"Mission Hope": An Exploration of Children's Experiences of Hope in Middle Childhood

by

Kristine Nicole Iaboni

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Abstract

Hope is recognized as an important aspect of human growth, change and wellbeing (Erikson, 1964, 1968, 1985; Turner, 2005). Hope has been defined as the anticipation that one's future will be both meaningful and desirable (Stephenson, 1991) and is acknowledged as essential to daily life (Erikson, 1968; Hall, 1990; Obayuwana, 1980; Turner, 2005). Although the concept of hope has been extensively researched in adults from multiple perspectives, research remains scarce on how children develop hope, experience hope and understand hope (Larsen & Larsen, 2004; Stephanou, 2011; Turner, 2005; Yohani, 2008; Yohani & Larsen, 2009). To begin to address the existing gaps in research on children's hope, I examined the research question "how do children in middle childhood (ages nine to 11) experience hope?" Related objectives included exploring how children: (a) understand hope, (b) describe hope, and (c) describe employing hope in their lives. An exploratory, qualitative, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) design was used to realize the research objectives. A convenience sample of eleven participants was recruited by word of mouth and graduate student forums and list serves. Participants individually engaged in a preliminary interview in which they were provided a digital camera and were instructed to take photographs of anything that represents hope to them or makes them feel hopeful in their lives. Following the preliminary interviews, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each child prompted by his or her photo selections. Six main themes emerged from the findings representing children's experiences of hope: (1) hope as relational, (2) hope as personal and unique, (3) emotional and embodied hope, (4) hope challenged/hope present, (5) nature as a source of hope, and (6) other-oriented hope. Two additional findings addressed (a) how participants discussed and developed hope through their involvement in the study, and (b) advice participants had for parents, teachers and other children

based on their experiences of hope. These eight findings are discussed in relation to relevant

hope and developmental literature, providing a deeper understanding of hope experienced in

middle childhood. Implications for research, counselling psychology, school and education, and

parents/caregivers are highlighted, and future research directions on children's experiences of

hope are discussed. This research is amongst the first of its kind to explore the phenomenon of

hope in children, with results assisting in illuminating children's experience of hope and

illustrating the value of engaging with, and talking about, hope with children.

Preface

This dissertation is an original work by Kristine Nicole Iaboni. The research project, of which this dissertation is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, "An exploration of experiences of hope in middle childhood," No. Pro00054339, April 20, 2015.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the amazing children in my life, especially Kayla and Leah.

May you all dare to hope and dream each and every day.

"You have brains in your head.
You have feet in your shoes.
You can steer yourself
any direction you choose…

You're off to Great Places!
Today is your day!
Your mountain is waiting.
So… get on your way!"

- Dr. Seuss

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Childhood can be considered symbolic of hope. Despite uncertainty or disagreeable circumstances, society typically views young children as being resilient, possessing a positive attitude and a sense of possibility for their futures. As Snyder, Hoza, and colleagues (1997) state, "hope and children sometimes are invoked together to suggest that the latter are our hope for the future" (p.400). While foundational theory asserts that hope develops in early childhood (Erikson, 1964, 1968), and there are various benefits associated with hope for children in a variety of contexts, the trajectory of hope development remains an enigma. According to Shorey and colleagues (2003), "if young people learn to be more hopeful…they will be more likely to make commitments, set goals, and work effectively toward attaining those goals. As such, instilling hope in young people should be a societal priority" (p.686). Therefore, an important next step in children's hope research is to understand children's experiences of hope as they develop. Then, professionals may assist children to further cultivate, to strengthen and to maintain hope in helpful ways across positive or negative experiences encountered.

Statement of the Problem

Researchers suggest that "hope lies at the heart of human well-being" (Snyder, McDermott, Cook, & Rapoff, 1997, p.xi). Hope is universally experienced (Jevne, 2005; Scioli & Biller, 2009), and is recognized as an important aspect of human growth and change (Erikson, 1964, 1968, 1985; Turner, 2005). Hope has been defined as the anticipation that one's future will be both meaningful and desirable (Stephenson, 1991) and is understood as essential to daily life (Erikson, 1968; Hall, 1990; Obayuwana, 1980; Turner, 2005). In adulthood, hope is positively related to enhanced life satisfaction (Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004), to increased ability to problem solve (Snyder, Hoza, Pelham, Rapoff, Ware, Danovsky, et al., 1997), to a greater

identified purpose in life (Feldman & Snyder, 2000), and to enhanced self-esteem, academic

achievement and confidence (Snyder, Hoza, et al., 1997). Hope has also been identified as

contributing to beneficial therapeutic outcomes (Larsen & Stege, 2010; Schrank, Woppmann,

Sibitz, & Lauber, 2010). Although the concept of hope has been extensively researched in adults

from philosophical, theoretical, sociological, spiritual and cultural perspectives, research remains

scarce on how children develop, conceptualize, access, experience and understand hope (Larsen

& Larsen, 2004; Stephanou, 2011; Turner, 2005; Yohani, 2008; Yohani & Larsen, 2009).

        In relation to children, hope is seen as vital to visualize a positive, valuable future, and to

develop belief in good possibilities for adulthood (Erikson, 1968). Research findings suggest a

significant and positive relationship between children's hope and desirable outcomes, such as

enhanced school performance and personal adjustment (Gilman, Dooley, & Florell, 2006), more

secure attachments (Shorey, Snyder, Yang, & Lewin, 2003), increased satisfaction with

interpersonal relationships (Snyder, 2002), increased global self-worth (Barnum, Snyder, Rapoff,

Mani, & Thompson, 1998), enhanced coping with adversity (Parkins, 2004), and an inverse

relationship with depression (Snyder, Hoza, et al., 1997). While the value of hope for children is

clear, researchers have not mapped the development of children's experiences of hope, the

understanding of which would provide important foundational information regarding children's

development, potentially making developmentally-informed, hope-focused interventions

possible. The Children's Hope Scale (Snyder, Hoza, et al., 1997), the leading psychological scale

of children's hope used to study relationships regarding hope and children (used in virtually all

research studies on hope in children mentioned above), is an *a priori*, goals-focused scale that is

not informed by research on or with children. Rather, it is transposed from theoretical

conceptualizations of adult hope. The majority of research to date approaches the topic of hope

in children in a quantitative, rather than a qualitative, manner (Farran, Herth, & Popovich, 1995), which overlooks the crucial element of children's personal experiences of hope. Additionally, evidence suggests that the understanding and experience of hope shifts and changes for children over time (Larsen & Larsen, 2004; McDermott & Snyder, 2000), but little is known about either broad shifts or nuanced changes in children's hope across development or context. Considering the evidence-supported value of hope, there are enormous gaps requiring attention in developmental research regarding this foundational human experience.

Purpose of the Study

To begin to address the current gaps in research on children's hope, I posed the research question "how do children in middle childhood (ages nine to 11) experience hope?" Related objectives included exploring how children: (a) understand hope, (b) describe hope, and (c) describe employing hope in their lives. This project sought an inductive understanding of the experience of hope for middle childhood (both unique to each child and common to children in this age category) based on children's stories about their experiences of hope. An interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used in order to answer the above research question. This method of analysis was employed to decipher how individuals understand specific experiences or events (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Therefore, findings from this study represent an exploration of participants' hope experiences.

This study is amongst the first research to specifically focus on interviewing children about their personal experiences of hope. The aim of this project is to make a novel contribution to the field of developmental, educational and counselling psychology, with a specific contribution to our understanding of children's hope. This research may also help inform the development of interventions specific to children and hope within the field of counselling and

educational psychology. Ultimately, with this project, I seek to contribute to a strong foundation in illuminating developmental aspects related to hope in children.

My Personal Background and Perspective as Researcher

I have been witness to the power of hope and the damaging result of hopelessness in both clinical and volunteer experiences. The volunteer endeavour that sparked my curiosity about hope, and helped shaped my preliminary understandings of hope and hopelessness, was a position I held at an organization called *Dans la Rue* in Montreal. This charitable society supports homeless and at-risk youth age 12 to 25. My job at *Dans la Rue* was to work on the nightly food van, which makes several stops around the city, providing food, clothing and toiletries to the youth. Because I had a counselling psychology background, I took an active role in supporting and discussing difficult life issues with the youth, such as feelings of hope and hopelessness. While most of the stories I heard from the youth were about overcoming obstacles, fighting against oppression, and their ability to turn their negative experiences into learning opportunities, there were also many sad and hopeless stories.

I recall one 19-year-old boy in particular, I will call him Phillip, who frequently discussed the idea of suicide and the meaning of existing in a world that had been unjust towards him. He had been in and out of foster homes for years, and stated that he never felt welcomed anywhere. He was out of school, constantly fired from one job or another, and flip-flopped from sleeping on the street to sleeping on an acquaintance's couch. Phillip dabbled with drugs, stating that they often helped him cope with feelings of loneliness and disappointment in a life that was more often than not, miserable. I left many conversations with Phillip feeling hopeless and defeated, regularly taking on the emotional pain and frustrations from his life. My feelings of hopelessness came to a head when, one April night, Phillip did not board the van like he always

did. Week after week, I worried that something had happened to him. There was nothing I could

do but hope he was okay, but I had little hope.

       This experience with Phillip made me further evaluate the question "what does it mean to

have hope and be hopeful?" I began to question how hope develops in children, and how hopeful

experiences may be different for each child. Additionally, I contemplated how hope seemed to be

more present in certain children, and less evident in others. My time with Phillip, *Dans la Rue*

and my various clinical and personal experiences, have strongly shaped my desire for

researching hope. They have fuelled my professional belief in the importance of hope and the

value of further understanding this concept to better serve children. For these reasons, I feel

passionate about hope and the study of hope with respect to children's development and mental

health, as well as devoted to this project and a future program of research regarding children's

hope that could be useful in various settings and communities across Canada.

       I have always considered myself to be a hopeful person. Until the past few years, I never

took the time to analyze what this actually meant. My journey towards a more personal and

academic understanding of hope began at the beginning of my doctoral degree when I registered

myself in a course focused solely on hope. With increased reflections on hope in this course, and

with my evolving role as a therapeutic clinician, I am now able to identify assumptions that I

possess in relation to hope. I view hope first and foremost as multidimensional. This means that I

view hope as directly linked to the people, places and things around me. I recognize how my

hope shifts and changes based on my mood, my surroundings and my experiences. I personally

view hope as both an emotion (e.g., I feel hope deep within my core as a mix of both excitement

and anxiousness as I face uncertainty, and I see hope emotionally present in clients who I work

with through their non-verbal communication) and a cognition (e.g., I think about hope and talk

about hope with friends, family and clients). I perceive past levels of hope and experiences

directly affecting my present and future understandings of hope. I view hope as affected by

external events and resources (e.g., my surroundings and environment), as well as my internal

resources (e.g., my resilience and personality traits). These personal understandings of hope were

a foundational fore-structure as I entered this project. However, I also believe that hope is very

personal, and is experienced differently by everyone. Therefore, I came into this project excited

to learn more about children's individual experiences of hope, rather than hoping to impart my

understandings and experiences of hope on my participants, and was interested in any clinical

implications that could develop based on research findings from the project. By providing

children a platform to express their experiences of hope, I believe we can learn about and better

understand hope in children. We can also use this knowledge to better teach children about hope

and find ways to discuss hope in clinical settings to benefit children's hope development.

Important Concepts

Several important concepts require delineation to help provide a foundation for core

terms used in this paper. These concepts include: hope, middle childhood and experience.

Hope. In the absence of a definition of hope for children in the literature, a definition of

hope to help ground the current study is as follows: "A process of anticipation that involves the

interaction of thinking, acting, feeling and relating, and is directed toward a future fulfillment

that is personally meaningful" (Stephenson, 1991, p.1459). This definition of hope was chosen as

it highlights my understanding of the multidimensional nature of hope, including affective,

cognitive, behavioural and relational components. Furthermore, this definition underlines the

subjective experience of hope, which aligns with the focus of this project aimed at identifying

children's personal experiences of hope. Alongside this definition, it is important to note that I

still remained open to my participants' unique experiences and understandings of hope during

their interviews. Literature on hope will be further described later in Chapter 2.

     Middle childhood. In Western developmental psychology, middle childhood is

commonly characterized as the developmental period between age six and 12. It is seen as the

"transitional period leading to adolescence" (Zembar & Blume, 2009, p.4). Within the field of

healthcare, middle childhood is defined in relation to development. It is characterized as the

stage after early childhood growth and the stage prior to the child reaching puberty. For

educators, middle childhood is believed to begin when the child is cognitively prepared to move

into the elementary grades (i.e., grades one through six) (Zembar & Blume, 2009). For the

purpose of this study, "middle childhood" will be defined as children between the ages of nine

and 11. Middle childhood, and theories attached to this stage, will be further described in

Chapter 2.

     Experience. Various phenomenological researchers adhere to different definitions of the

concept of "experience." However, in regards to IPA, the methodology used in this project,

experience encompasses "…how they [the participants] understand and make sense of their

experiences in terms of their relatedness to, and their engagement with, [a] phenomena" (Larkin,

Watts, & Clifton, p.109). In IPA, a participant's lived experience is personal, and is generated in

the context of the meaning he or she attributes to an experience, the relational connections that

encircle him or her, and the engagement in his or her world (Larkin, Eatough, & Osborn, 2011).

A more nuanced understanding of experience can be found in Chapter 3.

Overview of Dissertation

     An outline of the dissertation is as follows: Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the

topic under investigation, to the researcher and to the research question. Chapter 2 covers two

perspectives from which to view hope, one which focuses on hope as a factor to help children

through difficulties in life, and the other as a factor to assist in the growth and well-being of

children. This chapter also includes a literature review of two key areas: (1) a review of middle

childhood, addressing developmental changes and theories associated with children's growth that

are likely to inform the current research, and (2) a review of hope literature, specifically

addressing what is currently known about hope in relation to relevant hope theories, the

development of children's hope, and the importance of gaining knowledge regarding hope for

use in multiple settings (e.g., the classroom, therapeutic settings). Chapter 3 addresses the

research methodology (i.e., IPA, theoretical foundations) and methods (i.e., a description of

participants, data collection and analysis procedures) associated with the current study. In

addition, a discussion on methodological challenges with children, ethical considerations and

research quality in relation to this study is offered. Chapter 4 discusses key findings of the

present study, and offers rich descriptions of participants' experiences of hope through the use of

direct quotations. Finally, chapter 5 discusses findings in relation to previous literature in the

areas of children and hope. Chapter 5 concludes with a discussion of study limitations, potential

implications of findings and future research directions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter is divided into three parts. First, I highlight two perspectives from which to view hope, emphasizing the potential benefits of further exploring hope in children. Second, I provide a background on middle childhood, focusing on developmental theories and research associated to middle childhood, and the importance of developmental areas for children's hope. Third, I elucidate hope theories and relevant hope research, especially in relation to middle childhood.

Two Perspectives From Which to View Hope

There are two quite distinct ways to view the benefits of understanding the concept of hope within children: (1) recognizing hope as a factor to help children through challenging life circumstances and various developmental changes (i.e., a focus on hope as a potential preventative and coping factor in children), and (2) identifying hope as a factor that can facilitate growth and well-being within a developing child (i.e., a view of hope using a positive psychology lens). These approaches will be explored to illustrate the necessity for further research on the possible benefits and advantages of learning about hope, specifically in the context of children.

Hope and the prevention of challenging life circumstances. Middle childhood presents many complex changes and challenges for children, as well as multiple, competing demands requiring a child's attention. Children today face increased stresses and demands earlier in life compared to children of previous generations (Shonkoff, Siegel, Dobbins, Earls, Garner, McGuinn, et al., 2012), and are continuously in the process of learning new skills throughout elementary school (Vasta, Miller, & Ellis, 2004). Research findings suggest that as they age, children evaluate themselves progressively more negatively (Harter, 1998) and their self-worth

begins to diminish (Rosenberg, 1986). Social comparisons of self to others within their

environment become more common for these children (Moretti & Higgins, 1990). The onset of

puberty also affects those in middle childhood as their physical statures change, hormones

increase and comfort levels with their bodies tend to decline (Bouchard & Johnson, 1988).

Family composition has also changed drastically over the years, which may have a

significant effect on children and children's development. Since the 1990s, proportionally more

children in North America grow up with working parents, and many more live in single-parent

families (Bohnert, Milan, & Lathe, 2014; Child Trends, 2015; Hernandez, 1994). In 2011, 12.8%

of families were female-led single-parent families, while 3.5% were male-led single-parent

families (Statistics Canada, 2012). Moreover, in 2011, 4.8% of children in Canada between the

ages of zero to 14 (i.e., 269,315 children) lived in an intergenerational household with at least

one grandparent, while 557,950 of children in the same age category were living within a step-

family (Statistics Canada, 2012). While some of these changes to the family composition and

shifts in family dynamics may not necessarily be negative (e.g., the presence of a grandparent in

the home is often seen as a protective factor for children) (Barnett, Scaramella, Neppl, Ontai, &

Conger, 2010), they may equally add new demands or difficulties for some children. For

example, familial changes and diverse family households may introduce unique stressors and

challenges to some children, such as moving back and forth between joint custody divorced

parents, adjusting to new step-family members, helping care for aging family members in the

home, or losing attachment security with caregivers who may often be absent because of their

own life demands.

Furthermore, mental health issues for children continue to be prevalent in Canada today

(Parliament of Canada, 2006), with the Canadian Mental Health Association (2016) reporting

that mental illness increasingly impacts the lives of children. Approximately 70% of young

adults dealing with a mental health issue state that their symptoms began early in childhood

(Government of Canada, 2006), and 18% of inpatient hospitalizations for children and

adolescents aged five to 24 in Canada in 2013-2014 were reportedly due to a mental disorder

(Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2015). Research also suggests that children who

experience mental health concerns have a higher probability of suffering from a mental health

problem later on in life as a youth and/or adult (Smetanin, Stiff, Briante, Adair, Ahmad, & Khan,

2011). According to the Canadian Mental Health Association (2016), approximately 10 to 20%

of Canadian adolescents are affected by a mental illness or disorder, and merely one of five

children requiring services for mental health issues receive care. Roughly 5 to 12% of youth

between the ages of 12 and 19 suffer from a major depressive episode, in which approximately

3.2 million of these children and adolescents are at risk for acquiring depression. Furthermore,

suicide is one of the leading causes of death among Canadians aged 15 to 24, accounting for 24%

of all deaths in this age bracket (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2016).

As seen above, a variety of concerns and challenges face children today (e.g., family

changes or mental health distresses), with even more awaiting children in their adolescent years.

Therefore, trying to foster a hopeful orientation early in a child's life may be important and

invaluable. For example, literature indicates that hope has been seen as particularly helpful for

children and youth when facing difficult life circumstances (e.g., Cherrington, 2015; Erdem,

2000; Parkins, 2004), a physical or mental illness (e.g., Danielsen, 1995, Dori & Overholser,

1999; Hinds & Martin, 1988), homelessness (e.g., Herth, 1998), or life transitions associated

with moving into adolescence (e.g., Hinds, 1984; King, 2014; Larsen & Larsen, 2004; Schmid,

Phelps, Kiely, Napolitano, Boyd, & Lerner, 2011). A better understanding of hope, as well as the

various physical, familial and mental health concerns facing children today, may help adults

working with children meet the demands placed on children, and help them better transition

through the developmental changes and stages occurring in their lives. However, it is not simply

enough to understand hope for children who may be facing potential struggles. In addition, we

may look within the field of positive psychology to gain a better understanding of how hope may

be a concept that is beneficial to the growth and well-being of all children.

      Hope and positive psychology. A hopeful orientation is not simply beneficial for

children in times of distress or despair, but is also associated with growth and well-being

(Turner, 2005). Hope is a powerful predictor of an individual's quality of life, and is seen as "an

important health outcome in its own right" (Schrank et al., 2010, p.427). Hope can be used to

empower and enhance what is good, rather than focus solely on moments of overcoming

adversity (Chou, Chan, Chan, Phillips, Ditchman, & Kaseroff, 2013). Moreover, with some

evidence suggesting a causal link between cultivating positive emotions and enhancing health

and well-being (e.g., Fredrickson, 2000), it is important to look at the research in the realm of

positive psychology, as well as Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build theory, to illuminate the

general benefits a sense of hope can provide every child, no matter their circumstances.

      Positive psychology focuses on flourishing in life, and shifts the focus of research away

from thinking about pathology and towards a strengths perspective (Chou et al., 2013). The

premise behind positive psychology is that it is not sufficient to simply look at those who may be

suffering or experiencing difficulties. Rather, it is important to focus on all individuals and how

certain traits may assist everyone to lead richer and more fulfilling lives (Seligman &

Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Martin Seligman, the co-founder of the positive psychology movement,

declares that the goal of positive psychology is to "measure and to build human flourishing"

(2011, p.29), which is done by increasing an individual's positive emotions, sense of meaning,

engagement with themselves and the world, positive relationships and feelings of

accomplishment. In positive psychology, hope is recognized as a subjective asset and described

as a strength that is present in the here and now, but which is also past and future-oriented

(Seligman, 2011). Therefore, according to positive psychology, hope is one such strength that

may help children flourish not only in the face of diversity, but also in everyday life.

Since hope has been described as a positive emotion (Lazarus, 1999; Simpson, 2004;

VIA Institute on Character, 2017), one important theory to consider when addressing the value of

hope within children is Fredrickson's (2001) Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions.

The foundation of this theory rests on the idea that positive affect can facilitate an individual's

engagement with his or her environment (Fredrickson, 2001). This theory postulates that

nurturing positive emotions is fundamental to enhance psychological growth and increase future

well-being. By nurturing certain emotions, individuals become more capable of "broaden[ing]

their momentary thought-action repertoires and build[ing] their enduring personal resources,

ranging from physical and intellectual resources to social and psychological resources"

(Fredrickson, 2001, p.220). This broadening and building process not only helps an individual in

the present, but also helps in future moments of need. An example using this theory is as follows:

If an individual has a positive experience leading to positive affect (e.g., having fun when

playing soccer and feeling hopeful and content), he or she will likely engage in similar

experiences in the future (e.g., play soccer again). In addition, this positive affect may lead to

both positive action tendencies (e.g., the urge to play soccer more frequently) and positive

psychological changes (e.g., increased healthy behaviour such as exercising and continued

feelings of hopefulness and happiness). Conversely, negative affect (e.g., feeling down about a

soccer performance or a general unhappiness and lack of hope derived from playing the sport) can narrow an individual's viewpoints (e.g., always focusing on the lack of goals produced), leading to his or her disengagement of activities (e.g., quitting soccer), and/or causing survival-oriented behaviours to develop (e.g., pretending to be sick so as to not have to play soccer). The action of broadening and building one's emotions leads to an increase in building skills and resources in an individual over time, while the opposite is true for negative emotional experiences (i.e., these circumstances tend to limit an individual's thoughts and decrease his or her propensity to build skills and resources) (Fredrickson, 2001).

Over the years, research on the broaden-and-build theory itself has flourished. Research studies in this field indicate that individuals who experience and display positive emotions (which encompasses hope according to this theory) are more resilient (Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, & Larkin, 2003), more socially connected (Kok, Coffey, Cohn, Catalino, Vacharkulksemsuk, Algoe, et al., 2013; Mauss, Shallcross, Troy, John, Ferrer, Wilhelm, et al., 2011), more readily take others' perspectives (Waugh & Fredrickson, 2006), more optimally functional in everyday life (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005; Mauss et al., 2011), and build personal resources more easily (Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek, & Finkel, 2008). While much of the research around the broaden-and-build theory is focused on adults, findings that highlight the value of this theory, and the value of hope as part of this theory, are promising for children as well. Therefore, when reviewing this theory with hope in mind, the act of a child nurturing hope and a hopeful orientation can lead to him or her further engaging with his or her world, and thereby build resources to help his or her development.

