The Pennsylvania State University

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“OUT OF THE LINES”:

HAUNTINGS, POLITICS, AND AESTHETICS IN CHILDREN’S ART

A Dissertation in

Art Education

by

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Abstract

This dissertation research takes a post-structural, reconceptualist approach to the study of art education to examine children’s art practices that dissociate from socially constructed accounts of children’s art and lives, especially those which seek to compartmentalize the child, children, and children’s art making. The theoretical orientation of this study is grounded in the work of French philosopher Jacques Rancière—namely, the distribution of the sensible, ignorance, politics, and aesthetics—among others, to explore what kinds of knowledge and values related to children’s art gets to be visible or invisible, sayable or unsayable, audible or inaudible, legible or illegible, to the extent that such existing frameworks police children’s everyday practices. These partitions are, in fact, perceivable through children’s demonstration of what they assume adults expect of their works and behavior, which exist as haunting ghosts, continuously visiting and revisiting the social lives of children thus reminding us of what is expected from and assigned to their bodies. In this regard, one of the main questions my dissertation raises is: How do adults understand children’s art making, and in what ways have these understandings partitioned (or not) children and their art making experiences?

Based on an ethnographic case study in the arts-integrated kindergarten classroom of a university-affiliated childcare center, I bring in my observation of how children also display their capability to disagree with and overturn the existing rules and roles imposed on them by constituting a political scene, despite the struggle that might follow. The methodological approach, too, draws from a Rancièrian concept of aesthetics that demands the researcher disrupt her preconceived notions about the subject and thus
constitute effects of equality with the informants by the presumption and practice of
equality. This method required the adult researcher to consider her positionality and
membership at the site, as well as to take seriously a relational ethics toward researching
with children.

As such, this dissertation centers on the following questions on children’s politics
and aesthetics: In what ways do children make themselves visible and legible as social
actors that disagrees with adults’ expectations? And, how do they negotiate the
circumstances that surround their art making? Moreover, and most importantly, what role
(if any) does art making have in the political process? However, rather than having
answers set forth, my dissertation aims to invoke (re)considerations toward new and
different approaches to the works and theories of early childhood art education: to
reconceptualize habitual theories and practices, hierarchical adult-child relationships, and
ghostly assumptions of rules and roles in early childhood art education; to think and do
art with children through different perspectives and pedagogical practices, seeing young
artists as political and social agents; and to embrace relational ethics in researching with
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Introduction

Much of what we have come to “know” and seem to “value” about children’s art has emerged from a logic and approach that often regards the child and children’s knowledge, work, and experience as being less than our own. In the field of art education, this logic and approach is most aptly identified in terms of research and theory that, especially during the mid-twentieth century, focused foremost on the causality between children’s art and issues of development. As a result of this focus, existing knowledge in the field of art education continues to be dominated by accounts of children’s thinking, making, and living: that are predetermined; that limit children’s voice and agency; that routinely decontextualize the child and their work; and, that ultimately position children to be the subject of adult intervention. Although these theories of classification were developed with the best of intentions, fashioned for a better understanding of young people’s art, such accounts have nonetheless functioned in service to discourses that are inclined to regard children as deficient or defiant, as Other, especially when children’s work fails to echo certain characteristics and models that have been normalized.

Having observed numerous events of children’s art making, both within and outside of school settings, I have come to realize that children’s art is a complex matter, one that is entangled with children’s culture, the subjects and themes of their narrative interests, the “public performance[s]” (Thompson, 2009, p. 32) that accompany these practices, and the social relationships that supplement and surround children’s art making. As there are many other elements adults fail to notice, the event of children’s art always exceeds the idea that it is a ‘thing’ which can be arranged into stages, a practice that can always be tamed, organized, and made to be predictable. In other words, the art
making of children is such that it often exists between stages, is suitable to multiple stages at once, or evades them entirely, “making a mockery of neat categorization” (Duncum, 2018, p. 225).

In taking a reconceptualist approach to the study of child art, my dissertation research examines children’s art practices that dissociate with socially constructed accounts of children’s art and lives, especially those which seek to compartmentalize the child, children, and children’s art making. I do this through French philosopher Jacques Rancière’s (2013a) idea of “the distribution of the sensible,” otherwise known as the ‘partition of the perceptible,’ which he describes as a way to address a society’s decision-making processes, specifically the problem of who gets to be visible and invisible, sayable and unsayable, audible and inaudible, legible and illegible. This creates a partitioning of the realm of the perceivable in society, thus positioning certain bodies as subjects while other bodies are seen as objects — for example, how children are often regarded as voiceless, without particular forms of agency. The partitions are visible through children’s demonstration of what they assume adults expect of their works and behavior, to the extent that such policing assumptions become ghosts that haunt them. It is the “ghostly matters” (Gordon, 2008) that continuously visit and revisit the social lives of children that reminds us of what is expected from and assigned to their bodies.

However, when those who are seen as objects disagree with their given partitions, a political enactment emerges. As a relational matter in nature, the essence of politics resides in “dissensus” (Rancière, 2015) which entails an interruption of the ‘distribution of the sensible,’ where political subjects — i.e., those who are considered less than equal in a given distribution of the sensible, make themselves visible and legible beings. I view
this act of dissensus as being integral to children’s everyday lives, because children are social beings who live in social environments, constantly having to negotiate between the adults’ world and their own world (Corsaro, 2015).

In exploring these ideas, I conducted an ethnographic case study from October 2017 to May 2018 in the arts-integrated kindergarten classroom of a university-affiliated childcare center. I visited the kindergarten classroom twice a week, staying for one and a half hours each time that I visited. In the classroom, I observed and participated in both whole-group and small-group activities. Upon entering the kindergarten classroom, I took seriously the task of being an interested adult, what Mandell (1988) has referred to as “the least adult,” one who participates in the everyday lives of children with curiosity, not as one who brings superior (or inferior) knowledge from outside. As such, by utilizing a Rancièrian lens and actively questioning adult-centered explanations of early childhood art, my dissertation study will explore the following questions, among others:

- How do the adults in the kindergarten classroom understand children’s art making, and in what ways do these understandings partition (or not) children and their art making experiences?
- In what ways do the children in the kindergarten classroom practice ‘dissensus’? In other words, how do the children in the kindergarten classroom make themselves visible and legible as social actors?
- What are the circumstances that surround children’s practices of dissensus? How do the children negotiate these circumstances? Moreover, and most importantly, what role (if any) does art making have in the process of dissensus?
This dissertation is theoretical and ethnographic. I attempt to balance the theoretical exploration of children’s art through the academic literature on childhood studies, children’s art, and the philosophical writings of Jacques Rancière, as well as provide ample examples from my experience of engaging with children and their artistic practices. As such, my aim is to research the discourse of children’s art in the field of Art Education, examine it along with the politico-aesthetic engagement of children and myself at the kindergarten classroom to reflect the experiences in the form of a methodology that I am calling *aesthetico-ethnography*. As part of the ethnographic characteristics, my simultaneous position as an artist, educator, researcher, and the writer of this dissertation plays a crucial role. Narratives about my own childhood experience in art education as well as my current position as an adult researcher studying children’s art are incorporated as part of my theoretical and analytic endeavors. I open up Chapter One by presenting my childhood art education experience in Seoul, South Korea, to discuss how ‘the distribution of the sensible’ in art education could entail violence in children’s lives, even within the parts that seem distanced from overt police orders—the creative exercise of art. Here, the ghosts of my childhood art education guide me to understand a historical landscape of the field of Art Education and the “hauntology” (Derrida, 1994) within its disciplinary shifts. Chapter Two explores the discourse of childhood studies, a historically and socially constructed area of study that has often bound children into particular images and categories, and see how art education theories and practices shifted accordingly to such images. In Chapter Three, I interrogate Jacques Rancière’s ideas by illustrating the relevant historical accounts that contributes to his thoughts on pedagogy, politics, and aesthetics, along with other thinkers’ concepts. Next, in Chapter Four, I
elaborate on the methodological approach of this study by discussing ethnography in childhood studies and how the distribution of the sensible might exist in ethnographic practices. In doing so, I inquire as to how the aesthetic dimension might emerge in ethnographic practices. It is for this reason that I describe my approach as an ‘aesthetico-ethnographic case study.’ Chapter Five is an expanded version of my forthcoming article in the journal of *Visual Arts Research*, titled “Painting ‘out of the lines’: The politics of aesthetics and the aesthetics of politics in children’s art.” In this chapter, I focus on a painting event encountered at the kindergarten classroom, in which two boys diverge from the teacher’s instruction of painting small dots yet continue to be cognizant of the teacher’s presence and rules. I consider this as a political enactment drawing Rancière’s notion of politics and aesthetics, as well as other concepts that scaffold the interpretation of this event. Lastly, in Chapter Six, I linger on the notion of ethics in researching with children by looking into a drawing companionship of illustrating Star Wars figures with one kindergarten boy, Alex, and myself. Thus, I conclude the dissertation by raising questions to the field of (early childhood) art education and its research, asserting that we attend to children’s lives and works differently by suspending our habitual modes of thinking about and engaging with children’s art practices. An earlier version of this chapter will be published as part of the anthology *Ethics and research with young children: New perspectives*, titled ‘Drawing together: Towards a relational ethics of ignorance’ (Park, forthcoming 2019).
Chapter 1

Art and the Disciplinary Haunts in Art Education

A few days before the art-specialized middle schools’ entrance exam, our watercolor paintings were ranked and evaluated. It was late. In fact, it was already later than our usually scheduled time to go home, so it must have been after 10:00 pm. Ms. Lee, upset by the poor outcomes of some of the paintings, asked the artists of the two lowest-ranked paintings—a girl and a boy—to walk outside of the building, hold their works so that they were facing the car-rushing street, and declare: “I am [name], 6th grade at [your elementary school] preparing for Yewon Art Middle school. I am here because I did not try my best to paint this work and I will do a better job next time.” The boy and girl were instructed to do this until we (the rest of the students in the classroom, and Ms. Lee) could hear their statements from the open window on the 4th floor. I remember vividly that she was crying, even before she began to walk down the stairs. Those of us who had not been singled out, me included, remained quiet in our seats, listening to the sound of the girl crying as she made her way to the street.

A Disciplinary Haunt

Children being punished in an art studio may not be a common scene to encounter today, especially in an American context. However, it was the opposite case during my childhood in Seoul, South Korea in the early 2000s. The vignette above is one of the more creatively harsh punishments that we, the sixteen 6th graders from different
elementary schools in the Seoul metropolitan area, experienced for drawing poorly. During the time of the year when the preparation for the prestigious arts middle school entrance exam became rigorous, the Art Hakwons offered intensive art lessons for 6th graders to prepare for the exam. ¹ Translated as “educational institute” in Korean, Hakwon (or Hagwon, 학원) is a private institute typically available within walking distance of the neighborhood, where registered students take art lessons in small studio environments, paying monthly tuitions. A Hakwon could specify in any area: there are Hakwons of school subject areas (e.g., Math and English) and Hakwons that are non-school-subject oriented, which specialize in subjects such as learning Ballet or Cooking. In terms of Art Hakwons, there are traditionally two types: The Art Hakwons for PreK to 6th grade students function primarily as after-school childcare spaces, focusing more on exploring diverse art materials and techniques; and the Art Hakwons for middle and high-school students, who plan to major in art or design in secondary school or college, emphasize the development of fundamental and advanced art and design skills. In the latter type of Hakwons, forms, representation, color theories, and the mastery of traditional materials and skills are emphasized to help registered students prepare for specialized art schools’ entrance examinations (see Shin & Kim, 2014).

The annual entrance exam, typically held in late October, consists of creating two types of art works in one day. The first 3.5 hours is dedicated to an imaginary watercolor painting. Then, after a lunch break, a second 3.5-hour period focuses on the creation of a still life charcoal drawing. In preparation for taking the exam, our Art Hakwon, among

¹ In South Korea, 6th grade is the last grade of elementary school (elementary: 1st - 6th grade, middle school: 7th -9th grade, high school: 10-12th grade).
many other Art Hakwons in Korea, required that students spend a total of 13 hours per day at the art Hakwon, three four-hour classes and two 30-minute meal breaks in between, from the beginning of summer break (around mid-July) to the exam day in late October, which meant that students skipped school of the first half of fall semester. During a four-hour class time, for example, there would be two instructors present if it were a regular class, and one instructor if it was a mock exam. In regular classes, though the majority of the time we worked on our own paintings or drawings, the instructor might take the time to sit down on a student’s chair and directly add, correct, and proceed the work. Because the personal touch of the adult helped students to learn how to enhance the level of drawing, the instructor(s) did this for all students 2-3 times a class. The mock exam, however, was based solely on the work of the students. Within the context of a mock exam, the role of the instructor was to therefore supervise and remind students of the time that remained. As such, our works done as an exam were usually evaluated and ranked, with the occasional letter grade being added to the upper right side of a finished work.

Luckily, because my works were frequently ranked as one of the best works, or perhaps because my mom was an acquaintance of Ms. Lee, the head instructor of the Art Hakwon, I ostensibly evaded such embarrassing moments, yet was always tormented with the recurring atmosphere of punishment and fear. Ms. Lee was the authoritative figure who taught us verbally more than holding the pencil or brush. She was in her early forties at that time (I knew this because she went to college with my mom and they were the same age) and had a near mythic aura; perfectly applied makeup with mid-length hair-salon blown curls and, most interestingly, an all-black attire that always included a
black flare maxi dress dropped down to her ankles. There was a rumor circulating at the
time, that once and only once had Ms. Lee been spotted wearing blue jeans. As the story
goes, she was shopping at a neighborhood grocery story. This, coupled with her
infrequent visits, which centered mostly on making announcements and having children
gather around one person’s work to highlight the ‘right’ way to draw, only added to her
mystique. Ms. Lee’s presence and instruction urged us to draw/paint faster, rank and
evaluate each other after a mock exam, and/or any maintenance work (e.g., asking us to
clean up our eating area, checking watercolor palettes for abundant amount of paint being
squeezed in, resolving peer issues and etc.). Her time of appearance could be from a few
seconds to up to an hour—she never stayed the full four-our class time since there were
other groups to supervise such as secondary school students preparing for the arts high
school or college.

It was not only her appearance that was witchlike but also her performances. As
the exam approached, her instructional methods became rigorous and authoritarian. She
often scolded students by yelling orspanking them with a clear 50 cm (approximately 20
inches) plastic ruler for various reasons, mostly when the technical rules of drawing or
painting were not followed. Those who were yelled at or spanked were frequently the
ones who we tacitly thought of as less talented, not competent enough to get into the art
schools. At times, it was often the two boys among the sixteen 6th graders who the girls
felt less sorry for, for being punished. However, the day we drew the cabbage was
different. Somehow, this day, Ms. Lee was present in the classroom from the beginning,
from our initial stage of sketching still life objects with pencils to the later stage of
drawing with charcoal.
Carefully curated by the instructors for a still life, to be rendered as a charcoal drawing, sixteen metal easels are circled around a table with an assortment of objects neatly placed on a white cloth. The walls that surround us are simply covered with pictures, grouped in pencil drawings, charcoal still-life drawings, and watercolor paintings. It is the beginning of our second 4-hour slot of drawing, just after our 25-minute lunch break. In beginning to draw the still-life, normally, we instantly recognize what we are supposed to place as the main object—one to be sketched bigger than the other objects, slightly moved off from the center of the paper—and what we could draw as other supporting objects in the composition of the 39.4 x 59.4 cm (15.5 x 23.4 in) charcoal paper, clipped on the wooden panels facing us on the easels. On this day, the main object was a whole green cabbage with the cut end of the stem facing up, and other supporting objects placed together; for example, a plastic Coca-Cola bottle, an apple, and some smaller objects placed in the background.

Afar, we hear the high heels click-clacking on the granite floor, in approach to our studio door. An immediate silence commences. Ms. Lee walks in and we greet her with silence—no one says hi to her as we concentrate on the drawing, or at least pretend to be. She begins to roam the studio with her heels clacking the floor, hands placed on her back, lecturing on the importance of sketching while we all listened in silence. We moved our pencils busily as we knew meeting a certain time limit to finish our sketching was crucial, normally in the first 30 to 40 minutes. In fact, the most frequently mentioned vocabulary in the studio, not only by Ms. Lee but also the other instructors, would have been ‘quickly’ to prepare for the time frame at the actual exam. Ms. Lee was emphasizing that the oval shape of the cabbage stem has to be more of a round circle, rather than a thin
oval, to suggest a wider viewpoint. She instructed us to compare looking at the still life objects from above—where more objects could be captured in a frame allowing more expressions of volume such as light and shade—and from the side—in which only a few objects could fit into the frame as flat volumes. Circling around our easels, she repeated this several times, pointing out who was doing it right. As I erased the circle-shaped pencil mark to elaborate an even more full circle, Ms. Lee identified my cabbage stem section as having a thin oval shape, and called me out to stand up, up and walk over to the movable drawer that was often used as a still life placing table and grab the edges. In a daze, my body moved as order before even realizing that this was going to be my first physical punishment from Ms. Lee. She then smacked me with the plastic ruler three times. Thwack! Thwack! Thwack! Then, my body began to move again, quietly retreating to my seat to resume drawing. I reminded myself to immediately correct that “damn flat oval.” I corrected the cabbage top (which I was about to re-sketch just moments before Ms. Lee’s decision to punish me), then proceeded to render other figures that appeared among those that were part of the display.

This discipline-and-punishment-based art education lives with me as an inscribed mark on my art education experience. There were clearly lines that could not be crossed: ‘correct’ skills to sketch still-life figures, ‘proper’ time spent to complete a work of drawing, and ‘expected’ ways of receiving punishment from the art instructor. It was a haunting experience, if not traumatic, to all of the students. For example, I recall one of the girls disclosing to me on the exam day that she had been taking sleepiing aids every night because Ms. Lee would visit her in her dreams. Ms. Lee, or rather the ghost of Ms. Lee, was perhaps haunting us more so in her absence, as we feared for her unforeseeable
visits, unpredictable mood, and the unfathomable ways she punished and shamed us. It was the possibility of return, her coming and going, that haunted us in an untimely fashion. The horror and scene of punishment conjured up in our minds the moment we heard the clacking of footsteps, along with the fear of not-knowing what to expect. There was no closure to this recurring fear: even when the teachers were not present, we found the imagery and voices in the midst of their vacancy. Though the end of the exam might have liberated us from any actual punishment, it has lived with me as even the recalling my experiences now utterly terrifies me.

Not all of my childhood art education involved haunting experiences, though. I was an avid artist who would draw anytime and anywhere. At home, my mother, who studied fine arts in college, always encouraged me to draw and paint, providing me with a diversity of art materials to consider and explore—even her “quality” art materials. She often drew with me using her great sense and realistic techniques of figure drawing, which made me wish to draw as good as her. Even earlier, at the Montessori daycare center I went to in Champaign, Illinois, I drew freely whenever I could, as the teachers encouraged my creative endeavors, along with other material choices that I made as a child. Despite my art education experience as an older child and teenager in Korea, it was my time at home—drawing with my mother—and my early experiences of that choice-based, child-centered early childhood education that left an imprint on my life as an artist and art learner.

Considering my rigorous art learning experience, it comes as no surprise that I was fascinated by the artistic engagements of children at my first research experience, somewhat romanticizing children’s art practices to a certain extent. Initially, I explored
children’s art as a form of play (see, e.g., Park, 2018), then also broadened my perspective to the social aspects and peer relationships that surround the art experiences. Being around young children to observe, listen to, and engage with their art making was an experience that was dramatically different from those I had while attending the Art Hakwon in Korea. However, as I moved further into my endeavor of doing ethnographic fieldwork, and became more involved in the everyday lives of the children, especially in the kindergarten classroom where I visited for my dissertation research, I realized that children’s art practices are not merely about being playful, cute, imaginary, or developmentally conducive, but rather these events are highly complex matters that involve subtle to explicit political acts. That is to say, in observing the process of children’s art practice, which was often accompanied by verbal narratives, I began to notice more clearly the politics that informs and surrounds children’s art making. There were solitary declarations, such as: “I am an artist and I can do/paint/draw whatever I want.” Questions of solidarity among peers: “We’re artists, right?” And disclosures of concern, too: “Are we allowed to do that?” or “I don’t think [the teacher] will be happy about this.” Along with the actions associated with such narratives, I interpreted these doings as political, as gestures that reveal children’s continuous negotiation of the adults’ rules and the children’s own desire to make themselves seen and heard, to legitimize their ontological beings and experiences in the classroom. In other words, it revealed the in-between status that children are made to maintain, a status by which it is necessary both to reside in and also move between the adults’ world and their own, constantly having negotiate the ideas and interests of adults, and at times their mere presence. To address this, I turn to French philosopher Jacques Rancière’s notion of “the distribution
of the sensible” and “police” in order to examine what is haunting in children’s artistic experiences at school and what political actions they might manifest in response to such adult policing.

**The Distribution of the Sensible**

Jacques Rancière argues that the societies are structured according to *Le partage du sensible*, translated as the ‘partition of the perceptible’ or the ‘distribution of the sensible’:

I call the distribution of the sensible the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the determinations that define the respective parts and positions within it. The distribution of the sensible reveals who can have a share in what is common to the community based on what they do and on the time and space in which this activity is performed… it defines what is visible or not in a common space, endowed with a common language, etc. There is thus an ‘aesthetics’ at the core of politics … It is a delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience. Politics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time. (Rancière, 2013a, pp. 12-13)

The distribution of sensible is composed of the *a priori* laws that condition what is possible to see and hear, to say and think, to do and make—it is the condition of what is
possible to apprehend by the senses, such as the possibility for perception, thought, and activity, rather than something that makes sense. The sensible is partitioned into various regimes that delimits forms of inclusion and exclusion in a community. To put the distribution of the sensible into everyday language, it is the existing frameworks of knowledge that define people’s modalities of visibility, audibility, and performativity by an aesthetic organization, which regard certain bodies as subjects while others are seen as objects. Yet this tidying up of the sensible does not entirely coincide with the logic of hierarchy; it is not the case that there are distinct worlds, for example, that of material and intellectual, that could potentially reverse its hierarchical relationship, but the relationships in the sensible world what people can decide meanings—in other words, it is “a matter of constructing a plot” (Rancière 2016, p. 29).

Then, who holds the power to construct the plot? In other words, who gets to write a plot and who are mere subjects in the plot? Rancière’s elaboration on the power of the police help us answer these questions:

The police is thus first an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying, and sees that those bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and task; it is a particular order of the visible and the sayable that sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not, that this speech is discourse and another is noise. (Rancière, 1999, p. 29)

It is notable that there are order(s) of the police, the qualitatively different and more or less desirable arrangement the police renders. The existence of an order implies that an established consensus or a force decides to prioritize, sort, group, align or eliminate particular qualities or bodies out of the mix. Thus, we inhabit an order of the police at any
given time, and that by definition it obscures and renders unrecognizable portions of the population. Police, in this sense, is a particular distributed sensible that defines the territory one should occupy and the accordingly expected activity of the allocated position.

As the power of police defines the ways of doing and being, bodies in educational institutions—namely, schools—are also expected to operate by the police order. The presence of police materializes in various forms at schools: the instructional methods, curricula, classroom rules, and even the environment of the classrooms, to name a few. In thinking specifically about art education, a school art curriculum might be constructed as a plot that decides, for example, what type of art could be seen as approvable art while others are not, or what narratives could be told through art while others cannot. This message could be insinuated in subtle forms, such as the ‘good’ examples hung on the classroom walls, the given materials and particular ways of using them, and/or the teacher’s lesson plans. Accordingly, by these policed senses, the students’ bodies become assigned to a particular place and task; it is a particular distribution of the sensible constructed to suggest a particular aesthetics and performances acceptable in the space.

This idea of the distribution of the sensible policed by the power not only resonates with my personal experience at the Hakwon, but also evokes encounters at the kindergarten classroom during my ethnographic fieldwork. In examining children’s art practices at the classroom, I have come to realize that there is, too, a haunt in the discipline that children are most encouraged to be free in using their creativity: early childhood art. Though it may be a different degree of haunt than what my peers and I experienced at the Hakwon, the kindergarteners also desired to gain approval and
appreciation from the adults (e.g., parents and teachers), which often accompanied a simultaneous fear of rejection, undervalue, or shame. Though in most cases the fear evades upon the encouraging responses of adults, however, an elusive yet perpetual force of the police seems to persist in children’s perception of art education. In other words, I have come to believe that a common thread of haunt in art education have persisted throughout the history.

The Haunting Plots in the History of Child Art and Art Education

Admittedly, thinking about ghosts and haunted students may not be the most joyful topic to discuss in the discipline of art education, but it is certainly one of the most important discussions for recognizing the policed reality of children’s art. Here, I argue that the hauntings not only occur on the personal level, but, more importantly, in the history of child art and art education. Though history tends to associate with notions of the past, where events diminish to the realm of ‘old’ or ‘gone,’ it nonetheless influences the doings and beings of our present time. In thinking about this out-of-joint time, Jacques Derrida’s (1994) idea of “hauntology” in his book Spectres of Marx provides insight for construing history being out of linear order of time: Hauntology denotes that the temporal, historical, and epistemological traces converge with the presence of being—the ontology. Derrida uses the plural spectres (or specters) intentionally, given that Marxism embraces diverse interpretation and revision upon the changing cultural conditions. Considering how these ghosts of Marx continue to haunt the paradigm of Western liberal democracy’s supposed “triumph” over communism, Derrida describes how there is neither a beginning nor an end to history:
Given that a *revenant* is always called upon to come and to come back, the thinking of the spectre, contrary to what good sense leads us to believe, signals toward the future. It is a thinking of the past, a legacy that can come only from that which has not yet arrived—from the *arrivant*\(^2\) itself” (Derrida, 1994, p. 196, original italics).

It is the peculiar presence that is no longer or not-yet present, yet inviting the past and future to converge.

Derrida’s deconstructive structure of the play between the present and absent is, in fact, distinct from Rancière’s perspective on time and history, as he sees the present as a sensible universe constructed from a/the moment in the past, a holistic view rather than as a means of understanding the present. This is not to say that the past is gone, but to avoid the past being in service to understanding the present; When Rancière reflects on moments of the past, it functions as a means “to destabilize it, to take away some of its obviousness” (Rancière, 2016, p. 107). Nevertheless, Rancière (2011) admits that Derrida’s notion of hauntology addresses similar problems that Rancière confronts, for example how we perceive the distribution of the sensible. However, Rancière’s position is that Derrida oversubstantializes the identity of the inexistence, or the presence of the absent. Although my thoughts align with most of Rancière’s theories throughout this dissertation, it is the history of child art where I divert to agree with Derrida’s notion of hauntology for its effectiveness to understand the elusive power that continues to influence children’s art making today. If opening up the idea of hauntings with my

\(^2\)Whereas ‘revenant’ means the ghost, “a coming back” or “return,” the arrivant is a guest or a newcomer, which is always “to come” in the future. When the arrivant haunts, it indicates the coming of a past that calls for a more just future (Derrida, 1994).
experience at the Art Hakwon was more of a broader, allegorical thinking, here I use spectrality beyond metaphors and narratives to undertake a substantive study of historical shifts that concerns children’s art.

Then, what does the ghost look like in the history of child art? More specifically, what do they do to children? The historical account of child art cannot be discussed without also addressing how the study of childhood has been informed and perpetuated by a deficit discourse that regards children as ‘less-than.’ For example, psychologists and medical professionals have bound children to a framework that positions them as less-developed in relation to older members of the population (i.e. adults) (James, Jenks & Prout, 1998), and sociologists and philosophers have regarded children as less-than in terms of their citizenship (Cohen, 2005; Marshall, 1950; Moosa-Mitha, 2005). As a result, children have continued to be regarded as less-than adult—an understanding merely on their deficiency compared to the adult population. As such, the assumption that children are less capable than adults persisted as a ghost in the study of child art, where children have been, and still are, considered less-than artists. This underpinning discourse also implies that children are a group of bodies not capable of having proper aesthetics, craftsmanship, culture and all the other aspects “adult” artists might embrace.

To use hauntology as part of continuing the discussion on children’s art is to make it a place where I interrogate the constructed idea of child art in relation to the past, examine the elusive assumptions of the present, and explore the lines that may be drawn in the future. A ghost is a tradition inherited from the past, yet always to return, always to come, within the disjointed time. In looking into the past of the field of art education, the discourse of child art has a long history of categorizing children’s drawings on the basis
of age (e.g., developmental stage theories): whereby drawings are assumed to be a natural artifact of childhood, unaffected by culture, and distinctively innocent compared to those of adults. Therefore, the ghosts in child art is the notion that, on the basis of biomedical and sociological deficit models, children require adults’ approval, guidance, or explication to ‘properly’ make art in the ‘right’ direction towards development.

As a constructed plot, the conception of children and childhood has been policed by the predominant philosophies, power, and interests of adults. Children’s art, as such, has also been bound to specific knowledge systems and thus subjugated to the generalizable as part of the distribution of the sensible. These classifications established upon adults’ beliefs and ideas that often decontextualize the child employ the deterministic scale used for the examination and evaluation of child art. It is the criteria of “biomedical designation of age and the aesthetic principles associated with visual realism, against which the competencies of children and their drawing are interpreted” (Schulte, 2018, p. 223, original emphasis). In what follows, I describe a historical landscape of child art—rather than the history of child art—by focusing on two main aspects of art education literature: (1) age and maturity; and (2) style and contents.

**Age and Maturity: When Children Draw**

Age and the according competence have been the most ubiquitous measurement for studying a child’s artistic development. From Nineteenth century psychologists who were drawn to the child psychology and development, the study on children’s drawing were predominantly in service to other disciplines (i.e. psychology or neuro-science) because it seemed to provide causality for understanding a child’s cognitive, linguistic,
and intellectual development. A dominant theory in this psychological focus on children’s art was the ‘Mirror paradigm’ that examined the ability of the child to represent images of something other than the object itself, which often compared children’s drawings to that of primitive (Bühler, 1930; Sully, 1896). For example, British psychologist James Sully (1896), influenced by Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic theories, was interested in the self-reflective qualities of children’s art that allegedly suggested the inner workings of their minds.

Continuing the work of Sully, psychologists analyzed and classified the development of a child by examining the end product, that of children’s drawings. For example, Florence Goodenough (1926) believed a child’s intellectual development controlled the nature and content of children’s drawings, stating that “the brighter the child, the more closely is his analysis of a figure” (p. 75). In the 1930s, Jean Piaget (1932, 1960, 1962) (see also, Piaget & Inhelder, 1956) presented a developmental theory of organizational and graphic skills based on maturity, which is consequently connected with age. In his theories, a child’s drawing is in the process of assimilation, therefore neither a child’s procedural decision makings nor his or her experience was a significant factor for understanding the child.

The opposing ‘Window paradigm’ was an aesthetic perspective followed by practitioners working in the arts that viewed children’s art serves a window on the world, as an objective reproduction of reality that carries all of the meaning with the image. As such, a child’s act of representational drawing was the ultimate goal in this model. One of the leading scholars in supporting the aesthetic Window paradigm was Viktor Lowenfeld (1947) who described the creative and mental growth embodied in children’s drawings by
classifying five developmental progressions from scribbling to preschematic to schematic and dawning realism to pseudo-naturalistic (see Figure 1). Originating from psychoanalysis, Lowenfeld theorized that, within this linear progression, children’s life experiences are integrated into the drawing in an orderly manner, which assumed a certain level of universal predictability and universality in children’s drawings. Like Cizek, Lowenfeld also believed that adults should not impose their images on a child’s art practice, as he found that students lose confidence in their artistic competency because of the seemingly toxic adult influences.