Research on the broaden-and-build theory also suggests that positive emotions have the capability to undo the effects of, or help an individual cope more efficiently with, negative

emotions (e.g., hope may help alleviate the negative feeling of fear or judgement) (Fredrickson, 2001; Fredrickson, 2013). Research on this "undoing effect" suggests promising results for an individual's health and well-being. For example, individuals feeling both amused and content experience a quicker recovery from cardiovascular after-effects of negative emotions (i.e., fear, sadness and anxiety) (Fredrickson & Levenson, 1998). Additionally, preliminary support was provided for the undoing effect in Falkenstern and colleagues' (2009) study measuring cognitive processing changes of 86 college students. Students were twice randomly induced into three different affective states (i.e., positive, negative and neutral). Results indicated that students who were induced into a negative affective state were able to undo the cognitive effects of the negative emotions when induced into a second, positive affective state. These same students (i.e., going from a negative to a positive affective state) also had faster reaction times from state one to state two on a letter-identification task compared to the group induced into two positive affective states in a row (whose reaction times did not change). The above research provides support for the notion that positive emotions themselves, with hope being one such important emotion, can assist in broadening and building every child's resources for an overall healthier and better-adjusted life. Research also suggests that a hopeful orientation may be able to assist children in undoing the effects of previously experienced negative emotions and difficult circumstances in their lives.

The current research project focused on examining how children in middle childhood (9-11) experience hope. Keeping the two reasons for looking at hope in middle childhood in mind (i.e., amelioration of negative impacts during challenging life events and enhanced growth and development), hope for this population can perhaps be both a means to assist with issues of prevention and coping, as well as to increase overall well-being in every child, no matter what

their circumstance. By developing a clearer understanding of hope in children, we can better

prepare children to meet adversity, and help them thrive and flourish in their everyday life.

While an understanding of both avenues of hope is significant, it is also important to provide

background information on the development of children, as well as relevant theories associated

with research on children and hope.

Background on Middle Childhood

The following section explores developmental and ecological theories relevant to middle

childhood and hope development, and highlights fundamental changes and challenges

experienced by those in this population that may influence the research participants and the

findings in the present study.

Bio-ecological theory of development. There are multiple theories in the developmental

literature that aim to describe the growth of a child, the changes associated with a child's

development, and the influences related to a child's development. One such overarching

developmental theory that may guide our understanding of the development of hope, and the

effects of individual and environmental factors on hope, is the bio-ecological theory.

The bio-ecological theory developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) is a perspective that

begins to illustrate the intricacies of a child's development, as well as contextual influences on

their development. Bronfenbrenner highlights the notion that a developing individual can be seen

as a biological system that networks with other external systems. In this theory, an individual (or

in this case a child) is in constant interaction with his or her environment, and what occurs in one

affects the other. These interactions occur at four different levels: (1) the microsystem (i.e., the

child's interactions with other people, such as a teacher or parent), (2) the mesosystem (i.e., the

direct or indirect interactions of two of more microsystems, such as a parent interacting with

their child's tutor), (3) the exosystem (i.e., peripheral influences that directly or indirectly

influence a child's development, such as a parent losing their job), and (4) the macrosystem (i.e.,

broader influences on a child's development, such as religion or culture) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979;

Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1983). Each of these levels is related to the levels beside them, where

they all affect each other.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the synthesis of subjective factors (derived from the

individual) and objective factors (derived from environmental experiences) ultimately shapes the

development of a person from childhood to adolescence. A child progressively develops via

ongoing activities and experiences (e.g., playing with others, reading and writing). These

activities and experiences become more intricate and frequent as the child ages (Bronfenbrenner

& Ceci, 1994). These interactions between a child and his or her environment help build skills,

knowledge, aptitude and drive within that child, and are hugely affected by subjective

experiences (e.g., feelings, perceptions) (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). Bronfenbrenner and

Morris (1998) suggest that positive and negative experiences from a child's past may impact how

they mature and grow in the future.

There are multiple experiences, changes and challenges that arise during a child's life that

may impact his or her development, and which are influential relative to the four different levels

of interaction present in Bronfenbrenner's theory. Hope, and a child's experiences with hope, is

likely to be one factor contributing to that child's subjective experience, and which may alter or

shape experiences and interactions within his or her developmental trajectory. Indeed,

Bronfenbrenner directly, but briefly, identifies the importance of hope in his theory by

highlighting the important influence of children's interactions with adults on hope development

(Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Various developmental changes within middle childhood that

are likely to be important for the growth and understanding of hope, as well as impactful on the

interaction of the four systems present in the bio-ecological theory, are described below.

        Important changes and possible challenges in middle childhood. Although the

developmental trajectory of hope has yet to be described in research, understanding

developmental aspects of middle childhood may help us understand the value of hope from a

child's point of view, the role hope may play in the lives of children, and how various

developmental aspects may influence children's hope. Therefore, four developmental areas are

considered: (1) cognitive development, (2) language development and academic achievement,

(3) affective development, and (4) social development. Each section will describe salient changes

and difficulties present for children, relevant research linking to hope, and the value of further

understanding hope for future research.

        Cognitive development. When most children reach the age of six or seven, their cognitive

abilities begin to grow and further develop. They become increasingly capable of managing more

intricate problem-solving tasks (Zembar & Blume, 2009) and become vastly more logical than

younger children (Vasta et al., 2004). Children at this age possess increased ability to retain

information in memory and retrieve this information quicker than they previously could (Kail,

1990, 1991; Schwartz, 2017). Those in middle childhood have a greater number of worldly

experiences compared to younger children, and as a result, have a larger and richer knowledge

base (Zembar & Blume, 2009). They also have greater abilities to selectively attend to stimuli

compared to their younger counterparts, and have an augmented aptitude to disregard internal

and external distractions (e.g., instinctual desires, invading or irrelevant thoughts, behaviours

and/or feelings) (Lin, Hsiao, & Chen, 1999). However, it is important to note that attention

deficit hyperactivity disorder is also most commonly diagnosed within this age category

(Brownell & Yogendran, 2001). When reflecting on the cognitive changes occurring in children, one may assume that areas such as a child's memory (e.g., remembering past hopeful experiences), knowledge base (e.g., understanding the difference between having hope and being hopeless), attention (e.g., focusing on the task at hand to reach one's goal) and ability to problem solve (e.g., doing X will help increase feelings of hopefulness) may greatly enhance a child's ability to discuss their experiences of hope, as well as access a more hopeful orientation to life.

Jean Piaget's (1963) Cognitive Developmental Theory depicts how a child comes to comprehend the world around him or her, and how he or she begins to develop internal cognitive conceptions about this world based on his or her multiple experiences and relations with others and the environment. Piaget believed that cognitive development is impacted by both environmental and biological properties (Zembar & Blume, 2009). He outlined stages of cognitive development, suggesting that middle childhood falls within the concrete operational phase. In this phase, a child develops the capacity to apply logical thought to concrete problems. The child is no longer constrained by thinking egocentrically (i.e., he or she can focus on the perspectives of others and not simply his or her own perspectives), and tends to be more able to foster internal representations about distinct things (i.e., objects that can be seen, touched or experienced) (Piaget, 1963). A child in middle childhood is able to comprehend how one material state (e.g., solid to liquid) can alter to another, and has the ability to integrate a number of events, looking at the events as a whole with a start and finish, rather than as individual points in time (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969). In addition, a child in this phase tends to better understand causal relationships and be more inquisitive in nature (i.e., they ask more questions that start with "why" or "how come") (Zembar & Blume, 2009). With the enhancement of cognitive abilities evident between Piaget's preoperational phase for two to seven year olds (i.e., where children are described as less logical and less likely to understand more complex concepts such as hope) to

concrete operational phase in middle childhood (i.e., where children are described as more logical about concrete experiences and objects, and possess a growing ability to understand the abstract), it seems more likely that a child will have a better understanding of his or her hope experiences, making it more possible to discuss them.

More recently, there has been an emerging view on cognition entitled Embodied Active Situated Cognition (EASC). EASC "focuses attention on the fact that most real-world thinking occurs in very particular (and often very complex) environments, is employed for very practical ends, and exploits the possibility of interaction with and manipulation of external props" (Anderson, 2003, p.91). This approach stresses that cognition is not solely something that takes place in the mind (Gallagher & Zahavi, 2007), but should be recognized instead as: (a) situated (i.e., sensitive to context), (b) temporal (i.e., fluctuating depending on available time); (c) distributed (i.e., an individual unloads portions of their cognitive work onto the environment, and therefore the environment co-creates the cognitive system); (d) engaged in the environment, and consequently concerned with taking action (i.e., intentional actions); and (e) embodied (i.e., the body outlines an individual's perceptual contributions to the world) (Wilson, 2002). Ultimately, EASC stresses that the mind is "no longer seen as passively reflective of the outside world, but rather as an active constructor of its own reality" (Iyer, 2002, p.389). According to this approach, the meaning and experience of hope would be expected to vary across situations, time and environment, and would be dependent on who is involved or around the child.

There is a considerable amount of research illuminating connections between the presence of hope and cognitive processes. One of the leading hope researchers, Carl Snyder (to be further discussed later), depicted hope as entirely cognitive and wholly goal-focused. Based on this cognitive perspective of hope, Snyder, Rand, and Sigmon (2002) suggest that individuals with higher levels of hope should have enough cognitive flexibility to discover alternate goals

when their first goals are obstructed. Other research findings support this claim, indicating that

individuals who demonstrate low levels of hope are inclined to ruminate inefficiently about

being in an obstructed state (Michael, 2000; Snyder, 1999), and possess increasingly negative

thinking patterns compared to those who exhibit high levels of hope (Snyder, Sympson, Ybasco,

Borders, Babyak, & Higgins, 1996). Similar findings are evident in adolescents, where Barnum

et al. (1998) found that youth who reported holding higher levels of hope were better able to

generate more positive solutions and were more efficient at finding ways to problem solve, thus

decreasing their need to act out. In children, it is reported that those with higher hope are better

able to attend to specific illness-related information than those of lower levels of hope

(Vernberg, Snyder, & Schuh, 2005).

The theories and research mentioned above illustrate links between cognitive processes

and hope. These links highlight the value in further understanding children's experiences of

hope, and the development of hope in this population.

Language development and academic achievement. Although language development

and academic achievement can fall under the category of cognitive development, their

importance for hope development seems to call for specific attention and explanation. Children

in middle childhood have a vocabulary that is growing exponentially (Brown, 1973). They gain

approximately 6,200 new words in their vocabulary every year between grade one and high

school (Owens, 1996). Furthermore, they start to develop an understanding of the disparity

between the active and passive voice (O'Grady, 1997), and comprehend the proper use of "a,"

"the" and conjunctions (e.g., however, but) (Vion & Colas, 2004). In middle childhood, children

better understand the social etiquette of language, also referred to as pragmatics (e.g., leaving

room for the needs of the listener), and are superior at clarifying the meaning behind their

statements (Ninio & Snow, 1996). As children progress in age, they are better able to use their

burgeoning language skills to communicate with those around them. This may, in turn, help them

communicate and describe their experiences with the elusive concept of hope.

In addition, it is interesting to note gender differences in language development during

childhood. From a biological standpoint, boys of all ages (i.e., childhood to adolescence) tend to

develop language later (Gleason & Ely, 2002) and score lower on measures of verbal production

(Hyde & Linn, 1988) compared to their female counterparts. Additionally, the social

construction of language suggests that since genders participate in different activities from a

young age, different forms of communications develop (Coates, 2015). For example, Leaper

(2000) showed how girls tend to engage in domestic fantasy play most likely containing

collaborative conversations accentuating affiliative speech, whereas boys tend to be involved in

more constructive play that includes task-oriented conversations emphasizing assertive speech.

These gender-typed ways of play are further reinforced by peers and social pressures,

encouraging girls and boys to act in ways that are in line with their gender (Braun & Davidson,

2017; Fagot, 1977). For example, girls are supposed to act in "nice" and "cute" manners,

whereas boys are supposed to act "tough" (Leaper, 1994). The ways in which children act thus

continue to shape how they develop and use language (Coates, 2015; Maltz & Borker, 1982).

Moreover, different roles and responsibilities imposed by one's society and culture continue to

perpetuate and develop gender differences. For example, girls learn to employ words in order to

generate and sustain a feeling of closeness with others by using "supportive and inclusive types

of speech," while boys learn to assert themselves while engaging in competitive or instrumental

play by using "commands and challenging statements" (Leaper & Smith, 2004, p.996). Finally,

in a meta-analytic review of gender variations in children's language use, girls were overall seen

to be slightly more talkative than boys' and talked significantly more than boys in child-adult

interactions (Leaper & Smith, 2004). The latter finding was partially attributed to parents' use of

speech with gender different children, in which it has been shown that mothers tend to be more

talkative with their daughters than with their sons (Leaper, Anderson, & Sanders 1998).

Gender differences, specifically in the context of language development or whether

individuals who identity as being part of different genders experience or develop hope

differently, may be particularly beneficial considering the current study, in which children of

both genders were asked to discuss and explore their experiences of hope. Although very little

research has been done on possible gender differences in hope, a hint of this can be found in

Larsen and Larsen's (2004) study of adolescent self-metaphors. In this study, hope seemed to be

part of the identity development for both girls and boys, and while male adolescent participants

largely described a component of their hope as having the ability to be productive, female

participants reported hope was fostered from their ability to navigate social situations. It appears

that gender may play a difference in hope focus, though additional research is needed to

elucidate this early finding.

As a child advances throughout middle school, learning becomes much more challenging,

and academic demands begin to increase. Children transitioning into grade four face many new

learning experiences, and are stretched cognitively, linguistically and conceptually in school

(Zembar & Blume, 2009). Among children within the transitional period between elementary

and middle school, there tends to be a significant decrease in motivation and academic success

(Eccles & Buchanan, 1996). Disengagement for children heightens if they are too challenged by

the curriculum or if they are bored with school (O'Connor, 2011). Given that hope is often

associated with life engagement in adult populations (Bruininks & Malle, 2005), understanding

hope may be helpful during these difficult changes and transitions in and out of school,

particularly with increased academic pressures as children progress through elementary school.

There is also evidence of the importance of hope in relation to academic achievement.

For example, children's hope has been shown to moderately predict academic success.

Elementary school children with higher levels of hope showed higher overall achievement test

scores in comparison to children with lower levels of hope (Snyder, Harris, Anderson, Holleran,

Irving, Sigmon, et al., 1991). Furthermore, among adolescents at risk of dropping out of high

school, those with higher hope were less likely to drop out compared to those with low hope

(Worrell & Hale, 2001). Adolescents with low hope were also shown to have lower overall

grades, lower personal adjustment and overall satisfaction with life, less involvement with

extracurricular activities, and increased levels of distress than adolescents demonstrating average

or higher levels of hope (Gilman et al., 2006). Although these studies demonstrate the

importance of hope for children and youth, they once again use a hope scale uninformed by

research on children themselves and define hope as equating to goals. Nevertheless, in light of

the apparent relationships between hope and both language development and academic

achievement, it is important to further understand how children both experience hope and

describe these hope experiences.

Affective development. Affect development is also important to look at when considering

hope development. Affect development is one's outward expression of one's emotions (Vasta et

al., 2004). It has been referred to as the most vital component to learning and teaching (Iozzi,

1989), and affect presumably plays a large role in helping a person build connections among his

or her experiences (Fast, 1985). According to Fast (1985), affect can provide the foundation for

the development of one's self-concept. During middle childhood, children are developing a sense

of self-competence (i.e., the child's understandings of his or her personal skills and aptitudes)

and self-worth (i.e., the child's development of self-esteem grounded in his or her embodiment

of others' positive regard towards them). For children of both genders between grades three to

six, there is an increase in self-rated self-competence scores for academic ability, athletic skill

and social acceptance, and a decrease in evaluations of physical appearance and behavioural

management (Cole, Maxwell, Martin, Peeke, Tram, Hoffman, et al., 2001). Approval from peers

quickly becomes more important than a child's personal sense of self-worth in grades six to eight

(Harter, 2012; Harter, Stocker, & Robinson, 1996), and motivation to gain peer approval is seen

as a factor influencing positive engagement with peers and fewer conflicts or disagreements with

peers (Rudolph & Bohn, 2014). Emotional competence (i.e., the capacity to comprehend

emotional states being experienced, appropriately understand affective incidences with others,

and regulate emotions) also expands during middle childhood (Zembar & Blume, 2009).

Children at this age are more adept at managing their affective levels by pursuing rewarding

endeavours, while evading negative ones (Salovey, Bedell, Detweiler, & Mayer, 2000).

　　　　An understanding of the affective development of children provides a richer appreciation

of their abilities and experiences, which is likely related to hope as an emotional experience.

Though scholars consistently regard hope as an emotion (e.g., Lazarus, 1999; Simpson, 2004),

hope as an emotion in childhood has received virtually no attention. Employing Snyder's

cognitive hope scale with adults, research findings suggest that augmented levels of hope are

positively correlated with positive affect and negatively correlated with negative affect (Snyder,

Harris, et al., 1991; Snyder, Hoza, et al., 1997). Not only has the ability of an individual to

display higher hope been linked to a more meaningful life (Feldman & Snyder, 1999), but

therapeutic interventions using hope have been shown to positively impact an individual's

understandings of themself, their sense of purpose and their feelings of self-worth (Larsen &

Stege, 2012). Once again, however, this research was completed with adult samples. Such

research points to both the likelihood that emotional intricacies may be at play during the

development of hope, and to the possible role of emotion in children's hope experiences.

However, this has yet to be investigated.

Additionally, the concept of embodied experience (or a "felt sense" as being part of an

experience) is a component of a child's affect that is important to further explore for the purpose

of this study (and one that fits with the phenomenological perspective underlined in Chapter 3).

Embodied experience can be described as "people's subjective, felt experiences of their bodies in

action" (Gibbs, 2003, p.2). Research identifying hope as an embodied experience has begun to

emerge. In Yohani and Larsen's (2009) study with refugee children in Canada, the authors

suggest that an embodied experience derived from participants' hope being "present in their

hearts" (p.252). They deemed this embodied experience to be linked to "both energizing and

calming activities" (p.259). Additionally, King (2014) found a major theme in adolescent girls'

experiences of hope to be that of an embodied sense of hope. She discussed how participants

regularly related hope to physical energy and movement, and saw hope as "experienced

physically by the participants and allowing them to actively and positively engage with their

surroundings" (p. 70). These are just a few indications that an embodied experience of hope is

also important to consider when attempting to understand the process of hope for children.

Social development. Researchers indicate that children in middle childhood begin to

transition from dependency on others to a more independent stance on life (Decker, 2011;

Stevenson, 2017), with a greater capacity to affect their own good in their world (Zembar &

Blume, 2009). At this stage, children begin to understand how the success or failure of their

goals compare, or are affected by, those around them (Ruble & Frey, 1991; Weiss, Ebbeck, &

Horn, 1997). Children's ability to see others' perspectives and comprehend what others may be

thinking is also strengthened and more sophisticated at this age as they move away from

egocentric thinking towards social perspective-taking (Durkin, 1995; Flapan, 1968; Sierksma,

Thijs, Verkuyten, & Komter, 2014). Between the ages of eight and 11, a large majority of

children can put themselves in another person's place, as well as wonder about another person's

objectives and behaviors (i.e., reciprocal role-taking) (Birch, Li, Haddock, Ghrear, Brosseau-

Liard, Baimel & Whyte, 2017; Zembar & Blume, 2009). With the development of these skills,

children begin to navigate more easily through interpersonal conflicts (Selman, 2003). These

social developments, and interactions with others in a child's environment, may be invaluable to

a child's hope development (further discussed in the section on attachment and hope).

According to Piaget (1965), it is also during middle childhood that children are

commonly able to contemplate the consequences of their actions. There is a steady increase in a

child's ability to integrate consequences and intentions as they develop (Grueneich, 1982).

Kohlberg (1971) extended Piaget's notion that children develop progressively more mature

abilities to problem-solve as they age. Kohlberg described six main stages of moral reasoning

development. He stated that children between ages five to 18 progress through two out of three

levels of moral reasoning: preconventional and conventional. In the preconventional level,

children transition from employing punishment and compliance rules to inform their actions

(e.g., trying to avoid being grounded for poor behaviour or following the rules to be seen as a

good student) towards doing what is right in order to satisfy a personal need or often the needs of

others by using rules of fairness, equality and reciprocity (e.g., helping a friend out who has

helped you out). By middle childhood (i.e., 10 years and older), children reach the conventional

level of moral reasoning. Here, children begin to understand others' viewpoints and take action

based on the expectations of their family, social group, community, etcetera without worrying about apparent consequences (e.g., acting in a way that would please the teacher). Children eventually position themselves towards following rules, sustaining social order and obeying authority (e.g., showing respect for the police). While there has been some debate on the legitimacy of Kohlberg's stages of moral reasoning (see Aron, 1977 or Carpendale, 2000), and critique regarding whether this theory applies equally well to both genders (see Jordan, 1991), Kohlberg's theory helps illuminate some of the personal and social changes in morality and intellectual understandings occurring during middle childhood. Therefore, contemplating these changes, and the progression through different levels of moral development, in regards to child's hope development may be merited.

The issue of fairness becomes a large concern for this population as well. By the time children are eight years of age or older, they are able to use principles of equality and merit when making decisions (Damon, 1975; Shaw, Montinari, Piovesan, Olsen, Gino, & Norton, 2014). By 10 to 12 years of age, children begin to understand that fairness does not necessarily equate to equality (Nucci, 2001). Children begin to demonstrate prosocial behaviours (e.g., altruism, empathy, sharing) and/or antisocial behaviours (e.g., aggression, delinquency, bullying) more readily in middle childhood (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998; Coie & Dodge, 1998). These developmental issues seem particularly relevant given the newly emerging literature on the possibility of adolescents possessing other-oriented hope. For instance, research by both King (2014) and Howell and Larsen (2015) emphasize that younger individuals do hold hope for others. Yet, little research exists acknowledging the potential presence of other-oriented hope within children's hope experiences.

Finally, the role of friendships is increasingly more important in middle childhood, as is creating a social identity for oneself (Bukowski, Buhrmester, & Underwood, 2011). For younger

children, friendship is often seen in activities that involve sharing, whereas for children in middle

childhood, friendship begins to be more meaningful since it is recognized as something that may

last a substantial period of time (Parker & Seal, 1996). Loyalty for friends begins to shape

around age 10 or 11 (Bigelow, 1977) and becomes increasingly important as a child develops

(Erwin, 1998). However, friendships remain tumultuous at this age, where many relationships do

not last in the face of difficulties or fights (Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 1998). Friendships

become much more collaborative, intimate, trusting and supportive in the later years of middle

childhood (Azmitia, Kamprath, & Linnet, 1998), and children who experience close friendships

tend to experience increased levels of happiness, life satisfaction and self-esteem, and decreased

levels of loneliness, depression and victimization compared to those with limited social

connection (Holder & Coleman, 2015). It is also during middle childhood that children begin to

develop their own personal identities. As such, children come to understand themselves based on

what they excel at and how others perceive them (Damon & Hart, 1988). As children develop,

they begin to construct ideas on who they want to be in the future (i.e., a kind of hope for the

future) (Elkind, 1967), and identify themselves based on group membership (e.g., gender,

ethnicity, religion, peer group) (Braun & Davidson, 2017; Nesdale, Zimmer-Gembeck, &

Roxburgh, 2014; Turner, 1987). Both areas (i.e., the role of friendships and how children identify

themselves) are seemingly relevant for hope development in children, especially given the

connections between hope and relationships in adulthood. However, there is little formal

research as to the significance of the above areas, and their relationship to hope, in childhood.

Some connections do exist between cognitive-orientations to hope (i.e., a focus on goals)

and children's social development. For example, higher levels of hope are positively correlated

with children's perceived social support (Hagen, Myers, & Mackintosh, 2005), and negatively

correlated with overall substance use (i.e., alcohol, tobacco and marijuana) in adolescence

(Wilson, Syme, Boyce, Battistich, & Selvin, 2005). Children with increased levels of hope have also demonstrated an increased likelihood to be socially desirable, and tend to present themselves more positively compared to those with lower levels of hope (Snyder, Harris, et al., 1991; Snyder, Hoza, et al., 1997). These results indicate that those who are more hopeful may be more mindful about the impressions they make on others (Rand & Cheavens, 2009). Additionally, research studies demonstrate that individuals with high levels of hope have an increased likelihood of having close connections with others since they are interested in the goals of others in their network, along with their own personal goals (Snyder, 1994; Snyder, Cheavens, & Sympson, 1997). Individuals with high levels of hope are also able to more easily consider the perspective of others (Rieger, 1993) and better appreciate social interactions (Snyder, Hoza, et al., 1997). With evidence for relationships between an individual's social experiences and his or her overall sense of hope, accounting for and understanding the social development of children is instrumental when aiming to understand their experiences of hope.

Although not an exhaustive description, the topics discussed above begin to outline a picture of children in middle childhood, and the potential relevance of various developmental areas when considering experiences of hope in middle childhood. Despite variations in rates of growth for each individual child, development within middle childhood more strongly predicts behaviours and achievement in adolescence than does development in early childhood (Collins, 1984; Feinstein & Bynner, 2004; Magnuson, Duncan, & Kalil, 2006). It is during middle childhood that children are planning for their transition into adolescence, while simultaneously navigating different life choices thrown their way (e.g., what to study in school, what extracurricular activities to participate in, with whom to maintain friendships) (Zembar & Blume, 2009). Results from a study by Tsuzuki (2012) looking at the change process of hope in fifth to

eighth grade children suggest that adolescents' hope for the future progressively deteriorates as both boys and girls age. Therefore, it seems especially important for children during middle childhood to develop an understanding of hope within this crucial period, and perhaps equally important that those working with students in middle childhood recognize how hope is experienced and enacted by children at this stage.

With a foundation in the development of children in middle childhood, and how this unique period may have bearing on the current project, we now shift attention to the concept of hope, as well as pertinent models of hope that serve as the foundation for the current project.

Background on Hope

Hope is a complex and elusive concept that is hard to conclusively define. Hope has been described as both a cognition (Snyder, Lopez, Shorey, Rand, & Feldman, 2003; Staats & Stassen, 1985) and an emotion (Lazarus, 1999; Simpson, 2004). It influences those who feel either its presence or its absence (Hinds & Gattuso, 1991). Hope is associated with both courage and trust (Jevne, 1991), but is not optimism or self-esteem (Snyder, 2000). Hope has been deemed both fluid and temporary (Farran et al., 1995), yet is understood as a universal experience (Miller, 1989). Hope can be experienced but cannot be touched, and can alter an individual's life when witnessed, revealed, communicated or sensed (Jevne, Nekolaichuk, & Boman, 1999). The experience of hope is unique to everyone, crosses cultures and religions, and is influenced by a person's life situation (Jevne et al., 1999). Hope can also be experienced despite significant probabilities against it (Jevne, 1991), and while multiple circumstances can appear to threaten hope (i.e., illness, age, difficult life situations), it can survive (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Miller, 1989). Hope is not simply present or absent, but is dynamic and varies in levels or degrees (Hinds & Guttaso, 1991), and is shown to comprise both *being* and *doing* dimensions

(Benzein, Saveman, & Norberg, 2000). It is increasingly viewed as an essential experience for

any individual (Eliott, 2005), and has been linked to more adaptive coping (Farran et al., 1995)

and enhanced meaning-making (Frankl, 1992). Although there are multiple definitions for hope,

and various emotional, cognitive, behavioural and spiritual components that accompany these

definitions, little is known about how hope is viewed or defined by children. However, literature

seems to support the idea that adults often see the hopes of children and adolescents as more

unrealistic (Farran et al., 1995).

Hope began to emerge as a field of study in the early 1960s and 70s with the movement

in research towards holistic health (Jevne et al., 1999). While many individuals from the field of

medicine have viewed nonphysical treatments of ailments (e.g., using hope) as impractical, and

even go so far as to say that cures using hope are placebo-like (Snyder, 2000), many others have

credited positive emotions like hope as methods of healing (e.g., Menninger, 1959; Pelletier,

1977; Siegel, 1986) and have even championed the apparent profound effects of psychological

processes such as placebos (e.g., Frank, 1968). As the field of health psychology began to

burgeon, so did the support for constructs such as hope. This was accompanied by an exponential

increase in qualitative and quantitative research exploring the role of hope in the face of various

life difficulties (Eliott, 2005; Farran et al., 1995). It also initiated a surge of theoretical work on

hope within a range of subject areas (e.g., sociology, psychology, nursing) (Snyder, 2000).

As previously stated, there is no current definition of hope for children in the literature.

Therefore, the comprehensive definition that launched the current study was by Stephenson

(1991), who defined hope as "a process of anticipation that involves the interaction of thinking,

acting, feeling and relating, and is directed toward a future fulfillment that is personally

meaningful" (p.1459). Stephenson's definition highlights the multidimensional nature of hope,

including cognitive, affective, behavioural, physical, relational and goal-oriented aspects of

hope. These aspects are common among a variety of hope models in the literature (e.g., Benzein

et al., 2000; Cutcliffe, 1996; Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Farran et al., 1995; Snyder et al.,

1991). All current definitions of hope were developed based on the experiences and

understandings of hope in adults. Thus, gaining knowledge of how children's experiences of

hope relate or differ from Stephenson's (1991) foundational definition may be of value.

Overall, the field of research on hope has begun to flourish. Below, I review several

components of hope to provide a greater understanding of the foundational research in the field

of hope informing the current study: language of hope, temporal dimensions of hope, theories of

hope, development of hope in middle childhood, measuring children's hope, hope in the

classroom, hope in therapy and important research on hope with children to date.

Language of hope. While this project was not focused on discourse, language is an

important component in interpretative phenomenology (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009), and

therefore is worthy of exploration. Hope is used in everyday language as an adjective, noun and

verb (Farran et al., 1995), in addition to an adverb (Eliott & Olver, 2002). Oftentimes in research,

hope is conflated with other affective states such as optimism, wanting, desire or wishing

(Bruininks & Malle, 2005). Many studies fail to discuss the relationship between these concepts

or fail to discuss distinctions between hope and other related terms. Discourse researchers

Bruininks and Malle (2005) assert, "researchers sometimes take the freedom of redefining an

everyday concept (such as hope or intentionality) in ways that significantly deviate from

people's own understanding of the underlying phenomenon" (p.353). This approach frequently

leads to a misrepresentation of the complex and unique nature of hope. Indeed, hope is

commonly used as a folk term, and employed as part of everyday language (e.g., "I hope you

have a good day" or "I hope I get a cat for Christmas"). By understanding the difference between

hope and other concepts, we have the capacity to take a nuanced approach to the qualitative

study of hope and the language used to represent hope experiences.

Bruininks and Malle's (2005) foundational discourse research examining the differences

between hope and other related affective states (e.g., optimism, wanting, desiring, wishing and

joy) revealed several important conceptual findings. First, hope was depicted as an emotion that

occurs when an individual is focused on a significant, positive future outcome. Second, hope

appeared action-oriented, meaning actions were taken to achieve or pursue hope or a hopeful

state. Third, there is high meaning attached to a hoped-for object, yet a low feeling of control for

the hoped-for object. Despite feeling little personal control over the outcome of something that

was hoped for, an outcome attached to hope was seen as possible. Fourth, hope proved to be

different than related concepts such as wishing, optimism and joy. When compared to wishing,

hope appeared directed at events that were somewhat more controllable, and involved "a greater

commitment to representing and seeking out the outcome" (p.349). This included a continuous

emotional and cognitive commitment to a hope. In contrast, outcomes of a wish were seen as

unlikely to occur. Wishes were not invested in, and outcomes of a wish were not thought about

for long. Furthermore, optimism was linked to high probability outcomes, making the desired

outcome of an individual experiencing optimism seem more attainable than the outcome of a

hope. Joy also had an overwhelming relationship with strictly positive emotions, was not

considered a cognition, and had virtually no link to future outcomes. In contrast to joy, hope was

seen as both a cognition and linked to future outcomes, and occurred both when there was

evidence of a positive outcome occurring, but also when the odds of something occurring were

not high. Finally, Buininks and Malle's (2005) research indicated that objects of hope were

deemed more valuable and important than the outcomes for other states such as wishing,

optimism or joy. Overall, results from this research highlight the importance of distinguishing

between hope and other constructs as fundamentally different from one another. A nuanced

understanding of these differences enhances both research interviewing and interpretation.

      Temporal Dimensions of Hope. Positive psychologists describe hope as a strength that

exists in the present moment, but that also consists of past and future-oriented qualities

(Seligman, 2011). Building on this temporal perspective, McElheran's (2012) research on hope

and time perspectives helps further explain the temporal dimensions of hope. She examined the

relationship between hope and different time perspectives within 288 Canadian adults, looking at

five differing perspectives: past positive (i.e., those who showcase a warm, emotional attitude

towards the past); past-negative (i.e., those who hold pessimistic, negative views of the past);

present-hedonistic (i.e., depicted by a risk-taking, pleasure-seeking attitude); present-fatalistic

(i.e., portrayed as those who engage in more helpless and hopeless approaches towards the future

and life in general); and future (i.e., those who are more goal-directed) (Zimbardo & Boyd,

2008). Results from this study indicated that higher hope was positively correlated with a high

past-positive time perspective, and negatively correlated with a high past-negative time

perspective. Furthermore, those who displayed a balanced time perspective profile (i.e., had high

past-positive and future scores, and low past-negative scores) displayed significantly higher

levels of hope than individuals with a future time perspective (i.e., high future scores, and low

scores in all other areas), negative perspective (i.e., high past-negative scores and low past-

positive scores), and risk-taking perspective (i.e., high present-hedonistic, present-fatalistic, and

past-negative scores) (McElheran, 2012). This research study indicates that having fond

memories of the past and a goal-oriented approach to the future is associated with an individual's

overall hope. While evidence for this pattern has only been shown in adults, it highlights the importance of time perspectives to hope and raises important questions on this topic in relation to children.

With respect to hope, time perspectives and children, findings by both King (2014) and Cherrington (2015) suggest that there is a temporal quality to hope. Adolescent girls in King's (2014) study discussed wanting to sustain present-moment hopes, while rural South African children in Cherrington's (2015) study highlighted how hope included a component of actively trying to build a better future for themselves. Our ability to understand hope, and the language and temporal dimensions around the concept of hope, is growing. However, hope theories relevant to adults still vary, and very little theorizing includes children.

Theories of Hope. In the following section, I outline three theories and one conceptual view of hope: (1) hope theory by Snyder, (2) Dufault and Martocchio's theory on hope, (3) Hope Process Framework by Farran, Herth, and Popovich, and (4) Hinds' view on hope. Each theory or viewpoint adds valuable knowledge to what is currently understood about the concept of hope in adults, adolescents and children.

Hope theory. Along with several colleagues, Charles R. Snyder developed one of the leading psychological theories on hope (Snyder et al, 1991). This theory continues to hold sway today, emphasizing a goal-oriented, cognitive approach to hope, where two specific constituents of hope are involved: (1) agency thinking (i.e., a cognitive drive that pushes individuals towards their goals) and (2) pathways thinking (i.e., the apparent ability of individuals to identify paths towards their desired goals) (Snyder, 1995). It is suggested that both agency thinking (e.g., "I am able to accomplish this") and pathway thinking (e.g., "If I work on A, then I will achieve B") are necessary to pursue a goal, while one alone is inadequate to experience hope. Individuals who

have higher levels of hope are said to possess increased mental energy and augmented pathways

for goals, whereas the opposite is true for those with lower levels of hope. Snyder and colleagues

(2003) delineate a goal as whatever an individual wishes to develop, achieve or experience.

Goals can vary from something broad (i.e., understanding the purpose of life), to something

common and simplistic (i.e., getting to bed at a decent hour). In this theory, hope is seen as a

dispositional concept that can change (Snyder, 1995).

When it comes to children, Synder (1994) states that it is imperative for children to learn

how to discover and build objectives, and identify goals that may produce personal development

and fulfillment. He associates several characteristics with children's hope. First, Snyder believes

that hope is stable over time, where levels of hope can be maintained once a foundation of hope

has been established. Second, Snyder states that for the majority of children, hope is relatively

high across geographic and socio-economic backgrounds, and that hope stories are readily

available and utilized by most children. Third, Snyder reports that hope is biased positively,

where children who have high levels of hope think positively of themselves and the situations

that surround them, and are less vulnerable to hope-harming circumstances. Finally, Snyder

asserts that even children who have limited hope still maintain some hope (i.e., seldom is hope

completely absent) (Snyder, McDermott, et al., 1997). In this hope theory, Snyder asserts that

children must also learn how to face and handle obstacles in their lives. By emphasizing these

key factors, Snyder declares a greater sense of hope can be fostered within children.

While this uni-dimensional theory of hope, focused solely on goals, dominated research

and literature on hope in the past (and in psychology, still does), it fails to account for many

fundamental attributes of hope that others have pinpointed as important for children's hope

development (e.g., social connections, feelings of trust) (Farran et al., 1995). In addition, there

are several commonly employed multidimensional theories on hope, which better represent the

differing attributes that encompass a more complex concept such as hope. Two of the main

multidimensional hope theories are outlined below (i.e., Dufault & Martocchio, 1985 and Farran

et al., 1995), both of which provide qualitative accounts of hope that offer a deeper theoretical

foundation to the current study. I close this section with one conceptual view of hope in

adolescence (i.e., Hinds, 1988), the only child/youth view of hope currently available. This final

view of hope most closely relates to this project's target population of middle childhood.

   Dufault and Martocchio. The earliest social scientific theory of hope is that of Karin

Dufault and Benita Martocchio (1985). Based on an early qualitative study, hope is comprised of

two spheres (i.e., generalized and particularized hope) with a total of six shared dimensions. The

first sphere of hope, generalized hope, is described as broad in scope but not connected to any

specific object (concrete or not concrete) of hope. This sphere of hope serves to restore meaning

in life. An example of generalized hope is the comment "good things can and will happen." The

second sphere of hope, particularized hope, involves a more specifically identified outcome,

investment or state that can be connected to a hope object. These two spheres of hope have six

common dimensions, the: (1) affective dimension, involving an individual's emotions and

sensations associated with hope; (2) affiliative dimension, involving an individual's connection

to things outside of themselves (e.g., relationships to others, issues of attachment and intimacy, a

sense of belonging, or a connection to a spiritual power); (3) cognitive dimension, involving how

an individual thinks, wishes, judges, imagines, interprets and recalls in regards to hope; (4)

behavioural dimension, involving the actions (direct or indirect) related to an individual's hope,

including psychological, physical, social and religious actions; (5) temporal dimension,

involving how an individual experiences time (i.e., past, present and future) concerning hope;

and the (6) contextual dimension, involving the settings or circumstances that influence an

individual's hope (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985).

Dufault and Martocchio's research on hope has served as the foundation for hundreds of

qualitative studies on hope (Eliott, 2005). While it more thoroughly incorporates characteristics

that have been deemed essential for children's hope, there is no mention of how this theory may

be directly applicable to children. Therefore, highlighting the Hope Process Framework, a

second seminal multidimensional theory of hope, and its relevance to children is important.

Hope Process Framework. The Hope Process Framework by Farran, Herth and Popovich

(1995) is focused on adults, and was developed in the field of nursing. This multidimensional

theory describes hope as a way of feeling, thinking and behaving. Farran and colleagues (1995)

state that hope consists of four main dimensions: (1) hope as an experiential process (i.e., hope

linked to our personal experiences), (2) hope as a spiritual or transcendent process (i.e., hope

linked to faith in ourselves and in others), (3) hope as a rational thought process (i.e., hope linked

to our goals, our resources, our ability to be active, our feelings of control over our fate, and the

aspect of time), and (4) hope as a relational process (i.e., hope occurring through our

relationships with others). Farran and colleagues (1995) also suggest that hopelessness has

"opposite expectations" to hope (p.25), where hopelessness consists of the same four dimensions

as hope. Hopelessness is viewed as an indication that something in an individual's world is

wrong. Farran et al. maintain that hopelessness can derive from an accumulation of difficult life

experiences, an inability to manage trying experiences, and limited internal and external

resources. In regards to children, the authors discuss how meeting a child's early needs helps to

foster a sense of hope and positivity. On the other hand, when a child's needs are not met, a

feeling of hopelessness can be cultivated.

This multidimensional theory accounts for experiential or transcendent processes of hope,

processes seen as fundamental in the development of hope (Farran et al., 1995) and absent from

other hope theories. However, what appears to be lacking is knowledge regarding the differences

that may exist between adults and children regarding the four main dimensions. In addition,

specific research-informed theorizing on the development and processes related to hope in

children is necessary. Consequently, the work by Hinds (1984) regarding hope in adolescence is

one final foundation to explore when studying hope in younger individuals.

  Hinds. Pamela Hinds (1984) is a nurse researcher, known for her development of

research regarding adolescent hope. According to Hinds, hope in adolescence can be seen as a

process, where its levels are in a constant state of change, especially during fundamental

experiences and events (Hinds, 1988). Hinds conducted grounded theory research on both

healthy and hospitalized adolescent participants to determine their understandings and

conceptualizations of hope. Analysis of interview data resulted in a definition of adolescent

hopefulness, and informed a scale based on direct explanations of hope from adolescents

themselves (i.e., The Hopefulness Scale for Adolescents) (Hinds & Gattuso, 1991). Hinds

defines hopefulness as "the degree to which adolescents possess a comforting or life-sustaining,

reality-based belief that a positive future exists for themselves or others" (Hinds, 1988, p.85).

Hopefulness was also described by the adolescent population as having four dimensions: (1)

"forced effort" (i.e., how much an adolescent attempts to undertake a more positive view), (2)

"personal possibilities" (i.e., how much an adolescent believes in the existence of second

chances), (3) "expectations of a better tomorrow" (i.e., how much an adolescent holds a vague,

yet positive and future-oriented view), and (4) "anticipation of a personal future" (i.e., how much

an adolescent believes in definite and optimistic future opportunities for themselves) (Hinds,

1988, p.83-84). Since hope and hopelessness are viewed as dynamic, especially for adolescents

whose goals and expectations are in a constant state of change, Hinds stressed the necessity of

measuring hope over time.

The three highlighted theories (i.e., hope theory by Snyder, Dufault and Martocchio's

theory on hope, and Hope Process Framework by Farran, Herth, and Popovich) and one

conceptual view of hope (i.e., Hinds's view on hope) do not represent a complete list of hope

theories and views that currently exist in hope literature. However, they are arguably the most

dominant views on hope across the ever-growing field of hope research. Whether or not they

map the areas of hope deemed fundamental or relevant to children's experiences and

understandings of hope remains to be investigated. As indicated, there is no specific theory that

directly addresses hope solely in, and for, children. There are, however, additional aspects in the

broader scholarly literature that are relevant in regard to children's hope (i.e., developmental

factors related to hope, attachment, measuring hope and hope research in schools and therapy)

and that are worthy of attention as a foundation for the current research study.

Development of hope in middle childhood. The foundation for hope is believed to be

set in children by the age of two (Snyder, Hoza, et al., 1997), and is fundamental to a child's

development (Erikson, 1968, 1985). Unfortunately, children this young do not have the requisite

language skills to discuss their experiences or understandings of hope. What remains clear is that

some children appear to grow up with a robust sense of hope and the ability to hope, while other

children, sadly, do not. The process of how hope grows and develops can be seen as a journey,

where this development is ultimately linked in a holistic manner to the growth of physical ability,

language, and the relationships the child forms with others and with their surroundings as they

grow up (Snyder, McDermott, et al., 1997). Further illuminating this journey through additional

research on children's hope experiences is therefore warranted.

Attachment and hope. An important factor linked to the development of hope that runs

across the infant, toddler, preschool, middle, adolescent and even adult years is the importance of

solid (and trustworthy) relationships and attachments (Erikson, 1964, 1985). In the context of

childhood, attachment can be described as the positive, emotional bond that is created between a

child and another figure (usually an adult or a primary caregiver) (Feldman, 2012). Early on,

young children look to adults in order to create a self that is amiable, curious and unique from

others (Tooley, 1978). The creation of a secure attachment (i.e., displaying healthy patterns of

behaviour) (Simmons, Gooty, Nelson, & Little, 2009) helps a child feel gratified and protected

when he or she is with his or her attachment figure, especially in times of distress. Furthermore,

research findings suggest that attachment levels during infancy largely affect relations with

others in the future (Hofer, 2006).

Bowlby and the foundations of attachment theory. John Bowlby is considered one of the

most influential figures in the evolution of attachment theory (Fitton, 2012; Wallin, 2007).

Bowlby (1969) acknowledged that children seek biological attachment to their caregivers. He

viewed this attachment as a motivational system whereby a child has an innate need to be

physically close to his or her caregiver in order to guarantee the child's survival and foster his or

her emotional security. According to Bowlby (1969), attachment is an instinctive response that is

programmed within each individual, and is comparable to other genetically driven systems (e.g.,

feeding, mating). This innate response is evident in three distinct reactions by a child in

threatening or insecure situations: (1) pursuing, observing and remaining proximally close to a

protecting attachment figure, (2) utilizing the attachment figure as a safe base, and (3) seeking

the attachment figure for safety during dangerous or alarming events (Wallin, 2007). Bowlby

(1973) discovered that both protection from harm and continual availability are required for

healthy attachment to occur between caregiver and child, and that a child's appraisal of his or her

caregiver's availability in the present is dependent on his or her experiences of the caregiver's

dependability in the past. These ideas of protection and availability have been linked to building

a solid foundation for a hopeful orientation in children (Erikson, 1968).

Bowlby (1980) further stressed the importance of attachment as an ongoing human need

by stating, "Intimate attachments to other human beings are the hub around which a person's life

revolves, not only when he is an infant or a toddler, but throughout his adolescence and his years

of maturity as well, and on into old age" (p.442). Bowlby believed that constant interactions

between a child and his or her caregivers (typically a maternal figure) led to healthy

psychological development, but only if these interactions were sincere, intimate and gratifying

for both the child and the caregiver (Bowlby, 1951).