Figure 1. Lowenfeld & Brittan’s (1947) six stages of drawing development

Following this gravitation toward a developmental and psychologically informed analysis, many other scholars have theorized child art on the basis of developmental typologies: Lark-Horovitz, Lewis and Luca (1967) studied spatial organization by the use of baseline and constructed three primary stages of children’s drawing; Rhoda Kellogg (1969) offered developmental typologies considering pattern-making stage of early
childhood art; Rudolf Arnheim (1974) created abstract mental equivalences for the objects children observe in the world, and thus reproduce the equivalences as graphic configurations that represent the original perception of the object, and in the 1980s Howard Gardner (1980) proposed a U-shaped developmental curve to argue that a child’s peak of “artistry” is generally reached before the age of six or seven and that after such stage the artistic ability declines except for a few children. The approaches to children’s art practice on the basis of the developmental nature of children’s drawing abilities culminated in the late 20th century yet persists in somewhat recent studies as well (see Kindler & Darras, 1997; Kouvou, 2016; Mann, 2017; Matthews, 2003).

The classification of child art based on psychological standards remains highly controversial as it neglects the particularities and vicissitudes of children in many aspects. Art education scholars Brent and Marjorie Wilson (1981) critiqued the studies on developmental stages by proposing three reasons: developmental approaches to children’s drawings were primarily conducted decades ago in Western culture (e.g., the United States and Europe); assume a natural, spontaneous innate unfolding as an unfettered and uninfluenced process that consequently lack searching for any other explanations; and fail to deal with themes, of which the variety of ways in which children compose pictures, as well as gender-related differences (pp. 4-5). The theorization based on developmental stages, to put it into Rancièrian terms, merely resulted in a ‘distribution of the sensible’ that assigned children’s art into particular places susceptible to the hierarchical orders. It polices the perception of children’s art to discern what is visible or noticeable in their work while other aspects are not as important to pay attention to.
Though my thoughts on compartmentalizing children’s works on the basis of age and maturity align with Wilson and Wilson’s (1981) critique, it is not to demonize the psychologists’ and art education scholars’ attempts of studying child art. In fact, such attempts originate from good intention and inquiry on yearning to know about children and their works. However, what I do find problematic is that such classification on children’s art maintains as an invisible yet ubiquitously controlling force in education, despite today’s disciplinary climate that does not explicitly advocate the theorization of children’s art based on age and maturity. It is the presumption that adults, and even children themselves, internalize the idea that a certain age is expected to draw and make art in particular ways and forms, which continues in the realm of the style and contents of children’s art, or in other words, how and what children draw.

**Style and Contents: How and What Children Draw**

Just like how adults have partitioned children’s art based on age, developmental capacities, and other biomedical standards, the content of children’s art—what they draw about—and the resulting style have been significantly policed as well, as a particular kind of a distribution of the sensible. Namely, adults often present approval and interest when children draw about general life events (e.g., birthday parties, nature, school life, family, animals, and etc.), whereas seemingly age-inappropriate contents and aesthetics (e.g., violence, eroticism, and etc.) tend to raise concerns and ultimately censored by adults, and even peers. This, too, exists as a normalized framework in art education settings, policing everyday art practices of children. Considering how adults’ perceptions on what
is proper content or aesthetic\(^3\) in children’s drawing and what is not persist to haunt the children and the field of art education today, I illustrate here how such notions gained timeless power throughout the historical shifts in art education.

The police on children’s graphic development on the basis of age and maturity has consequently policed particular modes of child art throughout the history. The idea that children’s art works even have a sense of aesthetic is, in fact, a new one. Children’s drawings have been either “ignored, found amusing, or ridiculed” until the 19\(^{th}\) century, which is when modernism allowed the appreciation of “inventive, primal and authentically expressive modes of work that adults became able to value the art of children for its own special aesthetic qualities” (Leeds, 1989, pp. 95-96). It is when the fashions of adults’ aesthetics changed upon the introduction of new forms and movements of art (e.g., Avant-garde) that subsequently affected the aesthetic standards of child art. The terminology ‘child art,’ in fact, was not recognized until Franz Cizek discovered it and named it in the early 1900s (Viola, 1936). At that time, drawing was taught in schools by giving children pages of dots: children were asked to connect the dots with straight lines, and as the age advanced, only the gap between the dots were further apart (Viola, 1936). Valuing seemingly intuitive renderings in children’s artworks, one of Cizek’s belief was that adult influences were detrimental to the “natural” creation of children, and therefore any intervention from the adult world would contaminate the child’s original drawing. In other words, the ‘child-like’ characteristics

\(^3\) It is essential to note how the term ‘aesthetics’ is used in this section. Though I will refer to a different definition of aesthetics in the next chapters (i.e. Rancière’s definition of aesthetics), aesthetics here denotes a general understanding that broadly considers a theory of beauty, sensibility or taste, which is interchangeably used with style. Such notion of aesthetics therefore concerns the “visual appearance of effects” (Williams, 1976, p. 28) and/or a “sense perception” (Eagleton, 1990).
in children’s works (e.g., spontaneity and the use of vivid colors in early childhood art) that were treasured by the adults constituted the image of what child art looked like.

Accordingly, the study and teaching practice in art education valued child-like elements in the artworks produced by children. Resembling how Cizek instructed his students in the 1920s by assigning particular subjects, materials, rules, aesthetics, and presentation of art to all the students in his class (Greenberg, 1996; Leeds, 1989; Viola, 1936; Wilson, 2004, 2007), art teachers at schools selected topics of art for children attending to more of the adult’s interest and standards. That is, the style of “school art” (Efland, 1976) was created, controlling the aesthetics of child art to render “the appearance of creativity” (Wilson, 2004, p. 277, my emphasis). As school art often service to other school subjects or recreative functions rather than being a legitimate independent subject, the style children were encouraged to adhere to in their artwork was controlled by the adults, ostensibly resembling a child’s creative or imaginative capacities. This practice of appropriating ready-made aesthetics implies that child art has been regarded as mere objects while that of adults, or art works seen in museums, were seen as subjects—the aesthetics of adult art persisted to enact as the police in the discourse of child art.

Moreover, how children draw is intricately interwoven to what they draw. The ‘what’ in child art is recognized by adults’ set of preconceived knowledges and images, as incomprehensible renderings (e.g., scribbles or unidentifiable figures in the adults’ eyes) are often dismissed as ‘unimportant.’ However, even within the visually identifiable contents, adults often police whether it is appropriate for a child to draw. One example is the reception of popular cultural images in children’s art. Often times at
school classrooms, popular culture is reserved for “playtimes” or informal spaces, rather than a resource for formal activities (Yoon, 2018). This is because media-inspired contents in children’s writing or drawing activities could be “ideologically unsettling” (Dyson, 1997, p. 3) for adults, since the stories and images are subject to insinuating sexist or racist stereotypes and physical aggression. Thus, these concerns result in establishing classroom rules, for example, restricting the times and occasions stories and images of media culture could appear in teacher-led activities.

For children, however, consuming this cultural content asserts their membership in a generational group that is distinct from other age groups, namely adults, even as a form of resistance to that group. British Childhood Studies scholar Allison James (1998) describes the different approaches and values between adults and children and introduces the term “ket,” a concept derived from children’s taste for cheap candies, which they purchase with weekly allowances. Importantly, the kets that children consume are often considered by adults to be rubbish, a lowly and useless indulgence. This iteration of ‘kets’ has expanded to include children’s exclusive and prevalent cultural values, such as the toys they play with and television shows or movies that they watch. The aesthetics of kets, in this sense, refers to children’s deliberate choices about their own visual cultural worlds and the values they have about how best to construct, use, and maintain the content of in cultural spaces.

For this reason, the manifestation of ket aesthetics seldom appear under explicit rules and instructions, but rather “prevails whenever a slackening of adult control occurs” (Thompson, 2006, p. 71). It is a form of constructing their own community and logic as well as a shared culture among peers. French scholar Michel de Certeau (1984) argues
that consumption is itself a form of agentive and cultural production, as it constructs a specific logic and space (pp. xii-xiii). What adults commonly fail to notice, therefore, is that children’s consumption of popular media culture images and its incorporation in their works reflect an active practice of establishing their own logic and a space of community. The media culture images that children choose “provide a common language, pervasive evidence of one’s place in the world, and potent motivations of drawing” (Thompson, 2003, p. 143). As children’s popular media culture is central to their lives both inside and outside of school, the ket aesthetics unfold ubiquitously in their artworks as well.

The field of art education have been keen to popular cultural influences in children’s art practices (Duncum, 1987, 2009, 2014; Ivashkevich, 2009; McClure, 2013; Thompson, 2003, 2006, 2017; Wilson, 1974, 1997; Wilson & Wilson, 1984). Wilson and Wilson (2007) acknowledge that children’s self-initiated works that contains visual cultural contents were unnoticed and regarded as unimportant by adults during the 20th century, mainly because children created such drawings in their leisure time on their own. However, amalgamated with the advent of social media that allows a more accessible visual cultural platform for children and youth, it is now virtually impossible to avoid the presence of popular-culture-inspired images and stories in the works of children (Bae-Dimitriadis, 2015; Castro, 2012; Castro, Lalonde & Pariser, 2016; Shin, 2016). Art Education scholar Kevin Tavin (2005) writes about the hauntological shifts in the field of art education, particularly focusing on popular culture and visual culture that emerged in early 2000s in service to legitimatize the discipline of art education. Also referring to Derrida’s elaboration on hauntology, Tavin argues that ideological stratifications on popular culture have continued to haunt art education by disparaging the mass-produced
images’ influence in children’s art (e.g., comic books, films, and TV shows) thus police art education curricula in schools to persist the view that they are the opposite of high culture (Eisner, 1978), as Kitsch or a disregard towards aesthetic contemplation (Efland, 2004). Though neither consensually regarded as explicitly detrimental nor educationally conducive, popular culture consumption and production in educational settings maintain as a contentious matter to adults. In other words, the possibility of a disapproval towards children’s shared culture itself exemplifies adults’ potential control on what children can consume or produce and what they cannot, using their power that could possibility to force their decisions on them. Also, it is important to note that the example of popular culture is only a fragment of many other occasions where adults’ beliefs police the content and style of children’s art practices.

**Toward a New Perspective: Endeavors of Alleviating Hauntological Plots**

Hauntology not only concerns the deconstructive critique of the priority given to the presence of beings and concepts over absence and non-beings, but it is also an ethical destabilization of any kind of dualisms and universalizing totalities (Critchley, 2014). Because dismantling the haunting narratives (e.g., generalized assumptions on the development and style of children’s art) compels me as an ethical obligation, this dissertation works toward alleviating the power of such ghosts in the field of art education, to work against the perpetuating haunts by highlighting alternative narratives. In fact, some recent scholarship in art education problematized of the theorizing of children’s art based on graphic artifacts for its use to constructing knowledge and the consequential results (e.g., Ivashkevich, 2009; Pearson, 2001; Schulte, 2011; Thompson,
(2009). For instance, Pearson (2001) argues that researchers have tended to concentrate on the theorizing of children’s drawing as “artifactual residue” (p. 348) dismissing the social and contextual complexities embedded in the process of making. Instead, when discussing child art, the interwoven processes of decision making, negotiation, and interaction within one’s mind and the affective individuals has to be taken into consideration. This perspective of children’s social practice in art offered a broader understanding to child art, suggesting that adults, as affective individuals, play a significant role as one of the manifolds of elements that affect a child’s an art experience.

Scholars have built up on this perspective of by looking at children’s art as socio-cultural practice through a relational approach, such as adult-child collaborative drawing (Wilson, 2007), process-oriented art (McLennan, 2010), relational art (Sunday, 2015), drawing as social play (Kukkonen & Chang-Kredl, 2018), and drawing as intellectual play (Wood & Hall, 2011), to list a few. Moreover, as the history of the study of child art have demonstrated its classification based on graphic sophistication and visual realism of recognizable representations of particular images as an endpoint where children strive to reach, only by viewing the residue of children’s drawing and painting. This fails to recognize concepts and narratives manifested in abstract methods and various new media forms. For example, the use of digital photography and video arts often stay on the sidelines when discussing children’s artistic practice as adults find it difficult to measure them with visual realism standards (Sakr, 2017a). Thus, the surface-level elements in child art that adults have long believed as deterministic factors, in fact, only produce a limited understanding of children’s artistic practices. In other words, if examining graphic residues was only the tip of the iceberg, attending to children’s social practices,
use of new media, or political performances would shift the perspective to below surface, to what had been disregarded or undisclosed in children’s art.

I view these endeavors as attempts to weaken the ghosts’ power to firmly define, classify, and suppress child art based on age, maturity, and contents. Although I contend that the ghosts in child art is present in its absence continuing to influence children as well as the discipline of art education, taking a pessimistic standpoint would only repudiate the ability of scholars, teachers, and students to draw future landscapes differently. That is, rather than permitting the ghosts to maintain the same degree of power to haunt art education, we should consider new liberating approaches to the pedagogy and practice of (early childhood) art education. This is where I invite Rancière’s (1991, 2003, 2007a, 2009a) notion of “emancipation.” For Rancière, emancipation is a “rupture in the order of thing” (2003, p. 219) that disrupts the configuration of the oppositional relationship of one who dominates and one who is subjected to domination. If the ghosts have persisted to dominate our understanding of child art throughout the history, to emancipate from the hauntology would be to disrupt the seemingly normalized order of domination. Yet disrupting the ghosts’ power is not to dismiss them, but rather to use the hauntings to recognize what has been controlling us and act in response to that recognition. Dernikos, Ferguson, & Siegel (2019) assert that hauntings “are ontological agents that call on us to both acknowledge and act upon our own participation with/in violent systems of oppression (e.g., of colonialism, racism, hetero/sexism, classism), which continue to be dehumanizing and deeply hurtful” (p. 11). It is my experience at the Hakwon and the ghosts’ continuous visits that enable me to recognize the hauntings children might carry in everyday lives today, which may not be
recognizable to others without the haunting experiences. Dernikos et al. (2019) further state that, therefore, hauntings offer useful ethical tools for us to consider a different way of seeing, one that is less mechanical, more willing to be surprised, to link imagination and critique, one that is more attuned to the task of “conjuring up the appearances of something that [is] absent.” (Gordon, 1997, p. 22, in Dernikos et al., 2019, p. 11)

This is why I open up my dissertation with my haunted childhood art education experience: to consider a new way of seeing. I plan to view children’s art practices differently by being more willing to be surprised, dissociated with my habitual thinking, thus more attuned to the elusive forces that continue to affect art education today. Because the hauntings potentiate a different way of seeing, my approach towards conjuring up the ghosts does not equate to demonizing. Dernikos et al. (2019) write:

So while ghosts serve to haunt us, they also watch over us, enabling human beings to “see” anew—even as humanism’s forces threaten to obstruct our view. For that reason, ghosts deserve our respect, and even our love. And, as the living are always entangled with the dead, the living deserve our love too—despite our differences, and the anger and frustrations those differences may produce. (p. 12)

Some of the new ways in which art education practitioners and researchers could potentiate this is by viewing children’s art on the basis of relationships and deeper understanding of children’s lived experiences and cultural contexts, rather than merely looking at the residue of the works—the end product of art. This is what both Derrida and Rancière contribute to this dissertation: acknowledging the elusive yet ubiquitous power that dominated the history of child art, I attempt to explore children’s art in a political
domain, inquiring whether emancipation might materialize, and if so, how Rancièrean ideas of “aesthetics” and “politics” come into play. Specifically, as Rancière’s idea of aesthetic experiences has been criticized for primarily concerning with art reception more than art production (see Lampert, 2017), I aim to see how children’s engagement with art production might generate a sense of politics. But before I delve into the specificity of children’s art practices, it is vital to situate child, children, and childhood in a broader context for understanding the present status and discourses that surround children today. The next chapter discusses the distribution of the sensible of the childhood images and realities that has long demonstrated the tendency to minoritize children into less-than partitions.
Chapter 2

The Distribution of the Sensible in Childhood Studies

At the Art Hakwon in Korea, we were nothing more than docile beings. The unspoken assumption was that we lacked the ability to produce appropriate art works qualifying for the exams, and therefore our art skills would improve if we were given the proper training and education. Surely, the most apparent problem of this art education derives from South Korea’s art school exam system where the middle school’s enrollment requires rigorous training beyond what we learn in elementary school art classes, along with the heated extracurricular education culture influenced by “helicopter moms” (Park, Lim & Choi, 2015) or “tiger parenting” (Juang, Qin, & Park, 2013). However, it is also one example of childhood images that rooted from a long history of Western theories that perpetuated the distributed sensible towards children’s lives. That is, as not-yet artists, not-yet autonomous beings competent to learn art by ourselves, our bodies were treated and seen in particular ways, malleable to the adults’ power. This assumption on us as a less-than being was vividly present in every social engagement at the Art Hakwon, generating fears to the individual, as well as the peer culture as a group.

Another haunting example of the image of a child more specific to the Western context, in contrary, is the idea that adults’ influence being detrimental to children’s art. It denotes a particular image of children, one that views the child as natural, innocent and pure, a child that is to remain untainted—expressively and imaginatively. This line of thinking is not exclusive to the field of art education and the everyday lives and practices of art educators. Nor is it an idea that first emerged in the 20th century, through the writings of figures like Franz Cizek and Viktor Lowenfeld, for example, although
certainly these figures have indeed contributed in significant ways to the legitimization of this image of the child and its underlying role in shaping the study of childhood art in the field of art education. This line of thinking, though, which can be traced back to the 18th century (e.g., Rousseau and Locke’s treatise of childhood), derives from a much broader history. The complexities of this history and the ways in which the child, children and childhood, as a result, have been constructed and reconstructed through it, across multiple disciplines, continues to wield certain realities and frameworks that haunt the field of art education.

The discourse of childhood is especially productive for Ranciére (2013), particularly regarding his conceptualization of the distribution of the sensible: where young people are viewed, treated, and analyzed by adults, and thus partitioned into knowledge structures and classifications. Yet, the modern concept of childhood is paradoxical: While children’s autonomy as active agents in their learning has been increasingly acknowledged (e.g., Reggio Emilia’s image of the child, as rich), regulation of children’s activities in social spaces has also increased (Coleman & Dyment, 2013; Ey & Cupit, 2011; Valentine, 1997). Conceived from different social, political and moral positions, childhood, therefore, remains as “a highly contentious topic” (James et al., 1998, p. 8) and this socially constructed idea of childhood will continue to be controversial. As Qvortrup (1991) comments, “childhood is a permanent structure, even if its members are currently being replaced” (p. 12). Because of this permanence, the constructed idea of childhood, in fact, haunts the theories and practices of early childhood education. Australian early childhood education researcher Jane Bone (2018) boldly asserts that “In terms of theory, early childhood education is haunted by the dead white
males who still whisper their theories in the classrooms of the present, and inhabit thoughts and conceptualisations about children and their lives” (p. 6). Indeed, it is the Western philosophers, psychologists, and scholars’ construction of childhood that persisted to control our notions of children. What is problematic is such theories continue to haunt children’s lives and works today beyond Western settings of early childhood education, from the Art Hakwon in South Korea to a kindergarten classroom in central Pennsylvania. As such, with particular emphasis given to how children have been historically, socially, and politically constructed, this chapter serves as a foundation for the following chapters, wherein I further discuss the politics of children’s art practice and the research orientation that I undertake in studying children’s artistic and cultural practices.

A Haunting History of Childhood Images

Childhood images stem from a long history that goes back to as early as Plato’s *Republic* where an external person (e.g., the philosopher, educator, or legislator of the *polis*) would give form to another who has no form, who is understood incapable of establishing the form by himself (Plato, 1902). As Platonic ‘form’ is synonymous to ‘idea,’4 having no form meant lacking intellectual perception or knowledge about the “truth” of the world, which justified education be necessary for the development of a child for its function of giving a form—to inform. In thinking about children regarded as

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4 Plato’s words are *eidos* and *idea* in Greek. This is different from the modern English definition of ‘idea,’ for Plato’s Forms are not mental entities, but rather “subject of independent truths, not reducible to or dependent on facts about its sensible manifestations” (Sedley, 2016, p. 11). In other words, Forms are independently existing entities only grasped by the mind, though they are not dependent on being grasped in order to exist.
having ‘no form,’ it invokes Rancière’s (1999) description of those who are unseen and unheard, as having “no part” (p. 30), as the constitutive outside of the distribution of the sensible. Though Rancière has not specifically addressed such thoughts in the context of young children, he has articulated extensively on emancipatory politics and pedagogy on the status of being positioned as a minority, such as the laborer (1989), the poor (2003), the spectator (2007a, 2011), and the student (1991, 2010). As such, bringing Rancièrian perspective to this dissertation, I can only speculate how Rancière might think about the context of early childhood education, and more particularly art education, by alluding to his writings on pedagogy, politics, and aesthetics. Therefore, here, in taking the task of conjecture in what Rancière would attend to within the conflict in the historically, socially, and politically constructed image of childhood (e.g., the deficit model), I assume he argue that childhood images is a part of the distribution of the sensible that has been deeply engraved onto adults’ perceptions of children that consequently generated the idea that children lack forms and parts of the society, missing the rights adults have. In fact, what governed the history of child art, as mentioned in the previous chapter, is rooted in a broader notion of childhood, which is again a “matter of constructing a plot” (Rancière, 2016, p. 29). The plot-shaping of childhood, I would argue, is the attempt to organize and impose meanings to childhood by adults’ convenience. I view developmental structuralist approaches as an example of constructing a plot in childhood, as they rely on biomedical causation to understand the lives and works of children (e.g., Lowenfeld & Brittan, 1947; Piaget, 1960) that primarily derives from the images of children as lacking social ability. Thus, in order to discuss how such images of childhood have policed children’s everyday
lives and works, the following illustrates the definition of childhood and the pre-sociological and sociological approaches to understanding childhood.

**Child(ren) and Childhood**

Because it is difficult to define the child without the conception of the adult and adult society (Jenks, 1996), children are inevitably recognized by their apparent differences, such as biological traits, behaviors, language, and other perceived (in)abilities. In this chapter, I unpack the historically, socially, and politically interwoven concept of the child, children, and childhood that adults have theorized and practiced. Though I am critical of adult-centered explanations of childhood, I do not intend to create a dualism between the adult and the child, as it would be a move that further intensifies existing hierarchical social orders, which continue to police children. Therefore, rather than explaining who the child *is*, here I focus on how the child has been *viewed* throughout history. In other words, I attempt to explore the dominant *images* of children in relation to existing philosophical, sociological, and political discourses.

Before I examine the scholarship of childhood studies, I should note that here, I differentiate child(ren) and childhood. While ‘child(ren)’ signifies an individual or a group of people who are not yet adults, the notion of ‘childhood’ is a human condition that is perceived distinctly different from adulthood, that tends to associate with particular images adults have constructed. In fact, I have not yet encountered a child referring to his or her present status as ‘childhood.’ According to James and James (2012), a definition of a *child* is:

> [a] human being in the early stages of its life-course, biologically, psychologically and socially; it is a member of a generation referred to collectively by adults as
‘children’, who together temporarily occupy the social space that is created for them by adults and referred to as ‘childhood.’” (p. 8)

Among the biological and social characteristics of child(ren), age, in particular, has been used as a convenient tool to separate children from other social groups, classifying children’s physical, psychological, and social development (James & James, 2012). This emphasis on age creates the ultimate “Other,” a population is from the onset reliant on the majority population (i.e. adults) for guidance toward maturity and individual independence (Cannella, 1997, p. 19). For example, developmental psychologist Jean Piaget (1960) described children’s cognitive and moral development in a deterministic manner, binding children to distinct developmental stages, each designed to represent the child’s incremental progression towards adulthood. In this approach, the criterion of age was dominantly employed to define the idea of adulthood and citizenship rather than a genuine impression of the child’s intellectual capacities or achievements.

Of course, it is indisputable that the analysis of children’s biological development has provided considerable knowledge about the various common changes that young people experience over time. However, using age as the defining marker for this change often engenders restrictions or protections on children’s activities (James & James, 2012), which neglects the child’s capacity to be in control of his/her activity. Moreover, the problem rests with this distinction and the separation of time and space as it produces inequalities that bind children—by virtue of being non-adults—to adults’ constructions of them, as predetermined human conditions (Foucault, 1975) (see also, e.g., MacNaughton, 2005). In other words, the conceptualizations of children have been regulated by adults’ power and interests, resulting in the production of oppression and injustice toward
children. This is widely and deeply ingrained in adults’ perspective, influencing children’s everyday lives. As Carla Rinaldi (1998) writes, the image of the child has been “a cultural (and therefore social and political) convention that makes it possible to recognize (or not) certain qualities and potential in children” (p. 116). Attentive to this image and reality of childhood constructed in socio-cultural contexts, the following section maps out the two main threads of childhood: the “pre-sociological” and “sociological” images of the child.

**Images of the Child: The “Pre-sociological”**

Relativizing the concept of childhood within social contexts, French historian of child and family Phillippe Ariès (1965) asserted that childhood has not always been the same thing: in the past children were viewed as miniature adults expected to behave like grown-ups as soon as possible. However, after the “discovery of children” emerged in the 18th century, the view shifted to children being considered as inferior beings in need of adults’ strict control. The vision surrounding children is conceived from a series of socio-political discourses, an invention of more contemporary times. Such discourses are informed by the dominant philosophical concepts driven by Western models of family and childhood, proposed by White, middle to upper-class males (e.g., Rousseau, Locke, and Piaget) studying white children in Western contexts. In fact, most of the scholars I refer to here, from Rancière to even those who propose critical perspective to childhood studies, are primarily Western scholars and researchers. I would have to ironically refer to Rancière again to unpack this dilemma, as valuing conventional Western perspective is a ‘distribution of the sensible’ in the majority of scholarships. Yet because such Western-
centered ideas have widely policed the study of childhood, I find that it is appropriate to
describe the historical landscape of how the image of childhood has been constructed,
which stretches its influence to the non-Western parts of the world as well.

Herein, I adopt James, Jenks and Prout’s (1998) review of the theoretical models
of childhood in *Theorizing Childhood*, from the “pre-sociological” characterization to
“sociological,” to grasp the conventional perceptions of the child(ren) and childhood.
These two distinctly different theoretical views of children shape notions of children’s
citizenship as either a future status or as a current status. To begin with, the pre-
sociological models of childhood are demonstrated as follows: the evil child, the innocent
child, the immanent child, the naturally developing child, and the unconscious child.

While this list of five major pre-sociological theories is not a definitive way of viewing
children, it has informed and continue to inform conceptions about children and their
everyday lives from the 1600s to the present. These models were shaped by theories that
do not acknowledge the social context and have developed in becoming “part of
conventional wisdom surrounding the child” (James et al., 1998, p. 3).

The image of *the evil child* has its foundation in the doctrine of Adamic original
sin, regarding children as demonic, subject to potentially dark forces. In the 16th century,
the child was considered weak and susceptible to evil and therefore needed correct
training and discipline to become good citizens. English theologian John Wesley (1703–
1791), for instance, believed that children are inherently bad and therefore they should be
inculcated in order to become good via adults’ control and punishment (Heitzenrater,
2001). This image of a child justifies the adults’ subjugation of young people to power
structures, which corresponds to Michel Foucault’s (1975) idea of “docile bodies,” bodies
that are subject to being used, transformed and improved. Childhood, in this regard, has its foundation in exercising restraint on the dispositions of corruption, and thus requires discipline and punishment operated by adults.

The most problematic yet most dominant image of childhood is the innocent child. This image depicts the child as being in a naïve state, due to their lack of experience or knowledge, and free from moral guilt (James & James, 2012, p. 68). Based on Jean Jacques Rousseau’s (1712–1778) treatise on children’s education described in the book Emile, the innocent child is considered inherently good, pure in heart, angelic, and uncorrupted by the world. Also, believing in natural development, education was thus the process of learning about nature, reasons, logic, and objects in the real world. In fact, the 18th and 19th-century discourse of the innocent child has become foundational to contemporary child-centered education that considers childhood recognizable through “encouragement, assistance, support, and facilitation” (James et al., 1998, p. 14). Although regarding children as little demons or angels may not be the dominant idea today, however, theories in early childhood education and adults’ everyday engagement with children still gravitate toward one side of the dichotomy, emphasizing either the child’s natural development over social demands or what the child must learn to become a good (adult) citizen in the future.

The immanent child is based on John Locke’s (1632–1704) ideas that consider children as “no-thing,” or in a blank slate, which is fundamentally antithetical to

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5 In Discipline and Punish, Foucault (1975) demonstrated how a regulatory gaze and constant surveillance that are often subtle and thereby seemingly invisible transformed individuals into docile bodies leading to normalization and acceptance of systems.
Rancière’s (1991) understanding of all people’s already-endowed intellectual capacities. This idea that children come to the world as empty pages anticipating to be filled with knowledge given by adults acknowledge children’s mental processes and perceptions on a gradient of becoming, moving towards reason. In this sense, all contents of children’s mind come from experiences, and adults can elicit reasons from children if an appropriate environment is provided. In fact, this model created the general view that children are innately motivated to learn, offering “the earliest manifesto for ‘child-centered’ education” (Archard, 1993, as cited in James et al. 1998, p. 16), which bases on the belief that education determines everything about a child becoming adult.

In the twentieth century, the image of children became ostensibly more scientific, focusing on their physical, psychological, and emotional development. The naturally developing child draws on Jean Piaget’s (1896–1980) “the stages of cognitive development” (1932, 1960, 1962, 1971) in which children are considered as lacking competence, whereas adults’ operative intelligence signifies achieved competence. In this view, children were described as initially egocentric, only capable to develop moral sensibilities and reasoning that comply with expectations for rational thinking only gradually, in a linear progression. Moreover, Piaget’s description of children’s cognitive and moral development represented the distribution of the sensible, which specific cognitive structures were classified in discrete stages, where an achievement of each being necessary to move into the next stage. As psychology theory dominated the understanding of childhood during this time—namely, behaviorism, measurement and

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6 In The Ignorant Schoolmaster, Rancière (1991) tells the story of Joseph Jacotot who believed that differences in performance derived from inability to attend rather than from innate intellectual differences and therefore all people were of equal intelligence. I further elaborate on Rancière’s idea of intellectual equality in detail in the next chapter.
habit formation, and normative child psychology—researchers have constructed specific characteristics as universal truths, of which they believed important to the growth and functioning of the child (Cannella, 1997).

Grounded on Sigmund Freud’s (1856–1939) ideas, the unconscious child understands young children as not only sentient and passionate beings but also highly vulnerable to parental and other early influences, affected by the id, ego, and super-ego. In the 1920s, a Freudian context for the interest in children’s experience became dominant in public discourse on the child. One of the distinctive features of this discourse is the assumption that unresolved conflicts in childhood persist into adulthood and may become sources for problems later in life. This perspective often yielded exaggerated and distorted understanding of a child, insofar as such ideas only depicted a child as lacking agency and intentionality.

The conception of childhood being established primarily on the basis of developmental psychology has become prevalent beyond the U.S. context, with its emphasis on sorting and chopping childhood into sections (Galman, 2019). The hegemony of developmental psychology restricted adults’ vision of understanding children only in proportion to developmental stages (Tarr, 2003) and such biomedical conception of the child has bound children to the “less-developed” side of the population. For example, the Piagetian understanding of children’s development tends to subscribe to the “deficit conception” of childhood, where the nature of the child is viewed primarily as a configuration of deficits, lacking competencies adults possess (Matthews, 2008, 2009). It is an assumption that children are less-than adults, less-than citizens, less-than artists, or merely a group of bodies not having culture or knowledge. In
the late 20th century, a number of postmodern scholars have questioned the underlying universality of these stages for its neglect of the context or the culture that accompanies children’s lives (Cannella, 1997; Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999; Walsh, 2005). For example, Gaile Cannella (1997) points out that classifying developmental stages is problematic for their implicit assumptions of a deficit, which consequently marginalizes the child as the “Other” (p. 34). Among the academic discipline, sociology, in particular, arose to challenge the unitary models of child development. The sociologists emphasized the social construction of childhood, a theoretical perspective that explores how the ‘reality’ in different social contexts could depict the idea of childhood differently (Berger & Luckman, 1967). As such, while the pre-sociological models demonstrated series of images, representations, and constructs of a child on the basis of age and maturity, the sociological approach arose with a perspective that acknowledges children’s agency with “social, political and economic status as contemporary subjects” (James et al., 1998 p. 26).