Volumes of research have been done on the long-term effect of various infant attachment

patterns. Children who are securely attached demonstrate higher levels of self-esteem, emotional

well-being, social competence, ability to concentrate, resourcefulness, ego resilience and

attentiveness during play compared to insecurely attached children (Weinfeld, Sroufe, Engeland,

& Carlson, 1999). During school, students who are securely attached (i.e., defined as a child who

is able to explore when feeling secure, yet seeks comfort when feeling a threat in their

environment) appear to be treated more affectionately by their teachers. Students who have an

avoidant attachment (i.e., defined as a child who seems almost unaffected when placed in a

threatening situation, and persistently plays despite inner feelings of stress) (Ainsworth, Blehar,

Waters, & Wall, 1978) tend to prompt angry responses from others. Also, students who have an

ambivalent attachment style (i.e., defined as a child who is overly preoccupied with the location

of her or his primary caregiver, and therefore cannot play and explore) (Ainsworth et al., 1978)

seem to be coddled more by those around them. Children who are securely attached are also

more likely to neither be a victim or victimizer at school, while those who are ambivalent are

often victimized and those who are avoidant tend to be seen victimizing others more frequently

(Elicker, Englund, & Sroufe, 1992; Sroufe, 1983). Although many researchers have focused on

attachment styles in children, and the various effects of attachment styles to children's

development, none have been more influential in illuminating the link between attachment and

hope than Erik Erikson.

     Erikson, attachment and hope. Erikson was one of the first developmental psychologists

to discuss the concept of hope in regard to children. Erikson (1964) viewed hope as the most

"childlike of all ego-qualities" (p.116) and recognized hope as reliant on social settings outside

the individual. He believed that hope is fundamental to a child's development and that it provides

a child with an instinctive feeling of certainty in his or her social context (Erikson 1968, 1985).

Erikson (1964) provided preliminary evidence that hope emerges from early childhood

attachment relationships that foster trust in oneself, others and the environment. These hopes are

upheld in trustworthy relationships and experiences, but weakened in unreliable or unpredictable

relationships. Thus, if a child's physical and emotional needs are satisfied, they develop a

stronger sense of trust, ultimately providing them with an increased capacity to hope. However,

if a child's basic needs are not met, and they do not feel safe in their environment, they are less

likely to develop a hopeful orientation (Erikson, 1964). Therefore, the relationship between child

and caregiver can either encourage or dissuade hopeful experiences and the ability to believe in

the possibility of desirable, personal outcomes within a child.

     Additionally, Erikson (1968) highlighted the importance of middle childhood (which he

defined as ages seven to 11), where children leave the household and begin to integrate further

into society. He believed these transitions strongly impact children's development towards a

"sense of industry," wherein children acquire the ability to collaborate with other children and

older adults, as well as develop skills to work on specific tasks, and follow through with these

tasks over time. Erikson believed that children who are not encouraged for their hard work and

supported through the development of new skills, or who are ridiculed for any potential setbacks

or failures during these transitions, might begin to feel inferior to those around them (Erikson,

1950). Without the growth of this sense of industry, and adequate guidance from adult figures in

their lives, children are more likely to struggle in school and their environment, and may fail to

develop the strong sense of hope seemingly associated with children who are more independent

and who receive increased support from caregivers. While Erikson's theory of attachment is but

one of several theories, it hints at how hope figures in the attachment process, and how

attachment to caregivers may influence the development of hope. What follows is a description

of the existing connections in the literature between hope, children and attachment.

Development of a hopeful orientation. Secure relationships that are formed between a

child and others (e.g., caregiver, peers, teachers) can help foster and cultivate hope (Snyder,

Cheavens & Sympson, 1997). Research employing Snyder's cognitive formulation of hope

suggests that children are better able to think in a hopeful manner once they have built secure

and supportive relationships with adult caregivers (Shorey et al., 2003). According to Snyder,

Hoza and colleagues (1997), the first two years of life are crucial for this hopeful seed to be

planted. If a solid attachment to caregivers is not developed at this stage of a child's life, the

ability to hope may not fully develop. The stronger the attachment a child has to at least one

caregiver, the more solid their foundation for the facilitation of hopeful thoughts and actions

(Snyder, 1994). Therefore, spending quality time with a child is important for hope to flourish, as

well as to help a child feel supported, guided and nurtured in his or her environment (Rieger,

1993). In this condition, caregivers can engender and model the belief and knowledge that life

experiences, even difficult ones, can be managed. A caregiver, however, has to do more than just

be present for his or her child. They must attend to, engage with, and motivate the developing

child (Snyder, 1994). Forbes (1994) underscores the importance of having a caring relationship

as the backdrop for the development of hope, stating that hope helps generate the drive required

for an individual to cope with barriers and losses.

Without the development of a positive and secure relationship with a caregiver, hope can

remain dormant in a child. The lack of an attentive caregiver may confuse a child and lead to an

underdeveloped ability to recognize and achieve his or her goals or believe that his or her needs

can be met, potentially leading to a weaker sense of overall hope (Snyder, 1994). The world

around a child tends to make less sense in these scenarios, where he or she may view others as

uncaring, and ultimately view the world as a harsh and unyielding or indifferent place (Snyder,

1994). Research by Stephanou (2011) examined the role of hope in friendships for 322 children

in middle childhood, with results supporting hope as influential to a child's thoughts, emotions,

beliefs and actions in relationships. This research attests to a fundamental necessity to focus on a

child's relationships and connections as they age as one compelling location for the experience

and development of hope. These relations can assist in nurturing and continually supporting a

sense of hope within children, as well as fostering a belief in the self in the context of the world.

Measuring children's hope. Currently, there are a handful of measures to help evaluate

and quantify levels of hope in middle childhood. While none are based on children's experiences

of hope, an evaluation of the Children's Hope Scale (CHS) (Snyder, Hoza, et al., 1997),

currently the most commonly used scale to measure hope in children between ages eight and 16,

will be discussed to emphasize several gaps in the assessment of children's hope and the need for

future research on children's hope. The CHS is a self-report measure with six items targeting

goal-directed thoughts consistent with hope theory's view of agencies and pathways (Snyder, 1994). A significant problem with the CHS is that it is an *a priori* scale. This means that it targets what is previously understood about hope with adults rather than focusing on understandings about hope that may be unique or novel to children. This measure focuses on the goals children may have, but is not informed by research investigating children's experiences of hope (because little research of that kind exists) or how hope changes contextually or developmentally as children mature. Therefore, any research employing this scale may provide an inaccurate or incomplete view of a child's overall level of hope, solely targeting their goal-oriented behaviour rather than measuring different aspects of hope from a multidimensional and child-informed perspective.

Hope in the classroom. An important context for middle-aged children is school: a seven hours a day, five days a week, about 200 days a year occupation for children. Aside from home, the classroom is easily one of the most influential environments for children. As previously mentioned, children and youth with higher levels of hope have been linked to increased academic performance and decreased dropout rates when compared to children with lower levels of hope (Cheavens, Michael, & Snyder, 2005; Gilman et al., 2006; Worrell & Hale, 2001). The value of hope for children and youth has gained social and scholarly recognition over the years, and with this recognition has come an increase in the introduction, use and teachings regarding hope in the classroom. Currently in the classrooms of several teachers across Canada, there exist specific hope-focused practices that hold promise. However, none of these practices have been empirically researched. Even so, a discussion about what exists in the classroom may help inform future research on the study of hope in children.

There have been numerous ideas about ways to integrate hope in the classroom. Some

suggestions include sharing personal hope stories and discussions, personal brainstorming about hope for self and others, setting action plans around attaining hope, and the creation of hope kits (i.e., resources for when hope is low) (Larsen, 2014). In addition, research findings suggest that the meaning and personal understanding of hope for children can truly flourish and become enriched through the use of arts-based and story-based work (Herth, 1998; Yohani, 2008), especially within the classroom. By "making hope visible" (LeMay, Edey, & Larsen, 2008), we may be able to help children view the world (and not just the school yard) through a more positive lens, and aid them in recognizing the possibilities they may have today, tomorrow and for years to come. While there have been many advances when it comes to employing hope in the classroom, there remains a need for foundational research on hope as it directly relates to children. Increased understanding of the differences and nuances in children's hope at various ages and stages can help shape future evidence-based hope-specific lessons and interventions in the classroom.

Hope in therapy. While this study focuses more on child development rather than therapy with children, it suggests potential implications for therapeutic practice. Therefore, a brief outline of current research on hope in therapy will be highlighted.

While there are no direct research studies identifying the use of hope in therapy for children, there is strong evidence to support that hope is vital in therapeutic settings. The psychotherapist Irving Yalom (1985) noted that hope plays an important role in therapy, stating the "installation and maintenance of hope is crucial in all the psychotherapies" (p. 6). Hope is a factor common to virtually all therapeutic approaches (Arkowitz, 1997; Grencavage & Norcross, 1990). Hope is estimated to account for approximately 10 to 15% of client outcome in therapy (Asay & Lambert, 1999; Hubble, Duncan, & Miller, 1999; Lambert, 1992; Larsen & Stege,

2010; Snyder, Michael, & Cheavens, 1999), and is shown to be a critical factor in the client

change process (Hubble et al., 1999). Research also suggests that hope interventions can improve

psychological difficulty and function as a psychological strength, helping clients improve their

overall well-being (Howell, Jacobson, & Larsen, 2015). One study that highlights the value of

utilizing hope in therapy is that of Larsen and Stege (2010). This research focuses on the explicit

use of hope during early psychotherapy sessions, in which 11 participants reviewed tapes of their

therapeutic sessions and commented on any salient in-session experiences with a specific focus

on hope. Results indicated three main findings: (1) clients found hope in the therapeutic

relationship, when experienced by the client as relational safety, feeling heard and understood,

and when they recognized their counsellor as invested; (2) client hope was supported in the

process of identity development, as clients began to see themselves as valuable human beings

and capable of making a difference; and (3) client hope was found in perspective change, when

clients began to witness and explore new possibilities, and began to reframe life circumstances to

envision more engaging futures. Overall, this research highlights the important role that hope can

play in therapeutic settings.

   Over the past few decades, there has been a rapid expansion of child-focused

psychotherapy clinics to directly assist children through the various issues they face during

childhood (Allen, 2013). Since the value of using hope in therapy is very evident for adults

(Hubble et al., 1999; Larsen & Stege, 2010), one might assume the benefits for children could be

equally useful, and an important next step to investigate.

   Research on hope with children. There are only a few qualitative studies on hope in

children and adolescents. Yet each demonstrates how children have the ability to be hopeful and

talk about their hopeful experiences. In this section, I discuss three studies that have explored

children and adolescent's hope experiences, and that are foundational in providing direction for the current project: (1) refugee and immigrant children's perceptions of hope and hope-engendering sources; (2) research understanding hope in early adolescent girls, and (3) research as a hope intervention with rural South African primary school children.

Perceptions of hope in refugee and immigrant children. Yohani and Larsen (2009) conducted qualitative research exploring the perceptions of hope and hope-engendering sources in the early years of resettlement for 10 refugee and immigrant children and youth between the ages of eight and 18. Using group interviews and arts-based data collection methods (i.e., a collage, a story-quilt-making activity, and photography), children investigated personal descriptions of hope and what facilitated hopeful feelings. Findings indicated that participants conceptualized hope as "a dynamic and enduring trait that is intimately linked to each child's life context" (p.246). Two main themes also emerged from participant interviews: (1) hope was present within participants and had enduring properties, and (2) hope developed from self-empowering activities, secure relationships and a feeling of connection with the environment. Not only does this study support the use of photography in research with children, it also indicates that providing children with an opportunity to discuss, work with and process hope can lead to the development and enhancement of hope. It provides evidence that exploring hope with children can be a useful intervention in and of itself to build children's hope.

Notably, this study did not discuss findings in relation to age differences, included only four participants under the age of 12, and focused solely on children who have endured hardships and adjustment issues as immigrants and refugees. Therefore, information on hope development in children who have not gone through such a significant life transition remains elusive, and further explorations of children's experiences of hope are warranted.

Understanding hope in early adolescent girls. A qualitative thesis completed by King (2014) aimed to understand and describe the development and experience of hope for early adolescent girls between the ages of 13 to 15. Implementing a photo-assisted interview method with participants, four main themes emerged in the findings: (1) "experiential hope" highlighted hope as an emotional and somatic experience; (2) "relational hope" emphasized how hope was developed and supported by important relationships in participants' lives, and also included an other-oriented component to hope; (3) "hope and identity" revealed how reflections on the self (i.e., who girls hoped to become) and being genuine with others facilitated the growth and maintenance of hope; and (4) "hope threatened; hope renewed" described how participants could regenerate their hope after facing difficult life circumstances. Participants also viewed hope as a choice, discussing how hope was increasingly challenged as they transitioned from childhood to adolescence.

King's research provides a better understanding of hope from an adolescent perspective. Since this research highlights hope as an important factor when facing adversity during adolescence, the development of a hopeful orientation before the transition into teenage years may be extremely valuable. Further research into the experiences of hope in children is worthy of exploration to better understand hope development prior to adolescence.

Research as a hope intervention with rural South African children. More recently, Cherrington and De Lange (2016) displayed how the use of research as intervention helped rural South African primary school children (most orphaned by HIV/AIDs) explore their conceptualizations of hope and strengthen their hope. Participants included 12 children between the ages of nine to 13, and research data was co-constructed by participants and the researcher using arts-based initiatives (e.g., collages, drawings, photographs) and individual and group

interviews. Findings from this study highlight many important considerations for understanding children's hope. First, hope was seen as developing both internally (i.e., within the individual) and through the assistance of external sources (e.g., community members, family, friends). Hope in turn was shown to spread outwardly in the form of beliefs, feelings and behaviours. Second, through the research process, children began to develop and enrich their sense of hope at the personal, relational and collective levels. Participants conveyed a developed understanding of their hope process, and displayed increased autonomy and enhanced coping skills to improve their personal sense of hope. This research provides a strong foundation for the potential of research as intervention to help increase children's understandings and conceptualizations of hope, and enhance children's ability to use hope in their every day life. It indicates how the use of a variety of arts-based approaches can activate and illuminate children's experiences of hope.

Nevertheless, the above study focuses solely on children in a very different cultural context than our Canadian context. Also, children's individual understandings of hope may have been less clear because the participants and the researcher were openly sharing their ideas about hope before and during data collection (e.g., group activities and discussions). While information derived from sharing ideas about hope is still vital to an understanding of hope development, I believe it is also beneficial to try to capture each child's personal experiences of hope. In this manner, we may begin to gain knowledge of similarities and differences between children's hope experiences stemming from aspects such as culture, gender, age and family background.

In all, these three studies serve as fundamental to the current research project as they take qualitative, arts-based approaches to research with children, highlight the multidimensional nature of hope, and illuminate the value of hope for children.

The Need to Study Hope in Children

With previously discussed evidence that hope can serve as an asset during various life transitions, targeting hope at a younger age could help improve overall health and well-being for children as they progress through adolescence and into adulthood. Therefore, to begin to address the current gaps in research on children's hope, the following research question was examined: "how do children in middle childhood (ages nine to 11) experience hope?" This question is important to explore how children understand hope, describe hope, and describe employing hope in their lives.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The objective of this study is to examine how children in middle childhood experience hope. With virtually no robust research-informed field on child and/or youth hope yet developed, an exploratory, qualitative, interpretative phenomenological design was employed to research children's experiences of hope.

Most broadly speaking, qualitative research seeks to describe, understand and make sense of the meaning of a complex phenomenon (Van Maanen, 1979), and aims to explore this phenomenon in both detail and context (Morse & Richards, 2002). Qualitative researchers then, aim to understand and explore how individuals interpret their experiences, how they build their worlds, and how they place meaning on such experiences (Merriam, 2009). They aim to discover or illuminate meaning, rather than test a pre-defined hypothesis. Since this qualitative method is best suited to understand a particular phenomenon, a qualitative methodology was a fitting choice for illuminating the experiences of hope in children.

This chapter begins by describing the research methodology Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), the theoretical foundations underlining IPA (i.e., phenomenology, hermeneutics and ideography) and other relevant considerations for an IPA study (e.g., data collection, sample size, interviews). Second, descriptions of the use of photography in research (particularly with children) and methodological challenges of researching children are outlined. Third, methods used (i.e., participants, data collection and analysis) and the approach taken to writing project findings are discussed. Finally, research quality is reviewed and ethical considerations are outlined.

Research Design

  Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Interpretative Phenomenological

Analysis (IPA) was the qualitative approach used in this study. IPA was first introduced in 1996

by Jonathan Smith (Smith et al., 2009). Smith and colleagues identified the need for a

psychological approach to appropriately depict the experiences of individuals. They emphasized

the importance of a qualitative approach concentrated in psychology, representing experiential

realms of research aimed at psychological discovery, rather than using qualitative methods from

other disciplines. Smith and colleagues (2009) define IPA as a research approach that is

"committed to the examination of how people make sense of their major life experiences… [and]

is concerned with exploring experience in its own terms" (p.1).

IPA is focused on meticulously exploring a participant's subjective experiences,

perceptions and understandings of the social world (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). IPA is

interpretive, informed by hermeneutics and positions a participant in their personal environment

to explore their individual perspectives. IPA sees individuals as cognitive, affective, linguistic

and physical, and presumes a link between individuals' verbal communication and their

cognitive and affective state (Smith & Osborn, 2007). The aim of IPA is to discover the emotions

and ideas surrounding participants' experiences (e.g., how they experience and make sense of

hope), with the underlying belief that participants' narratives during their interview will reflect

the ways in which they make sense of their current experiences (Smith et al., 2009). As such,

embedded in IPA is recognition of phenomenological lived experience, in which an individual's

personal experience is created in the context of the meaning he or she ascribes to an experience,

the relationships that surround him or her, and the lived world to which he or she is a part

(Larkin et al., 2011).

Within IPA, the researcher takes an active role, where he or she tries to get as close in

understanding to the participants' perspectives as possible (Smith, 2004). The researcher

employing IPA is tasked with the responsibility of interpreting participants' interviews in a

careful attempt to understand and describe participants' experiences. The process of IPA can be described as a "double hermeneutic" (i.e., "the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of what is happening to them") (Smith et al., 2009, p.3). The researcher, who thus analyzes the data, is then suggesting an interpretive explanation of participants' experiences within participants' specific contexts (Larkin et al., 2006). This approach principally focuses on creating an emic (i.e., "constructs or behaviors that are unique to an individual") (Ponterotto, 2005, p.128) or insider view of the question(s) being researched. IPA acknowledges that the researcher ultimately generates a theoretical framework founded in, and potentially moving beyond, participants' own vocabulary and conceptualizations (Smith, 2004). Furthermore, there are no theoretical hypotheses (i.e., *a priori* reasoning or knowledge, or preconceptions) governing how to unravel this view (Larkin et al., 2006). Fundamentally, IPA does not claim "truths," but rather acknowledges that meanings assigned to experiences result from interactions between individuals and their world (Willig, 2001).

Theoretical Underpinnings of IPA

From its conception, two main theoretical perspectives have informed IPA: Phenomenology and hermeneutics. Each of these theoretical foundations is discussed below, with a description of their relevance to the current study. Idiography, a characteristic deemed relevant to IPA and the current study, is also highlighted.

Phenomenology. Phenomenology explores human experiences (e.g., what is important to us, what creates the foundations of our lived experience) and how individuals develop an understanding of their experiences (Smith et al., 2009). A primary goal of phenomenology is to focus on a particular phenomenon (i.e., an event, situation, experience or concept) in everyday life, further understand the phenomenon, and aim to clarify and describe that phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Understanding the phenomenon under investigation involves not only 'what'

individuals' experience, but also 'how' they experience it (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenology offers many viewpoints on how to assess, examine and understand lived experiences (Smith et al., 2009). Edmund Husserl was one of the founding philosophers of phenomenological inquiry at the beginning of the twentieth century. He described the significance of experience, and focused on the essential features of an individual's experience, which he believed might elucidate others' experiences as well. In Husserl's view, phenomenology was centered on "stepping outside of our everyday experience, our *natural attitude* as he called it, in order to be able to examine everyday experience" (Smith et al., 2009, p.12). Instead of focusing on "natural attitude" (i.e., assumptions used to make sense of the world), Husserl described assuming a "phenomenological attitude" (i.e., being reflective by looking inward towards our perception of an object, rather than simply looking at an object). According to Husserl's view of phenomenology, phenomenological findings encompass *the* truth rather than *a* truth (McLeod, 2001). While Husserl was instrumental in developing foundational understandings of phenomenology, his understanding of phenomenology has been criticized for failing to account for factors such as social context, or the importance of previous knowledge, pre-existing biases and/or knowledge about a phenomenon that can inform research (Laverty, 2003; Smith et al., 2009). For these reasons, I do not adhere to a Husserlian view of phenomenology, particularly the notion that there are "essential" features to experience.

Alternatively, Smith and his colleagues' (2009) interpretations of philosophers such as Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre inform my approach to phenomenology. This stance focuses on understanding an individual as rooted and immersed "in a world of objects and relationships, language and culture, projects and concerns" (Smith et al., 2009, p.21). Here, the individual is not a creature of isolation, but rather has relations with others and the world. Unlike Husserl, who believed that one could "bracket" his or her experiences (i.e., putting aside beliefs

and assumptions in order to build new understandings), Heidegger saw that past experiences were fundamental to understandings and phenomenological inquiry, and could not simply be suspended (McLeod, 2001). Heidegger believed that experiences are always influenced by one's perspective, one's temporality, and 'in relation to' something. In addition, Merleau-Ponty emphasized the embodied nature of our interactions with the world, which he believed leads to each person's individually situated perspective of the world (Smith et al., 2009). He viewed the body (both physical and perceptual components) as primarily shaping an individual's knowledge about the world and his or her experiences in the world. Finally, Sartre (1948) emphasized the belief that an individual's experiences are contingent on the presence or absence of his or her relationships with others. He famously expressed that "existence comes before essence" (p.26), underlining that there is no pre-existing self to discover, but rather that an individual is in a continual process of becoming and discovering him or herself. As a whole, these ideas acknowledge that findings from research do not represent "the truth," but rather "a truth," built on the context around us, our engagement in the world and our experiences (both past and present) (McLeod, 2001, p.38).

Overall, the leading figures in phenomenological literature, and the development of phenomenological perspectives, help shift our thinking towards an interpretive stance focused on an individual's lived experiences developed through relations with the world and others in his or her world. This shift, and the key phenomenological principles discussed herein, were relevant to the current study for several reasons. First, I was interested in understanding how participants experienced the phenomenon of hope. This included the unique experiences participants brought to the project, encompassing such aspects as their own relationships, cultures and family dynamics. Second, multiple aspects of the participants' experiences of hope were sought during research interviews (e.g., language, relationships, culture) through both visual and verbal means

(i.e., photos and interviews). Third, multiple aspects of hope (e.g., physical, emotional and visual components) were addressed in the research questions of the study to inform the findings, which helped shape my knowledge and understanding of participants' hope experiences.

Hermeneutics. The second theoretical foundation of IPA is hermeneutics. According to McLeod (2001), hermeneutics can be described as "an act of interpretation which brings to light an underlying coherence or sense within the actions, behaviour or utterances of a person or group" (p.22). In hermeneutic research, understanding is drawn from a participant's perspective, but always involves interpretation by the researcher. As Heidegger and Gadamer emphasized, hermeneutics involves "the relationship between the fore-understanding and the new phenomenon being attended to" (Smith et al., 2009, p.29). The researcher is believed unable to let go of pre-existing assumptions or biases, which have developed as a result of their past and present experiences. Therefore, questions being asked in the research, in addition to research findings, are inevitably framed within the cultural perspective of the researcher (McLeod, 2001). While phenomenology does not always aim to socially or historically contextualize knowledge, the foundation of knowledge in hermeneutics is understood to be contextual (i.e., culturally and historically informed) (McLeod, 2001). In other words, it is impossible to eliminate such things as culture and history.

With regard to hermeneutics, Heidegger discussed the value of interactions between others and the world instead of simply just "knowing" the world (Smith et al., 2009). He claimed that the understanding of our world could only occur through interpretation. Heidegger emphasized the link between interpretation and the interpreter. He indicated how preconceptions, experiences and thoughts of the interpreter cannot be suspended, but rather play a role in the interpretation process (i.e., affect our interpretation of participants' experiences). Therefore throughout this project, my understanding of children's experiences of hope comes from my

previous understandings of hope, but also my interpretations of what I am seeing, hearing and

being told by participants about their hope experiences. I tried to understand children's

experiences of hope as best and as fully as I could. This was done through in-depth interviews

with participants, and by probing deeper with each research question. I also aimed to uncover

children's experiences of hope during analysis by listening to interview recordings multiple

times and reflecting on my experiences with each participant. Therefore, both participants'

descriptions of their experiences with hope, and my interpretation of the meanings behind their

personal hope stories, contributed to the hermeneutics aspect of analysis.

     Similar to Heidegger, Gadamer underlined the importance of the relationship between the

interpreter and the interpreted for proper interpretations to occur (Laverty, 2003). He viewed

interpretation as a "fusion of horizons" (i.e., the interaction between what the interpreter/

researcher expects to find based on his or her preconceptions of the research, and the meaning of

other data that surfaces during the research process). A horizon is described as "a range of

vision" (Laverty, 2003, p.25) that encompasses everything witnessed from a specific vantage

point. Therefore, the eventual goal in hermeneutics is to move beyond one particular horizon

towards a fusion of horizons. This fusion occurs as the researcher reflects on multiple viewpoints

(i.e., horizons) of the research project. For example, I wrote about my preconceptions related to

this research prior to the study to reflect on my assumptions and biases. In addition, I looked at

multiple data sources such as photos and transcripts during the findings and analysis processes.

With this fusion, my interpretation of the data as the researcher is posited to become clearer and

stronger. According to Gadamer, an individual who engages a fusion of horizons is able to see

beyond what is nearest at hand. Furthermore, Gadamer stressed how the ability to ask questions

is essential for interpretation since it assists in developing new horizons and understandings

(Laverty, 2003). For example, by asking participants clarifying or follow-up questions, I was

better able to deepen my understanding of their experiences, and more accurately reflect and interpret these experiences in the study's findings and discussion. Thus a "fusion of horizons" was achieved between the experiences of hope expressed by the child participants and my interpretation of their hope experiences.

Gadamer also highlighted how an individual cannot simply let go of his or her preconceptions since they are undoubtedly present, but that new experiences and engagements will allow conceptions to be compared, contrasted and modified as an individual makes sense of an experience and its meaning (Smith et al., 2009). These principles by Gadamer were brought forth in this study during data collection and analysis through: (a) the use of a wide variety of questions from a number of angles targeting cognitions, feelings and behaviours involved in participants' hope experiences, (b) the use of photography, allowing quite literally different views of hope from each participant, (c) my ongoing reflection of personal influences at play during the data interpretation process, and (d) the process of comparing and contrasting participants' experiences with, and of, hope to make sense of children's experiences of hope.

Another important concept to consider in regards to the interpretation of experience is that of the hermeneutic circle (a concept relevant to this study). The hermeneutic circle, adopted by hermeneutic writers, seeks to understand text by looking at the relationship between the whole and its parts (Smith et al., 2009). It highlights how one must explore the whole to comprehend any individual part (McLeod, 2001), in addition to examining and discovering individual parts to understand the whole (Smith et al., 2009). This idea is particularly fitting for researching a dynamic concept like hope, that is considered to have multidimensional influences, experiences and meanings (e.g., Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Farran et al., 1995). To understand the experience of hope as completely as possible with children, we must look at the parts that constitute their hope experiences, alongside their overall experience of hope. This view is also

crucial to analyzing data, where analysis can be seen as more of an iterative process in which the researcher navigates between the whole and its parts, rather than approaching the data in a rigid, step-wise analysis process (Smith et al., 2009). Therefore, within data collection, analysis and interpretation processes, both individual parts and broader, holistic understandings of children's hope experiences were constantly being considered.

Idiography. A third area important to review in relation to the theoretical underpinnings of IPA is idiography. Idiography directs the researcher's focus to the particular, rather than groups or populations as are often highlighted in psychological literature. Ideography accentuates the particular by focusing on understanding individual meanings of an object, idea or concept. The particular functions at two levels: (1) emphasizing detail, with a commitment to deeper and systematic analysis procedures, and (2) accentuating the value of smaller, purposefully selected samples (Smith et al., 2009). Idiography does not avoid generalizations (i.e., making general claims about the findings), but aims to provide an alternate way of obtaining transferability (i.e., providing rich, thick descriptions within the findings, ensuring that results can be applicable to other contexts) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Essentially, idiography focuses on understanding the meaning of an experience for each person, and possibly the interplay with other people (e.g., parents and teachers) and cultures (e.g., schools), rather than simply making general claims (Smith & Osborn, 2007).

Idiography aligns particularly well with phenomenology as it focuses on an individual person's experience of a phenomenon as uniquely embodied and influenced by a person's situation and perspective. Idiography also fits within the analysis process of IPA, where a single participant's experience is thoroughly examined prior to the analysis of the next participant's experience. In IPA, findings are to include both themes that are shared between participants in relation to their experiences of hope, as well as themes that address experiences of hope that may

be unique to one or two participants in particular.

All three of these fundamental perspectives within IPA (i.e., phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography) informed the conceptualization of this study, as well as data collection and analysis procedures.

Use of IPA methodology. IPA has been employed in a wide variety of research studies (Chapman & Smith, 2002), and has recently become one of the most commonly employed qualitative methods in psychology (Smith, 2011). Research employing IPA ranges from topics in mental health such as the experience of recovering from long-term addiction (Shinebourne & Smith, 2011) and the impact of sexual assault on heterosexual couples (Connop & Petrak, 2004), to conceptual topics, such as uncovering the experience and meaning of compassion and self-compassion for individuals with depression and anxiety (Pauley & McPherson, 2010). Although there are only a handful of studies using IPA with children (e.g., Back**,** Gustafsson, Larsson, & Berterö, 2011; Doutre, Green, & Knight-Elliott, 2013; Morris, 2013), IPA seemed appropriate for this population and the current research project. First, IPA is deemed particularly relevant for examining novel or intricate processes (Smith & Osborn, 2007). The current project is novel in that research on children's hope has received limited attention to date. The concept of hope itself is also intricate, multifaceted in nature and expected to be unique for each individual. Second, IPA research focuses on the meaning of particular experiences for its participants (Smith & Osborn, 2007). This study aligns with this goal since it examined how children experience hope (i.e., understand hope, describe hope and describe employing hope in their lives), with results inductively developing a description and interpretation of the experience of hope for children in middle childhood.

Data Collection in IPA

Sample in IPA. IPA typically seeks a homogenous sample to ensure that comparisons

between the participants may be more meaningful (Smith et al., 2009). This means that

participants all come from a closely defined group deemed significant to the research question

under investigation. Examples include: participants with similar demographics (e.g., age) or

socio-economic profiles (e.g., middle class). While results from an IPA study may not be

generalizable, they will report on a particular group in detail (e.g., for this study, results will

report on experiences of hope in children between nine to 11 years old). In this manner, the

reader becomes aware of the context relevant to the experiences of the participants in the study.

Compared to other qualitative approaches, studies using IPA typically have a smaller number of

participants (e.g., six to eight) due to the detailed, in-depth analysis of each participant's data

(Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Smith, 2004). Samples in IPA have ranged from single case studies to

research involving approximately 30 participants (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). Smith and

colleagues (2009) loosely recommend eight to ten participants for a doctoral dissertation,

suggesting that this may allow for rigorous and thorough data collection and analysis.

   Sample considerations for this study. The current study included eleven participants,

allowing similarities and differences in experiences between participants to emerge and enrich

the findings. Data collection ended once there was evidence of both (1) overlap within themes

being displayed between participants and (2) uniqueness within cases (i.e., enough variability to

represent different experiences). This sample size provided an opportunity for both participant

similarities (e.g., age of participants) and some differences (e.g., gender differences as self-

identified by the children, as well as religious or culture differences) to deepen the

understandings of children's experiences of hope.

   Additionally, there are several reasons for selecting participants within middle childhood

for this exploratory study. Middle childhood is a period of rapid developmental changes. As

Zembar and Blume (2009) state, "understanding the developmental processes and contextual

factors influencing middle childhood may provide answers to important basic questions about

how children develop between ages 6 and 12" (p.5-6). Moreover, developmental transitions that

occur during middle childhood have been shown to forecast future abilities of a child more than

those from a child's early developmental years, and are better predictors of adulthood than a

child's adolescent period (Huston & Ripke, 2006; Feinstein & Bynner, 2004). Focusing this

research with children ages nine to 11 offered a mid-point developmental description of hope

between that of younger children and adolescents, which will help build a foundation for future

research on hope in children. There are also key attributes of this group that make them

particularly suitable for being involved in a program of research on hope in children. Children in

middle childhood have increased levels of comprehension compared to younger children (Kail,

1990, 1991), which can help them create more detailed responses during the interview process.

Children at this age also often disclose thoughts and feelings more easily than younger children,

who may have a harder time with abstract concepts. Finally, those in middle childhood tend to

start working and thinking more independently around age nine or ten, with less help from

parents (McDermott & Snyder, 2000). Given that this project is the first to attempt to understand

children's experiences of hope, I hoped that children of this age would be able to find and

discuss hope on their own as much as possible, rather than rely on others around them to define

hope (e.g., parents, teachers, others in their environments). While evidence of interactions with

others does exist in interviews, these interactions support findings of children's experiences of

hope in relation to their various contexts. In sum, the attributes listed above assist in supporting

the decision to begin this foundational research with children between the ages of nine to 11.

        Interviews in IPA. IPA studies typically seek data collection methods that will elicit

detailed stories, thoughts and feelings from participants (Smith et al., 2009). For this reason, the

preferred method of data collection in IPA is semi-structured, one-on-one interviews. This method of data collection allows a strong rapport to build between the participant and the interviewer, and provides the participant an opportunity to reflect on his or her experiences with the phenomenon under investigation, as well as feel validated and heard when sharing his or her experiences. Both the participant and the interviewer are actively engaged in the interview process (Smith et al., 2009), meaning that both parties contribute to the conversation (e.g., by asking questions or clarifying statements). The participant plays a key role in guiding what is covered in the interview through discussions of his or her stories, ideas and concerns. The interviewer's task is then to follow-up on any content that arises, following the participant's lead but also helping the interview remain on discussions relevant to the research topic.

While the aim of an IPA interview is to allow the participant to freely discuss his or her experiences with the phenomenon under investigation, it is important to have a pre-determined interview guide (especially for the novice researcher) (Smith et al., 2009). This interview guide allows the researcher to explicitly contemplate what he or she hopes to cover in the interview. It also permits the researcher to be more active and engaged throughout the interview knowing there are prepared questions to fall back on if the interview becomes stuck, difficult or moves too far away from the research topic (Smith et al., 2009). Finally, an interview guide is helpful if the interviewer is slightly anxious or if the participant is less forthcoming with responses. Guiding interview questions for the proposed research study can be found in Appendix A.

Photography, IPA and children. This study used photographs to enhance the interview experience and the richness of data collected. The use of photos to foster dialogue during a research interview is called photo-elicitation (or photo-interviewing), and was first published as an interview method in the late 1950s by John Collier (Shell, 2014). Collier (1957) considered the use of photos during interviews to be a means of jogging participants' memories, arousing

feelings and making the interview more meaningful for the participant. Photo-elicited methods can also allow marginalized populations (e.g., children) a chance to share personal perspectives on their experiences instead of being passive research participants (Wang & Burris, 1997).

Participatory research methods, such as photo-elicited interviews, can be both user-friendly and an inexpensive method for data collection (Epstein, Stevens, McKeever, & Baruchel, 2006). In this aspect of data collection, the participant is often able to easily relay a large amount of information to the researcher through the photos themselves. Additionally, the researcher is presented with various avenues for discussion with each participant through the use of photos. The researcher is able to target both content based questions (e.g., tell me about this hope photo) and social and environmental relationship questions (e.g., what may have helped you know this was hope? Was there something that made you think this was a good photo to take to represent hope?) (Rasmussen, 2004; Smith & Barker, 2004). Photos also often generate new and deeper insights and understandings throughout the photo-elicited discussion and analysis process (Close, 2007). These insights help the researcher more fully understand the lived experience of participants, and help establish more accurate interpretations of experiences during analysis. As a result, the use of photos in the data collection process is closely aligned with both the data collection and analysis in IPA.

The use of photography in research is phenomenological in nature (Pettersson, 2011). Photography is seen as a form of "capturing and communicating the unspeakable in an experience" (Kirova & Emme, 2006, p.7), representing a visual depiction of a participant's lived experience. The use of photographs allows the participant to control what is attended to in photos based on his or her experiences in the moment, the environment within which he or she is located, and the personal meaning he or she places on a photo (Gibson, 1979). Ziller (1990) discussed how providing a participant with a camera ultimately places the participant in control

of communicating his or her experiences via the photos taken. In return, the researcher viewing

the photos is allowed access to experiences, feelings and ideas associated with the photos from

the participant him or herself. In this approach to data collection, "[w]hat something "is" is

related to what it means to the perceiver" (Ziller, 1990, p.32).

Interview methods utilizing visual prompts (i.e., photography) are often used to engage

children in discussions about their experiences (Kellett & Ding, 2004; Mandleco, 2013; Ziller

1990). Techniques that are both flexible and participatory (i.e., providing participants an

opportunity to be involved in the research process) can spark children's interests, and often prove

effective with the age group being researched in this project (e.g., Kellett & Ding, 2004).

Participatory research methods empower children to have more control in the research and

participate on their own terms (James, 1995). Rather than relying on a child's discussion of past

experiences or ideas through interviews alone, participatory research methods can help enhance

understandings of the concept being studied as the voice of the child is encouraged, and

additional sources of data are discussed (e.g., what the child saw, felt, heard or thought during a

particular photo) (Mischel, 1977). Promisingly, there are many qualitative research studies that

use participatory research methods involving photography with child participants (e.g., Cappello,

2005; Clark, 1999; Yohani, 2008).

Since hope is often associated with creative processes (Lynch, 1965), an arts-based

approach to data collection, such as the use of photographs, seemed particularly relevant for this

project. This photo-elicited method of research is an accepted evidence-based data collection

approach for exploring hope with youth (e.g., Turner, 2005; Yohani, 2008), and has been shown

to help elicit discussion in children of this age (Van Manen, 1994). In addition, this photo-

elicited interview technique has been shown to help increase the comfort of children while

decreasing their potential boredom during the research process (Harden, Scott, Backett-Milburn, & Jackson, 2000), engaging them in the process of exploring their world through a hopeful lens. For example, Turner (2005) used photography to study hope in young adults (between the ages of 18 to 25). Participants in Turner's study were asked to "imagine that they were being paid to mount a photographic exhibition on hope, and to take photographs that depicted hope to them" (p.510). Also, a study by Yohani (2008) employed photography as one arts-based research tool to explore hope and help build program interventions for refugee children in Canada. More recently, two studies examined arts-based approaches to study hope. King (2014) used photo-elicited interviews to experientially and conceptually describe and understand the development and experience of hope for early adolescent girls. Furthermore, Cherrington (2015) studied how visual participatory methodology assisted rural South African primary school children to explore conceptualizations of hope, in addition to strengthening their sense of hope. In Cherrington's project, children were asked to make a list of things that were hopeful or not hopeful in their community, and from this list, the children took photos to depict either hopeful or unhopeful people and things in the community. Taken together, these four studies all provide evidence to suggest that the use of photography is a valuable tool to explore hope with children and youth. On a practical note, the first three studies discussed used disposable cameras for data collection. To avoid issues that can arise with the use of disposable cameras (e.g., photos not developing properly, lighting issues, not being able to delete a photo if it is of a sensitive nature or if it is too personal for the study), I decided to use digital cameras in the present study.

Participants

Recruitment. Following approval from the University of Alberta's Research Ethics Board, a convenience sample of participants was recruited in two ways: by word of mouth (see Appendix B for information letter to parents/guardians) and through graduate student forums and

list serves (see Appendix C for recruitment email). Parents who were interested in having their

child(ren) participate either phoned or emailed me to set up a preliminary information meeting.

This first meeting with me included parents and child(ren).

Participant inclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria for this study were as follows: (a) return

of parent consent form; (b) return of child assent form; (c) available for two interviews (i.e.,

approximately 15 to 20 minutes for the pre-interview and 30 to 40 minutes for the main research

interview), and a potential follow-up interview if required (i.e., approximately 10 to 15 minutes);

(d) able to articulate ideas and express him or herself, as informally assessed by his or her parent

or guardian; and (e) able to manage and return a digital camera, as informally assessed by his or

her parent or guardian.

Final sample. A total of 11 participants from a large Western Canadian city were

enrolled in the study. Participants were included in the study on a first come, first served basis.

All included participants were children between the ages of nine and 11, and all met inclusion

criteria. Information on intellectual disabilities, mental health issues or diagnoses on the part of

the participants were not reported or requested as part of this project. As one would expect, there

appeared to be individual differences between the participants. For example, some participants

appeared more capable of talking about feelings, some were more verbal/verbose in their

responses, some took longer to feel comfortable and open up, and some appeared more

distractible during the interview. Reflections on possible developmental differences and their

impact on findings are highlighted in Chapter 5.

Two other families expressed interest in the study and were preliminarily considered for

inclusion. In the first case, the child did not want to provide assent to participate, therefore he did

not continue in the research study. In the second case, the family expressed interest, but after

numerous attempts to schedule the preliminary interview, failed to follow up. Three additional

parents articulated an interest in the study, however their children did not meet inclusion criteria.

Table 1 depicts the demographic data from all 11 included participants.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Name	Age	Sex	Ethnicity*	Primary Language in the Home	Religion	Marital Status of Parents	Current annual income in the home	Highest level of education in the home	# of children in the home
Bill	9	Male	European and East/South-East Asian Origins	English	Not disclosed	Married	60-80K	Doctoral Degree	1
Clark	11	Male	Other North American Origins	English	Not disclosed	Married	60-80K	Master's Degree	2
Cora	9	Female	European Origins	English	Not disclosed	Married	Over 100K	Doctoral Degree	2
Jessica	9	Female	Other North American Origins	English	Salvation Army	Married	Over 100K	Bachelor's Degree	2
John	9	Male	Other North American and European Origins	English	Not disclosed	Married	Not disclosed	Master's Degree	2
May	11	Female	Middle Eastern Origins	English/ Arabic	Muslim	Married	Not disclosed	Master's Degree	3
Sam	10	Female	European Origins	English	Protestant	Married	Over 100K	Doctoral Degree	2
Shay	9	Male	Other North American Origins	English	Not disclosed	Married	60-80K	Master's Degree	2
Sterling	10	Female	Other North American Origins	English	Roman Catholic	Married	Over 100K	Master's Degree	2
Tip	9	Female	European Origins	English	United	Common Law	Over 100K	Master's Degree	2
Yoyo	9	Male	South Asian Origins	English	Pentecostal	Widowed	Under 20K	Master's Degree	1

*Note: Forced choice options for ethnicity were:
- North American Aboriginal origins (e.g., First Nations, Inuit, Métis)
- Other North American origins (e.g., Acadian, Canadian, Québécois)
- European origins (e.g., English, Flemish, Scandinavian)
- Caribbean origins (e.g., Haitian, Jamaican, West Indian)
- Latin, Central, and South American origins (e.g., Brazilian, Hispanic, Mexican)
- African origins (e.g., African-Canadian, Egyptian, South African)
- West Asian and Middle Eastern origins (e.g., Afghani, Armenian, Saudi Arabian)
- South Asian origins (e.g., East Indian, Pakistani, Punjabi)
- East and Southeast Asian origins (e.g., Chinese, Filipino, Thai)
- Oceania origins (e.g., Maori, Pacific Islander, Polynesian)
- Multi-ethic / mixed race origins
- Other (please specify) _____

Data Collection

    Preliminary Interviews. Each preliminary interview took place at a mutually agreed upon time and date. Ten preliminary interviews occurred in the child's home, while one interview took place at a local library. During these meetings, the study was explained to prospective participants and their parents in detail. Participants were encouraged to ask questions about the study prior to committing their involvement. Once participants verbally expressed interest in participating in the study, parental consent (see Appendix B), participant assent (see Appendix D) and demographic data (see Appendix E) were collected from each child and his or her parent(s). Participants were reminded that they could choose to withdraw anytime during the research study if they no longer wished to participate in the research.

    After obtaining consent and assent, I went over basic information on how to use the digital camera with the participant. I checked on the child's level of comfort or knowledge with the digital camera, and encouraged the child to ask any questions about the use of the digital camera. This brief preliminary interview also served as a way to emphasize ethical concerns that could arise for the participant when he or she was completing the photo activity. For example, ethical topics included: what constituted appropriate versus inappropriate photos (e.g., avoiding photos of family members in the bathroom), how to avoid invading other people's privacy and how to avoid talking to strangers. The participant and his or her parent(s) were told that I would assume responsibility for any damaged, lost or stolen cameras. I also indicated that if problems with the digital camera arose during data collection, or if the camera was lost or stolen, the child and/or guardian of the child should contact me for assistance. Every effort was made to help address any negative feelings that could arise in the participant if the digital camera was lost, damaged or stolen (e.g., reminding the child and the parent/guardian that accidents happen, that

they should not feel guilty or worry about the lost, stolen or damaged camera, and that the

camera would be replaced for them).[1]

After this initial discussion, participants were given the digital camera and were

instructed to take about 20 to 25 photos of anything that represented hope to them or made them

feel hopeful in their lives. They were told they were "experts on their hope" and that I wanted to

learn from them about how they understand and make sense of their experiences of hope (e.g.,

what hope is, how they see hope, what hope feels like, what influences their hope and how they

understand hope). They were also given a journal, which they were told could be used to jot

down notes about aspects of their photos (e.g., noting what was going on at the time, why a

certain photo was important to them, or drawing images they thought were hopeful but could not

find in their environment to capture in a photo, etc.). This journal was given as a suggestion to

help them remember the reasons behind taking their hope photos, but was not a requirement for

completion of the project. As a reference for the participants, written directions for the photo

activity were included on a page at the beginning of their journal. Each preliminary interview

meeting was approximately 15 to 20 minutes in length. At the end of the interview, parents of

each child were also reminded of the importance of the child completing this activity

independently. Finally, participants and their parents were encouraged to call me if they had

questions or concerns throughout the research process.

Changes to Preliminary Protocol. One participant served as the pilot for this study

(Clark). A few days after Clark's preliminary interview, I received an email from his mother

wondering if the "20 to 25-picture recommendation" in the project's instructions was a

suggestion or a necessity. The mother mentioned that Clark was worried about coming to his

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[1] One participant did lose the digital camera, and her interview went forward as planned, simply without physical photographs. However, the participant could still remember the photos she took, and could discuss them at length, which aided the interview.

interview without 20 to 25 meaningful photos (i.e., was focused on the number of photos, rather than on taking meaningful photos). I stressed to the mother that any number of photos taken by the participant was acceptable, whether it be only one or over 100. This incident caused me to alter my protocol with the rest of the research participants, directing them to take as many or as few photos as they wanted (i.e., I did not give them a set number of photos required for the project). I believe that this allowed participants more freedom in the number of photos taken, and perhaps led to less anxiety over having to take a certain number of photos prior to the interview.