**The Sociological Approach: The “New” Sociology of Childhood**

The awakening of social theory that problematizes the very idea of the child as a pre-stated being within determined trajectories (i.e. developmental psychology) has increasingly become a popular perspective in contemporary childhood studies (Qvortrup, 1993). Viewing childhood as a social phenomenon, scholars developed a sociological perspective of which the taken-for-granted realities of everyday life spring from the interactions people engage with one another within the complex milieu, thus moving toward multiple conceptions of childhood (Berger & Luckman, 1967, James & Prout,
1997; Jenks, 2008). This shift in paradigm has been called as the “new” sociology of childhood for its focus on children’s historical, temporal, and cultural specificity as well as their agency capable of creating meaning through their interactions with adults and peers (Prout, 2011). Though such views challenge the taken-for-granted notions of childhood, it is not that such a perspective is ignorant of biological characters of humans but rather committed to studying how children become members of the society, as children’s socialization is “a process of appropriation, reinvention, and reproduction” in which a communal activity that children “negotiate, share and create culture with adults and each other” (Corsaro, 2015, p. 18).

In viewing the concept of the socially developing child as transitional theorizing of childhood, James et al. (1998) demonstrate four different discourses to childhood from a sociological point of view: the socially constructed child perspective that stresses childhood of plurality and diverse constructions; the tribal child that intentionality welcomes the anthropological strangeness and such a form of childlife; the minority group child, which describes a status excluded from complete participation in the social life; and the social structural child perspective that views childhood as a social phenomenon and children as body of subjects determined by their society, sharing certain universal characteristics. Whereas the pre-sociological theories perceived children in terms of becoming adults, the sociological theories developed in recent decades focus on the ‘here and now’ of children apart from the psychologically deterministic epistemology. These four analytical models do not stand in isolation given that they commonly acknowledge children as competent and capable social actors, as well as the influence of social structures, yet conceptualized in different ways.
In a broad sense, my arguments align with the sociological approach of viewing children as social actors rather than bodies that could be bound to the distributed sensible of categorized notions of childhood. This is because the sociological viewpoint highlights the particularities of childhood, in lieu of imposing naturalistic and universalistic assumptions. However, among the four approaches, I primarily associate my arguments with two perspectives: I first and foremost draw from the ‘socially constructed child,’ as the main point of sociological analysis of childhood rests on the belief that childhood is socially constructed, and the ‘the minority group child’ standpoint. The ‘socially constructed child’ reflects the social, economic, cultural and historical contexts within which children are embedded, as well as the social structures such as generation, ethnicity, class and gender in shaping children’s lives (Qvortrup et al., 1994). The ‘minority group child’ attends to the politicization of childhood and the consideration of children as essentially equal to any other age group, as “active subjects” (James et al., 1998, p. 31). Here, the term ‘minority’ is a “moral rather than a demographic classification” as this concept primarily “conveys notions of relative powerlessness or victimization” (James et al., 1998, p. 31). This perspective particularly focuses on the structural and ideological issues that assign children to a subordinate status, subject to potentially being positioned as powerless, disadvantaged and oppressed by those with power (i.e. adults) (James & James, 2012; Oakley, 1994). Hence, such deficit discourse has attributed to the marginalized status of children in reality: For instance, children’s participation in socio-political realms as citizens or researcher is by far limited than the adults. Because, paradoxically, a child is socially constructed yet pushed into the margins as a minority in reality, it is important to acknowledge how children’s lives are policed in
multiple layers and in diverse realms. Before I delve into these realities of children, I find it useful to trace how the pre-sociological to sociological images of children have aligned to the idea of childhood art in the last century.

**The Pre-sociological to Sociological Child in Art Education**

The previous chapter illustrated how the hauntology of art education perpetuated policing children’s art by the standards of age and maturity as well as content and styles, followed by recent endeavors of easing the ghosts by highlighting the social aspects of children’s art. Indeed, childhood is a complex matter where multiple theories and images of children converge. However, I find that the idea of child art in the scholarship of art education has shifted in a way that corresponds to James et al.’s (1998) characterization of the pre-sociological and sociological child. Although the police driven by the desire to control children’s art continues to haunt us even today, roots of pre-sociological and sociological models remain apparent in the theories that compose both haunting and alleviating ghosts in children’s art.

To begin with, the pre-sociological child images align with the conception of childhood art in the 20th century, the time when Cizek taught children child-like characteristics in his studio and psychologists chopped the works of children into partitions. Cizek’s belief in the “original” creation of children and his criticism on any adult influence in children’s art practice reflects the ‘innocent child’ approach. Similar to Rousseau’s treatise of children as pure and uncorrupted by the world, Cizek treasured the naturally occurring artworks of children and taught “decorative and sentimental child art style” (Duncum, 1982, p. 34). Also, Lowenfeld’s (1947) linear understanding of child art
development parallels to the ‘naturally developing child’ image, which draws on Piaget’s (1932, 1960, 1962, 1971) linear progression model of the developmental stages as well. This biomedical understanding of children was implemented in many other education-oriented researches during this period of the 20th century, in which children’s art was construed by psychological standards (e.g., Arnheim, 1974; Gardner, 1980; Goodenough, 1926; Kellogg, 1969).

An epitome of policing children’s art also emerged during this time that regarded children as pre-sociological beings: Florence Goodenough (1926) introduced the “Draw-a-Man Test” that measured children’s cognitive, psychological, and intellectual abilities by using quantitative methods for the assessment of human-figure drawings. Later revised and extended to “Goodenough-Harris Drawing Test” (Harris, 1963/1991), the test gained popularity among psychologists and other researchers who were eager to use quantitative scales to measure children’s intellectual maturity. The main assessment criterion was the number of details: higher quantitative details manifested in the portrait indicated superiority in intelligence. For example, more numbers of body parts, more details of clothing and accessories, more accurate representation of the facial expressions and gender of the figure, as well as movements of the figure signified superior intelligence (Goodenough, 1926; Harris, 1963/1991). This test raised much concern and critique, especially for “the equation of details with intelligence [being] far too simple to be reliable” (Duncum, 2018, p. 225). The fact that the test intentionally eliminated any sociological aspect of a child, such as language, verbal skills, emotion, or collaboration with others, implies that adults’ ultimate interest rested on controlling knowledge about children, mainly about their development. In other words, rather than seeing children as
social agents, it was only their end products that was indicative of something worth to study.\footnote{Though I describe the “Draw-a-Man” test as a completed study widely received in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, it is important to note that there are a number of researches today that utilize this test as a method (e.g., Dey & Ghosh, 2016; Latorre-Román, Mora-López, & García-Pinillos, 2016; Picard, 2015).}

In the late 20\textsuperscript{th} century, scholars who believed that there are alternative approaches to developmentalist normalization of child art emerged. Such idea has been continued and supported by literature in the field of art education, emphasizing the social aspect of children’s lives and works (Ivaskevich, 2009; McClure, 2013; Park, forthcoming 2019; Pearson, 2001; Sakr, 2017b; Schulte, 2011, 2015a, 2015b, 2018; Sunday, 2015, 2018; Thompson & Bales, 1991; Thompson, 1995, 2002, 2009; Wilson, 1982, 2005, 2008a, 2008b). Though in a broad sense the sociological child aligns with these alternative perspectives, among the four approaches ‘the socially constructed child’ (James et al., 1998) has been the most prominent model embraced in these literatures; Focusing on the pluralities and particularities in children’s art practices, such works have highlighted the generational characteristics of children, such as visual culture and popular culture influences (e.g., McClure, 2007; Shin, 2016; Thompson, 2003, 2006; Wilson, 2005, 2007) and the use of digital methods in art practices (e.g., Ivashkevich & shoppell, 2013; Knight, 2018; Sakr, 2017b, 2019), along with gender-related understandings (e.g., Bae- Dimitriadis, 2015; Ivashkevich, 2009; McClure, 2006) and many other socio-culturally influenced aspects.

Brent Wilson’s (2005, 2008a, 2008b) works in the early 2000s on the “three pedagogical sites” plays a useful role as an example of studying children’s social settings in their art practices. The third pedagogical site is located in between “the first
pedagogical site”—the site where kids, individually and collectively, create art and visual
culture on their own with little or no assistance from adults—and “the second
pedagogical site,” such as schools, museums and other arts institution classrooms where
students learn how to make and interpret art and visual culture (Wilson, 2008b). Wilson
refers to postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha (1994), who addresses the history of
colonies and nations by directing attention to “liminal spaces”—fluid and often vague
realms of conflict, interaction, and mutual assimilation between powerful and less
powerful communities. According to Bhabha (1994), liminal spaces are a ‘third space’
between dominant [read: adult] and subordinate [read: child] cultures, and within the
third space that new, unusual, and unpredictable hybrid cultural productions emerge. As
the third space of postcolonial theory engenders new possibilities for its interruptive,
interrogative, and enunciative characteristics, when situated in visual culture, it becomes
a “life-changing space where new forms of hybrid visual cultural artifacts, production,
and meaning arise through informal contacts among kids and adults” (Wilson, 2008b, p.
120). It is also the *performativity* of the third site that enables social interactions between
adults and children:

> In this third site there exists the possibility of the emergence of cultural meanings
> that are not yet firmly resolved – not yet fixed. This site points to new modes of
> pedagogy at the edges of and beyond schooling. It celebrates the possibility of
> new content that emerges through the presentation, negotiation, and collaborative
> reformulation of kids’ and adults’ interests. This third pedagogical site holds the
> possibility of their collaborating to combine high art with popular visual cultural
> interests. It is an open space where seeming oppositional and confrontational high
and low visual cultures modify and facilitate one another so that hybrid things emerge and evolve. (Wilson, 2008b, p. 120)

In other words, between the first pedagogical site and second pedagogical site, the third pedagogical site serves as a space where visual cultural productions emerge and develop through the negotiation between adult and child—it is a space of social practices.

The two strands of pre-sociological and sociological—or developmentalism and social constructionism—are not in a distinct binary form but interwoven in a way that produces continuous discussion. Alan Prout (2011) points out that the long neglect of childhood by sociology was due to childhood seemingly “defy[ing] the division between nature and culture” (p. 7). It was the characteristic of childhood that challenged adults’ propensity to classify children into the either/or binary. Prout also refers to feminist philosopher Donna Haraway (1991), who included childhood—along with madness and women’s bodies—to the list of phenomena that eluded modernity. Childhood, like the other phenomena, embraces hybridity: it sits astride the culture or nature binary that the white-male history has constructed, producing unsettlement among those who attempt to fully control and know about children. Children being part natural and part social, therefore, suggests that we also stray away from dichotomizing and compartmentalizing them into partitions. Insofar as the history, culture, and society has widely normalized and generalized childhood into categories of “the distribution of the sensible” (Rancière, 2013a), it is essential that we as interested adults attend to childhood by celebrating their hybridity, to allow them to be part of multiple characteristics, in between the “stages” (Lowenfeld, 1947), or to be free from any deterministic definition imposed on them. As such, rather than tidying up these innately heterogeneous characters of the child, children,
and childhood, I argue that we attend to the particularities of children’s in-betweenness and the subtle yet significant social performances they engage in.

**The Reality of Childhood**

**The Citizenship of Children**

Though the discussion on citizenship may seem only as a legislative matter distinct from children’s art practices, I view that the underlying discourses that exclude children from social citizenship ultimately contributes to the policing and haunting children’s everyday experiences from explicit to subtle forms. Children, throughout history, have remained in the margins in the discourse of democratic citizenship, being “part of those that have no part” (Rancière, 2015, p. 33) of the distribution of the sensible. They are rarely perceived as agents, actors, or participants of the society capable of making claims and demanding rights. Aristotle, who first theorized the notion of citizenship (Faulks, 2000), defined ‘a citizen’ as one who has a rational autonomy capable of governing and to be governed. In describing citizens as political beings, of those with speech, Aristotle (1999) excluded both children and old men for their dependency, along with slaves who lacked the voice to speak. Also, British sociologist Thomas Humphrey Marshall, whose work has long debated about social citizenship, considered citizenship as “a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed” (Marshall, 1950, p. 28). However, Marshall, too, excluded children from the range of citizens for their dependency upon adults thus have no political rights. This idea that omits young people as valid citizens maintains until today
that characterize children as “not-yet-citizens” (Moosa-Mitha, 2005), “semi-citizens” (Cohen, 2005), “citizens in the making” (Marshall, 1950), or “citizens in waiting” (Cutler & Frost, 2001). It is a view that subscribe to the ‘less-than’ narrative of children, reinforced by the influence of developmental psychology and the images of childhood that regard children as incomplete when compared to the dominant population—the adults.

Before posing an assertion that children should be seen as legitimate citizens, it must be unpacked why it is important and what might happen when such equity is achieved. Evoking Rancière’s description of the police that distributes what is visible, what can be said, who can speak and act, the idea that who we perceive as citizens is also constructed by a normalized social order. That said, it is important to recognize children’s citizenship insofar as the reality children inhabit is at times being considered as a homologous category, rather than a group of diverse social actors, especially when it comes to the political domain. Dobrowolsky (2002) argues that “because the figure of the child is unified, homogeneous, undifferentiated, there is little talk about race, ethnicity, gender, class and disability. Children become a single, essentialized category” (p. 43). The point being is that, just as how adults are given the privilege of consideration that social divisions (e.g., class, race, gender, and disability) affect their citizenship, children’s diverse social, cultural, and economic context ought to be equally acknowledged as well.

In fact, legislative endeavors do exist to acknowledge children’s agency and political roles in communities: recent international research and policies emphasize its focus on children as citizens, especially after the ratification in 1989 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (Bath & Karlsson, 2016;
Cockburn, 2013; James & James, 2012). Moreover, broader conceptualizations of citizenship that recognize people’s lives and socio-cultural background that affect their citizenship has emerged. Isin and Turner (2002) state in their *Handbook of Citizenship Studies* that contemporary citizenship theory constructs citizenship not only in terms of legal rights but “as a social process through which individuals and social groups engage in claiming, expanding or losing rights” (p. 4). They further illustrate that this has led to “a sociologically informed definition of citizenship in which the emphasis is less on legal rules and more on norms, practices, meanings, and identities” (Isin & Turner, 2002, p. 4). This understanding of citizenship serves as more hopeful than focusing on the legal definition on citizenship alone, especially thinking about how children might be considered as legitimate citizens for their social, cultural, and material circumstances they embody in everyday lives. Notwithstanding the efforts to include children as citizens, the everyday language and worlds of children in reality remain very different to those of adults’ contemporary public spaces (Corsaro, 2014). Again, like ghosts, it is the elusive narrative that bound children to the partition of not-yet-citizens, thus affecting every mundane activities and engagement with the world.

What I aim to focus on, though, is how children might enact as social citizens despite the reality that neglects their inclusion as citizens. A Rancièreian thinking of politics leverages my contention that one does not have to be a formal citizen in order to perform the acts of citizenship—to be heard and seen. According to Rancière (2004b, 2013, 2015), politics occur when those who reside in the part of “no parts” constitutes a community to challenge the distribution of social parts. Thus, subjects who are denied

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8 Rancière’s notion of politics is unique as it is not so much about governmental practice of power but rather a configuration of a specific space, of those positioned as common and as pertaining to a common
the status of a valid citizen (i.e. children) are capable of interrupting the system of consensus and voice themselves as visible and legitimate beings. Engin Isin (2008) writes the ways in which to understand the decisions involved in subjects becoming citizens:

To investigate acts of citizenship is to draw attention to acts that may not be considered as political and demonstrate that their enactment does indeed instantiate constituents (which may mean being part of a whole as well as being a member of constituency). The enactment of citizenship is paradoxical because it is dialogical. The moment of the enactment of citizenship, which instantiates constituent, also instantiates other subjects from whom the subject of a claim is differentiated. So an enactment inevitably creates a scene where there are selves and others defined in relation to each other. (p. 18)

As the actors of citizenship are not necessarily those who already hold the status of citizenship (Isin, 2009), we can understand citizenship being performed or enacted by various partitions of subjects including aliens, migrants, refugees, states, courts and so on (Bassel, 2008). In this sense, children are more than capable of performing citizenship outside of their assigned partitions. In other words, insofar as the political is not limited to the already constituted territory or its legal ‘subjects’ but potentiates exceeding the sense, and putting forward arguments about them (Rancière, 2004b). This will be further discussed in the next chapter.

9 The term ‘subject’ here is rooted in 17th-century England, when the notion of subject was only understood by contradiction with the definition of the citizen: A ‘subject’ is someone under the dominion of a monarch, whereas a ‘citizen’ is who has the right to be heard and can participate in the government (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.). This is different from Rancière’s definition of political subjects, as he characterizes a political subject as “an operator that connects and disconnects different areas, regions, identities, functions, and capacities existing in the configuration of a given experience—that is, in the nexus of distributions of the police order and whatever equality is already inscribed there, however fragile and fleeting such inscriptions may be” (Rancière, 1999, p. 40). To Rancière (2013), a political subject is an empty operator, yet capable of confronting the police order through emancipation, which he calls as political subectivization.
boundaries, children, as actors of citizenship, cannot be defined in advance of a given site and scale, but instead seen in relation to those who are already endowed of the status—adults. The point here is that we consider children’s enactment of citizenship as a dialogical matter within the social relationship with peers and adults.

Then, what exactly constitutes an enactment of citizenship and how might the acts of not-yet citizens be seen? In his book *Acts of Citizenship*, Isin (2008) defines the word ‘acts’ by drawing on contemporary political thought theorist Robert Ware (1973), who distinguishes ‘act’ and ‘action’ and thereby list six necessary conditions for something to be called an act, which I summarize as:

1. To specify an act is to indicate a *doing*: while actions also involve a doing, it necessitates movement, change, and motion of objects and bodies, but the kind of doing that acts indicate is not dependent on objects and bodies;
2. Acts are doings of either human or humanized actors (e.g., acts of nature), while actions can occur without actors;
3. Acts happen because of a decision to perform the act. The decision can be intentional or non-intentional but an act will always involve a decision;
4. Acts take time and space for doing, but do not have spatio-temporal coordinates;
5. Acts involve accomplishments: “Doings that go on for a period of time and that can be continued or broken off might be action or activities [routines or practices], but they are not acts” (Ware, p. 413, as cited in Isin);

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10 Ware (1973) states that, while both acts and actions concern doings rather than happenings, the two concepts are different from one another not only for the common use of the expressions, but also for the six conditions.
6. Acts have continuity within themselves—they accrete over time. (p. 23)

The three entities involved in the definition of acts—acts, actions, and actors—
distinguish and emphasize that acts cannot be actualized without actions, the intentional
and communal performances of bodies upon the purpose to accomplish something as a
result. In focusing on the ontological difference between acts and actions, Isin further
attends to philosopher Adolf Reinach (1983), who interpreted the fundamental quality of
an act as an expression of the need to be heard (and seen). Investigating various types of
acts (e.g., willing, commanding, requesting, and contemplating), Reinach argued that a
social act must enact a need felt by one party to be heard by another via linguistic or non-
linguistic means, and therefore making acts inescapably dialogical (Reinach, as cited in
Isin, 2008). To restate the definition and types of acts in relation to children’s enactment
of citizenship, it is the linguistic or non-linguistic dialogical methods children utilize as a
means to be recognized or heard by adults, a desire that constitutes their social acts. Thus,
for adults, it is the matter of listening to these acts to acknowledge and assume the equal
citizenship of children.

Now, the remaining question to ask is, do children consider themselves as
legitimate citizens? In other words, do children think of themselves equally capable of
seeing, speaking, and doing just like adults in the spaces they share with them? And if so,
what are the acts of citizenships they manifest in everyday lives, particularly in school
settings? Rather than a grandiose or extensive inquiry, what I attempt to study is
children’s constitution and demonstration of citizenship within their everyday social
spaces, such as in classrooms, playgrounds, or public spaces, where they are not
separated but intermingling with adults who operate as the power-holder. I am not too
interested—and, in fact, cannot know entirely—how children enact citizenship and authorship among peers, apart from the presence of adults. What intrigues me more so is the political enactment, or acts of citizenship, that demands an acknowledgement of their legitimacy as equal beings to adults, even though the speaking and doing may not explicitly be directed towards particular adults. Rancière (2006a) says, “Politics means precisely this, that you speak at a time and in a place you’re not expected to speak” (p. 5). Therefore, children’s political enactment exceeds beyond the child-centered curricula principles of ‘speaking for themselves’ or ‘becoming agents,’ as something more difficult, complex, and radical being at work.

**Children and Research**

*The data have landed*

First they said they needed data about the children to find out what they’re learning.

Then they said they needed data about the children to make sure they are learning.

Then the children only learnt what could be turned into data.

Then the children became data. (Rosen, 2018, February 8)
Similar to the perspective on the eligibility for citizenship, young people’s marginalization also prevails in the practice of research. Despite the preponderance of child(ren) and childhood research in diverse disciplines, researchers often inflict adult-centric biases on the study of children, treating them “as if they are malleable or as if their worlds are timeless and ideal” (Knupfer, 1996, p. 139). This propensity merely reproduces the romanticized images of childhood (e.g., the innocent and immanent child) thus reiterates inequalities children are already faced with in their everyday lives. If such approaches aimed to research about children from the adults’ point of view, recent studies have devised methods to research with children by actively involving children as co-researchers, arguing for children to be regarded as valid participants in research (Alderson, 2008; Clark, 2003; Clark & Moss, 2001; Kellet, 2006). Upon the inception of childhood studies, a commitment to child-focused research has been one of the priorities and researchers have developed techniques to that enabled children’s perspectives and voices to be incorporated in the research, and moreover, some researchers have explored the ways in which children themselves could take the role as a researcher (James & James, 2012). For example, some studies had the research projects designed by children as co-authors (Kellet, 2006) or photographs taken by the children involved in the research as data (Clark, 2004; Kondo & Sjöberg, 2012). However, authoring direct participation to children also engendered resistance, due to certain methodological, contextual, and/or ethical issues, such as responsibility, payment, or safety concerns (James & James, 2012). Anthropologist Lawrence Hirschfeld (2002) argues that the resistance to child-focused research in anthropology could be a result of “an impoverished view of cultural learning that overestimates the role adults play and underestimates the contribution that children
It is another realm where the ‘less-than’ image of children prevail, primarily because of the idea of age and maturity, even when the study is about children.

Yet, a researcher can highlight the equally-capable agency of children by assuming a sense of equality between the adult and the child. Namely, equality could be attained by subverting the presumption that certain people have a part while others neither can have a part nor the ability to speak, which is what Rancière (1991) described as the binary between intelligences. Instead of subscribing to this dominant binary, intellectual equality commences when it is postulated as a belief from the beginning rather than a result to be achieved at the end. This concept of equality in childhood research is more of an ethical orientation than a methodological approach. Though ethics invites a broader spectrum of disciplines it is not to insinuate an “easier” implementation. Embracing equality between children and adults below the surface of what is ostensibly set forth as methods produces a much difficult decision makings and continuous negotiations within the self, as well as with others. This is what I embrace in my dissertation research: to amplify children’s acts and voices more than the adults’ as an endeavor to research with children. Drawing on Rancièrian ideas, this concept of equality in the child-adult relationship in research is further discussed in chapter four and six.

**Ghostly Matters in the Image and Reality of Childhood**

Ghostly Matters are part of social life. If we want to study social life well, and if in addition we [too] want to contribute, in however small a measure, to changing it, we must learn how to identify hauntings and reckon with ghosts, must learn
how to make contact with what is without doubt often painful, difficult, and unsettling. (Gordon, 2008, p. 23)

Cultural theorist Avery Gordon’s (1997/2008) work *Ghostly Matters* builds on Derrida’s idea of hauntology to establish a new way of thinking about the exclusions of history. Drawing from C. Wright Mills’ (1959) idea that personal experiences are always shaped by broader cultural practices, Gordon uses “ghostly matters” as a methodology to investigate “that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life” (p. 8). I bring Gordon’s elaboration on ghostly matters as it aligns with the history that constructed childhood and how it influences children’s social life. As seen in the images of pre-sociological to sociological, as well as the many aspects in the reality of childhood, it is apparent that the culturally, historically, and politically constructed notion of childhood forms our everyday understanding of a child and children. As such, it is crucial that we do not reproduce the unspoken presence of the ghosts that continues to haunt children and their lives.

Gordon (2008) comments about “the quiet, unmotivated complicity of those who shut their eyes, go about their daily routines, and find every means available to not know, to shelter themselves from what is happening all around them” (p. 94). Though Gordon states this in relevance to the specific social context of Argentina, this, to me, reads as a wakeup call to what the scholarship of art education might have done to childhood, how we might have silenced the voices and proceeded our daily routines without any intention to know what is happening in children’s lives. This, perhaps, suggest a way to confront the ghostly matters in the study and practice of children’s art: to be attentive to what we
are habitually shutting our eyes on, what we are ignorant of without recognizing, and what the society have trained us to act and exist in certain ways.
Chapter 3

Thinking with Jacques Rancière

An evident reality of the distribution of the sensible (Rancière, 2013a) prevails in children’s everyday lives as ghosts: the ghost of developmental partitions, innocent child images, and many other less-than narratives that are immanent to conjure up again anytime. Inasmuch as ghosts allow us to recognize the normalized discourses that continues to haunt children thus think alternative ways of seeing children, I respectfully invite the ghosts as a productive tool to provide avenues of new ideas (Dernikos et al., 2019; Gordon, 1997/2008). As an artist, researcher, educator, and a former child learner whose artistic practices were profoundly haunted by adults’ implicit and explicit forms of control, I believe it is my moral obligation to address the haunting distribution of the sensible in the scholarship of art education, and more specifically, early childhood art education that tends to compartmentalize children into divisive structures. Thus, recognizing such distribution of the sensible prevalent in art education, I am committed to offer potential approaches to actively think and act against reproducing oppression towards children by aligning myself with the scholars who endeavor to assuage the ghosts, suggesting alternative narratives of children’s lives and works. This is why Rancière’s ideas are compelling: his thoughts suggest something fundamentally different from the common sense of which we tend to be complicit in, numbed by, and that we perpetuate through our daily routines. In other words, Ranciérian thoughts work in support of my troubling this subtle tendency; the elusive yet prevalent norms that have been accepted but rarely questioned—it is the “ghostly matters” (Gordon, 1997/2008) of the distribution of the sensible that Rancière brings to surface.
While the previous two chapters focused on addressing the haunting “police” (Rancière, 1999) active in the historical landscape of childhood art education, this chapter explores and examines how Jacques Rancière’s concept of pedagogy, politics, and aesthetics produce possibilities for alleviating such hauntings, or at least minimize the perpetuation of the distribution of the sensible in understanding the lives and works of children. In other words, how might Rancière’s work function as a theoretical framework for this dissertation, and even broader, for producing different understandings that dissociates from the normative images and realities of children? This chapter will also serve as a foundation for the following chapters where I will further discuss the politics and aesthetics of children’s art practice and the research methodology I undertake in studying children’s artistic and cultural practices.

**Pedagogy: The Practice of Ignorance**

**The Ignorant Schoolmaster**

Among the many ways in which Rancière’s philosophical work has been taken up, his elaboration on ‘intellectual equality’ has been the most radical and well-known idea, which also foregrounds his thinking on the concepts of politics and aesthetics. Rancière’s conceptualization of intellectual equality is addressed most extensively in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation* (1991), where he provides a distinctive and insightful account of a pedagogical event to suggest that the assumption and affirmation of equality ought to occur in a teacher-student relationship. He does this by examining the case of Joseph Jacotot, a French university lecturer in the nineteenth century who proclaimed that all people, including the uneducated, could learn
for themselves without a teacher’s explanation and that the teacher could, in turn, teach himself what he was ignorant of. This claim originates in Jacotot’s unexpected experience of finding himself teaching a class whose members speak exclusively Flemish. Jacotot did not know their language and the students did not know his. He nonetheless organized the lesson around a bilingual edition of the classic French novel *Télémaque*, which was a text Jacotot and the students could not study together. Instead, through an interpreter, Joseph Jacotot asks the students to read half of the book with the aid of translation and the other half quickly, and then write what they had thought about it in French.

The students learned to read *Télémaque* in the same way as learning their mother tongue language: “by observing and retaining, repeating and verifying, by relating what they were trying to know to what they already knew, by doing and reflecting about what they had done” (Rancière, 1991, p. 10). Having expected regrettable outcomes, Jacotot became surprised by the quality of the students’ work. As the students looked for the French vocabularies that corresponded with those they already knew, they learned to put the words together to create sentences in French by themselves. Jacotot described: “their spelling and grammar became more and more exact as they progressed through the book; but above all, sentences of writers and not of schoolchildren” (Rancière, 1991, p. 4).

Here, what ‘schoolchildren’ might allude to is the conventional and commonly understood role of students who are rarely considered as legitimate writers, which suggests the less-than model of children to a certain extent. Nevertheless, as they wrote and learned the language through an unconventional method, it resulted in producing exceptional literary texts. Although Jacotot had explained virtually nothing, neither the
spellings nor conjugations of the language, both the students and Jacotot explored the text and found alternative ways to learn through taking the position of un-knowing—the act of ignorance.

What is the virtue of ignorance, which Rancière believes is the most important quality of a schoolmaster? To respond to this question, I find it effective to illustrate what the ignorant schoolmaster does and chooses not to do. To begin with, an ignorant schoolmaster is not a teacher who does not teach, but “a teacher who teaches that which is unknown to him or her” (Rancière, 2010, p. 1). The schoolmaster does not teach his knowledge but instead commands students to explore what they are able to see, what they think about it, and then to verify it. This suggests that in practicing ignorance the schoolmaster intentionally dissociates with his preexisting knowledge about things in order to discover the unknown, of which what both himself and the students could learn. By doing so, the only knowledge the ignorant schoolmaster owns becomes the “knowledge of ignorance” (Rancière, 2007)—the skill to acknowledge his own incapacity. It is a realization that no direct link is necessary between teaching and possessing knowledge.

Characterizing the ignorant schoolmaster is not to say that a teacher is powerless, unknowledgeable, or merely a symbolic status who lacks authority. It is, in fact, the authority of Jacotot that installed the experimental learning experience with students, as he acknowledged his privileged position capable of directing the students according to his experiment. An ignorant schoolmaster does retain the authority but concentrates on situating students in positions to actualize intellectual capacities they already possess. Jacotot refrained from teaching his knowledge but instead attempted to move students to
explore what they see, what they think about, and to then verify it. Here, intellectual capacity does not signify equal intelligences in terms of numerically measurable IQs, but rather the act of believing that all people are capable of discovering the meaning of diverse things by themselves, just as every child is sufficiently capable of learning a mother tongue language. The replication of the process of acquiring their first language (e.g., listening, comparing, repeating, attempting, and imitating) leveraged the students’ learning of a new language.