In addition to the change in protocol above, I reviewed my audio-recorded pilot interview with my supervisor. This was done to ensure that I was not unintentionally leading the participant, that all of my questions were understandable, that my pace of questioning was acceptable, and that I was appropriately asking the child to elaborate on his experiences of hope in his photos. After both my supervisor and I reviewed the pilot interview, we discussed making changes to some of the language used for future participant interviews (e.g., ensuring that words were not too complex or difficult for the child to understand, clarifying my questions if the participant seemed confused).

Interviews and photography activity. I conducted all interviews, choosing an interview date and time that was mutually agreed upon by the participants' parents and myself. All efforts were made to ensure that participants were interviewed within a week or two of their preliminary interview. This was done to increase the likelihood that participants remembered as much as possible about the rationale behind their hope photos. Despite these efforts, the time between the preliminary and main interview ranged from seven to 20 days, with one participant being interviewed 42 days after their preliminary interview due to extenuating circumstances.

Most research interviews were completed in a confidential setting in a convenient public

institution (n=9). The chosen location was thought to help eliminate any environmental distractions or interruptions during the interview (e.g., interruptions from other siblings in the house, distractions from toys), and to provide a quiet atmosphere to attain a clear recording of the interview. Parking expenses at this location were reimbursed for participatory families. Two families were unable to bring their child to the designated location, therefore research interviews took place at the participants' homes. Regardless of the interview location, parents were nearby the interview room in case of an emergency (i.e., in a waiting room in the public institution or within another room at the child and parent's home).

Audio-recorded, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each child prompted by his or her hope photos. The interview was informal in nature. This approach has been described in the literature as a way to help eliminate the power differential between the researcher and the child, and to increase the child's comfort during the interview (Harden et al., 2000). Leaving the interview relatively open allowed flexibility to follow the participant's conversational direction. Throughout the interviews, participants were permitted and encouraged to lead discussions about their photos and their experiences of hope. They were told that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions being asked in the interview, and that my sole interest was to hear all about their thoughts on, and experiences with, hope. Participants were also told they could clarify questions if they were uncertain about my inquiries (e.g., May asked for me to provide an example of what I meant when I asked about different places she could see hope) or could say "I don't know" at any point throughout their interview. At times, participants were encouraged to elaborate on their ideas (e.g., can you tell me more about that?). If they could not elaborate, their efforts were thanked, they were provided with encouragement for the ideas that they already provided, and the next question was posed to them.

Participants took between five to 54 photos. However, not all photos were discussed during interviews. For example, some children took multiple photos of the same object and just wanted to show me their favourites, some took photos "just for fun," and others deleted some photos in the interview because these photos were no longer deemed meaningful. Both the participant and I chose certain photos to discuss. Typically, participants discussed most photos by the end of the interview. Photo-based interviews lasted between 44 minutes and an hour and nine minutes. Interview questions were similar to those employed in previous hope-focused research and practice (LeMay, Edey, & Larsen, 2008; Turner, 2005; Yohani, 2008) (See Appendix A for guiding questions used in this research study). These questions were based on dimensions of hope (e.g., relational, goal-oriented, affective) identified in previously mentioned hope theories (e.g., Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Farran et al., 1995; Snyder et al, 1991). Questions were also based on the scant research currently available on children's hope (e.g., Turner, 2005; Yohani, 2008). At the end of the interviews, all participants were given an opportunity to provide feedback about the project as a whole and their experiences of the interview process. After the interview, participants came up with a pseudonym for the study so that their confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained (often with the help of their parents). Also, photos of participants' journals were taken for my records, journals were given to participants to take home as a souvenir from the project, and digital cameras were returned to me. Each child was asked if they would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview should this be necessary in the future, and all agreed. All participants completed the full interview without terminating prematurely.

As a thank you for participating in the research study, each participant was sent a package in the mail consisting of a photo album with all of the participant's personal hope photos and a

thank you card for his or her help in illuminating the concept of hope. My intention was that participants would be left with an artefact from the project, and a reminder of the assistance they provided in educating me about their experiences of hope. According to Mitchell (2011), this type of artefact can help participants feel as though their only purpose was not to simply generate data for the project, and emphasizes their right to have a personal copy of what they produced.

Follow-up interviews. Four participants were initially invited to participate in follow-up interviews, and three participants chose to participate. It was evident after these initial three follow-up interviews that children were very present- and future-oriented, limited in their ability to recall much from initial interviews, unable to think of many new experiences of hope since their interview, and focused on upcoming events in their lives. Therefore, additional follow-up interviews were not pursued.

One follow-up interview was conducted at a participant's home and two were conducted over the phone. Follow-up interviews lasted between 4 to 21 minutes. These interviews consisted of questions regarding the following topics: (a) clarifying information from the participant's main interviews (e.g., "You talked about how hope is found outside. Can you think of something hopeful, or that makes you think of hope, that is inside?"), (b) checking-in with the participant's experiences of hope since his or her interview took place (e.g., "Have you thought about hope since helping out with the hope project? Can you tell me a bit about what you may have thought about in terms of hope?" or "Do you still feel hope in your photos when you look at them now? How do you know?"), and (c) seeing if any further questions arose since the participant's interview (e.g., "Did you have any questions after we last spoke about hope or the project?").

From a methodological perspective, IPA does not require member checking. Instead, IPA intentionally focuses on the researcher's understanding, validity and judgement of the data

collected (Webb, 2003; Webb & Kevern, 2001). In support of this contention, Webb and Kevern (2001) suggest that another version of the information gained through follow-up interviews will not invalidate the researcher's previous interpretations, but will rather solely provide another description of the data. Another description is not warranted since additional information can alter or even weaken a participant's original account of an experience, taking away from the richness of the original data (McConnell-Henry, Chapman, & Francis, 2011). McConnell-Henry and colleagues (2011) also concur that member checking is not necessary in an interpretative phenomenological study, suggesting that "there is no directive in interpretive research to prove or generalise, so the idea of validation is illogical" (p. 30). They argue that an interpretation is by definition determined by how it is perceived.

Rather than member checking, some degree of clarification did take place during each of the participants' interviews. Clarification during an interview is more in-line with an interpretative phenomenological approach to research, as the aim of the interview is to gain an understanding of participants' experiences and to "uncover and understand uncensored data as it is immediately recounted by the participant" (McConnell-Henry et al., 2011, p.33). Using 'how,' 'who' and 'when' questions help the interviewer probe further into participants' experiences and allows participants room to expand and clarify their narratives, which aligns with Heidegger's notion of context-specific truth (McConnell-Henry et al., 2011). In this study, clarification was done by paraphrasing participants' answers or asking follow-up questions to ensure that I understood the participants correctly. An example of this method is as follows:

> Interviewer: And how does your hope change?
> Jessica: How my hope changes like, when I'm scared and then I hug her she just l
>   starts to cuddle up next to me like ahhh so cute.
> Interviewer: Yeah. I bet. So she gives you that little protection and that comfort feeling?
> Jessica: Mmhmm. [nodding head in agreement]

The use of clarification during participant interviews helped validate my understandings and interpretations of the participants' experiences of hope.

      Analysis. After each interview, field notes were recorded in my own research journal. These field notes contained personal reflections on how the interview went as a whole, thoughts and feelings associated with the interview and the participant, general observations about each participant's developmental experiences, and questions to discuss with my supervisor. Additional notes included ideas to consider for the findings, choice of wording to be aware of for future interviews, preliminary and tentative theme or code ideas for analysis, and personal assumptions that may interfere with results. This reflective process continued in the weeks and months that followed after the interviews. I also remained reflexive throughout the entire writing process by attempting to name my personal understandings of hope and of children, and by acknowledging how my developing views may influence my interpretation of participants' experiences.

      Two audio recordings were made of each participant interview, with one serving as a backup in case the other recording failed. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysis was informed by IPA guidelines. Following suggestions set out in IPA's literature, the analytic process was flexible, iterative, non-linear and inductive (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005; Smith, 2007). While trying to maintain a non-prescriptive approach to analysis, several steps of analysis were used that were drawn from foundational IPA literature (e.g., Smith, 2004; Smith & Osborn, 2007; Smith et al., 2009).

      First, I repeatedly immersed myself in the original data, listening to and re-reading each participant transcript to become as familiar as possible with each participant's narrative. Second, I began initial noting, noting areas that were of interest to me in the transcript (e.g., choice of wording, main ideas, arising questions from the participant, pauses or tone of voice). This process helped identify the ways in which each participant discussed, understood and

experienced the concept of hope. Third, I began to develop themes for each transcript. As I

moved in and out of each transcript, I noted connections, patterns and relationships. I analyzed

each transcript by section (i.e., a few lines at a time), and themes began to develop as I

considered both the transcript and my notes. Emerging themes in each transcript were tested

against previous data from within the same transcript (i.e., looking to make sure they represented

the participant's experiences of hope and my understanding of these experiences). Themes were

then re-evaluated, modified or changed as new data were analyzed. Final themes represented

meaningful units of data that were relevant to the research question.

Fourth, after initial themes were developed for each individual participant, I began to

map out how the emerging themes within each transcript fit together. I used several IPA methods

to look for patterns and connections between emerging themes, and to achieve a deeper level of

interpretation within each transcript: abstraction (i.e., putting similar themes together and

renaming the newly formed clusters), subsumption (i.e., certain themes achieving more relevance

in the data, taking on multiple subordinate themes), polarization (i.e., focusing on what made

themes opposing rather than similar to help differentiate themes), and contextualization (i.e.,

looking at the context or narrative components of the transcripts) (Smith et al., 2009).

Fifth, both within-person (i.e., a single participant, and smaller components within a

single interview) and across-person (i.e., taking all participant data into consideration) analysis

occurred. Each participant's data (i.e., transcript, photos and journal entries) was thoroughly

reviewed during within-person analysis, looking to understand each individual experience in

detail. Then, across-person analysis was done, focusing on exploring similarities and differences

across participants. During this fifth stage of analysis, I remained open to new themes emerging.

I revisited transcripts often to rework themes, and eventually began to cluster common themes

together. Ultimately, this process can be seen as moving from within-person analysis to across-

person analysis, and then back to within-person analysis if required (i.e., revisiting specific

participant transcripts and specific components of individual transcripts). The end goal of this

phase of analysis is to have a description that is representative of both individual participants

(i.e., emergent ideas unique to a single participant) and all participants as a whole (i.e., patterns

and connections common to most, if not all, participants) (Smith et al., 2009). Overall, the goal

after all five phases of analysis was a deeper understanding of children's experiences of hope.

  Approach to writing. According to Smith and colleagues (2009), there are various ways

to approach writing within IPA. They suggest presenting results that are "…comprehensible,

systematic and persuasive to that reader who is coming to your study for the first time" (p.109).

They argue that the final representation of findings should consist of a substantial experiential

component, and the writer should attend closely to the concept being researched. Therefore, my

aim throughout the writing process was to give the reader a sense of participants' lived

experiences with hope, and to represent both conceptual and experiential components of

participants' experiences of hope.

  To navigate through the writing process, I drew inspiration from the qualitative writer

Laurel Richardson. In her segment of a co-written chapter on writing as a method of inquiry (i.e.,

Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), Richardson stated that qualitative research conveys its meaning

throughout its entire text, highlighting the value of writing a qualitative text as a "dynamic

creative process" (p. 960). She argues that,

> Qualitative writers… do not have to try to play God, writing as disembodied omniscient
> narrators claiming universal and atemporal general knowledge. They can eschew the
> questionable metanarrative of scientific objectivity and still have plenty to say as situated
> speakers, subjectivities engaged in knowing/telling about the world as they perceive it.
> (p.961)

For me, Richardson's approach to writing emphasizes the value of focusing less on being "all

knowing" (e.g., knowing everything that children are thinking or feeling in regards to hope, as if that is even possible). Rather, I take her to underscore the importance of recognizing my partial and experiential knowledge from data collection and interview experiences, in combination with other influences in my life (e.g., language, culture, socio-political environment), is "still knowing" (p.961). Her approach also confirms that by describing my experiences of having listened to and being part of children's stories of hope, my interpretations of their experiences of hope are more likely to come alive for the reader. This approach highlights the experiential aspect of children's hope experiences.

Research Quality

Unlike a quantitative approach to research, which has well established and widely accepted standards for assessing the quality of its research (e.g., sample size, internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity), criteria suitable for assessing the quality of qualitative research continues to evolve (Yardley, 2000). Identifying criteria that are suitable across qualitative research approaches, each with differing foundational theories and philosophies, is difficult. However, providing a framework to assess the quality of qualitative research is imperative.

I have chosen to employ Yardley's (2000) criteria for establishing research quality. Smith and colleagues (2009) support this choice for IPA research studies, asserting that Yardley's criteria apply to psychological research and have a more "pluralistic stance" (p.179) (i.e., can be applied to diverse cultures). Yardley (2000) highlights four main principles to assess the quality of qualitative research: (a) sensitivity to context, (b) commitment and rigour, (c) transparency and coherence, and (d) impact and importance. Each criterion will be discussed below in three ways. First, a description of the criterion will be presented. Second, an explanation of how the

criterion aligns with IPA will be highlighted. Third, a description for how the current study met this criterion of quality is provided. Finally, in addition to Yardley's (2000) criteria for establishing qualitative research quality, I briefly discuss how I attended to trustworthiness (Morrow, 2005) in the study (found in the criterion of commitment and rigour).

     Sensitivity to context. Various components need to be accounted for to ensure a qualitative study upholds the quality criterion of sensitivity to context: (1) Theoretical context needs to be addressed, and entails gaining an understanding of the underlying theory from previous literature on the subject under investigation. It is important to help understand the foundational theory of the research (Yardley, 2000), and helps the researcher highlight his or her understandings and assumptions that shape the final research observations and discussions (Harding & Gantley, 1998); (2) Consideration of language, social interaction and culture in the research needs to be addressed. These areas are seen as influential to the meaning and functioning of every phenomenon, and the experiences of both researcher and participants (Yardley, 2000); and (3) An awareness of the social context of the relationship between the researcher and participants is important in order to be sensitive to the language and dialogue being used. This is critical as the communication between researcher and participant can affect the meaning, interpretation and understanding of each individual's experience (Yardley, 2000). This includes being sensitive to both verbal and non-verbal communication, and recognizing that personal characteristics (e.g., gender, age) affect means of communication.

     The choice of IPA as a methodology for this study adheres to the criterion of sensitivity to context. First, this criterion is evident from the very beginning of an IPA study, in which an understanding of underlying theory on the topic of investigation is recommended (i.e., an awareness of the literature behind the study) (Smith et al., 2009). Second, IPA also requires close

engagement with the idiographic and the particular, strengthening sensitivity to context. This means that a focus is on the individual experiences of each participant, and the way these experiences are shaped by various factors (e.g., his or her culture, language or social context) (Smith et al., 2009). Third, a core facet of IPA includes an awareness of the interaction, and the influence of this interaction, between participant and researcher in data collection, which helps demonstrate sensitivity to context. Finally, researchers employing IPA remain sensitive to context through analysis (e.g., making sense of how the participant is making sense of his or her experience by immersing oneself in the data, paying close attention to the developing data and what can be understood from the data) and representation (e.g., the use of direct participant quotes to support findings and researcher interpretations, and to give voice to participants' unique experiences) (Smith et al., 2009).

Effort was made to establish sensitivity to context throughout the current study in many ways. First, a literature review was done on relevant research associated with this project, along with describing a supporting rationale for my choice of methodology, data collection and analysis procedures. Second, I continuously reflected on sociocultural influences (e.g., language, beliefs, culture) with respect to both my participants and myself. I also reflected on how these influences may have shaped my approach to the research, the data collection, the analysis and the representation of final research findings. Evidence of this reflection includes working through project details with my core supervisory committee, using field notes during each stage of data collection and analysis, and thinking about how things might have been done differently within the research at the conclusion of the research study. Finally, I brought awareness to the relationship between my participants and I throughout the study. I did this by being sensitive to issues of power within the interview room, being mindful of language used in communicating

with participants, recognizing both verbal and non-verbal forms of communication as influential

to my relationship with my participants and the research, remaining conscious of ethical issues

that could arise, and using direct participant quotations in the representation of findings.

Commitment and rigour. A qualitative study demonstrates high quality when

displaying both (1) commitment (i.e., deep understanding of the topic, competence and aptitude

in the research methods being used, and engagement with relevant research) and (2) rigour (i.e.,

proper completion of data collection and analysis) (Yardley, 2000).

Use of IPA adheres to the criterion of commitment in several ways. In an IPA study,

commitment is established if the researcher shows meticulous care during data collection and

analysis (i.e., paying close attention to the participant and his or her experiences) (Smith et al.,

2009). Smith and colleagues (2009) stated that in an IPA study, "a demonstration of commitment

can be synonymous with a demonstration of sensitivity to context" (p.181). Furthermore, the

criterion of rigour is demonstrated in IPA research through: (a) careful selection of research

participants that are directly relevant to the research question (e.g., relatively homogeneous), (b)

in-depth interviews, (c) analysis procedures that are idiographic in nature, and (d) findings that

are well supported in the data (Smith et al., 2009).

In the current study, I attended to the criterion of commitment by gaining a deep

understanding of the previous hope literature. I was also attentive to participants during data

collection, and tried to ensure they were comfortable and felt heard throughout the interview

process. Finally, I analyzed each participant interview carefully to capture unique experiences of

hope. I also attended to the criterion of rigour by: (1) selecting a relatively homogenous sample

that was relevant to my research question (i.e., children in middle childhood between the ages of

nine to 11), (2) completing in-depth, semi-structured interview with all participants, (3) engaging

in analysis that was interpretative, and focused on both shared experiences of hope between

participants and unique experiences of hope for each participant, and (4) supporting each theme

with evidence grounded in the data (i.e., using quotes to support research findings).

In addition to Yardley's (2000) criterion of commitment and rigour to demonstrate the

quality of a qualitative study, it is beneficial to look at the trustworthiness of the study (i.e.,

ensuring that the investigation of the research questions is done fairly, and that final results of the

study represent the experiences of the participants as much as possible) (Morrow, 2005). An IPA

study is recognized as acceptable for publication, as having worth and as being of high quality if

it is deemed trustworthy (Smith, 2011). In the current study, I obtained rich descriptions from

participants about their personal experiences and understandings of hope to enhance

trustworthiness of the research. This was done by asking participants a number of research

questions to elicit rich descriptions of their hope experiences, with additional follow-up

questions, clarifying questions and interviews to get more details from participants when needed.

I also attended to the criterion of trustworthiness by using multiple sources of data (i.e.,

discussions, photos, journals) to aid with my interpretations of the findings. Trustworthiness was

also enhanced through memos and audit trails, and discussing and reviewing project findings

with others (further noted below as also enhancing the criterion of transparency and coherence).

Transparency and coherence. Quality can be enhanced in a qualitative study by

ensuring the research process is transparent and coherent. This means that the description and

arguments used in the research are clear, descriptive, engaging and persuasive to its readers

(Creswell, 2013; Yardley, 2000). Transparency is maintained through the co-construction (i.e.,

between participants and the researcher) of a final research narrative that is meaningful to its

readers and appears to meaningfully reflect the intricacies of life. In addition, the researcher can

be transparent by documenting and disclosing each step of the data collection and analysis

process, and reflecting on influences that may have shaped the researcher's decisions or

motivations throughout the research (Yardley, 2000). Finally, by ensuring a "fit" between the

research question, the theoretical underpinnings of the research, and the data collection and

analysis methods used in the research, coherence is conserved.

An IPA study demonstrates transparency if the researcher carefully describes the

selection process of participants, and the interview and analysis procedures (Smith et al., 2009).

Coherence is also upheld when the underlining principles of IPA are evident in the research

procedures, exhibited through evidence of both phenomenological and hermeneutic foundations,

as well as when focusing on the importance of interpretation (Smith et al., 2009).

In this study, many steps were taken to ensure transparency and coherence. I have

attempted to clearly document my thoughts and processes by maintaining an audit trail (i.e.,

thoroughly documenting all aspects of the research study) (Creswell, 2007). This was done by

using field notes during data collection procedures and memoing in relation to themes and

rationale for emerging themes during analysis. I have also highlighted reasons behind sampling

decisions to help strengthen transparency, and sought to create a representation of findings that

both engages readers and is an accurate illustration of children's experiences of hope.

Furthermore, there were various research advisors during this project, whose suggestions and

recommendations were documented through notes and memos. First, I was in contact with my

dissertation supervisor, Dr. Larsen, throughout the development of the study, the data analysis

and the writing processes to ensure an experienced qualitative researcher reviewed my work.

Issues such as the interpretation of data and emerging themes were reviewed together to ensure

that final themes (i.e., superordinate and subordinate themes) were robust, meaningful, clear and

supported in the data. Second, feedback from my supervisory committee was solicited, which

assisted in assuring research quality. Finally, the Hope Research Discussion Group (a group

which meets monthly to discuss hope related research) was used as a sounding board for

questions and concerns that arose during the early stages of the project.

       Impact and importance. Yardley's (2000) final measure of quality is that of impact and

importance. A study is deemed to have quality if it is impactful, useful and influential on the

beliefs or actions of others. These areas can be measured "in relation to the objectives of the

analysis, the applications it was intended for, and the community for whom findings were

deemed relevant" (Yardley, 2000, p.223). Research findings are important not just to explain a

particular phenomena, but rather to depict a new perspective that offers a different way to view

or understand a topic. In addition, impact and importance can be seen when qualitative research

illuminates different views within society, or yields results not initially intended by the research

that may impact a multitude of other areas (e.g., by understanding children's hope experiences,

this research may impact how teachers and counsellors approach their work with children).

       Yardley's (2000) assertions regarding the value of impact and importance to the research

quality are consistent within IPA (Smith et al., 2009). Specifically, a focus on participants'

experiences is intended to engage the reader and evoke empathic generalizability (i.e., the

research text evokes experience and feelings, so that even if the reader has not had the same

experience as the participant, the research findings call forward the ability of the reader to

generalize the findings to similar experiences and feelings). Osborne (1994) suggests checking if

research findings have empathic generalizability by asking the question "does it fit for the

reader?" (p.178). Additionally, Smith and colleagues (2009) state that all IPA studies should

aspire to produce interesting, important and useful findings.

One of my main goals in this study was to produce exciting and valuable results for both readers and future hope research. Moreover, during interviews, I sought participants' feedback regarding what other children, parents and teachers should be told about children's hope. This feedback highlighted important implications for potential stakeholders in this project (e.g., individuals within the field of education and therapy). Along with participants' feedback, I provided additional recommendations for parents, teachers and clinicians based on my interpretations of project findings.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics approval was obtained from the University of Alberta's Research Ethics Board in order to ensure that this project met ethical research standards and regulations (University of Alberta Research Ethics Office, 2013). Psychologists are also bound to a code of ethics called the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists (CCEP) (CPA, 2000). In this section, I identify relevant aspects of the CCEP and discuss how they applied to this study. Where appropriate, ethical codes from the CCEP will be referenced in bold beside each mentioned ethical consideration as a reference for the reader.

Informed consent and assent. Informed consent was sought from parents of the research participants **(I.34)**, and assent was sought from the participants themselves **(I.19)**. Both assent and consent forms were additionally reviewed with participants and parents during the pre-interview. As much information about the research study as possible was provided in the informed consent and assent and discussed verbally (e.g., purpose and nature of the study, confidentiality, any possible benefits or risks) **(I.24)** to ensure that each participant and his or her parent understood the research project to which they consented **(I.23)**.