In addition, an ignorant schoolmaster is ignorant of a particular definition of what he or she is supposed to be as a schoolmaster. For example, Jacotot actively refuses the knowledge of a pre-determined identity, which gave rise to the pedagogical experience. Indeed, the pedagogical experience came about as Jacotot refrained from assuming the conventional role of a schoolmaster, which is say that Jacotot worked against the tendency to give lessons by the method of explication. The students too did not abide by the roles traditionally expected of them, namely to passively listen to and assume the predefined lessons of explication. Explication, according to Rancière, is the “myth of pedagogy, the parable of a world divided into knowing minds and ignorant ones, ripe minds and immature ones, the capable and the incapable, the intelligent and the stupid” (1991, p. 6). To Rancière, explication is an act of stultification. Meaning, when a master explains, he or she transmits standardized knowledge and exercises power to verify if the student has satisfactorily understood what was explained. As Rancière (2010) writes:

The practice of explanation is something completely different from a practical means of reaching some end. It is an end itself, the infinite verification of a fundamental axiom: the axiom of inequality. To explain something to one who is
ignorant is, first and foremost, to explain that which would not be understood if it were not explained. It is to demonstrate incapacity. (p. 3)

As the act of explication only confirms the hierarchical order between the one who explains and the other who is being explained on, it indicates that the two reside in distinct partitions. Explication intensifies the binary of the two forms of intelligence: the inferior intelligence, or “the young child and the common man” (Rancière 1991, p. 7), and the superior one (e.g., the master), which regress to entrenching inequality. For example, Goodenough’s (1926) Draw a Man Test that allegedly produced evidence of the difference in children’s drawing capacity is figured under the premise that it is natural for intelligences of children not to be equal. This supposed measurement of intelligence is in fact the mere enactment of inequality; explicating differences by labeling certain abilities as intelligent, which only manages to reaffirm the idea that intelligence is hierarchical.

What Rancière contends does not mean that all intelligences are the same, but that there is only one intelligence at work in all intellectual training (Rancière, 2010, p. 5). One intelligence, here, connotes that rather than a divisive and dichotomous status between intellectual capacities, it is the effort of will that has to be activated to activate the equally endowed intelligence of all people. Insofar as intelligence cannot be measured in isolation from what it produces (e.g., acts and effects) it is the manifestations of willingness that becomes visible.

The myth of explication evokes Paulo Freire’s (2000) metaphor of the “banking model” of education, in which the teacher deposits knowledge into the students and scope of action permitted to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposit. Like the act of explication, the banking model assumes a strict hierarchical order
in the classroom: the teacher acts (e.g., teaches, thinks, disciplines, delivers…) and the
students are acted upon (e.g., taught, thought about, listen, receive…); the teacher possess
superior knowledge while the students know little or nothing; the teacher is an agentic
person of sense whereas the students are merely objects to be acted upon. This only
reinscribes and reaffirms that the students lack capability of learning until the teacher
activates a will to teach and puts a piece of knowledge into the piggy bank-like mind of
students. Therefore, the problematic yet still-dominant pedagogical assumption of the
students’ mind as a blank slate (e.g. the immanent child image), and that therefore
explication justifies, is deeply engrained in every aspect of education, as well as any
adult-child relationships that does nothing but hinders students from becoming active
learners and teachers.

The logic and practice of explication is also problematic as it presumes a
concealed truth that could only be uncovered by the master explicator. Rancière (1991)
claims that “Truth is not told” (p. 60), but it is the arbitrariness of language that fragments
it. In educational practice, however, it is too often the case that students are disallowed
from attending to this arbitrariness—i.e., to question, to think critically, to be in conflict,
and to create their own ways of learning. Considering language as a power structure,
Rancière presents his agonistic perspective toward such explanatory discourse that aims
to achieve truth. Instead, he presents the logic of “emancipation” as an opposite concept
of stultification (Rancière, 2007). Emancipation, to Rancière, is not simply about moving
from a minority group to a majority group, but rather denotes a “rupture in the order of
things” (Rancière, 2003, p. 219). In other words, it disrupts the configuration of the
oppositional relationship of the one who dominates and the one who is subjected to
domination. In the case of Jacotot, both the master and students constituted an emancipatory experience through the dissociating with their socially expected roles by attending to the obligation to use their own intellectual capacities. Furthermore, in the case of children’s drawing, the explicatory practice of studying children’s art has traditionally meant seeking forms of reasoning and truth that align with a developmental model and logic, merely perpetuating the deficit model of childhood (e.g., see Cannella, 1997; Matthews, 2008, 2009). Similar to Rancière’s description of stultification, the deficit child model assumes the nature of the child as a configuration of deficits—missing capacities that adults generally have but children lack. Gareth Matthews (2008, 2009) argues that this model undervalues the fact that children are, for instance, better able to learn a foreign language, produce aesthetic artworks, or conceive philosophically interesting questions. The presumption, therefore, restricts the range and value of potential relationships between adults and children. In challenging this dominant idea, I suggest that an emancipatory practice attends to the alternative narratives of children’s works and lives, looking into what might actually happen when the explicatory tendency is suspended.

The radical break between two forms of intelligence does not remove the schoolmaster’s will. The ignorant teacher may not impose his knowledge but manifests instead the authority to instigate the intellectual capacity of students. For Rancière, the method of equality is a method of will, which stimulates the intellect and comes before intelligence. The students learned not by the teacher’s explication, but “propelled by their own desire” (Rancière, 1991, p. 12). And, likewise, the teacher actuated his will to leave his intelligence out of the picture. The only thing that had been established between
Jacotot and the students was a will for attentiveness and a will to conduct a search, constituting “a pure relationship of will to will” (Rancière, 1991, p. 13). The students conducted the translation of the foreign language text by activating their own will, and the schoolmaster, cognizant of what remains unknown to the students and also the ways to make it knowable, also willingly put aside the dominant role of explication.

The wills operated to discover the thing in common, which is the intelligence of the book *Télémaque* that served as “the egalitarian intellectual link between master and student” (Rancière, 1991, p. 13). The book functioned not only as a primary source of knowledge but also as a site for the knowledge to emerge within the engagement with it. It was a mediator that produced something different, which Rancière describes elsewhere as the “third thing”:

In the logic of emancipation, between the ignorant schoolmaster and the emancipated novice there is always a third thing—a book or some other piece of writing—alien to both and to which they can refer to verify in common what the pupil has seen, what she says about it and what she thinks of it. (Rancière, 2011, pp. 14-15)

In Jacotot’s class, the ‘third thing’ is not the vision of the master’s knowledge or inspiration to the students, but something whose meaning is not owned by anybody—it exists between them (Rancière, 2011). Ignorance, accompanied with the student and Jacotot’s will to learn and *Télémaque* functioning as the third thing, therefore, produced intellectual emancipation. It was the logic of action being reformulated on the basis of subverting the traditional roles assigned to the role of a master and student.
Rancière’s Practice of Ignorance

Rancière’s elaboration of intellectual equality and emancipation in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* is not an imaginary, utopian concept conceived by a thinker from a distanced viewpoint. Instead, it is internalized and practiced by Rancière, as the story of Jacotot and his students closely aligns with Rancière’s personal break from his own master, Louis Althusser. As a student of Althusser at the École Normale Supérieure in the 1960s, Rancière was initially interested in traditional Marxism, thus followed Althusser’s thinking of unorthodox Marxism, which represented a different view from his own previous understanding of Marx. Rancière co-authored *Reading Capital* with Althusser, which, along with Althusser’s *For Marx*, defined the field of structuralist Marxism. However, Rancière broke away from his mentor as Althusser began to distance himself from political mobilizations during and after the events of May ’68, which was a famous uprising led by students that occurred in May and June of 1968 in France. This event influenced French thinkers in different ways, such as Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, among others. Committed to his membership in the French Communist Party, Althusser accepted its conservative response to the mass uprising movement and refused to support the strikes or demonstrations. Many of Althusser’s students who had previously viewed his ideas as a critical new development in revolutionary politics, in fact, bitterly rejected following Althusser, thinking that he was unable to act beyond the dictates of the party bureaucrats. Rancière also witnessed that Althusser stood for the power of the professors during the creation of the philosophy department of Paris VIII, a program designed to teach theoretical practice as it should be taught. Rancière was against this program and criticized the “dogmatism of theory and on the position of
Rancière, it seemed paradoxical that Althusser’s theory of a discourse “pretended to speak the truth about what political and social actors practiced, but which these same actors did not, or could not, think on their own” (Rancière, 2017, p. 71). It was Althusser’s preaching of a “philosophy of order” that “anaesthetized the revolt against the bourgeoisie” (Rockhill, 2013, p. xii) thus widened the gap between his theory and reality. As such, Rancière takes the journey to break with Althusserianism and critically re-examines the socio-political and historical forces in operation in the production of theory (Rockhill, 2013).

Rancière does this by writing *Althusser’s Lesson* (1974) in which, through a radical yet unique voice, he explains the theoretical and political distance separating his position from the Althusserian Marxist position. Rancière rejects the elitism of Althusser that insisted upon the gap separating the “universe of scientific cognition” from that of “ideological (mis) recognition” of the common masses (Rancière, 2013, p. 65). Instead, he rewrites the genealogy of Marxism to examine the difference between Marxism and what could have been an alternative workers’ tradition. It insists on the urgency of time that is full of possibilities to present Marxism as a way of thinking an imminent victory. That is, as Rancière returns to the original thoughts of Marxism, the target of his critique in *Althusser’s Lesson* is not so much on Althusser, but Althusserian Marxism, or Althusserianism (Rancière, 2017). Skeptical towards Marxist-inspired criticism that seeks to uncover hidden or underlying power structures, Rancière’s own theory grounds on his criticism of the critical theory, claiming that the problematization of the ideological process of assigning bodies to think and act in particular ways was essential, which is the
reason why intellectual equality has become central to his philosophy. Among many other social circumstances, he suggests this type of equality ought to occur in the teacher-student relationship in schools through his characterization of *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*.

It was not only Althusser’s political standpoint in the 1960s but his pedagogical practice that Rancière denounced. The depiction of stultification in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, in fact, echoes Althusser’s method of teaching Marxism to his students to a certain extent. Similar to Freire’s (2000) description of the “banking model,” Althusser, as caricatured in Rancière’s book *The Flesh of Words: The Politics of Writing* (2004a), used the method of “symptomal reading” wherein the teacher would leave particular words absent in parentheses for the students to fill out and the students would in turn restore the sentences left incomplete by figuring out the designated word. As such, the work of filling in the blank of a missing signifier, which Althusser called ‘dotted lines,’ was believed to be the method of effectively producing knowledge. The dotted lines, which parallels how children were taught to draw during Franz Cizek’s time before the discovery of ‘child art’ (Viola, 1936), functioned to verify that the student understands the lesson correctly and knows how to apply what has been taught. Thus, a hierarchy of knowledge was created in that there were proper, unquestionable answers that fit within in the parenthesis, as well as an inevitable dependency on the teacher. The dotted lines were “the presence of the teacher in his absence” (Rancière, 2004a, p. 134) that gauged—if not haunted—the students to submit to the hierarchy by inserting the one-right-answer. Perhaps Rancière was attracted to the story of Jacotot and his students for his empathy with the opposite case, of stultification, the presence of a hierarchical knowledge.
contingent in his learning of Marxism prior to his break with Althusser. Yet, according to Rancière, in his interview with political philosopher Peter Hallward, he mentioned that Althusser “taught very little” (Rancière, 2003, p. 194) and the students were left to construct the ideas for themselves, activating their will. This insinuates that, though the symptomatic reading method might have aligned with the pedagogy of stultification, Althusser’s approach to having his students read and think about Marxism does not entirely overlap with Rancière’s description of the master explicator who merely transmits knowledge thus reinforces inequality. That said, Rancière envisioned a pedagogy that rests on the basis of intellectual equality, not as a result of education. It is personally and philosophically essential to Rancière as he himself yearned for a sense of equality and emancipation in his learning.

A Discussion on Emancipation and Equality

Then, what is emancipation? According to dictionaries\(^\text{11}\), the definition of emancipation is to give away ownership: *e-* (variant of *ex*) means ‘out or away’ and *mancipum* means ‘ownership.’ It originated from Roman law, as it referred to the freeing of a son or wife from the legal authority, of the father of the family. This implies that the aim of the person to be emancipated wishes to become independent as a result of the act of emancipation. What Rancière argues through *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* is, however, that a student does not attain independence by achieving an adult or a master status but by separating from the master’s intelligence and will. That is, if stultification is one intelligence (e.g. the student) being subordinated to the other intelligence (e.g. the

\(^{11}\) Online Etymology Dictionary (https://www.etymonline.com/word/emancipate)
teacher), emancipation is when the two intelligences become separate and independent from each other; for example, in Jacotot’s experimental teaching of *Télémaque* the students were connected to Jacotot’s will, rather than his intelligence, and the intelligence of the book. It is also a process that one would conceive her human dignity, measure her own intellectual capacity, and determine how to use it (Rancière, 1991). To reiterate what emancipation means in Rancièrian terms, it is not about one’s status moving towards a majority group, but instead a deliberate rupture in the common sense.

Educational scholar Gert Biesta (2008) conceives a “new” logic of emancipation by comparing it with the old notion of emancipation that premises the presence of a fundamental inequality, where emancipation is something done to somebody, and requires an intervention by someone who is not dependent on the power that needs to be overcome. As such, paradoxically, the act of emancipation requires an intervention of the emancipator as if a gift given to them; this speaks to the fundamental inequality in education insofar as “emancipation marks the moment when and the process through which the (dependent) child becomes an (independent) adult” (Biesta, 2008, p. 169). In contrast, the “new” logic of emancipation no longer relies on this relationship of dependency. Biesta draws from Foucault (1975, 1991) and Ranciére (1989, 1991) to inform this proposal:

People need not wait until their emancipators tell them that they can move; they can make the move *right here and right now*. This also shows that new emancipation starts from the assumption of equality, in that everyone is considered to be able to make the move. This is not to suggest that society is equal. But what it aims to do is to take away from the logic of emancipation the
idea that there is a fundamental, almost ontological inequality that only can be overcome through the interventions of the emancipator. (Biesta, 2008, p. 175, my emphasis)

Further, continuing the Rancièrian orientation, Biesta (2008) states that in the new logic of emancipation people’s experiences and appearances are taken seriously, as opposed to the old emancipation where only those who have the parts in the society can have valid experiences. In other words, while the old logic of emancipation only validated the voices who were regarded as legitimate beings within the distribution of the sensible, the new logic opens up possibilities for all people to enact emancipation right here and right now on the basis of intellectual equality.

If put into the context of early childhood education and early childhood art education, producing a new logic of emancipation entails assuming equality within our every interaction with children, right here and right now, dissociating with the habitual teaching that often reproduces stultification or the myth of pedagogy. As I proceed with my argument in practicing the assumption of intellectual equality in early childhood spaces, I am also aware of how unsettling it might be to think about equal positions between adults and young children—or more specifically, the teacher and young children—if taken verbatim. It is often misunderstood that the purpose of contending equality is to completely undo inequality and render equal opportunities or power for everyone. However, undoing inequality is not only impossible—at least in our modern society—but also not the purpose of arguing for equality. In fact, no two humans can have absolutely equal opportunity unless they are identically the same person. Moreover, it is also not to confuse equality with equity, the social distribution of fairness. Whereas
equity is given, “posed as a project done to or for classifiable social actors,” Rancière’s concept of intellectual equality emphasizes its essential practice, as “something than can be tested, tried, and ongoingly renewed” (Thumlert, 2015, p. 126). Equality, therefore, rests on the willful acts to see what becomes visible when the assumption and practice is set forth.

Here, the doing of equality is not to confuse it with something that can be achieved at the end. Ranciérían equality is not so much about gradually accomplishing equality as a result of a provocation, but rather something that is “either asserted at the outset or is irremediably lost” (Tanke, 2011, p. 36). It is the initial assumption and the ongoing practice of verifying it that produces possibilities of an equal status, which produces affects that are different from the relationship or pedagogical practice that doesn’t assume equality at the first place. For Rancière, the problem is not to prove that all intelligences are equal, but instead “seeing what can be done under that supposition” (Rancière, 1991, p. 46). In other words, we ought to focus on the effects of equality that emerge when deploying the presupposition of equality and willfully practicing it. Inasmuch as I view the deficit model images and realities surrounding children as a haunting portrayal of inequality, the Ranciérían idea of equality offers productive ways to think about the ethics of researching with children, as an endeavor to ease the haunts in early childhood art education.

**Politics: The Re-distribution of the Sensible**

As seen in the *Ignorant Schoolmaster*, when one assumes equality, it functions as “a destabilizing force which allows those invoking it to assert themselves as political
agents” (Tanke, 2011, p. 36). As an opponent to the normalization of sensible hierarchies, Rancière uses the word ‘politics’ or ‘political’ as an activity that turns on equality as its principle, rather than to subscribe to the liberal idea that politics occur upon a rational debate between pre-established groups divided by interests. It is a provocative idea that suggests an alternative viewpoint on politics, which is beyond the dictionary terms of politics, as governmental exercise of power. To further investigate Rancière’s critical analysis of politics, I find Oliver Davis’ (2010) emphasis on four main points of Rancièrian politics to be a useful framework, especially to clarify a somewhat broad account of politics. For Davis, the four points are: (1) politics as an opposition to ‘police,’ (2) Rancière’s structural account of democratic politics, (3) the theory of political ‘subjects’ and ‘subjectivation,’ and (4) the aesthetic dimensions to politics (pp. 74-100). As Davis (2010) also admits, this sequential presentation of politics may seem artificial because all four aspects are inextricably interwoven, however, setting the four elements as pillars has been the most helpful approach for me to understand the grandiose concept of politics as a whole.

**Politics as an Opposition to ‘the Police’**

Politics occur as an opposition to the *police* that prevails as a distribution of the sensible, which defines the territory one should occupy and, accordingly, the expected activity of the allocated position. Rancière’s “police” plays on the Greek word *polis*, which Alan Badiou stated, is to designate “those distributions erected in order to support the selective accountings” (Tanke, 2011, p. 43) of a social community. In fact, Rancière’s notion of ‘politics’ reserves room for alternative visions and, furthermore, turns over what is normally understood as politics as ‘the police’:
Rancière claims to be drawing here on an older and wider sense of the term ‘police’ than the familiar one of a repressive organ of state, one closer to that identifies by Foucault in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writings as almost synonymous with the social order in its eternity [...] The opposition between ‘the police’ and ‘politics’ and the remaining of most of what is normally thought of as politics as ‘policing’ is a twisting of the ordinary usage of both terms which blurs their ‘proper’ meanings and dramatizes the conflict between them. (Davis, 2010, p. 76, original emphases)

Politics is a particular type of event that emerges with respect to these police orders, when that “part of those who have no part [la part des sans-part]” (Rancière, 1999, p. 11) counter the distribution of the sensible that excludes them. The term ‘part of those without part’ is used by Rancière to discuss the social reality resulted by the police and the people who are excluded in the distribution of the sensible. For example, it has been historically thought that politics entails the task of managing the struggle between the rich and the poor. However, Rancière thinks differently:

The struggle between the rich and the poor [...] is the actual institution of politics itself. There is politics when there is a part of those who have no part, a part or party of the poor. Politics does not happen just because the poor oppose the rich. It is the other way around: politics (that is, the interruption of the simple effects of domination by the rich) causes the poor to exist as an entity. (Rancière, 1999, p. 11)

As I read the politics of ‘those who have no part,’ it invokes the reality of children as having no part in citizenship, research, and even within their everyday lives, dominated
by the power of adults. In this sense, the very fact that children are regarded as having no part in politics, causing them to exist as a political community. Thus, politics occurs when the natural, normalized order of power is dismantled by the community of a part of those who have no part in the name of equality. In other words, the politics of the community of sans-part is a re-distribution of the sensible.

**Rancière’s Account of Democratic Politics**

What Rancière contends through arguing the re-distribution of the sensible is **demos**, the ‘subject’ of politics. As a concept of which Rancière’s “part of those who have no part [la part des sans-part]” originated from, Aristotle’s notion of the **demos** comes into play for illustrating the definition: the men of no position, those who “had no part in anything” (Rhodes, 1984, as cited in Rancière, 1999, p. 9). Demos, in this regard, is assumed to be silenced in the arrangement structured by the police. Yet it also holds the immanent power to render truly political instances by interrupting the public scene, in spite of the assigned role given by so-called “democratic” forms of policing. Rancière (1999) views this hierarchy of inequality created by the police as the fundamental “wrong” *[Le Tort]*

According to Rockhill (2013), a wrong is “a specific form of equality the establishes the ‘only universal’ of politics as a polemical point of struggle by relating the manifestations of political subjects to the police order […] A wrong can only be treated by modes of political subjectivization that reconfigure the field of experience” (p. 98).
Returning to Jacotot and the students’ dissociation from the traditional roles and identities of master and student, politics exists when a community opposes the distribution of the sensible for rendering a community of equality.

This idea of disagreeing with the natural order is what Rancière (2015) calls “dissensus,” which emphasizes all people’s equality and the expression of original forms of identity. Being at the heart of politics, the act of dissensus entails the manifestation of a radical displacement and emancipation from the ways that police distributed orders and partitioned bodies as an alleged consensus. In other words, dissensuality is essential for political subjects to attend to emancipation thus practice the assumption of equality. On a similar connotation, Dennis Atkinson (2018) uses the term “disobedience” to refer to the practices that run counter to the dominant, established frameworks in education to suggest heterogeneous approaches to existing patterns thus potentiating new transformations of a world of coexistence. This is why Rancière’s politics is a democratic politics: it is a contingently egalitarian practice that fractures the distribution of the sensible governing ‘normal’ experience to attain a sense of equality.

**Political Subjects and Subjectivation**

The process in which individuals stray away from their natural assigned partitions within the police order, the struggle to claim their existence as political subjects, is what Rancière refers to as “subjectivation” (Rancière, 1992, 2013a). Tanke (2011) writes, “If dissensus creates the stage of politics, one can claim that political subjectivation establishes its players, provided we do not separate the two processes” (p. 66). That is,

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13 Rancière’s term *La Subjectivation* could be translated as ‘subjectification,’ ‘subjectivation,’ or ‘subjectivization.’ (see Rancière, 2013, p. 97)
the agents who enact dissensus attain political subjectivation via the tension and struggle such dissensuality results in. Rancière’s subjectivation functions as an integral element of politics, in contrast to the historical account of subject in French philosophy: The creation of subjectivity has been regarded as the imposition of an ideological state apparatus (e.g., Althusser’s analysis of subject) or the self-constitution as subjects via power/knowledge (Foucault, 1975). Contrary to these ideas, Rancière contends in his article Politics, Identification, and Subjectivization that political subjectivization is “made out of the difference between the voice and the body, the interval between identities” and therefore a political subject is situated at “an interval or a gap: being together to the extent that we are in between—between names, identities, cultures, and so on” (Rancière, 1992, p. 62, original italics). It is an enactment of equality whereby those of no part divert from their given identity to deal with the “wrong,” to struggle for their existence, which puts them to a liminal space between the assigned and the ‘subject’ identity.

Davis (2010) adopts Rancière’s three main characteristics of the process of subjectivization: (1) an argumentative demonstration, (2) a theatrical dramatization, and (3) a heterologic disidentification (p. 84). The first characteristic of the argumentative demonstration in political subjectivation recalls Rancière’s insistence on the practical verification of equality. Practicality functions as a core value in Rancièrian equality because it consists of struggles that involve language and action-oriented arguments rather than relying on formal declarations of equality in legal or constitutional documents. Yet Rancière does believe that such documents could “serve as the basis for a practical verification of that equality, as part of logical, argumentative, demonstration of the sort enacted by the tailors” (Davis, 2010, p. 85).
The second aspect of subjectivization, a *theatrical dramatization*, means that the process of subjectivization is spectacular, as politics transforms the normalized space into a space for the appearance of a subject (Rancière, 2001). Referring to Hallward’s (2006, 2009) description of Rancièrian politics as “theatrocracy,” Davis (2010) writes that theatre is linked to democracy insofar as actors being themselves yet simultaneously being someone else allows them to have a political existence in addition to their own identity:

political subjectivation resembles acting because both involve the ruse of pretending you are something you are not in order to become it: for the *sans-part* this means pretending you are already equal participants in the political process from which in fact, by virtue of the ‘wrong’ of the miscount, you are excluded.

[...] politics for Rancière is, in a broader sense, creative or constructive in that it involves not only the manifestation of a new subject but the construction of a common space or ‘scene’ of relationality which did not exist previously. (Davis, 2010, pp. 86-87, original italics)

Situating this idea of theatrocratic politics to the case of children as having no part, the political subjectivization of children would involve a pretense of the other—the adult. Specifically, the process of subjectivization demands children to construct and practice as a new subject that is distinct from their given identity, as well as to create a ‘scene’ within the common space that highlights their existence, to make themselves visible. This idea of making a ‘scene’ within a shared space potentiates how particular events in children’s everyday spaces (e.g. classroom) could be considered as political events. In fact, this is the main question of my dissertation—to study how children might create a
political scene in their everyday lives as a means to voice and legitimize themselves as political subjects.

The third dimension to political subjectivization, the *heterologic disidentification*, is the idea that political subjectivization entails an “impossible identification” with a different subject or otherness in general (Davis, 2010, p. 87). As mentioned above, the process of political subjectivization involves not only declaring an identity but, more importantly, dissenting the identity given by the police. It is the process of subjects being placed in the gap between the identities. This is what heterologic disidentification means: the identities and social roles create temporary, unsettling, and entangled subject positions. Considering how children have been hauntingly pushed to the part of having ‘no part’ by the police, in order for children to be political subjects, the process entails a dissociation of their assigned partition and assertion of the other identity. Here, what I think of asserting the ‘other’ identity is not merely wishing to become the adult figure; rather, if children attend to political subjectivization, it would be to declare the logic of being an adult, to have the same legibility and sensibility (e.g., to be seen and heard). In fact, children have always been heterogeneous beings: Children have been living in the in-between world—between the world of their own and that of adults’ (Corsaro, 2015) and between nature and culture (e.g., Haraway, 1991; Prout, 2011). This innate hybridity of childhood provides the foundation for children to be political subjects, if children disidentify themselves from their expected social roles, thus asserting the identity of the legible other.
The Aesthetic Dimensions to Politics

The forth characteristic of politics is what makes Rancière’s idea of politics unique: the aesthetic dimension of it. Aesthetics, here, does not mean beauty or art theories, but the perception of the sensible. As Rancière (2013a) describes, politics “revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time” (p. 8). More specifically, when those of *sans-part* voice themselves, there is a tendency that such utterances are not heard as a rational argument that contains valid meaning. It is more likely to be unheard and disregarded because that is how the police put them into the partition of having no part, no voice, no visibility, and etc. Therefore, the process of political subjectivization brings those with no part into visible and audible beings—it is a process where invisibility come into presence and noise become language. This is a form of re-partitioning the sensible and reconfiguring what defines the common of the community, rendering the possibility of the invisible being visible and the unheard being heard. In this regard, the distribution of the sensible does not remain as binaries but rather works performatively within the time and space of those who were subject to being partitioned within the logic of inequality.

As such, for Rancière, politics is not the governmental practice or the struggle for power but a configuration of a specific space—the organization of a particular sphere of experience—of objects posited as common, as pertaining to a common sense, and putting forward arguments about them (Rancière, 2004b). In other words, it is troubling the habitually accepted distribution of the sensible in our everyday lives that, for example, put the rich or poor, male or female, old or young, have their “proper” occupation and
accordingly occupy his or her place. Politics, therefore, is a contingently egalitarian practice that fractures the distribution of the sensible governing ‘normal’ experience to attain a sense of equality. It emphasizes all people’s equality and the expression of original forms of identity by highlighting the political subjects’ dissensual acts.

Thus far I have described four characteristics of Rancière’s politics as the manifestation of a radical displacement and emancipation from the ways that police partitions bodies. Though the aesthetic dimension of politics discussed in the last section was more about the sensible rather than the arts, Rancière does in fact explore the notion of aesthetics within the artistic realm. Creating a synonymous idea between politics and aesthetics, he views the historical account of art in three regimes and defines one of them as an ‘aesthetic regime.’ The next section explores the specific connotations of Rancièrian aesthetics and how the concept could be used throughout this dissertation.

**Aesthetics: The Regime of Equality**

Continuing with Rancière’s characterization of the distribution of the sensible, historically, aesthetics has been a discursive regime of art in which order(s) of the police govern more or less desirable qualities in art in the production and appreciation of it. However, like politics, art emerged as an egalitarian suspension of the hierarchical modes of representation that was prevalent in artistic practices until the late eighteenth century. The identity of art was shifted in the end of eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century by the “aesthetic revolution,” which exists in a rethinking of what is to count as a work of art. As such, how Rancière uses the term aesthetics is quite different from the everyday use of it: To Rancière, aesthetics does not refer to a theory of beauty,
sensibility, or taste, but that “the property of being art is no longer given by the criteria of technical perfection but is ascribed to a specific form of sensory apprehension” (Rancière, 2004b, p. 29). Here, specificity entails the aesthetic experience that assumes equality between the art work and viewers. It is the political capacity of art of that Rancière focuses on, especially on its immanent characteristic to alter and divert from the distribution of the sensible through the creation of experiences that counter the common sense—it is constitutive of recognition, meaning, and signification.

The Three Regimes

Rancière’s re-thinking of aesthetics is achieved by glancing through the history of art, arguing that art is political inasmuch as it never exists as an abstraction, but always conditional to the way it is perceived in different historical periods or regimes (Rancière, 2013a, 2013b, 2015). He conceptualizes three regimes that art has been primarily situated in: the ethical, representational, and aesthetic regime. First, in the ethical regime, as exemplified by Plato’s *Republic*, works of art lack autonomy—for example, a sculpture is measured against the question of truthfulness and adequacy between subject matter and representation. Art works are assimilated into the question of images: for their origin—and thus their truth—as well as for their purpose, the uses and effects of the individuals and the community. Truth, here, is consistent with the “explanatory order” Rancière (1991) described as a fixed endpoint that precludes emancipatory practices, which in fact functioned in this regime to preclude artisans from having any creative flexibility in their

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14In *Republic*, Plato excluded both democracy and theatre in order to construct an ethical community, a community of organic life without politics. Both art and politics were excluded, thus the artisan held no power to engage in free play besides the true or false imitations.
practice of producing works of imitation. Hence, the ethical regime is preoccupied with the truth-value of images and its morality.

Second, in the representational regime, art is no longer subject to the rules of truth or utility, but identified within the distinction of mimesis (imitation) and poiesis (the way of doing). This regime is also called ‘poetic’ because, by breaking away from the ethical regime, it identifies art within the specific criteria of identification, the ways of doing and making (e.g., painting, drawing, sculpting). An interesting point made by Rancière (2004b) is that mimesis is not so much about the obligation to the resemblance, defined by skill and practice, but rather the divisive principle in human activities that renders objects to be subsumed under particular concepts and qualities only to be compared—it separated what is considered art and what is not. Therefore, this representative regime is classified under the hierarchy of social and political occupations, the hierarchy of genres corresponding to the dignity of their subject matter, and the very primacy of the art of speaking in actuality (Rancière, 2013a).

While the two former regimes of art were bound to the service of moral, social, and political function, the third regime, the aesthetic regime of art, contrasts with those regimes whereby it identifies art in the singular and liberates from the rules, genres, form, and matter—any hierarchy of the arts. Art now belongs to a heterogeneous sensorium that is liberated from the previous normative network art served for. It no longer requires a narrative of social significance or a system of meaning in order to be called as art. If the former regimes identified art by the law of mimesis in its strict relation between a poiesis and an aesthesis—the ways of being affected by the ways of doing—in the aesthetic regime of art the link between the doing and being is divorced, thus opens up the
possibility for art to address itself, inviting anyone to create, use, gaze, and appreciate it in any situation. It is a particular regime for identifying and reflecting on the arts: “a mode of articulation between ways of doing and making, their corresponding forms of visibility, and possible ways of thinking about their relationships” (Rancière, 2013a, p. 4). That is, genuine aesthetics entail active thinking—the ways of doing and making that break with the general distribution of ways of doing and making. Rancière (2013b) reworks this notion of ‘aesthetics’ concerning the sense of aesthetic, an autonomous, innovative activity of experience that could not be categorized under logic, reason, or morality. In other words, it is not the autonomy of the work of art, but the autonomy of one’s experience in relation to art that is emphasized. It is a matter of thinking the complicated link between autonomy and heteronomy between art becoming life and life becoming art (Rancière, 2002) in its ignorance to the subject matter and the distinction between art and non-art. The experience of the aesthetics challenges how the world is organized and constructed, which entails the possibility to change or redistribute the world (Rancière, 2015). The aesthetic regime of art, therefore, rejects the distribution of the sensible, yet continuously remain in the tension between being specifically art and bringing together other forms of activity and being.

**Dissensus as Aesthetic**

Art and politics consist of forms of dis-sensus—a process of re-ordering of the senses (Rancière, 2015). Rancière views modern society as a time of consensus, which does not indicate that everyone approves all the public policies, “but rather that there is a general agreement that the partition of the sensible and its distribution of roles is a
reasonable one, and that there is no reasonable alternative to it” (May, 2010, para. 7). In order for there to be a politics and aesthetics, it demands a dissensus that reconfigures the forms of visibility and intelligibility that intervenes the distribution of the sensible. Political and artistic practices, in other words, involve a mode of emancipation in which “bodies are torn from their assigned places, and exhibit verbal competencies and emotional capabilities they are not supposed to have by virtue of the space and time they occupy” (Corcoran, 2015, pp. 4-5). Anything can be politics and aesthetics if it overthrows the logic of hierarchies that determined the status of, for example, artistic practices and the very nature of its sensory experiences. Philosopher Todd May describes how dissensual actions come about within a community of sans-part:

Such action, if it is political, is going to be collective rather than individual. It will concern a group of people (or a subset of that group) who have been presupposed unequal by a particular hierarchical order, as well as those in solidarity with them, acting as though they were indeed equal to those above them in the order, and thus disrupting the social order itself. What are disrupted are not only the power arrangements of the social order, but, and more deeply, the perceptual and epistemic underpinnings of that order, the obviousness and naturalness that attaches to the order. Such a disruption is what Rancière calls a dissensus. (May, 2010, para. 4)

This is why Rancière’s idea of politics and aesthetics compels me to think about it side by side to children’s art practices, as it opens up possibilities to consider children’s artistic experiences as legitimate ones. The haunting history of early childhood art education, of how children’s art has been policed by adults’ order and control, also has been seen as
Thus, it is this notion of politics and aesthetics, and more specifically the synonymity between the two, that demands me to juxtapose to, understand with, and think through children’s art.

**To Research with Rancièrian Thoughts**

Inasmuch as a Rancièrian lens offers a radical perspective to a wide variety of disciplines (e.g., political studies, sociology, education, art, and so on), it has also attracted scholars who study the lives and works of children, as seen in recent literature, for example, in education policy (Biesta, 2008; Bingham & Biesta, 2010), philosophy of education (Kohan, 2011), and early childhood education and care (Bath & Karlsson, 2016). Though Rancière’s idea of aesthetics and politics have appeared in the field of art education (see, e.g., Garoian, 2013; Lewis, 2015, 2016; Richardson, 2018; Traff-Prats, 2012), seldom has it been used as a theoretical or conceptual lens to research early childhood art education. As such, I find the importance of my dissertation in its examination of young children’s art through Rancière’s writings on pedagogy, politics, and aesthetics, which helps to expose the ghostly matters of the police that have continue to affect children’s lives and artistic production.

However, as I delve into the research of children’s art, my orientation aligns more with exploration rather than the discovery of an absolute truth. In fact, the nature of society does not contain or clearly demonstrate an absolute truth that could be understood in an explanatory fashion, though the presentation and reproduction of social orders in the study of childhood, historically, has run parallel to the logic of explication. Namely, the commonsense hierarchy that is made to exist between the adult and child, and that is
reiterated through adults’ attempts of explication of children that fails to value and contextualize their voices and intellectual capacities. For instance, the dominant idea in education represents that a master explicator is needed when a child’s own will is not yet strong enough to independently speak, act, and think. This posits children within spaces that make them subjects to stultification (i.e., as having ‘no part’) and merely produces inequality in educational settings and more broadly in any dichotomously constructed child-adult relationships. Attuned to the politics and aesthetics discussed above, I take an antithetical position and contend that children are also capable of participating in aesthetico-political experiences if dissociated with the taken-for-granted ideas imposed on them. To further illustrate my research approach to children’s political and aesthetic enactments in art, the next chapter unfolds my research methodology, which I describe as an aesthetico-ethnographic case study.
Chapter 4

An Aesthetico-Ethnographic Inquiry

As I am sitting with the girls at the art table, Sophie asks me to draw a picture of Moana. Having watched the film Moana in a flight about five months ago, I proudly declare that I had watched the movie and therefore would be able to draw Moana without looking up the image on my smart phone. As I proceed to draw, Sophie makes another request: “Can you draw a picture of Maui after?” I ask, “Maui?” Sophie quickly responds, “Yes.” I’m puzzled, because it did sound like the name of Hawaiian island Maui, which was still contextually relevant, however unusual for Sophie, who had been making drawing requests of princesses and popular culture figures, to ask me to draw a shape of an island. In doubt, I ask, “Uh…just the shape of the island?” Sophie then slowly pronounces the word for me, “No, Mau-ee.” Still confused, I foolishly say, “So…Moana?” Sophie repeats, “No, Mau-ee.” I realized that, clearly, it was not something I knew about. “Okay, so what does Maui look like?” I asked. Katie, who was drawing next to me, nonchalantly urges, “Find a picture on your phone.” Sophie begins to describe it for me: “So Maui looks like…” And then, Zoey, sitting next to Sophie, adds, “Also has curly hair like Moana.” Despite these descriptions, I still had no apprehension of the figure, or if it was even a human figure, and eventually grabbed my phone for a Google image search, typing in ‘Moana Mawee’ at the search window. Google’s auto-correct function directed me to showing the images of Maui, one of the main characters in the movie Moana, at which point I
felt completely unknowledgeable in children’s popular culture, a realization that showed my earlier feeling of confidence to be misguided.

Field notes, January 30, 2018

Ethnographic Practices in Childhood Studies

The term ‘ethnography’ represents both process and product of a study. Derived from “ethno,” people, nation, or culture, and “graphy,” the writing about or study of, “ethnography” is a method designed to study cultures or cultural phenomena. Wolcott (1999) defines ethnography in the following way:

The underlying purpose of ethnographic research […] is to describe what the people in some particular place or status ordinarily do, and the meanings they ascribe to what they do, under ordinary or particular circumstances, presenting that description in a manner that draws attention to regularities that implicate cultural process. (p. 68)

To paraphrase, ethnography is a descriptive study of a particular human culture that the ethnographer seeks to know about by being immersed into the everyday lives of the cultural community. Rather than imposing outsider knowledge, it is observing and participating in the natural occurrences of a cultural group.

Traditionally, anthropologists employed ethnographic methods, most commonly participant-observation (e.g., Fine & Glassner, 1979), to understand the culture of the “exotic” (e.g., Malinowski, 1929; Mead, 1928), in which the particular cultural group is observed, documented, written about, and interpreted. In the fieldwork of the study, ethnographers position themselves as a simultaneous participant-observer of the cultural
or social group/system, interacting with and/or participating in the day-to-day lives of those they study for a prolonged period (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The process of ethnographic fieldwork includes methods such as jotting down field notes (see Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011), taking visual documentations (e.g., photo or video) that could later materialize into “narrative” forms (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), and/or one-on-one interviews with members of the group for discerning patterns and cultural behaviors in human social activity, as the goal of research is to comprehend the particularities of the cultural group. The product of ethnography refers to the ways in which these cultural behaviors are interpreted and the particular textual form that they are translated into. Based on the collection of notes and documentations, ethnographers endeavor to portray what was seen and experienced as vividly as possible by providing a “thick description” (Geertz, 1973). In doing so, the ethnographer contextualizes the particular culture through his or her perspective, which, I believe, is what exists at the core of writing ethnographies, as it could only be materialized by the researcher’s immersion in the culture being affected by his or her positionality and membership roles in the community.

In the context of childhood research, ethnography has become the “new orthodoxy” (James, 2001, p. 246; see also Qvortrup, 2000), as it incorporates children’s “direct voice and participation in the production of sociological data, as opposed to other scientifically experimental or survey styles of research” (James & Prout, 1997, p. 8). Historically, the beginnings of childhood ethnography were rooted in the discipline of anthropology. Early anthropologists critical to developmental formulations found in psychology, and who pioneered the ‘anthropology of childhood’ (Benedict, 1934, 1955; Boas, 1974; Fortes, 1949; Malinowski, 1929; Mead, 1928), used the interpretive tradition
of ethnography to study the cultural variation of children’s lives and practices. In studying the ways children acquire and construct culture, the ethnographic field work of these studies was conducted in diverse parts of the world, reflecting a diversity of ethnographic data, that entailed for example, a focus on kinship, religion, family, life cycle, psychological development, and other topics relating to children’s lives (Levine, 2007). However, while children’s adept skills to acquire adult culture was acknowledged, their less obvious ability to create their own culture has been undervalued, resulting in the marginalization of child-focused research (Hirschfeld, 2002). In other words, because children have been considered to be passive recipients of culture—a culture that is primarily conceptualized and consumed by adults—they have not been viewed as active participants or producers of a culture that is understood to be their own. What is hopeful, though, is that modern scholars and educators have increasingly come to view children as active constructors of their own culture, research focusing on the cultural particularities and children’s experiences have been expanded in recent decades (e.g., Balagopalan, 2014; Cook-Gumperz, Corsaro, & Streeck, 1986; Corsaro, 1985, 2003; Dyson, 2003; Ferguson, 2001; Thorne, 1993).

Children’s culture, as all cultures do, contains a shared understanding of beliefs, activities, routines, artifacts, values, knowledge, and concerns (Corsaro & Eder, 1990). In using ethnographic methods to explore children’s culture, researchers often embody the “tribes of childhood” (James et al., 1998) orientation, viewing children’s culture as “an independent place with its own folklore, rituals, rules and normative constraints … within a system that is unfamiliar to [adults] and therefore to be revealed through research” (p. 29). This approach allows the ethnographer to de-familiarize certain notions about
children and childhood but instead regard them as the anthropologically strange, in order to construe varying details of the culture through new perspectives. Although primarily shared with child peers, children’s culture is in fact in close relation with the adult world. Corsaro and Eder (1990) point out:

Children creatively appropriate information from the adult world to produce their own unique peer cultures. Such appropriation is creative in that it both extends or elaborates peer culture (transforms information from the adult world to meet the concerns of the peer world) and simultaneously contributes to the reproduction of the adult culture. (p. 200)

In other words, children reenact the observed imagery of adults’ social rites and events in their activities (e.g., in imaginative play), thus produce and consume particular cultural forms that reside in both the adults’ world and the child’s. As such, rather than living in a distinct partition of the adult-child binary, “children are always participating in and are part of two cultures—children’s and adults’—and these cultures are intricately interwoven” (Corsaro, 2015, p. 26). By simultaneously participating in both worlds, children acquire the conventions of communication relevant to their local and social community, and also “use and modify them for their own purpose” (LeVine & New, 2008, p. 3).

**The Distribution of the Sensible in Childhood Ethnography**

Inasmuch as the distribution of the sensible is immanent in any social parts, it most certainly functions in the realm of research, whereby knowledge is produced, distributed, and consumed via particular institutionalized conceptions that determine

Rancière, in fact, demonstrates antithetical views towards the discourses of sociology and social history, and even questions the epistemology such analysis takes for granted (Genel, 2016, p. 13). This is not because of the quality of the methodology of data collection or analysis, but rather because of “the presuppositions made in reading data, or more specifically, with the way a discipline positions its own discourse with respect to that of the object of study” (Pelletier, 2009, p. 7). Methodology, in this sense, is also subject to the modes of distributions, for its innate use of depicting the social world in a particular form and logic. Put differently, what gets to be named as ‘methodology,’ connotes that an implicit law and logic exist in the realm of research that determines the inclusion and exclusion of certain approaches. Cultural theorist Caroline Pelletier (2009) writes:

Disciplinary discourse therefore functions as a distribution of positions, and as the demonstration of the truth of this distribution. This means that the construction of the object of study is not primarily methodological—in the sense of methodology as epistemological starting point or as procedure of verification. (pp. 7-8)

In the case of qualitative research methodologies, what could be named as ethnography, grounded theory, or phenomenological approach, implies that there are proper forms and models of methods to be categorized as such methodology. In other words, methodologies and disciplinary discourses often function in mimesis, like the representational regime of art, subject to habitual approaches to the doing of research and knowledge production. What happens, then, to the studies that resides in-between methodologies that suspends the policing of the distribution of the sensible in research
that governs the definition of a fixated name of methodology? How might an ethnographic practice re-distribute the sensible of research? More particularly, how might researching with child participants disrupt the distribution of sensible through a heterogeneous methodology, one that presumes and verifies equality? As I linger on these inquiries through Rancièrian thoughts, I have reached to an inclination to explore how attending to a research methodology could constitute a sense of *aesthetics* by dissociating with the preexisting distribution of the sensible, the predominant frameworks that prevail as given. Insofar as the struggle for equality is political and therefore aesthetic, in the next section I explore the emergence and production of aesthetics in ethnographic practices.

**The Aesthetics of Ethnographic Practice**

Building on the legacy of ethnography in childhood research, I contend that ethnography has an innate aesthetic dimension, both in process and the product that it generates. Consistent with the concept of Rancièrian aesthetics mentioned in previous chapters, aesthetics, here, is “a historically determined concept…which is inscribed in a reconfiguration of the categories of sensible experience and its interpretation” (Rancière, 2006, p. 1). This is also consonant with Rancière’s (2011, 2013a, 2015) conceptualization of art, specifically “the aesthetic regime of art,” a notion of properly speaking a particular regime for purposes of identifying and thinking about the arts. The aesthetic regime of art, according to Rancière, comes after ‘the representational regime of art,’ in which art is subsumed under the hierarchy of social and political occupations, the genres serving the dignity of their subject matter, and the primacy of the art of speaking in actuality
(Rancière, 2013a). It is *more-than* representational, or emancipated from the mimetic function of art.

In thinking about this definition of aesthetics in relation to research methodologies, or more importantly, the *practice* of research, I see it as a re-distribution of the sensible, which determines a mode of articulation in-between forms of action, production, perception, and thought in knowledge production. That is, like Jacotot and his students’ pedagogical experience liberated them from being bound to the usual roles that society had assigned to them, an aesthetic experience entails “a change in the regime of belief, the change of the rapport between what the arms know how to do and what the eyes are capable of seeing” (Rancière, 2006b, p. 4). Namely, it is a political enactment that disrupts common sense, the familiar logic of bodies’ doing, seeing, and thinking in particular ways, which, in the case of research, might involve certain roles and actions that the researcher or participants engage in.

Unfolding the aesthetic dimension in research methodologies and practice reminds me of performance theorist and ethnographer Phillip Vannini’s (2015) elaboration of “non-representational research,” a research approach that strays away from the identities of representational methods (e.g., repetition, structures, and/or resemblance), but rather seeks experimental, novel, and even temporal knowledge in doing research. Vannini (2015) writes how to do non-representational research by conceptualizing five imperative attributes: (1) *events* that invite the possibilities of future, rather than pre-established plans, suggesting creative engagements; (2) *relations* that highlight the associations human engage with, including human and non-human materials; (3) the *doings*, as performance, in essence, is the possibility of practice and
taking things into action; (4) *affective resonances* as the body’s capacity “to be moved and be affected, and the body’s capacity to move and affect other people and other things” (p. 9); and (5) the *backgrounds*, or the atmosphere, that creates possibilities of events, practice, performance, and affects (pp. 7-9). In Rancièrian language, non-representational methodology entails an emancipation from representational research that often demands producing the knowledge of sameness, serving the explicatory purpose of a study policed by preconceived notions or conclusions. This divergence from representation is what I believe makes research ‘aesthetic,’ the search for something different, something new, and something contextually particular that affects the researcher and the participants’ practice, or doings, in willingly dissociating with the lines of expected structure in research.

In light of this, I argue that ethnography constitutes aesthetics both in process and the products that it produces: (1) the process of fieldwork that rejects discovering a one-right ‘truth,’ and (2) the writing that encapsulates the process of disrupting the often hierarchical role of the researcher and participants. First, the process of ethnographic method unfolds its aesthetic dimension when it veers away from searching for the one-right-truth. Different from quantitative research approaches, a qualitative ethnographic method may not conclude with a fixated fact or a clear result. Rather, the nature of ethnography allows the researcher to encounter emergent knowledges and cultural experiences by being immersed in the culture of the informants, which might yield a discursive conclusion that is mainly story-telling and question-raising. Instead of going after an absolute truth in order to resolve the research question—a reality that serves an explanatory order of resolving the research problem set forth—the aesthetic fieldwork of
ethnography, however, demands that the ethnographer produce multiple interpretations. The ethnographer’s presence is contingent on the relations shared with informants, and the ethnographic practice of listening to, participating in, and interacting with a cultural community culminates in a multifaceted understanding of the culture and people. In doing so, an ethnographic practice provokes diverse, contextually situated interpretations of a culture rather than a single-answer conclusion. Again, this is not a new idea but an approach that ethnographers traditionally embodied when going into the field. My intention is to highlight this as an aesthetic endeavor, to provide a different perspective through Rancière’s theories.

Identifying himself as a storyteller or a polemicist, Rancière posits an agnostic standpoint toward the idea of ‘truth,’ as it connotes linear modes of explication and representation. His perspective on today’s common intellectual discourses that search for the one-right answer is that they are “discourses that usually aim to get at truth rather than to proceed in spite of truth” (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, p. 132, original emphases). Here, the notion of truth closely aligns with the myth of explanatory education described in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, which compels one to talk about the truth that is agreed upon. It implies that something exists out there as an absolute fact, performing as a force to reach a valid conclusion and often limit possible methods to arrive at a conclusion. However, setting an assumption that there could be multiple understandings, even when a dominant ‘truth’ seems to exist, emancipates one from factual thinking and allows the focus to be concentrated on the particularities of an event. Emancipation, to Rancière, is not simply about moving from a minority group to a majority group, but rather denotes a “rupture in the order of thing” (Rancière, 2003, p. 219). In other words, it disrupts the
configuration of the oppositional relationship of one who dominates and one who is subjected to domination. This suggests that, though some early anthropologists have had undertaken approaches to get at truths about ‘Others,’ an ethnographic practice encourages the ethnographer to focus on the informants’ narratives as a cultural storyteller in spite of predominant notions of reality, which potentiates the ethnographic practice to be aesthetic.

I continue this thought within the discourse of childhood studies. Attitudes toward definitive knowledges about children have prevailed throughout history and remain, even today, as fact. For example, psychologically informed theories of child development continue to be regarded as the standard for how we think about and approach the complex and diverse experiences of children and childhood. By virtue of the distinct differences between adults and children, it has often been the case that research concerning childhood resided in an explanatory method that stultifies children rather than a research that emancipates them from predominant ideas of childhood. To further illustrate this point, in some early ethnographic literature, wide cultural variations in childhood environments was evinced by anthropologists’ generalization about childhood (e.g., DuBois, 1944; van Gennep, 1960; Weisner & Gallimore, 1977), which demonstrated that people divergently agreed upon a universal concept of what constitutes normal child psychological and social development. As the works strove to achieve knowledges and truths about children, regarding them as research subjects, the diversified milieu of children’s experiences and its particularities were overlooked. In fact, the study of heterogeneous aspects of childhood demands one embody the approach of researching with children, on the basis of an equal standpoint. When researchers take the position of researching about
children, it often entails a desire to get at truth, whereas researching with children embraces a move to proceed in spite of truth. In other words, the former accompanies a sense of equality of which both the researcher and children contribute to the inquiry by activating each intellectual capacity, while the latter prioritizes the researcher’s own determination to discover a type of knowledge associated with children. For example, in the exchanges with kindergarten children, I proceeded to draw popular culture figures in spite of the truth that the gap of cultural knowledge existed (e.g. the apparent gap between what I think of Maui and children’s expertise on it), and thereby actively incorporated the child’s voices to research with them, receptive to emergent events that constitute diverse ideas of children’s lives.

The second point I propose is that an aesthetic dimension unfolds in the product of ethnography via challenging the dichotomy of the researcher—the adult researcher—and the research subject—children, which is on the basis of this same challenge in the process of ethnographic fieldwork. As ethnography is the idea of “textualization” (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011), a researcher’s positionality, perspectives, and the relationships built with informants work toward being translated into texts. This procedure of translation manifests through the researcher’s own lens, comprised of lived experiences and worldviews. Namely, it is “the peculiar practice of representing the social reality of theirs through the analysis of one’s own experience in the world of these others” (Maanen, 2011, p. xiii). In studying the world of Others, early anthropologists have often objectified the people they study, regarding them as research ‘subjects.’ This orientation directs the researcher to exert a degree of superiority over the participants both in fieldwork and writing, viewing them as mere objects who do not—
and often cannot—know. Since Rancière is antithetic to this act of stultification that creates an intellectual binary among people, his notion of equality is not limited to pedagogy but also corresponds to the discipline of writing. For Rancière (2004), writing is a specific distribution of the sensible that suspends the representational modes of speech. He continues:

Writing, as I understand it, rests on the presupposition of equality. To write means to consider that anyone and everyone is the legitimate addressee of your discourse and, at the same time, that yours is the discourse of a researcher addressing his peers. (Rancière, 2017, pp. 195-196)

Opposed to the act of stultification that merely perpetuates intellectual divisions, Rancière assumes equality as a presupposition to be set forth when writing about others and therefore undermines the ostensibly legitimate order of discourse that society formulated in consensus. This type of writing, in fact, shifts the distribution of the sensible, providing a platform for people whose voices are not heard in the world, to speak and make their lives visible. In other words, it is an act of dissensus, as dissensus is not so much an institutional overturning but rather “an activity that cuts across forms of cultural and identity belonging and hierarchies between discourses and genres, working to introduce new subjects and heterogeneous objects into the field of perception” (Corcoran, 2015, p. 2). As one of the main modes in the work of perception, writing functions as a powerful act of dissensus, a practice of equality.

The notion of taking any individual(s) seriously as legitimate informants is especially vital in the case of research with and about children, given that children have been continuously pushed to the margins of research rather than being considered as
legitimate addressees. As such, amplifying children’s already endowed voices should be a central purpose of research, one that sets out to establish equality between the adult writer/researcher and child informants. An example of this approach to intellectual equality in writing about others could be found in Rancière’s own historical writing of French workers’ movements in nineteenth-century: *The Nights of Labor* (1989). While, at that time, others read the texts of the workers as documents about their labor conditions, he read them as literary and philosophical texts, to challenge the boundary that separates genres. Rendering close relationship between subject and method, Rancière describes:

*La nuit des prolétaires* was a “political” book in that it ignored the division between “scientific” and “literary” or between “social” and “ideological,” in order to take into account the struggle by which the proletariat sought to reappropriate for themselves a common language that had been appropriated by others, and to affirm transgressively the assumption of equality. (Rancière, in Guénoun & Kavanagh, 2000, p. 5)

The workers who were invisible and had no place by the distribution of the sensible was taken as sensible artists capable of producing literary works in Rancière’s perception and his textualization about them. In this sense, returning to childhood ethnographies, when the textualization of children’s culture firmly situates children as sensible, knowledgeable informants equal to any other cultural members and knowledge producers, it unfolds an aesthetic dimension where both the researcher and children benefit from the democratic relationships.

As the writing of ethnography is a convergent product of which the diverse processes of fieldwork materialize into, situating equality from the starting point among
the relationships with informants leverages the writing of ethnography in the domain of equality. By equality, again, I do not mean a utopian idea of equalness between the adult and the child, but the “intellectual equality” Rancière (1991) suggests through the story of Jacotot, where the master and the students presumed that both parts could equally contribute to the learning experience by actively acknowledging ignorance and activating the “relationship of will to will” (p. 13). For instance, I view that my exchange with the girls in drawing Maui closely aligns with Jacotot’s experience with his students, as the children demonstrated their shared cultural knowledge, and I activated the presupposition of considering them as legitimate informants. Despite the disparity between popular cultural knowledge and language, the children and I eventually worked toward producing a drawing with the help of Internet—similar to Jacotot’s use of a bilingual edition of Télémaque, or “the minimal link of a thing in common” (Rancière, 1991, p. 2)—which I then textualize the experience here in this dissertation. In fact, this notion of promoting equality through the form of writing is not foreign to the scholarship of childhood studies, as educators and researchers have endeavored to amplify children’s voices as legitimate addressees (Henward, 2015) and consider aspects of democratic and emancipatory early childhood education (Skarpenes & Sæverot, 2018). Therefore, the aesthetic dimension has already been inherent to many ethnographic researches in childhood studies yet have not been recognized enough, especially through Rancièrian lens. It is my hope that, therefore, through highlighting the essential aesthetic aspect of ethnography and practicing the presumption of equality in our relationships with children, we do something differently in our methodological and relational approaches to the study of children.
An Aesthetico-Ethnographic Case Study

Attending to the potential aesthetic unfoldings in the process and product of ethnography, I consider the research methodology for this dissertation to be an aesthetico-ethnographic case study, primarily for two reasons: the length of the fieldwork and the underlying objective of the research. Because my ethnographic fieldwork was conducted for eight months, visiting 3 hours per week, I am hesitant to describe my work as a traditional ethnography, as ethnographers are typically immersed in the field for at least one year\textsuperscript{15} engaging in everyday activities with the informants. In my case, I only visited twice a week, which allowed only a partial observation of children’s everyday events in the classroom. However, despite my relatively short engagement in the research site, I was able to build rapport with child informants and attain a sense of understanding about the explicit and subtle dynamics present in the kindergarten classroom community. It was through this ethnographic approach that allowed me to capture the voices of children and thereby contextualize their lived experience that “goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances ... presents details, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 8).

Moreover, inasmuch as my dissertation is primarily a theoretical work that examines Rancière and other thinkers’ ideas in the context of early childhood art education, my focus is in doing the theoretical exploration \textit{through} the specific events I encounter at the kindergarten classroom. In other words, the documentations described in

\textsuperscript{15} Although it is difficult to establish an ideal length of an ethnographic study, earlier anthropologists researching in rural cultures spent at least 12-months in order to experience the annual cycle of the growing season (Jeffrey & Troman, 2004).
this dissertation contribute as examples to actively think with and through the politics and aesthetics of children’s art, pedagogy, and ethics, rather than to serve as mere ‘data.’

Another aim in the study of children’s work and lives is not to make definitive generalizations about them but to present particularities of children’s experience with and alongside them. As such, along with the observational and participatory methods of ethnography, my research also espouses that of a case study, an exploration of a bounded system (i.e. kindergarten classroom) or a case (or multiple cases) over time through in-depth study within the specific context that might be highly pertinent to the knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political, and related phenomena of study (see Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2014). Describing what it means to be “on the case,” Dyson and Genishi (2005) write:

It is the messy complexity of human experience that leads researchers to case studies… They identify a social unit, for example, a person, a group, a place or activity, or some combination of those units—a child’s city block perhaps: that unit becomes a case of something, of some phenomenon. (p. 3)

It is precisely the appeal of ‘messy complexity’ that my research yearns to attend to—the complex entanglement of materials, relationships, politics, and culture that surround the case of children’s art in the kindergarten classroom.

Particularly, I see ‘case(s)’ happening in two ways in my research: first, from a holistic sense of qualitative methodologies studying a singular phenomenon it is an ethnographic case study of children’s art in a preschool classroom. Second, what constitutes the case study are multiple cases of children’s artistic events, where each event is considered as a distinct case. Although this might be similar to the characteristics
of “embedded cases” (Yin, 2014), where the researcher can choose to make a single case study with embedded subunits that are located within a larger case, I refrain from such labeling to sustain my intention to highlight each artistic event as a cultural manifestation, one that exceeds the idea that children’s art is a ‘thing’ subject to be arranged under a larger study. In other words, each art event attains children’s visual cultural knowledge beyond the confines of the classroom setting—it is a performative practice where lived experiences emerge and converge. For example, the event above of drawing Moana characters function as a case. Sophie’s personal history of watching the animated film and her appreciation of the characters, to the degree of wishing to represent the figures in drawing, implies that her lived experiences outside of the kindergarten classroom extend and conjoin at the site of an art table. Yet it was not only Sophie’s observation and understanding of the characters but also Katie and Zoey’s, and even my lived experiences and cultural knowledges, that converged in visual and narrative forms upon the provocation of a particular media content. As such, I view each artistic event more than a submissive unit that serve for a broader inquiry. In chapter 5 and 6 I bring up two separate cases of children’s art that invokes different aspects of children’s art. I trouble each case in multiple contexts, from the topic of children’s negotiations with adult assumptions, the production and consumption of media culture, to the ethics that concerns the relationship between the researcher and children. Thus, this aesthetico-ethnographic case study aims to investigate how the theories associated with childhood and children’s art enlivens in reality and how children make sense of it through the observation and participation in the socio-cultural-political site.
Revisiting my exchange with Sophie in drawing Moana and Maui, I view that, even within the short exchange, an aesthetic aspect unfolds as the process of my trying to know children’s culture strays away from searching for the one-right-truth. The pre-existing truth I carried in this case was the idea that Maui couldn’t possibly be something else than a geographical location—an immediate assumption that fails to escape my own set of knowledge. However, Sophie’s simple response “No, Maui” challenged my presumptions, implying that there is something else called Maui, a character that was in fact so obvious and integral to the visual culture of children’s everyday lives. My static, definitive idea of Maui shamefully collapsed and searched for means of redemption: the introduction to a new knowledge. This process allowed me to disrupt my own conception on children’s culture, particularly their production and consumption of media culture, even the ones I thought I knew about. Moreover, here in the ethnographic writing that describes this specific event, I labor to disrupt the hierarchical role of the researcher and research participants so that I amplify children’s voices rather than impose my own knowledge in translating the dialogue. Although the one who writes about this event is still the privileged adult, myself, I believe that something different could be produced when the writing actively considers children as legitimate informants who willfully voice themselves, tell interesting stories about their culture, and be skillful writers of their experiences. To continue this thread of thought, in the following chapters where I describe vignettes more extensively, I take the position of the storyteller whereby I interpret the kindergarteners’ complex artistic experiences on the basis of aesthetico-ethnographic practices.
Unpacking the Researcher’s Membership

In the time span of October 2017 to May 2018, I visited the kindergarten classroom at The Bennett Family Center, a private child care center affiliated to and located at the campus of The Pennsylvania State University. This was the only kindergarten class in the Center, while pre-kindergarten and infant/toddler ages consisted of four classrooms each. I visited twice a week, for up to 1.5 hours each, except for University and National holidays. For the first two months, I visited once in the morning when children participated in activities let by teachers’ instructions that relate to a particular topic they discussed as a whole group, and once in the afternoon when children engaged in choice-based activities, dispersed into multiple centers. I observed and participated in naturally occurring activities, from whole-group activities (e.g., book reading, playground time) to small-group centers that usually consisted of Legos, art, reading/writing, math, play areas. Parents of 16 children consented to my research protocol, where I indicate that I will be taking audio, photographic and video documentation, as well as descriptive fieldnotes. Therefore, in this dissertation I do expose children’s facial images, however, I use pseudonyms for all children’s names.