Vulnerable population. As a vulnerable population, my number one priority was to do

no harm to the child participants **(II.1, II.2)**, particularly given the potential for an unequal

power relationship between the participants and myself **(II.27)**. Rather than ignore this power

difference, I followed Mayall's (2000) suggestion and discussed this issue with the participants,

inviting them to share their expertise, perspectives and experiences with me. I continually

checked the safety and comfort of each participant, and reflected on any potential issues of

power differences that arose (e.g., me guiding the interview) through the research process.

   Voluntary participation. Participants were reminded that their decision to participate in

the study was strictly voluntary, and that they could withdraw from the study at any time **(I.24)**

or could refuse to answer any questions that made them feel uncomfortable. These messages

were reinforced in all interviews. As mentioned previously, there was one participant who

decided he did not wish to partake in the study. He, along with his parents, was/were told that

this decision was not going to affect him/them negatively in any way. There were no participants

who initially choose to participate and later changed their minds.

   Language (I.23). Since the population in this research project was between the ages of

nine and 11, the use of age appropriate and clear language was crucial in all research material

and research activities. It was important that participants understood their rights, the research

directions and the research question (Punch, 2002). I attempted to make clear to all participants

at the beginning of each interview that they could clarify questions or words with me that they

did not understand. If at any point it appeared to me that there was a misunderstanding with my

choice of word or the way a question was phrased (e.g., a look of confusion on a participant's

face or a long, perplexed pause), I reworded the question or defined a specific word to make the

language more comprehensible. Similarly, it was important for me to recognize that the

participants in the study sometimes used language differently than I did, and used language that I

did not understand (Punch, 2002). Therefore, I openly discussed any language or information

provided to me by the participants that I did not seem to understand.

Ownership of photos (I.40, I.42). I told participants and their parents that both the child

and myself would have copies of the photos and photocopies of children's hope journals. I

reminded them that I would use photos or journal entries for dissemination and dissertation

purposes, with all identifiers removed **(I.45)**. Following Mitchell's (2011) guidelines for ethical

considerations with photographs, each participant was asked to come up with a pseudonym in

order to have photos credited to him or her and to help the participants remain anonymous. There

were no photos deemed too private or confidential by either the parents or the participants during

the study, therefore all photos were permitted for dissemination purposes.

Anonymity and confidentiality. Participant data is being used solely for the purpose of

this research **(I.37)**. My supervisor and I were the only ones to see the transcripts and original

study data **(I.43)**. However, participants were given copies of their personal photos, to be shared

with whomever they wish. Research participants and their parents were told that participants may

be quoted in future reports or publications regarding this research, however it was reiterated to

both parties that participants would not be identified by name or by any other identifying

information (e.g., that the participant's pseudonym would be used instead, that any identifying

information would be deleted from transcripts and dissemination materials) **(1.45)**.

Identifying information (I.40, I.42). All identifying information in the photos or

journals was blurred out using the program Photoshop. This included blurring faces of others

present in the photos (e.g., friends, family, a construction worker) to maintain the anonymity of

those that did not consent to take part in the study. Photos given back to participants were those

that were Photoshoped as well, unless otherwise requested by parents of participants.

Storing data. All interview recordings were uploaded onto a password protected personal computer and were deleted from digital recorders immediately. Per REB regulations, all transcripts, memos and audio recordings will be kept on a secure password protected and encrypted computer, and locked in my office for a minimum of five years **(I.41-I.42).**

Risks (II.13, II.14). The topic of hope, or the thoughts and feelings elicited by the interviews on this subject, could be seen as sensitive, confidential and/or private in nature. Participants were told they did not need to share their hopeful experiences if they feared these experiences might elicit anxiety, stress and/or other uncomfortable thoughts and emotions. Throughout the interview process, I actively listened for any signs of discomfort or concerns from participants. Additionally, parents were encouraged to call me if there were any concerns or issues within their child after the interview took place. Apart from some nervousness at the beginning of the interview (e.g., Sterling reported "I was kind of nervous, because I didn't know if I could answer all the questions and I wouldn't know what to talk about"), no participant appeared distressed or uncomfortable during the interview, and no concerning emotional issues were reported during or after the interview. A current list of local low and no cost resources for professional counselling was prepared in case issues arose, however was not handed out to any parents of the participants as no need was identified (see Appendix F) (**II.21, II.31, II.32**).

Benefits (II.13). There is research support for the notion that simply talking about hope enables children to experience an increased sense of hope (Yohani & Larsen, 2009). Further information on apparent benefits of participating in this study is found in Chapter 5.

Informing participants (II.22, II.23). Stakeholders of this research (i.e., parents and children) who expressed interest in learning about project findings will be contacted and provided with a summary of research findings once the final research report is complete.

Chapter 4: Findings

Due to the scarce research on children's experiences of hope present in the literature to date, photo-elicited, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eleven participants to begin to illuminate how children in middle childhood (ages nine to 11) experience hope. In addition, this research aimed to explore how children understand hope, describe hope and describe employing hope in their lives.

The following chapter is organized in three parts. First, I briefly introduce each child through a personal experience or memory from my time with that child. My purpose here is to provide the reader with an understanding of each participant, and help illuminate how each child experienced and described experiencing hope during his or her engagement with this hope-focused project. Second, six superordinate themes that emerged from children's experiences of hope will be shared. Themes identified represent unique experiences of hope for participants, in addition to themes common to most participants' hope experiences. Detailed explanations of themes and quotes will support findings from these 11 remarkable participants, and will highlight how participants experienced hope. Third, additional knowledge gained from the study about children's hope experiences will be addressed. This will elucidate how participants talked about and developed hope by taking part in the study, and will illuminate advice participants had for parents, teachers and other children in regards to hope and building hopeful experiences.

Introduction to Participants

Clark (11-year-old male). Clark was the first participant I interviewed. I remember thinking that Clark was wise beyond his years. During Clark's interview, he shared a photo of a potato. At that moment, my approach to interviews fundamentally changed. He highlighted the unique nature of hope for children, and invited me into a sense of playfulness when approaching

all future interviews. Clark laughed with me and joked with me during our first interview. He

offered a welcome reminder of how research with children differs from research with adults, and

that a highly structured approach to interviews with children may not be best. He also taught me

that through simple conversations and an engaging activity, rich descriptions of hope could be

found. I will be forever grateful to Clark for these lessons.

May (11-year-old female). There was a familiarity to May that is hard to describe. The

minute I met her, I felt like I had known her for years. She invited me into her family home with

open arms, offering me a hug during our pre-interview. Her presence radiated comfort. Despite

her various qualities, one thing stood out the most: family was fundamental to her. She was, to

me, the epitome of an older and caring sister, introducing me to her two younger brothers so

proudly that first meeting. She also brought out paintings and crafts that her mother had created

for an upcoming bazaar, fondly showcasing her mother's exquisite workmanship. May's warm-

hearted approach to her family, and even to me (a virtual stranger), was unmistakable.

Sam (10-year-old female). My nervousness during Sam's pre-interview is hard to forget.

I recall having problems with the digital camera, not being able to get it to work properly.

Despite my anxiety around technology, Sam was patient and kind, checking in to see if she could

help me in any way. Sam's familiarity with digital cameras was evident, as even before I

explained how to take a photo, she demonstrated the photo-taking process to me. Sam's approach

to the use of technology in this project showcased how much more technologically advanced she

was than I initially gave her credit for. She helped me realize the need to talk to participants

about their experience with digital cameras prior to making assumptions about their abilities.

Jessica (nine-year-old female). The first word that comes to mind when I think of

Jessica is "sweet." Her lovable and charming personality came alive as she opened up and

discussed her experiences with being bullied. Jessica willingly talked about how she built

strength and courage in the face of being a target of bullying. Rather than letting past experiences define her, Jessica shared how she grew from these experiences. She described how negative experiences led her to approach all people with love, kindness and respect (even those who were rude or mean). Jessica openly shared her experiences, noting how they could help others understand the value of hope in a world that sometimes appears less hopeful.

Yoyo (nine-year-old male). Yoyo was an eager beaver. He started the project the moment he was handed the digital camera during his pre-interview. Yoyo no longer needed my direction moments after meeting me, quickly taking charge of his own process of finding hope in the world. In order to fully explain the project to Yoyo, I had to actively get his attention. There was no stopping Yoyo. His enthusiasm at being a hope detective for the project was instantly evident. I recall being in awe of his ability to feel comfortable and confident in the project from the moment he began. Watching him navigate the camera in his house that first day together was a pleasure, and reminded me of the excitement that comes from a novel and engaging activity.

Tip (nine-year-old female). Tip was seemingly shy when we first met. However, my initial perception of her was very wrong. For instance, when I walked her and her mother back to the parking garage after her interview, I recall her sharing how the movie Inside/Out was hopeful to her, depicting specific incidences of hope in the movie. Tip did not care about those around us who might be listening to our conversation. She continued to talk, so caught up in the topic of hope that she appeared unaware of where she was walking. Though she was the youngest participant, she had much wisdom to share. She taught me not to judge a book by its cover, displaying that even those who may appear shy and quiet at first can have many things to say when given the opportunity to speak about an experience such as hope.

Bill (nine-year-old male). As I was flipping through Bill's project journal during his

interview, I noticed that his father had left a note for me on one of the pages. In the note, Bill's father wrote about how Bill was upset one day, and after independently coming up with the idea to work on his hope project, Bill became "very happy" (as his father put it). This note was very important to me. You see, Bill did not present as outwardly emotional during his interview. He discussed little in regards to emotional or embodied experiences of hope. Instead, he chose to focus on conceptual aspects of hope. The note from Bill's father helped me recognize how focusing on hope could foster an emotional and physical change in the body: a change that is often personal and sometimes hard to describe.

       Sterling (10-year-old female). I still think of Sterling to this day as a young journaler. Within minutes of talking together during her interview, she brought out her project journal. She had taken detailed notes on all of her experiences of hope during the weeks leading up to her interview. She even wrote about hope above and beyond what was asked of her for the project. For example, she had a page devoted to brainstorming words that were related to hope, and another highlighting her personal definition of hope. I was floored by Sterling's efforts, not only because they exceeded my expectations, but also because of the importance she placed on sharing her experiences of hope in order to help others.

       John (nine-year-old male). John's enthusiasm towards this project was memorable in and of itself. Every picture that he took, and every question that he answered, appeared to evoke a sense of curiosity and wonder about hope for him (and as a result, for me). For only nine years old, he was a very verbal child (a trait that resonated with me as I had been deemed a "chatterbox" by my parents from a young age). I will never forget his emphatic articulation as he spoke with passion about his experiences and understandings of hope. With the passion in his voice filling the interview room, I could not help but feel energized and engaged in response. Every time I read a quote from John, that passion returns for me, as I picture him stressing the

value of hope to this world with his accentuated tone of voice and his dynamic body language.

Cora (nine-year-old female). The way in which Cora spoke about the idea of possibility exuded hope. A defining moment for me during Cora's interview was when she spoke about how a new building that was under construction in her neighbourhood created possibility, and as a result, hopes for her and for those around her. I could hear the excitement in her voice as she spoke about new friends that may be on the horizon for her because of this new building. I could hear the compassion in her voice as she spoke about new housing opportunities for those that may not have had a home in the past, along with future possible memories to be made. For Cora, it appeared that hope flourished out of new possibilities on the horizon.

Shay (nine-year-old male). I smile every time I think of my time with Shay. He was very comedic, keeping me entertained during our whole interview. Shay seemed to say things like they were, never trying to impress me with his words or his photos, but rather telling me his truthful opinion in regards to every question asked of him. I knew he was being candid because he did not fail to tell me on more than one occasion that I had to spice our interview up in order to maintain his engagement. One of Shay's future career goals was to write a choose-your-own-adventure book series, which seemed to fit so well with his spirited approach to this project. For example, Shay eventually took the reins of our interview, guiding me in our hope discussion and choosing the photos he wished to talk about, quickly bypassing photos that were less meaningful to him. Shay appeared confident to lead our hope-based interview as a kind of adventure. I trusted that, as the expert on his own experience of hope, I would follow his lead.

Themes

As a reminder, I came in to this study with the following operational definition of hope: "A process of anticipation that involves the interaction of thinking, acting, feeling and relating, and is directed toward a future fulfillment that is personally meaningful" (Stephenson, 1991,

p.1459). While I may have used this definition of hope to inform the development of this project

and my personal understanding of hope, my key value in this qualitative research was to remain

open to the language the child participants used to discuss their experiences and understandings

of hope when analyzing the data. Therefore, final themes are reflective of the participants'

conceptualizations of hope rather than on previous hope literature or my personal understanding

of hope.

Six overarching superordinate themes were highlighted in the study as representing

participants' experiences of hope. These themes are presented as discrete; however, due to

conceptual overlap in the lived experience of children's hope, some quotes or ideas presented

could fall into more than one theme. Every effort was made to differentiate final themes in the

analysis and writing process. Final superordinate themes, and a description of each theme, are as

follows: (1) "Hope as relational" discusses children's experiences of hope in relation to trust and

feelings of security and connection with people, animals, hope objects, hope places and a higher

power. This theme also depicts how children learned about hope from others; (2) "Hope as

personal and unique" illuminates how children find hope, and how their unique experiences of

hope are influenced by artistic expressions (i.e., paintings, music, literature and colours) and

temporal aspects (i.e., hope fostered by past experiences, present-focused hopes and future-

oriented hopes); (3) "Emotional and embodied hope" highlights the link between hope and

emotions for children, in addition to embodied experiences of hope; (4) "Hope challenged/Hope

present" portrays how children experience hope despite poor circumstances or despite a hope not

coming true. Participants also used metaphors and contrasting images to illustrate the theme of

continued and reoccurring hope; (5) "Nature as a source of hope" highlights how children's hope

experiences include being outdoors, and encompass a focus on human growth and survival. It

also illustrates how natural events could threaten participants' sense of hope; and (6) "Other-

oriented hope" describes children's experiences of hope oriented towards others, and the good

fortune of others and the environment, rather than solely towards themselves. A summary of

these six superordinate themes and their subordinate themes can be found in Table 2.

The conventions I have employed when representing parts of participants texts/words are

also important to acknowledge. For readability and confidentiality purposes, participant quotes

were changed in minor ways (e.g., words such as "like," "um," or "ah" were eliminated, stutters

were eliminated, names and locations were altered or eliminated, information that could identify

a participant was removed). Information within quotes deemed less relevant to the theme was

removed, and is indicated by dotted lines within the text (…). Similar dotted lines at the

Table 2

Superordinate and Subordinate Themes

Superordinate Themes	Subordinate Themes
Hope as relational	Hope and trust
	Security and connection with people
	Security and connection with animals
	Security and connection with hope objects and hope places
	Relationship with a higher power
	Learning about hope from others
Hope as personal and unique	Finding hope
	Artistic expressions
	Temporal aspects of hope
Emotional and embodied hope	Hope and emotions
	Felt sense of hope
Hope challenged/Hope present	Existence of hope despite poor circumstances
	Metaphors of hope
	Contrasting images of hope

	Continued hope despite a hope not coming true
Nature as a source of hope	Being outdoors
	Human growth and survival
	Natural events
Other-oriented hope	Hope when witnessing adversity
	Hope for others' happiness
	Hope through positive action directed towards others
	Hope through positive action directed towards the environment

beginning or end of a quote symbolize that the participant was talking before and/or after the

extracted segment. Any altered information (e.g., change of verb tense to help with readability),

inclusion of a word to help with readability, or relevant questions posed to participants by the

interviewer are indicated in square brackets.

Theme 1: Hope as relational. Participants highlighted how they experienced hope as

relational, discussing these relational experiences through: (1) trust, (2) security from, and

connections with, people, animals, hope objects and hope places, (3) relationships with a higher

power, and (4) learning about hope from others.

Hope and trust. A number of children expressed how their experiences of hope

flourished through a feeling of trust. When trust seemed absent or questionable, the experience of

hope appeared more elusive or weakened. Clark, Tip and Yoyo provided examples of how trust

helped foster a sense of hope for them. Clark was adamant about how trust in a friend helped

ensure a feeling of hopefulness, noting, "… cause I can sort of trust them and I know them pretty

well… unless I'm having an argument with them or something." Clark talked about how hope

was apparent for him when he felt he could trust a friend with whom he confided, but he alluded

to hope's disappearance when "…you don't really feel like you can trust them anymore." Yoyo

also discussed how his experience of hope positively shifted when a feeling of trust was present.
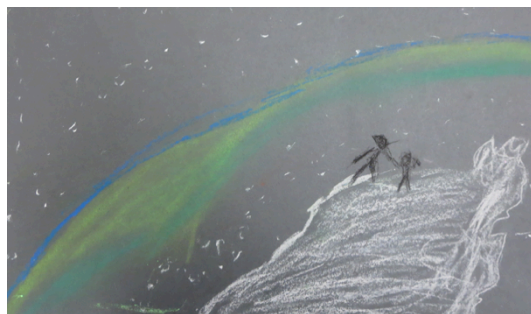
Figure 1. Yoyo's drawing of his mother and him in Antarctica.

When entering the interview room, Yoyo had in hand a drawing he made. This drawing was of him and his mother in Antarctica. Yoyo went on to share his meaning behind the drawing, stating, "This is my Mom, this is me, and I'm slipping a little… but my Mom's got hold of me." Yoyo's explanation, along with the evocative image of Yoyo holding his mother's hand on the iceberg so he does not fall, provided evidence of how trust in his mom helped contribute to feeling protected and hopeful.

Tip also shared her understanding of how "hope is like trust" with the use of a metaphor. For her, having no trust meant "… you are going the wrong way and you'll get lost… you have no more hope because you got lost…" Tip metaphorically illustrated how becoming "lost" in untrusting situations weakened her sense of hope. Alternatively, she highlighted how finding trust in others and in oneself, and letting that trust guide her, strengthened her sense of hope. Tip further supported her understanding of the link between trust and hope, sharing how trust in her mother made her feel "not alone" in dealing with people who were untrustworthy and who threatened her hope.

The examples above illustrate how the feeling of trust was important to several participants' experiences of hope. They display how the experience of hope was fostered in trusting relationships and situations, but how without trust, a sense of hope appeared in jeopardy.

Security and connection with people. Each of the 11 participants described how a feeling of security and connection to people in their lives was part of their experiences of hope. In the words of May, "…I guess you're hopeful if you're safe from something bad." All participants discussed how when feelings of safety were present, or when they felt a secure connection with

others (i.e., family, friends and community members), their sense of hope was strengthened. On

the other hand, when they were feeling unsafe or insecure, their sense of hope was weakened.

Security and connection with family. Hope fostered within relationships with family

members was evident as part of every child's described experience of hope. First and foremost, it

was clear that parents nurtured a feeling of security and safety in participants, helping children

feel physically and emotionally protected. Participants described these experiences as facilitating

the development of hope and the recognition that hope was present. For example, Yoyo

emotionally discussed how the connection he has with his

mother was a source of security and hope for him,

particularly in the absence of another parental figure. Yoyo's

voice softened as he shared his photo of an arts and crafts

project, with a drawing of a heart and the message "I love

you Mom" on the front:
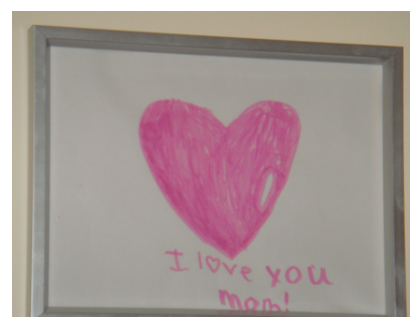
Figure 2. Yoyo's photo of a
picture he drew for his mother.

> I made it for… Mother's Day… My Mom, I mean she's a very, very wonderful person…
> Just randomly gave me hope for some reason… I looked at it, I thought, "this is a good
> picture." It's about me and my Mom… We've always been together. I don't have a Dad.
> He died when I was young. When I was two years, or two months I don't know.

Yoyo's admiration for his mother, and the comfort she provides him, was evident in his

interview. For Yoyo, a strong bond and a secure relationship with his mother both contributed to

his feeling of being protected, which he said ultimately helped foster a sense of hope.

Some participants reflected on how their parents inspired a sense of hope in them by

providing advice, strength and support to face challenges that life threw their way. Jessica

described an example of how her parents provided comfort and support to find hope in a

circumstance that appeared scary or uncertain:

> … when I'm scared and I'm shy and lonely, like say I joined a new hockey team… I'm

> shy to meet everyone and I'm scared at my first game cause I'm scared I'm going to miss
> the goal when I have the puck… then I look at my parents and I'm like, "I shouldn't be
> scared anymore, I should just shoot it and if I miss no biggie I can have the kids on my
> team be angry at me but I can still be happy with myself."

Jessica appeared so proud to discuss how she overcame a scary situation with the help and

support of her parents. Even the simple act of having eye contact with her parents during her

hockey game provided Jessica a sense of hope and courage as she faced her fears, displaying

how hope can stem from feelings of security and comfort. Bill also talked about his experiences

of finding hope in the support and comfort of his parents. He shared how his mother "solves

problems" and enhances his hope by helping him resolve school or social issues, and described

how his dad facilitates laughter and hope by "just mak[ing] other people laugh and [be] happy,

and then when they're happy, I'm happy." Furthermore, May shared how her mother's support

and pride in May and her brothers imparts a sense of hope in May:

> …if it weren't for my Mom I wouldn't even be here… So I'm really hopeful for that.
> And she undergoes a lot of pain for me and my brothers… and that pain is to help us, and
> you know she's always happy through our success even though she's not the one who's
> you know, getting any prizes. So let's say for example, I passed to the regional science
> fair… when I got the certificate she was really happy even though she wasn't the person
> getting the certificate, my success makes her happy.

Hope was associated with the support and encouragement May receives from her mother during

challenging life moments. In all, the feeling of support, encouragement and comfort from parents

appeared to be a fundamental component of participants' experiences of hope.

Participants also recounted how members of the family apart from parents encouraged

hope. When asked if there were others besides his parents who brought Shay hope, he responded,

"Well probably my Nana and Granddad… probably like most of my family… cause they're

related to me and I love them." Participants also gravitated towards discussions about how hope

was inspired in them through relationships with siblings. Jessica's beamed with delight as she

described how connecting and engaging meaningfully with her sister was hopeful for her.

However, her demeanour shifted as she described how the possibility of being ignored by her

sister is associated with not having hope:

> When I'm bored… I'm just like, [Sister] will know what to do and then I go over to her
> and we learn how to play our ukuleles and we talk and dance to music and it's really
> fun… I talk to her and she replies, cause some people in the world if you ask them a
> question they'll just ignore you and you feel bad when that happens. And then you go to
> [Sister] and you say, "hi [Sister]," she says hi back to you and she doesn't go like "uh"
> and just turns her head ignoring you, she just keeps on talking to you.

John also shared how his connection to his sister is one that encourages hope "because she is

almost always happy."

Altogether, different family members contributed to participants' experiences of hope.

The feelings of connection and security from different family members fuelled the development

of a strong sense of hope for participants.

Security and connection with friends. Connecting with friends was another component of

children's experiences of hope. Supportive and safe relationships with friends, in addition to

sharing common interests with friends, fostered a sense of hope for participants. May, for

instance, described how a friend comforted her when she was being bullied at school:

> … last year I didn't have any friends cause I was new to my school. This year I'm so
> grateful, I have a really good friend. She's my best friend now… she was there for me
> last year when all the other girls were bullying me. And she was, you know, just always
> comforting me.