As ‘Integrated Arts Kindergarten,’ the kindergarten embraced a unique curriculum that juxtaposes the arts to all learning. Accordingly, the classroom environment was comprised of displayed images of artists’ artworks of a wide variety as well as students’ works that changed regularly based on the curriculum. 17 students of age 4 to 5 attended the kindergarten class and there were at least three full-time teachers present everyday: the two classroom teachers, Ms. Joanne and Ms. Carla, and one undergraduate student teacher/intern per semester from the University. Also, some short-
term visitors were occasionally present to observe the classroom, for instance, undergraduate students from art education or early childhood education courses, as well as researchers, like myself, who visited more frequently for longer periods. Although the teachers were not participants of my research, I mention their names (also pseudonyms) in this dissertation as their presence played a significant role in children’s art making and the verbal exchanges associated with it. Inasmuch as I wished to learn about the classroom culture, rules, power dynamics, activities, relationships and etc. from the perspective of children, I refrained from having too much contact with other adults in the classroom, including other researchers or parents.

As insinuated in the opening vignette, children noticed my drawing ability fairly quickly and asked me to draw on the notebook I carried with me for taking field notes. The kindergarteners’ desire to draw on my notebook persisted throughout the entire eight months. Upon my arrival, the children were often quick to make this request: “Can I draw on your sketchbook?” or “Could you draw me [a specific figure] on your notebook?” Because it was something I had always brought with me, even to the playground, my arrival to the classroom also meant the time to draw on my notebook, particularly with my pen, accompanied with the Google image search tool from my smart phone. Using Internet on my smart phone often worried me in that it would interrupt the teacher’s lesson plan or classroom rules. However, the teachers did not seem to mind that the children used my phone and notebook. After completing the drawings, some children wished to tear it off from the notebook and take it home or gift it to friends or teachers. I tried to listen to the stories involved in the drawing, if there were any, and take pictures before being taken away. As such, a large portion of my visual documentation portrays
children using my notebook drawing a variety of figures, from individual work to collaborative works with peers or with myself (see Appendix for examples).

I realize that how I claimed my role to be in the kindergarten classroom—or how I wanted my role to be understood—and how children perceived my role could be comparatively dissimilar. While the children regarded me as an artist in residence, I entered the kindergarten classroom wishing to embody the role of an interested adult—one who participates in the ongoing everyday lives of children with curiosity, not as one who brings superior (or inferior) knowledge from outside. Thorne (1993) writes about adopting a different role in children’s spaces:

I claimed the free-lancing privilege of an adult visitor. I could, and did, come and go, shift groups… choose and alter my daily routines. Unlike the kids, I was relatively, although not entirely, free from the control of the principals, teachers, and aides… without a fixed school-based routine, I also had more spatial mobility than the teachers or aides. (p. 14)

As an adult visitor, I wished to become the children’s friend who would play, draw, and engage in their everyday activity together. However, being an adult visitor who is neither teacher nor parent was more of a complex matter. In order to stray away from enforcing rules or resolving problems, I had to be aware of such classroom rules so that I can choose not to act like a teacher or a parent. I continuously wondered: how should I negotiate the boundaries of being an adult and that of a friend, since an interested adult, “the least-adult” (Mandell, 1988), or “an unusual adult” (Christensen, 2004), is still an adult?
These boundaries of being the adult in children’s spaces demands an understanding of membership roles in the classroom. A researcher’s membership role for fieldwork varies on a spectrum, choosing and adapting the types of roles with informants. Sociologists Patricia and Peter Adler (1987) categorize three possible roles a researcher falls into: the peripheral, active, and complete membership role. As an ‘adult visitor’, I partook different memberships in the kindergarten classroom. Casting myself in the peripheral membership role, which is to “refrain from participating in activities” (Adler & Adler, 1987, p. 36), during the first several visits I endeavored to familiarize myself with the time structure, space, and materials of the classroom. More importantly, I focused on getting to know with the children by closely observing their peer interactions and class activities without interrupting the nature of events. Then, I gradually allowed myself to immerse into the classroom culture embracing an active membership role, that is, to attempt to play and interact with children but not as a member of the group. In building rapport with children, the relationships were much affected by our distinctive cultural contexts, characteristics, and experiences, however, ultimately took the direction of forming friendships.

When a researcher enters the space of children, not only the adult makes sense of children in the culture, but children also make sense of the adult (Knupfer, 1996). The kindergarteners were adept in recognizing my multiple identities, particularly the ostensibly apparent attributes, I carried along with me into the space: being an Asian woman, a graduate student researcher, and a young adult who was not a parent. The first question I was asked on my first day of observation was whether I was somebody’s mom, which I consider as children trying to make sense of a new adult’s presence and her role
in the classroom. I was also asked several times why I was coming to the classroom, which I would answer, “I want to know about you!” or “I want to play/make art with you.” After the fact that I am a student at the university was verified, the next most frequently asked question was in regards to my ethnicity; For example, perhaps due to the number of Asian students in the classroom, questions such as “Are you Chinese?” “What are you?” “Can you speak Korean?” were raised. My Asian-ness affected the interactions with children to a certain extent, perhaps more so with students from Asian families. This influenced me to become more cognizant of my positionality as an Asian woman researching at a predominantly White classroom employing philosophies and methods that Western male scholars developed. Though I remain critical of this reality, I also respect it for allowing me to continuously question my positionality and recognize other minoritized groups of people. As much as the culturally specific identities are highly important, my position as an adult compels me to think about my positionality in the kindergarten classroom more so, as it is subject to produce power dynamics within the relationship with children in virtually any circumstances.

Despite my desire to attain equal status with children through the *complete membership role*, or “the least-adult role” (Mandell, 1988), two main attributes of myself precluded my becoming of the complete member: the skill to draw and the limited knowledge of children’s media culture. As my drawing abilities were perceived as “skills that were useful to them” (Corsaro, 2003, p. 31), children perceived my role as that of an artist in residence who is available to draw various figures anytime upon request. In the beginning, I was asked to draw general figures of princesses in which children directed me to include specific features such as hair length, facial expression, or the number of
points on the crown. As more children recognized my skill, requests to draw media characters prevailed during every visit. However, when it came to kids’ culture, my status as a skillful artist immediately dropped: My drawing abilities couldn’t function without external assistance. I was unfamiliar with most of children’s contemporary media culture and often was unable to grasp what the children were referring to. Though I was somewhat familiar with their interest in long-standing media (e.g., Barbie, Disney princesses, Star Wars, and Pokémon characters), it was the recent children’s cartoons (e.g., PAW Patrol, Super Wings, Vampirina and etc.) that ultimately disclosed my lack of information.

Even when I ventured to present knowledge about some popular culture characters, it was meager compared to children’s proficiency, as the vignette above in drawing Maui portrays. My minimal knowledge in children’s popular culture was often revealed in my engagements with children in everyday conversations and activities. Yet, children willingly filled the cultural gap by providing information on the popular culture contents. In fact, though I might not have attained the complete membership role, I used “emic” interpretations, which is to understand narratives, matters, and cultural events from the participants’ point of view, rather than “etic” interpretations (Geertz, 1973)16. This was possible by making my way through the classroom context, mingling in the dynamics of children’s everyday lives. Graue and Walsh (1998) argue that the data of

16 An emic perspective is understanding a culture as an insider point of view, focusing on the particularities and internal schemes, and an etic perspective is taking a general, nonstructural, and objective point of view. Namely, in the case of researching with children, as an empirical study by nature, an emic approach might incorporate the voice of children whereas an etic research would primarily use the voice of a researcher. However, it is important for the researcher to have both perspectives in ethnographic research; In the case of my research, it was essential for me to understand the insider culture and shared understandings in the kindergarten classroom, as well as to attain an etic perspective based on my emic standpoint in the fieldwork of ethnographic research.
studying children not only concerns children in context, but also grasps the researcher in context:

If research is a process of soaking and poking we emphasize the poking over the soaking…the researcher is not a fly on the wall or a fog in the pocket. The researcher is there. She cannot be otherwise. She is in the mix. (p. 91, my emphasis)

There I was, in the mix of children’s everyday events, trying to make sense of a snippet of their complex cultural world inextricably entangled with both the adults’ and their own values and beliefs.

Throughout my aesthetico-ethnographic case study, I aspired to be present and attentive to children’s stories, actions, and thoughts in the visual cultural engagement, being simultaneously cognizant of my adult researcher positionality. Moreover, I enjoyed the performativity between theories and field work: As I was reading the literature of Rancière and other thinkers’ work outside of the classroom, observing events happening in the classroom invoked particular theories and ideas, or the other way around, in which the concepts I was reading recalled certain stories or activities children engaged in. In doing so, I focused on the aesthetic aspects of ethnographic practice in children’s everyday events, doings, and the relations with their surrounding materials or humans, similar to what Vannini (2015) described as attributes of non-representational research.

Despite my earlier critical standpoint on children often being regarded as voiceless research objects, it is not my intention to entirely dismiss the legacy of conventional ethnographic methods—of which a particular cultural group is observed, documented, written about, and interpreted—as my research practice does in fact follow such methods.
What I suggest is, rather, a kind of relational and ethical approach to think differently about the researcher-informant dynamics in the analysis of the particular events I observed and engaged in. This notion of relational ethics in researching with children will be further discussed in chapter 6, along with a vignette about drawing popular culture figures with one child in the kindergarten classroom.
Chapter 5

“Out of the lines”: The Aesthetics of Politics and the Politics of Aesthetics in Children’s Art

If emancipatory politics could emerge anywhere and anytime (Biesta, 2008), how might politics come about in the everyday spaces of early childhood education? And, as politics rests on “dissensus” (Rancière, 2015b), what ghostly policing conditions do children disagree with as a community of political subjects? I inquire about these questions by situating my observations at the kindergarten classroom within a theoretical illustration that consists of Rancièrian and other post-structural lines of thought. Whereas the previous chapters told of the theories about the distribution of the sensible and the politics in art education, here, I attempt to show how such politics might come into being, especially in early childhood spaces where children engage in art making. Continuing the exploration of politics, subjectivization, and aesthetics, I present a painting event I encountered while at the kindergarten classroom in order to discuss how young children engage in politics as political subjects, who participate in, disagree with, and negotiate the assumptions that haunt their artistic practice. In what follows, I interrogate this event by focusing on two conceptual elements: the aesthetics of politics and the politics of aesthetics. In doing so, it is my attempt to further complicate and recontextualize the often simplified and decontextualized understandings that exist about children’s art, and thus produce new and different perspectives towards the politico-aesthetic performances of young people.
Event: Brian, Oliver, and the Big Black Dots

On a Friday afternoon in the kindergarten classroom, center time had opened up. Inspired by George Seurat’s pointillism, Ms. Carla prompted a painting activity at the art table. She took out a canvas pre-painted in diagonal lines, in which children were encouraged to fill the divided sections with small dots. Brian and Oliver joined the art table and chose six different colors of acrylic paint: red, yellow, pink, blue, green, and black. Having the boys and myself gathered around the table, Ms. Carla carefully painted a few dots at the corner of the canvas using a thin paintbrush. The dots were small, roughly a quarter-inch in diameter, and in different colors, too. Attentive to Seurat’s method, she demonstrated how the dots should be painted close to each other without being mixed, and that the size and the colors of the circles could vary.

After Ms. Carla left the art table, Oliver and Brian, sitting across from each other, began to paint dots on the canvas, rendering different sizes of circles. With his paintbrush carefully touching the surface of the canvas, Brian said, “Look how tiny my dot is, you can’t even see it.” Oliver drew a circle close to 1-inch in diameter. It was bigger than the circles Ms. Carla had drawn. Then, he asked me, “Can you see that?” I replied, “That’s a huge one!” Oliver’s tone rose with excitement, “Oh no, that’s a huge, huge, huge, huge, HUGE one.” Utterances emerged and crisscrossed between Oliver and Brian as they playfully experimented with painting different sized dots. Oliver, seeking Brian’s attention, says, “Brian, look at mine, look at my paintbrush.” And Brian, seeking Oliver’s approval, replies back, “Look how big mine is.” Then, Oliver exclaimed, “This is
going to be bea-u-tiful! I made bigger dots than Brian when he made that dot, and that dot.”

The boys laughed, sang, and made unidentifiable noises together while delineating bigger shapes of black dots. Now the biggest size of the dots had a diameter of approximately 5 inches, applied with an abundant amount of paint over the diagonal lines. As they proceed, different colors of paint began to touch the boys’ hands and smocks. Brian recognizes the paint marks covered on his hands. He shows his hands to Oliver, which Oliver responds to, “Hands, hands!” Then Brian says, “Bad hands!” Oliver looks down at his smock that is also covered with paint, while Brian continues to examine his hands. Looking at Brian, then down at his smock, Oliver exclaims “Ahh! [look at my smock]” and Brian cries “My hands!” Then Oliver laughs out loud.

As the excitement intensified, Brian discontinued the whirling of the paintbrush and said, “I don’t think Ms. Carla’s going to be happy about this.” Oliver verbally agreed, “Yeah, I don’t think she’s going to be happy.” But as he enthusiastically whirled the paintbrush to form a bigger dot, shouting “Ahhh!” His action was in conflict with their concern. Brian repeated his previous statement again, “Ms. Carla’s not going to be happy. Oh no, oh no.” Oliver responds, “And this,” followed by laughter, “Ah ha ha ha, and this!” Brian then eyed Ms. Carla, tracking her movement in the classroom. He then whispered, “Oh, she’s coming,” and then again, with relief, “Oh, she isn’t.” In contrast with this concern, and continuing to make bigger dots, Oliver’s tone heightened, “Oh no, this is going to be way big, big, big, BIG!” Brian confirms, “Oh no, Ms. Carla’s close to us.”
Now Ms. Carla was actually walking towards the art table. When Ms. Carla approached the table, Greg, who later joined the activity, carefully asked her, “Do you like the big dots of black?” She replied, “I do.” Abruptly turning back and looking at the other boys, Greg exclaimed, “She likes the big dots of black!” In response, Brian says, “I did the bigger one!” And Oliver says, “No, I did. I did the bigger one.” Recognizing the tension, Ms. Carla intervened, saying, “Let’s not get carried away—an artist has an idea, right?” Despite her comment, Oliver shouts, “I did the big, big, one!”

As Ms. Carla walked away, in a lower voice, Oliver notes, “I messed up the pattern like that,” which to me, seemed like a confident claim to make, especially among his peers. At this moment, I quietly ask the boys, “So why did you guys think Ms. Carla wouldn’t like the big dots?” Brian responds, “She actually said she did.” I say, “Yeah, but before that, why did you think she would not like it?” Oliver answered, “Because they are so big and the other ones are not.” He then added, “Because it’s out of the lines.” I asked if it felt good to draw out of the lines. With enthusiasm, Oliver says, “Yeah, and this one’s going to get really big—wah, wah, wah!” He then reached for the paint. As the boys’ energy for the painting escalated, the pressure given to the paintbrushes forced the end to split in a rake-like shape, which made louder giggles and exclamations. Shortly after, Ms. Carla returned to the table and commented, “Oh, that is awesome! I like it.” The children continued with their previous endeavor of painting bigger dots with loud laughter.
“I think Ms. Carla’s going to like it” Brian declared. I say, “Maybe… why is that?” Brian responds, “Because black is the blue and the yellow is in the yellow.” Meanwhile, Oliver continues to entertain himself by mixing paint “Ahh! Ha-ha-ha!” The boys also begin to sing. “I think Ms. Carla’s going to like it” Brian repeats, and at the same moment, Ms. Carla comes and says, “That is awesome!” Because Oliver continued to paint without following the directions, Ms. Carla says: “Oliver, listen, if you’re going to be silly, you need to be done with this job. I want you to do a nice job.” Still, Oliver doesn’t seem to change the way he paints. Ms. Carla calls him to attention again: “Are you in control of your art? There’s a difference between putting some energy in art versus not in control. There’s a famous Japanese artist who throws pockets of paint and throws it to the wall. It’s pretty cool—it punches walls.” Brian jumps in, asking, “Is Oliver trying to do that?” and she responds, “Well… we can study that artist. I think you guys, especially, would enjoy it. Just be careful, okay?” Though Oliver remained quiet during Ms. Carla’s comment, after she left, he continued to mix paint intentionally, but in a gentler manner. Shortly after, I was pulled away to the other side of the classroom to draw bunnies and princesses for Lena and Iris. In the meantime, the painting event had come to a closure.
Figure 2. Oliver’s hands and the painting in progress.

Figure 3. Brian (right) shows his hands covered with paint to Oliver (left), which Oliver responds to, “Hands, hands!” Then Brian says, “Bad hands!”
Figure 4. Oliver looks down at his smock that is also covered with paint, and Brian looks at his hands.

Figure 5. While Oliver exclaims “Ahh!” Brian cries “My hands!” and Oliver laughs.
Figure 6. The completed work seen in the classroom weeks later (I speculate that other kindergarten students have also contributed to the painting, given that Ms. Carla had introduced the activity as a collaborative painting for the end of the year exhibition).
Surely, this painting event could occur in any early childhood space. The teacher used a traditionally accepted teaching format of referring to a historically recognized artist to demonstrate a painting technique, which guides children to follow the stated instructions and practice the artist’s methods. The canvas, acrylic paint, paint brushes, and water are also everyday art materials ubiquitously incorporated in early childhood art education. Even the children’s behavior may not seem too idiosyncratic since joyous or rebellious playfulness commonly emerge during early childhood classroom activities. However, I explore how even the mundane and subtle moments provoke avenues of inquiries that consist of different perspectives, thinking, and doing, when situated in theories (i.e., the Rancièrian thoughts). This is why the event of Brian and Oliver is located at the core of my dissertation; it is an exploration of viewing seemingly mundane class activities as a deeply political moments, as entanglements of power relations, materials, places, and human bodies.

I take the journey to examine this politico-aesthetic event inviting Rancière as a thinking companion. For Rancière, art and politics do not reside in two distinct realities but in two forms of distribution of the sensible, where both are contingent on a particular regime of identification, as he states “There are not always occurrences of politics, although there always exist forms of power. Similarly, there are not always occurrences of art, although there are always forms of poetry, painting, sculpture, music, theatre, and dance” (Rancière, 2004b, p. 26). Given Rancière’s definitions of politics and art as a persuasion of equality, this quote suggests that genuine politics and art only exists when there is a “rupture in the order of things” (Rancière, 2003, p. 219)—a dissensual act that destabilizes the distribution of the sensible. Both art and politics, in this sense, is neither
equitable with the representational forms nor occur on a daily basis. In other words, arts and politics are seldom seen in everyday lives inasmuch as it requires to be more-than, or emancipate from, the usual representational forms and partitions bodies are assigned to. As such, I view the painting event more than a form of mundane activities in children’s art thus take the responsibility to contribute to amplifying the politico-aesthetic story to be seen and told.

With this ethical obligation, I explore the painting event by bringing my attention to two aspects: One is the politics Oliver and Brian attended to, whereby a sense of tension and thrill was demonstrated as a community, and the other is the aesthetic experience that was being produced in conjunction with the political enactments. Here, though politics and aesthetics are ultimately homologous to each other for interrupting the distribution of the sensible, I attend to Rancière’s differentiation of politics and aesthetics: He describes the paradox of art and politics, with each defining a different form of dissensus, as the aesthetics of politics attends to the distribution of the sensible through the “political processes of subjectivation,” while the politics of aesthetics “lies in the practices and modes of visibility of art that re-configure the fabric of sensory experience” (Rancière, 2015, p. 148). In other words, the former attends to the act or performance of becoming subjects, whereas the latter resides in the re-distribution of the sensible of art experiences. As such, in inquiring into the painting event, I explore how Oliver and Brian engaged in political subjectivization and generated a effects of reconfiguring sensory experience in what has traditionally been considered as children’s art.
The Aesthetics of Politics

A Political Subjectivization

As described in chapter 3, “subjectivization” (Rancière, 1992, 2013a) exists upon the gap between the identity assigned by the police that generates a division of activities in a society and the subject identity the bodies wish to become. In other words, the political subjectivization of those with “no parts” (Rancière, 1999) embodies a deliberate disagreement to the given identity that moves towards the constitution of equality between the disparate identities. In this sense, Oliver and Brian painting out of the lines resonates with the process of subjectivization as it reveals three main characteristics of subjectivization—argumentative demonstration, theatrical dramatization, and heterologic disidentification (Davis, 2010, p. 84).

To begin with, the painting event contained an “argumentative demonstration” (Davis, 2010) of political subjectivization, insofar as Oliver and Brian’s verbalization and actions strove to attain a sense of equality. It was a practical and artistic argument of intellectual equality towards the system of hierarchy that involves a power figure (i.e. adult) and the myth of explication (i.e. instructions to render representational art). It is practical for its alternative form to a formal declaration of equality (e.g., legal documents) that produced an event that brought their presence into visibility by utilizing their given materials and space. Also, in creating a scene of dissensus that affected other agents to pay attention to the occurrence (e.g., Greg, myself, and Ms. Carla) the painting event certainly constituted a “theatrical dramatization” (Davis, 2010). Within the normalized space of the kindergarten classroom art table, the acting of Oliver and Brian going out of the given rules and roles produced a manifestation of a new ‘subject’ that was not
supposed to exist. It was a pretense of the other—pretending to be more than the assigned less-than identity they are often made to uphold as children. The third characteristic of political subjectivization, a “heterologic disidentification” (Davis, 2010), is at the core of this painting event: Oliver and Brian dislocated their given identity that is expected to follow the demonstration and asserted the other identity of being the other, to have equal visibility and audibility as those who impose rules and roles onto them (i.e. adults). It was an “impossible identification” (Davis, 2010, p. 87) yet productive political enactment for its attempt to reveal their hybridity (Haraway, 1991) despite the unsettlement and struggle constituted by the process of political subjectivization.

Though my interest is in examining the police children fear and their dissensual manifestations, however, it is not my intention to demonize school art teachers or scholars who subscribe to a particular aesthetic standard and instructional methods of art education. Instead, I aspire to see how the taken-for-granted ideas of child art could be reimagined and how new and different perspectives towards children’s art practices might be produced. In fact, in this particular painting event, Ms. Carla did not mind the children’s dissensual actions. Though she did assign a project that aligned with normative styles and the representational-regime-of-art conventions associated with child art in early childhood spaces, she did not enforce it. Nonetheless, Oliver and Brian certainly expected her to do so, which is what I believe is important to note. Their expectation, or assumption, that it would be enforced, and that their resistance to this even before they realized that it would be tolerated, was suggestive of the distribution of the sensible in children’s art and its broader material effect on children in early childhood spaces. It was the assumption of historically constructed normative styles and rules being imposed on
children’s art practices that haunted them at the moment, not Ms. Carla. This implies the prevalence of an elusive policing force, if not a monstrous violence, being present in children’s everyday art practices and spaces as “ghostly matters” (Gordon, 1997/2008). Children live in the reality that their engagement with anything, even with activities designed to for purposes that are creative and playful, requires them to produce an end result that shows their progress and obedience to adults, which accompanies a recurring fear of disapproval and disappointment. What Oliver and Brian feared is the method of explication, which Jacotot refused to comply with when teaching his students Télémaque.

It is the “myth of pedagogy” (Rancière, 1991) that merely stultifies students through its separation between intelligences—to have one intelligence subordinated to the other. Because this myth of teaching is such a predominantly practiced method to approach education, it is also deeply ingrained as the “usual” way of learning, which children internalize from a very young age. Though my argument may derive from personal observation of the two boys, it is, in fact, consistent with the hauntology of art education that has influenced children’s drawing throughout history. As such, in exploring the politics and aesthetics in the following sections, it is this assumption or elusive presence of police in children’s art that I bring my attention to, rather than Ms. Carla’s instructions or the kindergarten class’s curriculum.

**Tensions and Thrills in the Process of Subjectivization**

There are multiple layers of tensions in the painting event: tensions between adult’s instruction and children’s own pleasure, between children’s assigned identity and desired identity, and between the “proper” use of given materials and experimented
methods of engaging with human to non-human materials. These tensions materialized into bodily movements and verbalizations, which is precisely what Rancière (1999) defines as subjectivation, “the production through a series of actions of a body and a capacity for enunciation not previously identifiable within a given field of experience, whose identification is thus part of the reconfiguration of the field of experience” (p. 35). Similar to emancipation, the logic of subjectivation is, therefore, a process by which political subjects extract themselves from the dominant partitions of identification and classification.

Oliver’s exhilarated utterances of “I messed up the pattern like that,” “Because they are so big and the other ones are not,” and “Because it’s out of the lines,” as well as Brian calling his painted hands “Bad hands” suggest their reconfiguration of the dominant order as political subjects—their renditions were an accidentally deliberate deviation from the assigned rules and boundaries. I use the paradoxical term ‘accidentally deliberate’ to emphasize that children’s dissensual acts are not entirely involuntary nor planned ahead of time, but something that emerges in response to the police’s force that affects the production of dissensual acts. The assumed identity as empty operators having no title in the distribution of the sensible was subverted upon Oliver and Brian’s intentional dissensus, as they voiced themselves to challenge the given rules of doing and being. It was a search for emancipation that is attainable through the minorities’ own effort to divert from their given status and prove that “they are capable of opposing reason with reason and giving their action a demonstrative form” (Rancière, 1995, p. 48). As such, as the kindergarteners lingered with the tensions that arose as they removed
themselves from the naturalness of a place and the identity expected to follow instructions ordered by the adult(s)\textsuperscript{17}.

Oliver and Brian not only struggled together in disrupting the assigned conditions that confine their sensible experience, but also shared the thrill of transgressing the borders drawn by adults. The utterances of joy, such as “This is going to be bea-u-tiful!” and “Yeah, and this one’s going to get really big—wah, wah, wah!” as well as the facial expressions of grins and eye contacts. The vocalized expressions of giggling, singing, and exclaiming that emerged in-between verbalized anxiety also insinuated effects of pleasure, though such moments failed to last long. Their deviance of creating marks that literally and figuratively crossed the pre-established boundaries generated simultaneous tension and pleasure—a tension of negotiating between the police order and the pleasure that emerged as they refused the identity imposed by others in the process of subjectivation. Yet they still remain in the liminal space between the assigned identity and the achieved one in their journey of searching for equality.

\textbf{Acts}

I view this expression of pleasure as an \textit{act} of “emancipation” (Rancière, 1991, 2007a, 2011), of which children encountered as they break with the partitions that function to limit the range and mobility of their immanent performances. My use of ‘act’ here is intentional in that it refers back to Isin’s (2008) elaboration on the “acts of citizenship,” the dialogical and relational enactments that create a scene of partition. In

\textsuperscript{17} Here, I use plural to suggest that the adult power is not limited to Ms. Carla but also adults in general that constitutes the less-than image of childhood, which consequently put children to the partition of having no part.
this particular event, the act of citizenship was not so much about attaining a status the children didn’t have—as they are already citizens of the classroom—but rather an act of recognizing and practicing their already-present agency as autonomous artists capable of dismantling the representational order.

The boys’ manifestation in this painting event also resonates with Ware’s (1973) six necessary conditions for something to be defined as an ‘act.’ For example, Oliver and Brian’s dissensual act reminds the conditions that acts involve “movement, change, and motion of objects and bodies,” and occur because of a “decision to perform the act” (Ware, 1973, as cited in Isin, 2008, p. 23). The performance of painting big dots was entangled with bodily movements (e.g., hand motions and vocalizations) as well as materials affected and altered by the bodies (e.g., paint brushes changing shapes and paints being mixed). This goaded the materials to go out of the lines as well, to interact with human bodies out of the instructed methods. Because these acts were accidentally deliberate, continuous decision making was involved, to make each move visible and audible. In doing so, their decision to produce movements of changing the order of the distributed sensible created an unusual scene—a “theatrical dramatization” (Davis, 2010). It was a profound performance of political acts.

Further, acts involve “accomplishments” (Ware, 1973). In the case of the kindergarteners’ painting event, I speculate that the accomplishments exist within the performance of going out-of-the-lines, as effects of emancipation. Here, the effects of emancipation entail the experience of the other identity: to escape from the lines that were drawn to limit movements; to engage in the hybridity of materials by mixing the paints, rendering paint marks on their bodies, and playing with force given to the paint
brushes; and exploring the emotions of exhilaration and simultaneous fear that was produced when fully engaging in these human-material encounters. Perhaps, Ms. Carla’s assertion “I like it!” contributed to the momentary release of the haunting assumption that she would disapprove their work. This is only to mention the accomplishments that were visible to me, that were outwardly performed and recognizable. However, since children’s art practices contains entangled threads of thoughts, experiences, and relationships, achievements that are invisible to me might have occurred too.

Acts also have “continuity within themselves” that accrete over time (Ware, 1973, as cited in Isin, 2008, p. 23). In other words, acts reside in the intensity that is produced among the continuous performances. The most apparent act that persisted in the painting event is the sustained performance of rendering bigger dots even after a concern of disapproval was expressed. Consider how Oliver’s act of painting and laughter contrasted to the expression of agreement to Brian’s words, as he accelerated the rhythm of the brushstrokes while saying, “Yeah I don’t think she’s going to like it.” It was a deliberate performance and emancipatory enactment manifested as a pleasure in the midst of communicated tensions, which gained intensity as it proceeded. Canadian philosopher Brian Massumi (2002) describes intensity being “associated with nonlinear processes: resonation and feedback that momentarily suspend the linear progress of the narrative present from past to future” (p. 26). The intensity of creating bigger dots disrupted the anticipated linear progress of painting dots for representing pointillism. It was something other-than painting, or not-painting, that emerged within the process of engaging with given materials and time. As such, children actively produced a collective enunciation of artistic experience through the acts of dissensus.
Community

In thinking about the shared tensions and thrills in painting big dots, the act of going out of the lines did not occur on an individual level but rather within a group of children. That is, the tension involved in Oliver and Brian’s process of subjectivization transmitted to Greg, who asked Ms. Carla how she thinks about the painting even though he had joined the art table quite later after the painting had proceeded for a while. Greg was able to immediately recognize what was being out of the expected practice and what Oliver and Brian feared about. Together, they measured the gap between their designated identity presumed to abide by adult control, and the new identity capable of painting outside of the given instructions. Being with each other, they verbally communicated the recurring fear of adults’ potential control over their work as well as the entertainment of painting bigger dots. Subjectivation, therefore, formulates a sense of community, as Rancière (2015) writes that the aesthetic movement of politics “consists above all in the framing of a we, a subject of collective demonstration whose emergence is the element that disrupts the distribution of social parts” (pp. 149-150, original italics). This notion of a ‘we’ contributes to constructing a community of political subjects who challenge their designated social position to demonstrate their equality to those in power—it is a community of no-part. Insofar as “Political being-together is a being-between: between identities, between worlds” (Rancière, 2004b, p. 137), children sharing the in-between identity together constitutes a political community of heterogeneity. And, in this community, it involves going out of identities that the distribution of the sensible assigned to bodies.
The political tension, in fact, materialized because children are adept in understanding both adults’ and children’s desires, coping with their in-between status of the two worlds—the children’s and the adults’. That is, as social beings living in social environments, children constantly negotiate between the adults’ world and their own world (Corsaro, 2015) without dismissing either one. For children, it is impossible to reside in one territory, as just being child or just adult, but are always in the mix of the two identities. In fact, they share the in-between status together, by being between identities and worlds (Rancière 2004b). Although modern educational philosophies encourage children’s autonomy to speak, make themselves visible, and to be in control of their own behavior, children are also proficient in noticing how they could be controlled by the subtleties of power and knowledge (Foucault, 1977). The kindergarteners were very much aware of the power and their assigned partition, as the tension between pleasing the adult and their own desire prevailed. Consider Brian’s continuous tracking of the teacher’s movement as his peers’ excitement intensified. Also, his interpretation of painting big black dots depended on the adult’s reaction: Ms. Carla’s simple response, “I do [like that big dot],” released his concern about disappointing the adult, as his expression changes from “Ms. Carla’s not going to be happy about it,” to “I think Ms. Carla’s going to like it.” By cause of the adult’s simple affirmation of acceptance, the practice of painting big dots over the lines was not the same as before but rather transferred into an emancipatory artistic performance. Even Oliver, who seemed to be drawn more to his own excitement of painting bigger dots when Brian expressed his concern, was also aware of his expected identity and behavior, given his confident announcement that he had created a bigger one shortly after Ms. Carla’s approval. As
political subjects, therefore, children measured the gap between the two worlds (the adults’ and the child’s), negotiated with the desire of each world, and attained a sense of emancipation by traversing the familiar logic.

Children mobilized a community of political subjects that shares their in-between status as a common identity. Rancière (1992) writes that “a [political] subject is an outsider or, more, an in-between” (p. 61, original italics) as they are situated in between more than one identity, status, and name:

Political subjectivization is the enactment of equality—or the handling of a wrong—by people who are together to the extent that they are between. It is a crossing of identities, relying on a crossing of names: names that link the name of a group or class to the name of no group or no class, a being to a nonbeing or a not-yet-being. (Rancière, 1992, p. 61)

Reiterating Corsaro’s (2015) view on children living in two worlds, as in-between beings continuously negotiating the two social realms, political subjectivization of children is the rejection of both a socially-determined role and the adoption of an “impossible identification” (Rancière, 1992). Children formulated a community within the process of democratic politics in which those who have no part make the impossible declaration that they are legitimate beings within the whole of the community.

In fact, Rancière (1995) regards democracy as the “community of sharing” in which “a membership in a single world which can only be expressed in adversarial terms, and a coming together which can only occur conflict. To postulate a world of shared meaning is always transgressive” (p. 49). It entails a process of subjectivization in which the presupposition of equality and the transgression of the distribution of the sensible
emerge as a contrast to a given police order. Rancière calls this community as a “community of equals,” which is an “insubstantial community of individuals engaged in the common creation of equality” (Rancière, 1995, p. 84). Insofar as equality is not an end point to be reached but a “presupposition” and “practice” (Rancière, 1991), the community of equals does not resemble a form of social institution but linked to “the act of its own verification” (Rancière, 1995, p. 84). Interpreting Rancière’s (1995) statement that community of equals cannot be institutionalized but exist within its acts, May (2008) writes:

> Equality exists only in a collective movement, not in anything institutional that frames that movement of arises from it. For a community to be tied to its own act of verification, which is always in need of reiteration, seems to imply that a community of equals exists only in act, never in a static form. We might say here that a community of equals can only be a verb, never a noun. It is a happening rather than a site. (p. 103)

This resonates with the conditions and characteristics of acts that were discussed in the previous section: acts distinctive from actions for its involvement of movements, change, and continuity, to name a few. It is a community of equals that actively voice themselves against the police order rather than a static group. In this community, bodies of sans-part converge and continuously engage in the practice of equality in order to have their presence be recognized and legitimized. In other words, the process of political subjectivization Oliver and Brian collectively engaged in is a process about appearance—“the coming into presence” (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, p. 33)—and its simultaneous disruption to the existing hierarchical order that produces something different, something
new, to this naturalized order. In other words, politics only properly emerges through the antagonism of a common sense or a given order, it contains aesthetics at its core to the extent that a redistribution of the sensible is contingent, a shift in public consciousness concerning what is seen and who can legitimately speak.

The Politics of Aesthetics

The second aspect I focus on is the aesthetics that materialized in the painting event. The ‘politics of aesthetics’ does not indicate political art containing the artist’s ideological implications, as Rancière is quite skeptical of such type of political art. Instead, the politics and aesthetics means two compelling possibilities that is recognized as oppositional yet always exist simultaneously within the “aesthetic regime of art” (Rancière, 2004b, 2011, 2013a, 2015) — the collapse of the hierarchical system that controlled the ethical and representational regimes of art. As Rancière argues in Aesthetics and its Discontents, there is “an originary and persistent tension between the two great politics of aesthetics: the politics of becoming-life of art and the politics of resistant form” (2004b, pp. 43-44). In the former, the “becoming-life” of art, art constitutes “new forms of life in common and hence eliminates itself as a separate reality” (Rancière, 2004b, p. 44). Here, aesthetics ultimately denotes equality of the indiscernibility between art and life where the aesthetic experience dissolves into other forms of experiences, into forms of life. It is a re-distribution of the sensible that potentiates the equality of being-in-common, forming a sense of community and collectivity disruptive of the established police order—it generates new forms of thinking, doing, and living. In the latter politics of aesthetics of being in a “resistant
form” on the other hand, denotes a sense of retention of such new possibilities, to
“[enclose] the political promise of aesthetic experience in art’s very separation, in the
resistance of its form to every transformation into a form of life” (Rancière, 2004b, p.
44). That said, works of art that are emancipated from the ‘proper’ forms of sensory
connection resists to be dissolved into life or community.

This opposition between art as art and art as life generates a tension that
“respond[s] to a free play, meaning a nonhierarchical relation between the intellectual
and the sensory faculties” (Rancière, 2009a, p. 37, my emphasis). The political
contingency of the aesthetic experience, therefore, emerges from the divorce of art from
other forms of activity, its resistance to any transformation into a form of life, yet the
inclination to associate with such forms of life. The aesthetics thus rests on a paradoxical
idea of which art assembles the possibilities to reshape life on the condition that it
simultaneously maintain its difference as art. This is what politics on aesthetics means:
art and life containing potentials to retain their essential differences yet exchange
properties. In this next section, I explore the politics of aesthetics in Oliver and Brian’s
event by pointing out how the art attended to the free play between art and life, within its
politics of going out of the lines.

**Dissensus as Free Play**

The event of Oliver and Brian constituted a sense of aesthetics that is part of the
aesthetic regime of art. Refusing to resemble representational art, they generated a new
mode of art and a new form of community, a complicated “system of heterologies”
(Rancière, 2013a, p. 60). The distribution of the sensible that formulates ordinary
connection between form and matter, appearance and reality, activity and passivity, as well as comprehension and sensibility was disrupted. It was rather a ‘free play’ of the faculties—intellectual and sensible—that established a new community of ‘out of the lines’ by choosing the sensible side of divergent desire thus refuting what the “proper” form of intelligence, to understand and produce by the given instructions. And, the destabilized naturalness of senses constituted an assemblage of tensions and thrills, to the extent that the boys themselves recognized the intensity of doing so. My earlier descriptions of Oliver and Brian’s aesthetic engagement as a ‘painting’ event may seem ironic, as I have advocated a disagreement to such labels, as something that does not resemble ordinary modes of painting. However, it is also my intention to explore the meaning and modes of painting without creating a distinction between what is painting and what is not. In other words, I aspire to explore the diversity of definitions that could be generated in thinking about painting as aesthetic experience, especially the aesthetics young people engage in. This unsettling aspect of aesthetics is constitutive of the heterogeneity that disrupts ordinary and expected senses. As such, I continue to use the term painting for describing the vignette above, yet with the aesthetic connotations in mind.

This de-hierarchization between art and life is, in fact, depicted in Rancière’s examination of the nineteenth century French workers in The Nights of Labor (1989). As a mode of emancipation, the workers deviated from the social common sense—or the distribution of the sensible—that precluded them as artists or intellectuals. They instead enacted as proletarian intellectuals, poets, and artists who were capable of articulating their thoughts as they gathered to write poems, journals, music, letters, and to discuss
issues at night. The workers were migrants who resided in the in-betweenness of statuses, identities, and classes, yet regarded the practice at night as their real life. Likewise, as children are also living in the in-between space, they produced an aesthetic experience when the order of the police loosened. Rancière (2015) argues that “art is politics” (p. 180, original italics) not because of the art’s way of rescuing, imitating, or anticipating politics, but because it is properly speaking the identity of people. This implies that young people are capable of constituting a sense of equality opposed to the traditional social identity through engaging in art practices despite or because of the essential inequality of their biological, social, conceptual differences from adults.

In this sense, the type of art that Oliver and Brian produced resonates with the paradoxical characteristics of the politics of aesthetics, art becoming life and its resistance to become life (Rancière, 2004b). On the one hand, Oliver and Brian’s deliberate suspension of representational painting and the strategic ‘dissensuality’ that was activated instead suggests art practice being dissolved into life. Life, here, could entail the everyday matters that children encounter and experiences that may seem mundane and unnoteworthy. However, by bringing art into life, they persistently manifested a rupture of the rules of art and the laws of sensibility throughout this event when the power (i.e. the presence of the adult) slackened, and the pleasure shared in common was taken as verification of suspending the assigned order. On the other hand, the art activity preserved the material difference of art apart from the usual modes of everyday lives, by using the visual medium to declare dissensus instead of highlighting their in-between identity without utilizing the visibility of material performances. This tension between the two is what makes art aesthetic, as
there is no art without a specific form of visibility and discursivity which
identifies it as such. There is no art without a specific distribution of the sensible
 tying it to a certain form of politics. Aesthetics is such a distribution. The tension
between these two politics threatens the aesthetic regime of art. But it is also what
makes it function. (Rancière, 2004b, p. 44)
Therefore, though it might be unsettling, lingering with this paradox opens up new
perspectives of looking into the politics of aesthetics.
Rancière’s emphasis on the equality between art and life in the politics of
aesthetics help understand how children’s aesthetic experience is integral to their
everyday activity, as they gravitate toward the autonomy of one’s experience in relation
to art in the process of making, more than the product of art. This ignorance of the
subject matter and the division between art and non-art constitutes a sense of equality
between daily life and artistic practice. Brian Massumi (2013) asserts that an art practice
can be political in its own way without having any overtly political content. He
elaborates:
It [art] can push further to the indeterminate but relationally potentialize fringes of
existing situations, beyond the limits of current framings or regulatory principles.
Aesthetic politics is an exploratory politics of invention, unbound, unsubordinated
to external finalities. It is the suspensive aspect of it that gives it this freedom. The
suspension of the most available potentials, the potentials already comfortably
embodied, well housed and usefully institutionalized, gives a chance for more far-
fetched potentials to ripple up. Aesthetic politics is “autonomous” in the sense
that it has its own momentum, it isn’t beholden to external finalities. (pp. 53-54)
In this sense, children’s aesthetic engagement itself potentiates political forms of thinking, playing, art making, and other intellectual activities associated with diverse matters in everyday life (e.g., objects, people, places, visual culture, and so forth). Oliver and Brian explored how going out of the lines in already-understood appearances can disrupt the governing aesthetics and therefore affect the ways in which they make sense of the world. To reiterate, it suggests that the artwork participated in the aesthetic regime of art by producing rupture and interruption to the general distribution of the ways of doing and being, thus constituting a potentially different distribution of the perceptible emerged within the life of children.

**Material Encounters**

Continuing my focus on the politics of aesthetics, I inquire how materials might have played the role to goad the boys to engage in such dissensual painting event. What are the children’s interactions that produce something more than representational art and more than sans-part bodies? In other words, how might materials be affective agents capable of constituting dissensus *with* the children? As I look closer, I find that multiple out-of-the-line manifestations can be observed in this aesthetic event: The paint being mixed in the water cups, paints traveling outside the boarders of the canvas and to the boys’ hands, and the divergent affects of laughter and fear that were produced performatively. Here, I look into the bodily actions that emerged through the material encounters that occurred: how the materiality of paint, canvas, water, paint brushes, and other entities of the space produced the act of engaging with other—the emotions of fear and joy, performances of swirling and stopping, and the utterances of ‘ahs’ and ‘oh-nos.’
Drawing from a post-humanist perspective, Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kind, and Kocher (2017) investigates how materials in early childhood spaces “speak back” to children in a way that produces “material – discursive relationship” (p. 3) among humans and the material environment that involves objects and spaces. Describing the materials’ ability to communicate with humans recognizes materials’ agency as equally capable to produce meanings as human agency. Specifically discussing their experience with paint, they write “paint invited bodies to collaborate, to coorporate. It invited forces to interact and interfere with each other” (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2017, p. 46). The materiality of paint invites human bodies to move, change, and interact with one another producing affective avenues. The big black dots Oliver and Brian collaboratively rendered also left traces visually and politically—the marks couldn’t be undone. Political enactment leaves traces, as the subjectivization entails bringing into visibility and audibility that was previously unseen and unheard. Within the process of subjectivization, painting invites bodies to perform as a community, specifically as community of sans-part, as alliances of political subjects.

Further, Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2017) elaborates on children’s process of becoming familiar with the materiality of paint: “becoming competent or familiar with paint involves blurring the gap between the manipulations required to use paint in developmentally focused early childhood classroom and those required in the classroom conditions” (p. 51). This reminds me of Oliver’s and Brian’s use of paint that were “out of the lines”, in which the paint, paintbrushes, hands, and bodies were not moving as told by the instructions: the painted dots were big while they had to be small, the paints were mixed while they were told to be next to each other without touching, the performance of
painting was risk-taking while the instruction was to follow the rules of Pointillism, and so on. The boys were blurring the gap between what is a “proper” use of paint and their own way of creating artistic experiences with paint. It was an act of re-distributing the distribution of the sensible in the early childhood art practices—i.e., to “recompose the world” (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2017, p. 52).

In this sense, the materials involved in this event actively aided Oliver and Brian’s re-distribution of the sensible. Although Rancièrian concepts tend to highlight the human agency capable of producing politics of dissensual enactments, I hereby attempt to reconcile the distinction between the perspectives between human-centered engagement and post-humanistic engagement by inquiring what might happen when human actors and non-human actors work together affectively. Like Télémaque served as the mediator between Jacotot and his students in The Ignorant Schoolmaster (1991), art becomes the medium of political enactments between humans and non-humans. Non-human materials contain possibilities to invite and interact with human bodies that results in producing actions. Rather than focusing on the property of materials—of what it is supposed to do—it is a suggestion to think about the innate performativity of materials, to think of what it can do beyond assigned roles and what it can do with other entities. In other words, how might materials go out of the lines, beyond their given identity as materials? If we begin to think about the possibilities along with the possibilities of human agents producing out-of-the-line politics, the variety of works and performances that could be produced as art becomes unlimited. It is a dissensus of which humans and materials do all kinds of activities in suspending the distribution of the sensible.
Lines of Police, Dots of Dissensus, and Shapes of Aesthetics

Images produced by these materials are also significant actors in this event, most noticeably lines and dots. There were lines pre-drawn by the adults on the canvas surface, lines of the edges of the rectangular canvas, and the invisible lines that established boundaries on the children’s activity. It was not only the physical lines but also the ghostly lines that conjured to limit the bodily performance. Also, these lines divided the identity of who gets to give an assignment and demonstrate the rules of an activity, and who is given that explication thus expected to perform in such ways. Rancière (2009b) observes, “by drawing lines, arranging words or distributing surfaces, one also designs divisions of communal space” (p. 91). He says this in the context of design, but further demonstrates how lines could also yield particular distinctions between the senses:

- by assembling words or forms, people define not merely various forms of art, but certain configurations of what can be seen and what can be thought, certain forms of inhabiting the material world. These configurations, which are at once symbolic and material, cross the boundaries between arts, genres and epochs.

(Rancière, 2009b, p. 91)

Lines, in this regard, symbolically formulates configurations between what can be recognized and not within our material world, which was also the case in Oliver and Brian’s painting event.

Lines also carry its undeviating orientation even when it is loose or incomplete. As seen in the dotted-lines reading method Rancière experienced, which I described in chapter 3, Althusser’s students were given incomplete sentences to verify their comprehension of the lesson correctly and knowledge on its application. Waiting for the
students to restore what is being omitted, the dotted-lines directed students to perform in predictable ways, to fill in the correct answers—or the answer that pleases the master. Even without the presence of the master, the lines forced the students to achieve its completion by “tracing” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987)\textsuperscript{18} the path that has already been discovered. This was a method of explication that separated bodies (e.g., Althusser and his students) and their according activities, which was only generative of limited thinking and doing. As such, these lines drawn by the police order creates a distribution of the sensible.

However, there were dots that contributed to the disruption of these lines, the very visible lines of configurations on the canvas. Dots that initially abided by the boundaries of the pre-drawn lines transformed into having bigger presence in visibility and performativity as they diverted out. Rendering small yellow dots to big black dots, Oliver and Brian explored the potentials of dots that were unlimited in size and color. While lines insinuated linear and static performances, dots contained possibilities to mutate in its own, and invite others to converge and become one another. Dots were mixed by colors and generate different performativities that human bodies are capable of. The diversifying dots not only refused to remain in the boundaries of the canvas edges, but also traveled outside, onto Brian’s hands and Oliver’s smock, as well as in the water containers. As Peter Hallward (2009) writes, “[e]quality refers not to place but to the placeless or the out of place, not to class but to the unclassifiable or the out of class” (p. 141, my emphasis), it was a profound manifestation of equality that the unidentifiable

\textsuperscript{18} In their book \textit{A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia} (1987), philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari compare “tracing” with the construction of maps, in which the former only generates fixed and predictable paths and the latter opens up possibilities of adaptation and reconstruction.
people—young children—redefined the distribution of the sensible of the ways of doing, being, saying, and making. This provokes a contemplation on the notion of being ‘out,’ a removal from a particular place, class, status, or any normalized context that one might find the urge to escape from, which, in the painting event, was the materials that acted as equally capable agents. Dots constituted the re-distribution of the sensible, to be out of the lines and, moreover, goad children to divert out of their assigned identity. In other words, dots enacted as political agents that affected and interacted with other political subjects (i.e. Oliver and Brian) to attend to dissensus.

As such, the children and materials together shape aesthetics, a plane consisting of political enactments of free-playing between art and life. A force that kept the painting to somewhat remain in the representational modes of art existed as Oliver and Brian began by following the lines and traces drawn by the teacher, yet there was also the desire to traverse out of these boundaries of representation, to constitute a new mode of art. They crossed the assigned identities of a not-yet-artists to achieve a more-than status, which the site of aesthetics offered. As Tanke (2011) interpreted, “dissensus creates a stage of politics” (p.66, my emphasis), a plane that potentiates unbounded acts of politics of aesthetics to emerge. Therefore, when dots move out of the lines, together they construct a plane, one that consists of infinite directions and movements. Planes contains paths of moving lines, lines with breadth. It invites alterations and provocations the ways in which bodies can explore the performativity of the plane. Because planes are constructed on the basis of dissensus, it is political, potentiating a diversity of shapes to emerge.
Ghostly Matters in the Aesthetic Experience

As I mentioned earlier, the ghost that haunted Oliver and Brian is not Ms. Carla but the assumption they made even before confirming with Ms. Carla that their dissensus would be tolerated. In fact, Ms. Carla’s concern was more about their behavior that seemed to be out of control, not so much about the work done with paint. What the children assumed was a type of punishment or disappointment on painting bigger dots, having the colors mixed, and allowing paint marks on their hands and smocks. Although, fortunately, Ms. Carla’s response was “I like it,” accompanied with a sense of permission to continue to create bigger dots, their expectations were the opposite. Given Brian’s repeated statement “Ms. Carla’s not going to be happy about this,” it is apparent that the assumption provoked unsettling fear.

I take a moment here to think with Oliver and Brian, how envisioning a rejection from the teacher might have felt like for them. The teacher who left shortly after giving the instructions was nevertheless in their sight—she was present in her absence. The two boys, therefore, were cognizant of her presence/absence that still looked over their painting activity: As they tracked her shadow’s movement, a verbal communication about whether or not she is approaching persisted. And, as this anxious tracking continued, they predicted a negative response to be given on their work, just the matter of approaching sooner or later. The assumption of disapproval imagined to come through the body of Ms. Carla was the ghost omnipresent right at the moment.

Thinking with the children conjures up my hauntings at the Art Hakwon: the fear I underwent for drawing an oval shape smaller than I was supposed to. Whereas the kindergarteners’ presumption of punishment was invalidated, my haunting assumption
was substantiated by an actual confrontation of punishment. The two events are certainly different from the standpoint of discipline and consequence: whereas my case involved physical punishment that brought sheer shame and enforcement to correct the work, the kindergarteners received a positive response of the teacher favoring their out-of-the-line-ness thus brought ease to their anxiety. Yet both events are similar in a way that the omnipresent idea of students having to please adults, to fulfill given instructions and expectations of adults, affected us. This presumption led all of us—Oliver, Brian, my 11-year-old self—to project a scene of an unhappy master redirecting us to create a “better” work, that may or may not be accompanied by punishment.

Gordon’s (2008) definition of ghosts is helpful to understand the two-headed monster of policing and hauntings that the children and I experienced:

The ghost is not simply a dead or a missing person, but a social figure, and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life. The ghost or the apparition is one form by which something lost, or barely visible, or seemingly not there to our supposedly well-trained eyes, makes itself known or apparent to us, in its own way, of course. The way of the ghost is haunting, and haunting is a very particular way of knowing what has happened or is happening. Being haunted draws us affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into the structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as a transformative recognition. (p. 8, emphasis added)

The point being is not the actual presence of the master that is haunting us in person, but rather the social implications that accompany the figure who possesses the power to
exercise such discipline on us. It is also the hauntology of art education that comes into
play, which children are expected to create works that abide by particular aesthetics and
artistic behaviors. Again, this is the myth of pedagogy that Jacotot opposed to (i.e. explication), which only perpetuates the idea that a division of intelligence exists among actors. In other words, explication is haunting. Any pedagogical experience without
“ignorance” (Rancière, 1991) is haunting, insofar as explanation only shows a linear path for those of sans-part to follow. Within this static and unproductive realm of stultification, there is no other way to create meaning. Therefore, in order to produce experience outside of the linear path dissensus is necessary, which could only be materialized upon the knowing of haunting—as a “transformative recognition” (Gordon, 2008, p. 8).

The dotted-lines reading method of Althusser indicated “the presence of the teacher in his absence” (Rancière, 2004a, p. 134). It demanded the students to respond to the “learning” without asking them any questions nor leaving a room for them to ask questions to the teacher. Just like the pages of dotted-lines children were given before the discovery of child art, the pre-drawn lines and dots Ms. Carla exemplified for Oliver and Brian to imitate, as well as the preconceived standard of how to draw a perfect cabbage—converges here with the common thread as the haunting myth of pedagogy. In this sense, Rancière, children of the pre-child-art era, 11-year-old myself at the Art Hakwon, and Oliver and Brian, share some degree of haunting experience from the policing educational disciplines.

However, as Dernikos et al. (2019) suggested, being haunted by ghosts does not automatically mean something bad and traumatic. Rather, being haunted by ghosts
produces different ways of seeing and being (Gordon, 1997/2008) that are non-linear and non-habitual modes of engaging with the world. As ghosts continue to haunt us, “they also watch over us, enabling human beings to “see” anew… For that reason, ghosts deserve our respect, and even our love” (Dernikos et al., 2019, p. 12). Though loving has not been an easy task, I do endeavor to extend my greatest respect to the ghosts that allow me to think of children’s aesthetic experiences differently. Continuing this commitment, the last section of this chapter opens up a discussion to explore the ghostly matters specifically in early childhood education and what it means to be out of the lines in this context and space.

**Exploring Lines and Dots in Early Childhood Art Education**

Children, in many ways, are often told to stay *within* the lines, to learn and meet the normative expectations adults demonstrate. School education reinforces the policing lines—both literally and figuratively—by constraining students to, for example, walk in lines, stay in the lines of classroom time, space, and curriculum (Dyson, 2008), and act within the range of expected behaviors. Though these police function more subtly in early childhood education and care settings compared to secondary school settings, it is not absent. Upon the inception of choice-based education and the Reggio Emilia Approach, a majority of today’s early childhood education curricula and pedagogy stray away from imposing strict rules to children. However, following a history of art education that bound children’s art into a distribution of the sensible, which I have described as hauntological plots earlier in chapter 1, the underpinnings of the curriculum in schools continue to indicate a particular style of art. Namely, the anticipation of particular child-
like style of art works (e.g., developmentally appropriate art, school art), the aesthetics of “good” examples hung on classroom walls, and the step-by-step instructions implicitly command children to stay in the lines. These merely direct children to experience the representational regime of art, art that subscribes to the divisive principle in human activities that decide what is considered art and what is not (Rancière, 2004b). And, though often unspoken, these divisive lines are what children assume to be enforced on them when engaging with art activities and materials. The question is, then, how might the field of early childhood art education recognize the tendency to police young people’s art and thus offer new and different avenues that move towards a dissensual art?

Oliver and Brian’s painting event offers sound starting points of discussion for this inquiry. As they manifested, children willfully traverse out of the lines and inflect the ready-made rules or territories even if modes of political tensions are at stake. They actively open up the art experiences that align with that of the aesthetic regime of art, where the hierarchical systems that controlled the ethical and representational regimes of art become dismantled (Rancière, 2004b, 2011, 2013a, 2015). As seen in the constitution of the dissenting dots, children’s aesthetic art cannot be interpreted without taking the process of subjectivization into consideration. This also affirms the idea that children’s art being a “social practice” (Pearson, 2001): Instead of a residue, it is the process of children’s art that viewers ought to focus on, in which myriad of decision makings and “verbalizations” (Schulte, 2011) are incorporated. It is a “public performance” (Thompson, 2009, p. 32), and, further, a politico-aesthetic performance of re-distributing the taken-for-granted partitions so as to allow for an emancipatory work of making and speaking that would otherwise be excluded.
I acknowledge that I was extremely fortunate to observe and be part of Oliver and Brian’s dissensual event, inasmuch as “politics doesn't always happen—it actually happens very little or rarely” (Rancière, 1999, p. 17). This is especially true in the context of early childhood education classroom, because going out of the lines, to attempt political subjectivization, entails taking the risk of breaking rules, causing disappointment to adults, and, in some cases, being punished as a consequence. Subjectivization entails a laborious process: A recognition of the presumed roles, rules, and expectations imposed—or policed—on those with ‘no parts’; measuring the gap between such orders and the political subjects’ own desire to emancipate from the orders; then executing the desire into action. It is a deliberate enactment of disrupting the preconceived notions to voice themselves as legitimate beings. Also, it is confronting the hauntings yet activating the willingness to overcome the haunted notions that persists to conjure up in everyday lives. This is precisely why I am interested in children’s political manifestations as it is rare as well as a difficult decision for them. Ghostly matters in childhood spaces will always continue to exist in the study of child art, in ways in which speaks to children within its absence. But the possibility to alleviate the haunting experiences also exists, through recognizing events of subjectivization and politico-aesthetic events children engage in. Therefore, I believe that educators in the field of art education and anyone who is an advocate of children’s art ought to inquire how an aesthetic regime might come about in the landscape of art education to study the ways in which adults could might in early childhood education spaces.

On a side note, it is interesting that the children’s negotiations and tensions concerned mostly with Ms. Carla, not so much with the other adult, myself, who was
sitting right next to them. Though I was not explicitly invited to join or expressly involved in the painting event, I took on multiple roles: I was the primary spectator of the work and its process, an occasional responder to the comments and exclaims, as well as an intruder who sporadically asked questions while they were engaged in the art making. In other words, my presence as an adult was affecting the event, but not to the extent that the children recognized as part of the police. Observing the event also affected my perception, as my roles required to continuously negotiate with and refrain from my own assumptions about child art and the accordingly anticipated behaviors it might entail. Perhaps my question, “But did it feel good to draw out of the lines when you drew it?” could read as a leading question. However, as I attempted to position myself as “the least-adult” (Mandell, 1988), I disclosed my curiosity to know whether “going out of the lines” produced genuine excitement without presumptions. Continuing this thought on my positionality, the next chapter discusses ethical considerations of my role and relationship with children at the kindergarten classroom.
Chapter 6
Towards an Emancipatory Art Education Research

Rancière’s radical break from his mentor Althusser and the kindergarteners’ dissensus towards the assumption of the police, have certain emancipatory acts in common: The once-policed beings overturn the expected pedagogical responsiveness, which was to accept the teacher’s beliefs and instructions. They took the difficult journey of dissociating with the symbol of power in order to attain a sense of equality that was already present yet pending to be proclaimed. Then, what happens to the 6th-grade girl who could not even dare to think of disagreement—let alone emancipation—and submitted to the harsh discipline of teachers at the Art Hakwon? Do I pity myself for not even thinking about the possibility of dissensual acts? And, if the ghosts still continue to live with me, will I ever be emancipated from this disciplinary haunt? Instead of situating myself in the endless turmoil of regret, I chose to take the route of contemplating what I can do from now on, which, ironically, I find insight from hauntology.

In Spectres of Marx, Derrida (1994) considers the concept of time as non-linear, as “out of joint.”19 In this dislocated time, the past, present, and future is constitutive of one another, with each containing marks of the others—it is the hauntological imageries folding and unfolding beyond the boundaries of space and time (Maddern & Adey, 2008). In this sense, it compels me to believe that my present experiences contain possibilities to alter and reinterpret the traces from the Art Hakwon, which, in fact,

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19 This quote comes from Shakespeare’s Hamlet, who is lamenting the appearance of his father’s ghost. Derrida (1994) uses this phrase to describe the non-linear and uncontaminated conception of time throughout Specters of Marx.
resides in the broader history of child art being policed by developmental models. My hauntings have yet to come to an end thus offers possibilities to repair my compliance. As such, my struggle for emancipation is to refuse reproducing similar disciplinary haunts in the educational settings and in any human interactions I put myself into. That said, I set forth a commitment to actively dissent towards perpetuating hierarchical power relations that my presence might habitually produce, and instead attend to the heterogeneity of logic by actively presupposing and practicing equality (Rancière, 1991). Specific to my ethnographic case study at the kindergarten classroom, I acknowledge that I carried with me multiple privileged statuses: as a researcher, a graduate student, and simply being an adult. The effects of emancipation, therefore, could be achieved by inquiring how I activate the willful practice of equality between the researcher-participant, teacher-student, and adult-child relationships.

Attuned to the commitment of rewriting my memory with present and future emancipatory acts, this final chapter of my dissertation considers the relational ethics in art education research, with specific attention given to disrupting hierarchies predominant in traditional humanist research (e.g., explanatory researcher and passive subject dynamics). In lieu of these partitions, I argue that we place children at the center of research as a means to highlight their voices, their personal histories, and their culture. In doing so, and as an example of amplifying the worlds of children, I discuss the contentious realm of popular culture, which has long been degraded as lacking nutrition for children’s cognitive development and education. Then, I bring up a collaborative drawing event with Alex, a five-year-old boy at the Bennett Family Center kindergarten classroom, to describe how drawing popular cultural figures guided by his steady
instruction activated the will of “ignorance” (Rancière, 1991). Lastly, I unpack this event to explore the relational ethics of researching with children, as informed by thinkers such as Rancière (1991, 2016), Bakhtin (1990), and Haraway (2016), to name a few. Throughout these unfoldings, I reflect on research in the field of Art Education and suggest how a relational ethics might help us as art educators to rework the current dynamics that structure and mediate our research with children.

**Popular Culture in Early Childhood Spaces**

In the kindergarten classroom, children’s discussions of media culture frequently played a central role in their everyday social activities and art engagements. Though embraced and encouraged in this particular classroom, popular cultural images, generally, have not always been welcomed by adults, especially in early educational settings. It has been a universal controversy between the perspective that regards it as an unhealthy culture that requires adults’ strict monitoring and more tolerant perspectives on children’s exposure to such media culture. In the 1950s, some scholars described popular culture as “cancerous” (MacDonald, 1957), aligning it with the denigrative status of “Kitsch,” which positions it as less than what is commonly viewed as ‘high’ art and culture. Thinking critically about children and popular culture, Mitchell and Reid-Walsh (2002) provide some rather useful insights:

> Popular culture, especially mass-media culture, is often constructed as a monolithic giant, while the child is depicted as a powerless object who is about to be consumed. The researchers see themselves as off-screen saviors, rushing in to save the child who is unable to save himself or herself. The researchers, battling and conquering evil, play the role of the prince in fairy tales. (p. 2)
In reality, it is not only the researchers voluntarily playing the role of saviors, rescuing children from popular culture monsters, but also educators and parents who suddenly reduce children’s ability to passive consumers when exposed to seemingly provocative contents. Indeed, this policing is quite precisely one of the many versions of the distribution of the sensible that positions children as lacking capability to discern qualities in media contents.

Calling popular culture that children consume kitsch, cancerous, or monstrous merely degrades children’s ability of discretion as well as personal tastes and values. This seem to derive from a broader idea the deficit child model, or the pre-sociological child images (James et al., 1998), that view children as, for example, inherently innocent, in a blank slate, or unconscious. It is a broader discourse, in which these Western ideologies of child development perpetuate the tendency to dominate every corner of children’s lives. Anthropologist Ruth Benedict (1955) disrupts the normativity of Western ideas by suggesting that:

From a comparative point of view, our culture goes to great extremes in emphasizing contrasts between the child and the adult. The child is sexless, the adult estimates his virility by his sexual activities; the child must be protected from the ugly facts of life, the adult must meet them without psychic catastrophe; the child must obey, the adult must command this obedience: These are all dogmas of our culture, dogmas which, in spite of the facts of nature, other cultures commonly do not share. (pp. 21-22)

These dogmas of our culture, to “protect” the innocent child in preservation of their uncontaminated nature, is what fuels the polices of the distribution of the sensible. It
restricts the being (e.g., citizenship) and doing (e.g., social activities) of young people, thus pushing them into marginalized partitions. This is not to suggest that all popular media is useful or that we should allow children to be exposed to any type of popular cultural contents. Rather, it is a critique of the adults’ presumption that children are powerless and non-critical consumers, without attending carefully to the ways in which children encounter, consume, and reinterpret such cultural content.

What is important, though, is that children are very much aware of the restrictions placed on their consumption of popular visual culture. Perhaps because the policing of this process is so evident that they often use popular culture as a means to create their own sub-cultures, which run counter to those of adults. Recently, sociologists and educational scholars have viewed children's popular cultural practices as an active process of meaning-making through daily peer interactions and the engagement in such popular cultural contents (Corsaro, 2015; James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998; Kleinfeld, 2001; Yoon, 2018). Specifically, James (1998) suggests that children define themselves as members of a culture of their own, in part because of the ways children work, think and live “out of the lines” the adults have drawn for them:

By confusing the adult order children create for themselves considerable room for movement within the limits imposed upon them by adult society. This deflection of adult perception is crucial for both the maintenance of continuation of the child’s culture and for the growth of the concept of self for the individual child.

(p. 395)

James’ assertion suggests that children deliberately subvert adults’ policing to make room for dissensual movements, which defines what they should appreciate or consume not
only occurs commonly, but also serves as a crucial factor in continuing children’s own culture. This deflection materializes in diverse forms, as children’s culture is constituted by “all of the rules, norms, practices and things children make, do and use, as well as things made for them or sometimes even about them or around them” (Galman, 2019, p. 17). It is the visible and invisible materials, human bodies, and even the personal, social and cultural ghosts that surround children’s lives and their generational position, which varies greatly on the basis of their cultural context. Viewing everyday practices as a potential form of resistance, Michel de Certeau (1984) theorizes that a “nobody”—or, in Rancièrian terms, those with “no parts”—are capable of becoming a producer through the everyday practices of life rather than being the ordinary, passive consumer, and hence, of reconfiguring a given order. According to de Certeau, these everyday practices of consumption entail reading, writing, or consuming various products (e.g., stories, legends, newspapers, and articles of the dominant order), which potentiates consumers becoming “the unrecognized producers, poets of their own acts, silent discoverers of their own paths” thus constituting “wandering lines… in the jungle of functionalist rationality” (de Certeau, 1984, p. xviii). It is these lines of inflection, distinct from the lines of police, that constructs a dissensual consumption and production of culture. In this sense, children’s everyday activities of reading, writing, drawing, and even the seemingly casual talking about popular media culture could function as a site of resistance.

Concerning how children’s resistance manifests in artistic practices, Christine Thompson’s (2003, 2006) observation of the “ket aesthetic” (see also James, 1998) provides a useful example. As mentioned in chapter 1, “ket aesthetics” depicts young children’s consumption of popular culture that often “prevails whenever a slackening of
adult control occurs” (Thompson, 2006, p. 71). For children, in contrast to the adults’ view, consuming this cultural content helps to assert their membership in a generational group that is distinct from other age groups, namely adults. In fact, the media culture images that children choose “provide a common language, pervasive evidence of one’s place in the world, and potent motivations of drawing” (Thompson, 2003, p. 143).

Consuming these popular cultural images often disapproved by adults, perhaps, is part of disrupting the distribution of social parts, emerging to formulate a sense of “we” (Rancière, 2015) as a collective demonstration.

I was also fortunate to observe “ket aesthetics” in the kindergarten classroom as well. When invited to participate in drawing popular culture figures, I disclosed my limited knowledge of even the longest-standing films and TV shows (e.g., Star Wars and Pokémon), as well as the vast and varied forms of contemporary media culture children consume today (e.g., PAW Patrol, Vampirina, Super Wings, etc.). Requesting a drawing, for example, children were quick to demonstrate in great detail the distinctive features and strengths of the characters so that I could learn about and utilize this information in the drawing process. Moreover, rather than a mere replication of preexisting images, the children reconfigured particular stories and scenes that were different from the original image references. At times, this required that I search Google images on my phone for photographic reference. However, I also desired to explore how art experiences might eventuate differently when unaccompanied by such technology. In consideration of this, I often suggested to the children that I draw without photo references, to rely on children’s visual memories and narratives. In doing so, children partook in the work of drawing by directing me, completing my sketch, or coloring in the outlines I drew. Though
unfamiliar, attending to this media content allowed me to demonstrate to the children a certain degree of ignorance toward popular cultural content. The vignette below describes how drawing popular culture figures allowed me to think about relational ethics in researching with children.

**Drawing with Alex**

On a Friday afternoon, Alex comes to the art table and waits patiently for me to finish my drawing. Upon its completion, he asks, "Now can you get a picture on your phone of Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker?" Having drawn numerous Star Wars characters over the last five months, I confidently declare that I now know how to draw both of them without looking it up. Doubtful, Alex asks, "But can you draw the lightsabers clinging together?" In an attempt to reassure him, I say, "I can try." Though Alex’s facial expression remained uncertain, his actions seemed to be giving me permission to draw: Alex quietly picked up two Crayola markers, grey and black, explaining, "This [grey marker] is for Luke Skywalker, and this [black marker] is for Darth Vader." After a short pause, he asked, "Can you please look it up?" Because I wished to see whether I could draw from memory the image and his description, I suggested that if he dislikes my drawing, he and I can draw again by looking at an image. Without an explicit agreement in place, he begins to describe the scene along with step-by-step instructions: "First, draw Luke Skywalker putting his lightsaber up in the sky, then draw Darth Vader's lightsaber laying in against.” My confidence immediately diminishes the moment I begin to draw: “So the lightsaber going this
way?" Without answering my question, he asks, "Can you draw this line a little thicker?" To which I respond, “Yes.” Noticing that the marker I used was dry, Alex quickly leans toward the marker box, saying, "I'll get a different one. After you're done with Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader, can you look up the dock where they are fighting, and then draw the dock under them?" I agreed. By the time the lightsabers were illustrated, Alex desires to color the lightsabers before Darth Vader’s body is drawn. He uses blue for Luke Skywalker's lightsaber, verbally emphasizing that it is under. I ask, “Oh… What's the difference between being under and being over?” Continuing to color in, he explains, “Umm, under, if his is under, they will be blue in the middle here, and [if over] they will be red in the middle.” He proceeds to diligently fill in both lightsabers.

As Alex took a turn to draw, I engaged in conversation with other children who also had drawing requests. Completing both blue and red lightsabers, Alex calls me to attention: "Now can you finish drawing?" He then reaches for a thin black marker and places it on the table closer to me, saying, “Thin marker.” I ask, "Oh, you want me to use the thin markers?" Holding the grey marker close to himself, Alex responds, "Yeah, and you know, grey is only for Darth Vader's gloves, and the rest of him is black. I'll give this to you when it's time." Then, to reaffirm that I am doing the right thing, he says, “You're drawing Darth Vader.” Illustrating with the given marker, I ask, "Do you think his arm can come out from his cape?" He quickly responds, redirecting me: “No, his cape goes here.” The teacher calls attention to the children who had used the block play area (Alex
was one of the children called on to clean up). Before leaving the seat, he looks at me and asks, "Can you keep drawing?"

I proceeded to draw Darth Vader’s arm and a part of his cape. Alex returns shortly thereafter and glances at the drawing. He then grabs a thicker black marker to apply additional lines on top of those I had previously drawn. After thickening the lines a bit, he attached the cap to the marker and placed it on the table, near me. Then, looking at me, he says sternly, "You can start drawing." I say, “Okay—what’s this?” A short answer returns, “Darth Vader.” Pointing at the line next to the arm, I ask, “I mean, this part, what did you draw?” But he only repeated, “Draw the rest of Darth Vader.” I still desired to know about the mark next to Darth Vader’s arm: "Okay, so, is this part of the cape that you drew?"

Alex pauses, and then, fixing his eyes on the paper, sighs. With patience, he then attempts an explanation, “No, that is…that is…now…” Instead of continuing to explain, he takes the marker from my hand and swiftly draws a horizontal line on top of the previously thickened line. He gives the marker back to me with an instruction: "Draw something like the helmet, draw his helmet." I check, "Draw his helmet above this line?" “Yeah, above that line.” Still seeking for a satisfactory approval, I ask, “Like this? Does that look like his helmet?” Alex responds, "Yeah, but then draw his face part.” I continue to raise multiple questions: “Doesn't it look like this? This could be part of his cape, right? From here?” As his eyes trace my hand's movement, he finally confirms, “Um-hmm.” As I asked more questions on the placement of feet and arms, Alex, without answering my questions, again takes the marker from my hand to illustrate as he
wished. At this moment, the teacher calls him again to clean up the pieces he had missed previously. Before leaving the table, he gives me an assignment: "Can you make these lines as thick as this?" (see Figure 11). I continue to draw during his absence. He comes back in seconds and grabs the thin grey marker to thicken the contours of Luke Skywalker. At this moment we were drawing together—I was working on the left side, adding lines to the figure of Darth Vader, and Alex on the right side of the page.

I finished my part sooner. Alex quietly and carefully continues to draw by leaning close toward the table, often backing up to see the whole picture. After doing so, he looks at me and asks, "Can you look up the dock Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker is fighting?" I inquire how it looks like, and he asserts, “No, you have to type it in. Cause' I don't know how it looks like.” Acknowledging that we both needed a reference to continue drawing, I open the Google application on my iPhone to search for the fighting scene Alex described. With the help of the photo reference, we completed the drawing by adding the background dock to the fighting scene.
Figure 7. Alex coloring the blue lightsaber

Figure 8. Alex observes the way I draw Darth Vader’s body
Figure 9. Alex makes sure I continue to draw while he is gone.

Figure 10. Alex listens to the teacher calling him again to clean up the blocks, hesitant to leave the seat. Shortly after, he says, “How could I miss that!”
Figure 11. Alex directs me to thicken other lines like the pointed part.

Figure 12. After finishing the right side of the drawing, he adds marks onto the part I worked on.
Figure 13. He finishes by recoloring the red lightsaber.

Figure 14. Lastly, Alex insists that we need to search an image of the fighting dock.
In the kindergarten classroom, my role developed into that of an artist-in-residence, who at the request of the children assisted in the creation of characters and content related to the children’s popular media interests. Faithful to my role as an accessible drawing tool, I carried out most of the general figure drawings without technical difficulty. But when it came to drawing some of the more specialized content from children’s contemporary media culture, my status among the children immediately regressed—my drawing required assistance in sketching the characters desired by the children. As a recognition of my sparse knowledge, drawing requests were often accompanied with detailed descriptions of the characters’ unique features, or demands that I search for images on my phone, which could then be used to aid my drawing. The point being, that by drawing together, the relationship entailed both the exchange of demands and expertise, as I was reliant on the child’s cultural knowledge to deliver my graphic skills and the child utilized my graphic skills while also demonstrating his mastery of a particular media culture for me.

On the one hand, the process of attending to each other’s needs involved various forms of questioning, degrees of approval, and practices of negotiation. On the other hand, the process of asking for and attending to such questions, of accepting and resisting approval, and of being in negotiation, demanded that each of us, in different ways, establish the will to un-know what it is we think we understand about who the other is, about how they work, and the reasons they have for doing so. While the desire to know was ostensibly set forth and communicated, the process of un-knowing, however, required that each of us foster the willingness to work against ourselves, against the ideas and attitudes that sustain how we see and think the other. When drawing popular culture
figures together, the process often demanded that the child share with the me certain understandings about the popular media culture that was in question—a step that was typically unnecessary when children engaged in drawing with peers. For me, the experience of drawing with Alex often entailed having to relinquish the aesthetic principles and methods of drawing that were most familiar. In lieu of these comforts, I found myself having to attend to the subtle shifts and uncertainties that would emerge, changes that made drawing something I was not accustomed to.  

In exploring the process of working against oneself to accommodate the other, I discuss ‘ignorance’ in drawing with children, a conceptual and ethical orientation that is grounded in the work of Rancière. I reconsider the adult-child relationship, which often subscribes to a dominant asymmetrical structure, whereby the adult gets to assume a form of superiority over the child. Rather than making the suggestion to completely undo these hierarchical relations, I explore a relational ethics of ignorance that brings to the child’s and adult’s traditional roles in relationships of inquiry, different and unanticipated ethical relations, which enable the child, the adult, and the relationship to become otherwise.

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20 I acknowledge that the two main vignettes in this dissertation are about boys. In contemplating why, I can think of two possible reasons: (1) as my personal childhood art education experience failed to act “out of the lines,” Oliver and Brian’s dissensual behavior and Alex’s bold instructions to the adult seemed distinctively emancipatory; and (2) as a female, boys’ cultural interests and actions were less familiar to me, require more—or at least different—forms of attention from me. This is not to dismiss the generational and cultural gap that exist between the girls and myself nor to generalize gender differences. Within the natural occurrences that emerged in the classroom, the vignettes were most pertinent for the topic of my dissertation. Also, as the demographics of the university-affiliated kindergarten classroom were predominantly White, with children from middle-class and well-educated families, the boys I write about tend to be White boys (there was only one non-White boy in the classroom). I point this out because it would be more unethical to pass on as if race, gender, and class did not exist in the classroom environment.
Relational Ethics in Researching with Children

Ethics of Ignorance, Equality, and “Out of the Lines”

As was described in the drawing event with Alex and other kindergarteners, children are the “knowledge holders, the permission granter, and the rule setters for adults” (Walsh, 1998, p. 57). This overturn, of the traditional roles that children and adults occupy in research relationships, closely aligns with Rancière’s (1991) elaboration of “intellectual equality,” where argues that one must assume equality, as “a point of departure” instead of an endpoint, “a presupposition rather than a goal, a practice rather than a reward situated firmly in some distant future” (Ross, 1991, p. xix, original italics). Here, I focus on how these two aspects of equality—presupposition and practice—materialized in my engagements with Alex’s production of drawing Star Wars characters.

First, the presupposition of equality may not entail achieving an identical peer-status between the adult and the child—insofar as age, physical maturity, and cognitive development remain as apparent differences—but rather aims to minimize these differences by enacting a willful ignorance toward the ways in which these statuses center the adult as more-than. In drawing with Alex, a permission to fully disclose my vulnerability was given to myself. On each mark being made, I admittedly exposed how dependent I was on Alex’s guidance, and Alex, in turn, tolerated my unusual level of ignorance in media culture that was so familiar to him. My dependency and Alex’s tolerance were only possible upon the will to learn through the popular-cultural art production. That is, similar to how Télémaque was used in Jacotot’s case in The Ignorant Schoolmaster (Rancière, 1991), the drawing of a Star Wars scene served as a mediator, or what Rancière (2011) calls as the “third thing,” to narrow the skills and cultural
knowledge gap between Alex and I. While Alex brought with him a deep expertise of Star Wars media culture I was able to offer my proficiency in terms of graphic production, thanks to the rigorous technique-oriented art education at the Art Hakwon. Consider, for example, that in spite of the unsettling projection of whether the particular envisioned scene could be precisely illustrated, the child artist willingly took the risk to permit the adult, who knows virtually nothing about the context, to contribute to the production. And I, in spite of having only meager knowledge of Star Wars, proceeded to draw by assuming that I could learn from the child by attending carefully to his patient guidance. We were both knowledgeable of where we were coming from yet ignorant of where we were going.

Furthermore, the collaborative drawing of popular culture figures constituted a practice of intellectual equality on the basis of ignorance that both the Alex and myself operated. One might easily confuse ignorance with indifference, a detached and static attitude toward what is happening at the moment. However, ignorance invites one to think about equality “actively,” as a method of doing equality instead of only having equality (May, 2008). It is a matter of what people do, instead of what they receive, particularly what they do that challenges the roles the social structure assigned to them. When Alex and I relinquished our usual logic of action, together we attended to and affirmed the presupposition of equality. Then, we were also doing this by an active process that involved a deliberate ignorance to the taken-for-granted identities as well as operating the will to accommodate each other in the production of popular-cultural drawing. I further describe this ethics of ignorance along with other ethical considerations in following sections of this chapter.
The kind of equality that was produced in drawing with Alex was a negotiated equality, the many potentials of ongoing, emergent negotiations. I have elaborated earlier that arguing for equality is by no means to suggest becoming completely equal beings, as no two bodies could ever be equal unless they are the same person. Rather, it is a commitment to see what might happen if we set equality as a premise, to see the effects that would emerge differently from not presupposing equality at the first place. As Tanke (2011) echoes Rancière’s idea of equality, he writes:

[Rancière] does not argue that humans are essentially equal, but that all attempts to justify inequality are incoherent. The reason is simple: in order for authority to be more than arbitrary force, it must inevitably give reasons. This process of supplying reasons undermines the claims advanced on behalf of inequality, for when it attempts to explain the hierarchies it would erect, inequality presupposes equality. (p. 56)

In other words, equality is an ethical orientation of activating ignorance, to highlight the incoherency of inequality thus explore what might be produced if one presupposes and practices equality.

In drawing Star Wars figures with Alex, the process goaded me to know and unknow about children and their culture, and to proceed in spite of the dominant social order that often trivializes children’s production and consumption of culture. I learned about children’s shared cultural contexts by taking the role of a drawing companion, one who does not—or does not only—impose knowledge, but also listens to children’s interests and expertise. Alex and I were able to produce something outside of our usual works and roles, what Wilson (2007) refers to as an “other than child/other than adult” (p.
visual cultural production. On the basis of our “will to will” (Rancière, 1991) relationship, an “out of the lines” collaborative drawing emerged.

The process of drawing with Alex also entailed what education scholar Bronwyn Davies (2014) elaborates as “emergent listening.” Different from listening “as usual,” emergent listening seeks for the “not-yet-known” to disrupt one’s judgments and prejudices, attending to “letting go of the status quo and of the quotidian lives embedded in that status quo” (p. 28). If listening as usual aligns with Rancière’s concept of explication—namely, the practice of repetitive knowledge reproduction without demanding any new thoughts to come about—emergent listening invokes ‘ignorance’ that suspends one’s ready-made knowledge to allow critical thinking and the will to unknow to be operated thus generates effects of emancipation. This method of listening suggests not only the adult to listen critically and curiously to children but also, to preserve ignorance to the already-known knowledge about children’s consumption and production of popular culture. Ethics, by definition, is the operation of will to achieve our own beliefs, values, desires, and inclinations, and acknowledging the difference between the uncontrollable power coming from the outside (e.g., others’ beliefs, cultural differences, etc.). It is the will to confront the inevitable cultural and personal differences between one another thus seek for the ways in which reduce the gap. Therefore, activating ignorance is a profound ethical commitment for producing a child-adult relationship of equality.

Rancière’s approach to research provides a useful insight for thinking about the ethics of “out of the lines.” More than writing or teaching, Rancière’s primary interest was in research, especially the archival research of delving into the French working-class
texts. This materializes into his book *The Nights of Labor* (1989), where he demolishes the causal hierarchy by treating the workers’ texts as same as any other texts, a creation “to be studied in their texture and their performance and not as expressions” (Rancière, 2016, p. 29). Rather than viewing the texts as less-than expressions, he took the unconventional perspective to recognize and study them as literary performances. Additionally, in doing the archival research, Rancière (2016) strayed away from the dominant causal logic, as he asserts that the search for a cause is the search for a hierarchy that merely constructs a “plot” that generates a distribution of the sensible of “what is possible to perceive or think” (Rancière 2016, p. 29). Whereas subscribing to causality, or composing a plot, aligns with the usual modes of researching, Rancière’s approach attends to the ethics of ‘out of the lines,’ one that disrupts the normalized order only regarding those assigned as “writers” to produce valid literature works. This, I believe, exemplifies the relational ethics that educators, scholars, researchers, and any interested adult of children’s art should consider: not to regard children’s work as expressions that associates with descriptions such as immature, child-like, or not-yet-developed, but to take their process and product of art making as we would treat any other artwork. It is also the causality in children’s art (e.g., developmental analysis) that we consider dissociating with, as establishing a common logic in children’s art only reduces individuals to a mere sequence of scientific rationale. Though an instantaneous temptation to discover the ostensible cause and effects might arise, I argue that we attend to the particularities (e.g., the narratives, context, lived experiences, and the relationship with human and non-human materials) of children’s art practices for a contextual, and personally meaningful research.
**Ethics of Answerability and Response-ability**

The aesthetico-ethnographic study in the kindergarten classroom not only allowed my outsider membership to move out of the lines, towards the insider culture, but also away from my childhood art experiences. Because the haunting art education I underwent at the Hakwon continuously informs my perspectives on others’ art practices, drawing unfamiliar subjects with children required me to activate my own ignorance. It demanded a willingness to alleviate the haunting voices of what is ‘proper’ art and art education. As a means to “respect” the ghosts (Dernikos et al., 2019), specifically the ghosts of my haunting childhood art education, I hereby attempt to linger with these lines and dots entangled with personal histories and beliefs to inquire whether it might offer ethical insight to researching with children. To begin unraveling these lines in an ethical manner, I turn to philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1990) discussion of ethics, specifically his discussion of the human obligation of “answerability.” Bakhtin’s ethics of answerability underscores the unique demands of responsibility in everyday interaction and textual communication that individuals face as they respond to ‘Others,’ an essential function of understanding and being a Self—or being I—a position into which an ethical obligation to enter to the community dialogically is given. Bakhtin (1990) asserts:

> This ever-present excess of my seeing, knowing, and possessing in relation to any other human being is founded in the uniqueness and irreplaceability of my place in the world. For only I—the one-and-only I—occupy in a given set of circumstances this particular place at this particular time; all other human beings are situated outside me. (p. 23)
For Bakhtin, every human’s divergent subject position is simultaneously fully unique and fully limited. Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism lies on this paradoxical premise, where, in a dialogical moment, the locational self attends to modes of communication (e.g., agreement and/or disagreement) by going “out of the lines.” It is the unique self producing new meanings with the world of the Other, through the process of creating respective ethical postures towards one another.

In the realm of culture, outsideness is a most powerful factor in understanding . . . A meaning only reveals its depth once it has encountered another foreign meaning . . . We raise new questions for a foreign culture, ones that it did not raise for itself; we seek answers to our questions in it, the foreign culture responds to us by revealing to us its new aspects and new semantic depths. (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 7)

Here, the “outsideness,” a desire for difference, exists as “the first pre-requisites for creatively understanding another person or another culture and for being creatively understood by them” (Emerson, 1996, p. 110). To experience and to speak are activities that demand the self to be in chorus of others, as Bakhtin (1990) notes that “in a chorus I do not sing for myself; I am active only in relation to the other and I am passive in the other’s relation to me” (p. 121, original emphasis). This is what the kindergardeners and myself operated in harmony: I was an active operator to the children yet, on my part, I was given the children’s relation to me without the ability to control the responses. Being in chorus, in fact, requires one to set forth vulnerability, one that necessitates exposure to the other(s’) relation to the ‘I’. But because the other’s relation to the self is not something malleable it requires continuous singing, the back and forth of presenting the
self towards the other and exposing the self’s vulnerability as a pre-acceptance of whatever response to come. In my case, although I was visiting the classroom primarily as an observer without any intention to interfere with the natural occurrences in the space, my being was in relation to the children’s community and how they were performing in relation my presence defined my speaking and acting. Similar to Corsaro’s (2015) understanding of children living in between the “two worlds,” the children attended to their everyday lives being in relation to the Others—the adults as well as their peers.

Children not only live in the two worlds of the adult and the child, but also between “the division of nature and culture” (Prout, 2011, p. 7). As mentioned earlier, it is this hybridity of children that engender discomfort to adults for its difficulty to control and fully grasp the phenomenon of childhood. In her book *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Donna Haraway (2016) urges us to continually question our responses and accountabilities, rather than taking them for granted, as well as remain curious about the ethical implications of our acts. Similar to Bakhtin’s answerability, Haraway (2016) introduces the ethics of “response-ability” by demonstrating how string figure games (e.g. Cat’s Cradle) are played. In order to play the game and reach for an end, partners must take turns to accept and relinquish responsibilities. Though Haraway’s post-humanist ideas take other species, environment, and non-human beings into consideration, I find it insightful in understanding adult-child relationships, particularly the drawing companionship I had with children in drawing popular culture figures. We accepted our response-ability to fill in the gap of cultural knowledge and graphic skills between us in order to reach for the end product of a drawing. I must admit that being put in the position of response-ability entailed unsettling tensions, because it is much easier
to be in complete control of anything that seems controllable. Marrying Haraway’s ideas with Rancière, it was our equally endowed intelligences (Rancière, 1991) that enabled us to attend to the drawing companionship being ignorant to the definition of our statuses (e.g., adult and child) yet it was these differences that mattered and had driven the journey of drawing together, as “we are not all response-able in the same ways” (Haraway, 2016, p. 29).

The ethics of answerability and response-ability are not so much about verbal communication but more about a matter of offering our greatest presence. Attending to the subtle nuances and particularities within the relational interaction, it is maximizing our abilities in order to remain curious about the other. This resonates with the methodological practice of “being there” (Schulte, 2011; Thompson, 2009) that not only embodies the verbal and performative interaction with children, but also the often silent act of observation and documentation. The careful and deliberate act of listening, seeing, thinking, and being there operates through a willingness to activate “ignorance” (Rancière, 1991) in researching with children. As such, the ethics of ignorance, answerability, response-ability, being-there, and “out of the lines” demands our full commitment, rather than a suggestion of an optional quality, to view children as “responsive and responsible moral agents” (Juzwik, 2004).

Though I describe these concepts of ethics along with my experience and relational interaction with the kindergarten children, I am hesitant to say that my dissertation functions as an answer to any ethical questions that might arise in art education research concerning children’s art. Rather, my intention is to raise more questions for educators, researchers, and interested adults to reconsider some taken-for-
granted knowledges and practices in the work we do, and further contemplate on how we might venture “out of the lines” in our practices. With arms wide open, it is an invitation to take the journey of complicating and politicizing the often simplified notions about children’s lives and works. As such, if one desires to research, draw, read, write or engage in even seemingly quotidian activities with children, embracing these relational ethics may potentiate new ways of thinking with and about children, out of the lines of our habitual modes of being and doing.
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Appendix

Visiting the Kindergarten Classroom

A typical visit day would begin with walking to Bennett Family Center, which is located in a part of the campus that I do not typically pass through, as there are undergraduate dorms and parking lots nearby. I buzz the bell to have the receptionist open the entrance door for me, which only takes a few seconds. I then sign the visitor’s sheet, writing down my name, affiliation, and arrival time. The kindergarten classroom is the closest to the main entrance, and among the two doors, I normally use the door on the right side, for no particular reason. On both sides there are children’s cubbies—half of the class uses the right-side cubbies and the other half uses the left. I put my jacket and backpack in one of the unclaimed cubbies before entering the classroom. I then take out my spiral notebook from the backpack, along with a pen or pencil, and check my iPhone to see if it is on silent mode. I then open the recording application to begin recording. As the recording starts, I lock my phone again and slowly open the wooden door by pushing the door handle to walk into the classroom. When the noise level greeting me is low, the class is usually engaged in a whole-group activity, sitting in the carpet area facing the teacher who is either reading a book out loud, facilitating discussions, listening to children’s stories, and/or making announcements. If I walk in during carpet time, I quietly sit at one of the small wooden chairs next to the carpet. Some of the children notice my visit by showing a smile or verbally greeting me; often times one or two students will come to me and ask if they can draw on my notebook, to which I reply: “After circle time ends.” And then I gently direct them to pay attention to the teacher’s
words. Often times in the afternoon, I walked into an empty classroom, which means that the class was outside on the playground. When the noise level is higher upon entering the classroom, I immediately notice that children are in small group activities, divided into 3 to 4 groups, across the different center areas. This varies by the time of day. For example, in the mornings, it would be teacher-led small group activities, and in the afternoons, it would be free-choice activities, such as Legos, dramatic play, art, blocks, library, or other open areas of the day (the two slots were occasionally switched). If I entered during this time, I joined the art table, unless of course the children requested to draw on my notebook before I was able to reach the art table.

The kindergarteners’ desire to draw on my notebook persisted throughout the entire eight months. Upon my arrival, the children were often quick to make this request: “Can I draw on your sketchbook?” or “Could you draw me [a specific figure] on your notebook?” Because it was something I had always brought with me, even to the playground, my arrival to the classroom also meant the time to draw on my notebook, particularly with my pen, accompanied with the Google image search tool from my smart phone. Because of the use of Internet on my smart phone, I was often worried that it would interrupt the teacher’s lesson or classroom rules. However, the teachers did not seem to mind that the children used my phone and notebook. After completing the drawings, some children wished to tear it off from the notebook and take it home or gift it to friends or teachers. I tried to listen to the stories involved in the drawing and take pictures before being taken away. As such, a large portion of my visual documentation portrays children using my notebook drawing a variety of figures, from individual work to collaborative works with peers or with myself (see figures below for examples).
Figure 15. Gina and Iris watching Oliver draw Darth Vader.
Figure 16. Branden sitting on my lap drawing on my sketchbook. The figure at the upper right is “the old girl,” who is over hundreds of millions of years old and still alive—and who “always stays alive.”
Figure 17. Christie drawing on my sketchbook with mud at the playground.
Figure 18. At the playground, Alex asks me to draw the Boss Baby, a computer-animated film character, on my sketchbook. After I complete drawing the contour of the Boss Baby, he takes my pen and fills in the sketchbook with Band-Aids, eye patches, and different lines of detail sitting in the blue chair, just like the Boss Baby.
Figure 19. Alex’s drawing of Boss Baby.
Figure 20. I was asked to draw PAW Patrols by Matt. I suggest him that I want to experiment whether I could draw just based on his verbal descriptions. He agrees. Excitingly jumping, he begins to tell all the stories and the characteristics about the boy then about the boy then about each dog. It became a collaborative drawing as Rachel and Joanne join us to draw additional characters on the sketchbook page.
Figure 21. Sophie asked me to draw a princess with a three-point crown and then uses my pen to decorate in the patterns of the dress.
Figure 22. Other sketchbook drawings (1)
Figure 23. Other sketchbook drawings (2)
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