To May, this friend is "someone that makes me feel hopeful," and provides her with emotional

support and companionship, especially in moments that are difficult. Similarly, sharing common

interests with a friend nurtured a sense of hope within Cora. She shared, "… a lot of kids in my

class they don't like Minecraft, but I do… and then [friend] does too, so I guess it just makes me

feel hopeful so I don't have to give up my favourite game." Connecting through commonalities

made Cora feel understood and supported. She seemed relieved

when revealing how she had someone with whom to share

experiences, talking about how everyone could use a friend

who makes them feel hopeful, validated and understood.

Overall, it appeared that the presence of strong and valuable

Figure 3. Cora's photo of her Minecraft drawing.

friendships helped foster hopeful experiences in children.

      Security and connection with community members. Bill, Sam and May identified how a

connection with specific community members fostered a sense of hope by providing security and

support to them and those around them. For Bill, police officers facilitated a sense of hope by

providing safety and protection to the neighbourhood. Speaking

in a matter-of-fact tone of voice, Bill stressed the value of police

officers to his hope development:

> ...it's a police car… And it's hope because they can save
> our lives and they can stop bank robbers or criminals…
> they are important to our community… And if there are

Figure 4. Bill's photo of a police car.

speeding people, [police officers] can stop them before there are car accidents.

Bill further discussed how the feeling of safety and security would continue to enhance his hope

if a police dog was present, indicating, "…because usually police dogs are really important…

they can stop people by just grabbing them." In speaking with Bill, it was evident that the

presence of police in the community made him feel secure, and he felt that police could be a

beacon of security and hope for others as well.

      Meanwhile, Sam shared how a connection to her teacher strengthened her experience of

hope, particularly when her teacher initiated a charity event to support others in the community.

Finally, May noted that a construction worker strengthened hope in her by rebuilding and fixing

her community and making the city safer for its inhabitants, stating, "It's an old man you can tell
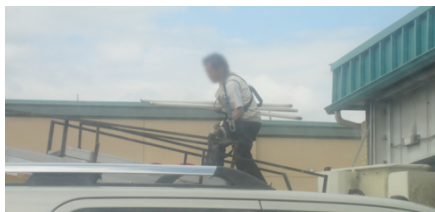
Figure 5. May's photo of a community worker.

he's pretty old and he's helping the community… [he] is helping make [city name] a better place… just pitching in to help fix up our city." May spoke at length about how this worker was an example of the way in which different members of society supported connections within a community, and in turn fostered a sense of hope.

Loss of security and connection with people. Several participants highlighted how experiences of insecurity, relational disconnect or moments of isolation deflated or threatened their experience of hope. This loss of hope was associated with fighting with a friend for Clark, and the possibility of some people in the world having no friends at all for both Shay and Sterling. Similarly, Jessica shared how not feeling loved or accepted by family, and landing in the foster-care system, would surely flatten her hope. May also provided an emotional account of how witnessing bullying at school took away her hope:

> When someone you know just treats someone else in a bad way because of their condition. In my old school there was a boy. I think he had Autism. I didn't know about it back then, and everyone was so mean to him and they'd run away from him… they would say his name and they'd be like, "oh it's the guy, run away he's gonna touch you, he's gonna give you a disease" and you know, I think that just takes away hope… Because he doesn't do anything wrong and everyone's just so mean to him… because of the way he looks and because of the way he acts.

Even the act of talking about this incident seemed to decrease May's sense of hope in the interview room. She described her reaction after observing this incident of bullying at school:

> …sadness… I feel bad for him… he doesn't really do anything mean to the other people. In fact he's actually really nice to them. Like, he offers them snacks and they'd be like, "ew, no you touched it. I'm not gonna take it from you." So I guess, you know, he's kind to everyone but they just don't show it back to him.

May seemed to point out that witnessing relational disconnect, in addition to seeing moments of

others being judged or mistreated, could take away one's hope.

Finally, almost all participants made reference to how the death of a loved one would threaten their hope. For instance, Bill pointed out the finality of death, and negative emotions that accompany death, by describing a loss of hope if "…someone important dies… it's really sad when somebody dies. You never see them again." Cora also talked about the grief and loss of hope that would accompany the death of a friend. In a sad and soft tone, she said, "… my friend gave me a lot of memories… like really fun times, and then [if] she gets murdered, then it just makes me feel so sad." Finally, Shay stated how the death of his parents or grandparents would cause him to "be less hopeful." These examples vividly demonstrate how the experience of losing a sense of connection to others deflated participants' experience of hope.

Overall, the experience of hope for participants involved building and strengthening relational connections with people in their lives. Shay summarized the value of relational connections beautifully as he described how spending time connecting with other people helps hope flourish, sharing, "…spend more time with people… you'll get to know the people more and they might make you feel hopeful." Relational connections, and feelings of protection and security within these connections, proved to be very important elements to foster participants' hope, while a loss of connection, a feeling of isolation or the death of a loved one threatened participants' hope.

Security and connection with animals. Participants talked about how experiences involving connecting to and being protected by animals generated hope. More specifically, family pets were a big source of hope for participants. They noted how pets provided feelings

Figure 6. Cora's photo of her dog.

of protection, calmness, comfort and reduced stress, especially in moments that participants felt scared or uncertain. This meant comfort from Cora's cat during a nightmare and a feeling of

having a "special friend" when her dog is present; support and protection from Shay's cats if

danger was present; and being emotionally supported through life difficulties for Sterling:

> …I took a picture of [dog]… he's my special friend and I hope that even if I grow up I'll
> have a special friend, and that everybody can have a special friend that maybe isn't a
> human that they can rely on… he makes me feel happy, and if everything doesn't go the
> way I planned, he makes me feel better and like everything did go the way I planned…
> that gives me hope that even if something did go wrong, he'll make it better.

What stood out from my discussion with Sterling was her use of the word "rely." This use of

language suggests how Sterling's hope was strengthened through feelings of love and comfort

fostered by her relationship with her dog, particularly when she

depended on her dog for support when facing adversity.

Participants also talked about how family pets provided

comfort that the children felt emotionally and physically. The

recognition of this shift brought them an awareness of the

Figure 7. Jessica's photo of her dog and cat.

presence of hope. A depiction of this shift is seen in Jessica's

story of how she found consolation and soothing with her dog during a lightning storm:

> Sometimes when I'm scared or something, like when a lightning storm's outside, I'm
> really scared of those. I look back at my dog and I'm like, "aww, [dog] give me a hug"
> and then I hug her and I feel better…. Because when I'm cold she's warm and then when
> I hug her I feel warm… It's like a warm fuzzy feeling inside… And some people say that
> dogs are special guardians because if you spell their name backwards it spells "God"…
> because you think, "oh no I'm gonna get hurt" when you see a lightning storm then you
> look at your dog and you're like, "never mind."

Figures 8 and 9. Clark's photos of his cats.

That "fuzzy feeling" described by Jessica illuminated

the emotional connection that appeared to come along

with attaining a sense of security and hope from

family pets. Even the simple act of petting family

pets seemed to shift how participants experienced hope. Clark

described his emotional change when petting his cats, noting, "…

they kinda make me feel hopeful…. They just remove stress and

make a bad day better sort of thing… you can pet her a bit and

she'll be happy and you'll feel probably happier." Bill also talked

about how the presence of his cat fostered hope and shifted the

way he emotionally felt when the cat was present:

Figure 10. Bill's photo of his cat.

> It's cute and it acts silly sometimes… when I sleep she comes to bed and then you pet her… it's healthy for both of us because the cat is purring and if it's purring it's healthy for the cat and it's good, and also makes me happy.

Similar to the loss of a family member or friend, several participants highlighted how the

death of a family pet would threaten their hope. For example, Sterling said,

> If somebody told me that my dog had just died or the horse that I was riding just died, I'd probably just give up on my hope. I'd be like, "I don't want to do this I don't feel this anymore," because I'd be too sad.

During conversations about a pet's death, participants appeared sad, often changing the subject

Figure 11. John's photo of his dog.

after briefly talking about how the loss of an animal close to

them would contribute to many painful emotional reactions (e.g.,

"sadness" or feeling "a broken heart"). Even thinking about an

aging pet, or the declining health of a pet, diminished

participants' hope. John displayed wavering hope during his

interview, as he told me about his worries and fears for his

family pet that often creep in and challenge his sense of hope:

> … that's my dog. She's kinda getting old. I hope my dog always stays healthy… It's because when I look at her she always looks lonely or something… I feel like if kids treat

an animal well it makes me hope that the kids will treat family or other people well… they will treat the dog or the animal the same way as they would treat a human being.

During their interviews, participants clearly did not want to focus on the potential death of an animal, or even the health of their family pets, as these topics threatened the presence of hope.

Taken together, participants discussed consistent and clear connections between their experiences of hope and their relationships with pets. Participants highlighted how their hope was strengthened when they sought out support from their pets, but was also reinforced when family pets simply engaged with or comforted them (e.g., came to visit them). Recounting stories of family pets also unmistakably caused shifts in participants' tone of voice, body language and the way they discussed obstacles in their world. These shifts included a warmer, energized and encouraged outlook on life, fostering their sense of hope. Alternatively, the loss of hope noted by participants at the sheer thought of an animal in harm or the loss of a pet highlights how valuable the relational connection with animals could be to foster a sense of hope in children.

Security and connection with hope objects and hope places. Special objects and particular places were experienced as providing participants' hope. Participants described how these objects and places offered a sense of security and connection, and made them feel more hopeful and safe. For example, Jessica talked about how her cherished teddy bear made her feel hopeful and protected. She shared how her teddy often supported her in times of sadness, and fostered a shift in her feelings:

Figure 12. Jessica's photo of her teddy bear.

My teddy bear photo is because when people are sad they hug their teddy bears and that's hope… like that was a bad day for me and then I just looked at him and was like, "yay teddy bear"… When I was little I tripped and I hurt my knee and then I was at the doctor's office cause it was really bad and I hugged my teddy bear and it helped… Because he made me feel happy when I hugged him…

Shay also felt comfort and security from his "Stuffie Big Daddy

Monkey," his "blue blanket" and his "baby monkey":

> So they make me feel hopeful cause I love them a lot.
> I've had them for a long time and also, if I don't have
> both of them with me I'll try to stay awake as long as I
> can… I like to cuddle with them… and then if the light
> would go off I'd be kind of scared because I'm kind of
> scared of the dark… they make me not so scared… they
> give me hope… And I just feel safe around them. Safer
> than if I didn't have them…

Figure 13. Shay's photo of his Stuffie monkey and blue blanket.

Jessica and Shay's hope objects fostered hope when their need for safety was satisfied. Simply

seeing their hope object, or even the photo taken of their object, appeared to create a profound

sense of hopefulness for Jessica and Shay during their interview. They indicated embodied

experiences attached to their hope objects. For example, they referred to a felt sense of being

"calm" and of feeling physically "warm" when hope objects were present.

While not an object that a child may physically touch, Tip identified the moon as a

unique symbol of protection and hope. In her example, she discussed how the moon was an

object that brought her feelings of comfort and safety, especially on a dark night:

> The moon kind of gives me a little hope and since I don't have your camera anymore, I
> couldn't take a picture of it. But I still have a picture in my mind… it's kinda staring
> down at me, kinda protecting me.

Overall, these hope objects were valuable to participants' experiences of growing and

maintaining hope. It seemed that hugging, touching or simply being in the presence of these

objects was an important part of participants' hope experiences, and helped participants self-

soothe when feeling sad, scared or insecure.

Furthermore, the notion of place and home seemed to be fundamental to participants'

experiences of hope. Tip and Clark shared how having a home created a sense of security and

hope for them. Clark indicated, "The home is sort of a safe place I guess… Where you sort of

feel safe… it's like a familiar place I guess." Tip also stressed the value and fortune of having a

place to stay at night and being "…thankful for what you have…," ultimately leading her to

experience a sense of hope. Both Clark and Tip's relationship with a hope place (i.e., their home)

appeared to foster hope and a sense of belonging.

Participants highlighted the power of special objects and places that played a role in their

experience of hope. Feelings of security and protection in relation to hope objects and hope

places appeared to make the presence of hope more easily recognizable for participants.

Relationship with a higher power. Two participants discussed how their experiences of

hope included a connection to a higher power. They highlighted hope fostered from religious

lessons learned at school or religious images seen on television. Sterling told me how her

religious upbringing provided her a sense of hope for an afterlife, stating, "I go to a Catholic

school and I learn a lot about religion and I believe that if I die then I'm going to go to heaven

and gonna see all my friends there and everything's going to be fine…" Sterling's experience of

hope appeared to foster a religious belief that people reconnect with loved ones after they die,

which seemed to provide her a feeling of comfort and hope. Yoyo similarly discussed the impact

of spirituality and his religious upbringing on his sense of hope. He shared his belief in the

connection between love and hope because he "read it in the Bible," and noted how adding

spiritual components to his photos would strengthen hope:

> Maybe I would just take one of my toy trees and put it on so it looks more like a desert?...
> That makes me feel like maybe God was born there… Because that's what I saw in most
> movies, that's how it looked… In God movies.

Yoyo continued to explain how hope rises from religious images, but is threatened by the evil

religious figure of the devil, stating, "The devil. Satan… He is a very evil person. He tempts

people into doing something very bad." There was sadness in Yoyo's voice as he discussed how

a lack of hope makes him feel "sometimes sadness… and just lonely. So lonely I can't even

stand a chance against Satan." For Sterling and Yoyo, a relationship with a higher power fostered

their experiences of hope.

Learning about hope from others. Participants indicated that learning about hope was a

process influenced by many people in their lives. They described learning about hope from

school, family and friends, and others in their world. Sterling and Clark recounted how they

learned about hope at school. Clark described learning about hope "probably either when I was

learning English when I was little, or at school or something," while Sterling reported,

> …I actually do remember some of our classes in religion about hope… what I remember
> is four candles on a wreath, and… each week, before… Easter you light a candle and one
> of those candles is for hope, and yeah I guess what they were trying to symbolize was
> that you feel hope that Jesus would resurrect?

Most participants discussed how family and friends aided their understanding of hope.

Cora, for instance, proudly identified her mother as shaping her knowledge of hope, noting, " …

when I was young I asked what hope meant and my Mom told me hope is something when you

have good feelings about what might happen or what has happened in the past." John also

proudly declared his grandfather as influencing his understanding of hope:

> ... my Grandpa does stuff… he helps kids… that have bad lives, like maybe their parents
> are in jail or something like that… cause I told him I was doing this project so then, he
> [said], "well here's something to know about hope."

Conversely, both Sam and Jessica talked about how their friends helped them learn about hope.

Sam described how her friends "showed [her] stuff" (e.g., a photo of baby puppies surviving

after being abandoned) to help teach her about hope, while Jessica described how a friend's

kindness influenced her understanding of hope:

> … there was this one last person that also taught me about hope, [Jessica's friend]… whenever I was sad, she'd say, "it's okay Jessica, you want to come play with me?" and then I'd be like, "yeah," and that kind of taught me about hope.

Participants highlighted how family and friends provided a sounding board to discuss hope and develop a better understanding of hope, and were catalysts for further experiences of hope.

Yoyo was the sole participant who reported learning about hope from a higher power (i.e., God). From a young age, Yoyo reported hearing about messages of hope from God, sharing, "And my God… he senses me. Like he tells me in my mind [about hope]. Inside my dreams… It was like when I was two or something." He described how messages from a higher power helped foster his understanding of hope and taught him how to use hope in his daily life. Yoyo's example highlighted how the development of religious or spiritual beliefs could potentially play a role in helping define hope for children.

Witnessing hope from others in society helped some participants learn about hope. Bill talked about how different people and places helped foster his understanding of hope. He stated, "I just saw it in a lot of places like on a restaurant or in a store or something… Well I just heard someone said hope and then I told my mom or dad what hope means." By listening to others talk about hope, or even seeing hope in places around his environment, Bill's conceptualization of hope seemed to further develop. Other participants also provided examples of how they learned about hope through witnessing others use hope. For example, Jessica said,

> … no one really taught me about it, I just saw other people using hope to save themselves and help others and I was like, "I need to do that someday." And then when someone got hurt one time, I just looked at them and was like, "Now's my time to use those special, magical words." And I figured out what it was called and it was called hope and I started using it on everyone to make them happy.

The powerful experiences of witnessing others interact with and use hope helped educate various participants on their understanding of hope.

In sum, participants' experiences of hope involved relational connections and security provided to them by people, animals, hope objects, hope places and spirituality. These connections and relationships allowed hope to become more apparent, and sheltered participants' hope in times of fear or insecurity. Furthermore, these relational connections tended to be the main contributors to participants learning about hope, beginning to understand hope, and starting to use hope in their lives.

Theme 2: Hope as personal and unique. Participants described their experiences of hope as being very personal and unique. For example, Tip explained, "…everyone has their own kind of style of hope… and I think they should never change it." In the most serious of tones, John further stressed the personal nature of hope, commenting, "…hope can be anything you want it to. It doesn't have to be something that other people tell you hope is. You can think it's hope in your own way." Participants' subjective experiences of hope were further discussed as including: (a) how they found and recognized hope; (b) artistic expressions they associated with hope; and (c) temporal aspects related to their experiences of hope.

Finding hope. Participants illustrated their unique experiences of finding hope and how they identified whether something in their world was or was not representative of hope. For some participants, the act of finding hope was "a little bit easy" (Yoyo). Tip, for instance, discussed how the experience of identifying and remembering hopeful moments was simple, noting, "…when you remember hope… you never forget it, so yes it was very easy to memorize it… Cause it stays in your mind cause hope is really nice, because hope is like love… you never forget that." Tip metaphorically painted a picture of the lasting effects a sense of hope can have on an individual, especially when attached to other positive emotions. These feelings appeared to make hope easier for her to locate. Additionally, some participants discussed their thinking process used to identify hope. When discussing his approach to finding hope, Clark explained,

> … once I see something more, that's when I think of it as hopeful. I don't think "what's hopeful, what's hopeful, what's hopeful?"… then think of something that I could maybe see, but I think it's more of when I see it like, "oh look there's a door!"… I sort of think of it more when I see it there in real life… usually you have to see it to actually think of it as hope. You can't just think of it in your head and then "oh that's hopeful," you have to sort of see it and then think of it.

Clark illuminated how his process of finding hope included an active deliberation on whether something concrete was or was not hopeful. Cora described the process of finding hope as somewhat more emotional:

> Hope isn't something that you can just look at and think of. It's more something that comes like from your heart… it's not like you can just look at the table and think, "oh that's hopeful." It's more like you have to think of it a bit longer.

Clark and Cora described how their process of finding hope did not come naturally (i.e., hope did not simply appear right away), but rather was a process in which they explicitly thought about hope and had to feel hopeful to identify a photo or an experience as representing hope.

Tip also shared how she went about finding her own hope. She noted how she altered her experience of hope by actively thinking about hope and working to turn her fear into hope:

> … if you somehow get fear inside you, you get a little scared… and you suddenly say, take a word like "I hope" and it kind of might give you a lot of hope… sometimes I kind of cry in the night cause I'm sad about something. Then I kind of think a little bit… then I say to myself, "hmm maybe I should just say a little word" and then I say, "I hope" and then it comes all back to me and I get a good dream.

Tip described how she intentionally engaged in a cognitive shift to help remind herself of the existence of hope and to locate hope, all as a means of fostering hope. Altogether, Clark, Cora and Tip seemed to highlight the importance of being intentional and explicit about hope, in addition to the personal nature of hope.

Conversely, others alluded to an immediate recognition of something being hopeful. Rather than needing to look for hope, May observed "… it's more like hope found me, you

know." She elaborated on her process of identifying something as hopeful by stating,

> It really just came. You know, hope isn't really something you can learn, it's something
> that you feel… I guess you just feel it, when you see something nice… you can't learn it.
> Everyone… they just have it inside of them…

Hope seemed to merely appear to Yoyo and John as well. Yoyo described, "[hope] just came up

to me so hard," while John shared how hope could simply "spring up." These descriptions

illustrate how sometimes participants did not need to even look for hope for hope to be present.

Finding hope, and identifying something as hopeful, appeared to be a very personal and

unique process for each participant. For some, the experience of finding hope was a cognitive

process, often with an attached emotional component. While for others, actively looking for hope

was not always necessary because hope was experienced as simply being present.

Artistic Expressions. Experiences involving artistic expressions were associated with

hope and hopeful experiences for multiple participants. In many ways, this seemed to add to the

personal and unique nature of participants' hope experiences. Engaging in, and with, various

forms of artistic expressions appeared to foster and strengthen participants' sense of hope, and

their recognition of the presence of hope. Forms of artistic expressions discussed by participants

included: (1) viewing visual arts, (2) reading literature, (3) listening to music, and (4) creating

art. Colours, an element of art, were also discussed as being part of children's hope experiences.

Viewing visual arts. Participants emphasized how experiences looking at visual artwork

elicited feelings of hope. For example, Sterling shared how posters of horses hanging in her

room gave her hope as they always remind her of the future goal to have her own farm. She told

me how the image of horses made her feel happy, peaceful and hopeful, which were all feelings

that she described experiencing when in the direct presence of horses too. Similarly, Clark

discussed the hope he experienced when seeing artwork of his favourite artist, stating, "…one of

Figure 14. Clark's photo of his favourite artist's artwork.

my favourite artists made that one, and I like art too, it kind of just makes me feel hopeful… pictures can also tell stories… they can sort of have plots and stuff." Clark talked about how artwork could inspire its viewers to construct stories through different artistic techniques (e.g., paintbrush strokes or stencilled images) in the same fashion as a well-written book.

While Tip acknowledged how a mural in the library had "all the good things in life" that reminded her of hope (e.g., food, nature), John discussed how he was moved by, and feeling hopeful because of, art in his house. He shared how he is personally hopeful when he sees art, and noted how conversations around the concept of hope could ensue from looking at art. He commented on different questions that could be posed to those who engage with art, specifically targeting an individual's emotional reaction to art:

> …it's art. And not only like, you look at it a [certain] way. If you show it to somebody, you can say "this is how I feel, how do you feel about my picture? And not only like, what I've just did, what emotion it gives you. Or what it makes you think about?

Figure 15. John's photo of artwork in his house.

In reflecting on the experiences of all four participants, and being present for discussions that ensued based on photos of different pieces of artwork, it became evident that observing and reflecting on forms of visual art fostered and instilled a personal and unique sense of hope. Being in the presence of art appeared to create an avenue through which hope could be explored, discussed and experienced for these children.

Reading literature. Both Clark, a self-proclaimed lover of literature, and Tip discussed how hope was present when engaging with literary pieces. For instance, hope was linked to

finding a book that piqued Clark's interest:

> … I was feeling hopeful that one book from the library, a few books from the library, would interest me and be good in my opinion…. Because I'm sort of hoping that it will be a good story and that it won't be boring…

Likewise, Tip discussed how a particular fairy tale story with a happy ending increased her personal sense of hope. She described a tale in which a mermaid was turned into a human against her will, and depicted how this mermaid eventually found her way back to the ocean to be with family. At the end of Tip's vivid description of this tale, she reported, "…[it] kind of fills me up with a little hope." The ending of this tale seemed to symbolize hope for Tip, leaving her feeling content as she recounted the mermaid's eventual happiness. For Clark and Tip, a good story meant being in the presence of hope, or even feeling hopeful (depending on how the story ends). Books represented a unique way for children to escape from their daily lives and immerse themselves in new, exciting, hopeful adventures that occasionally made something impossible seem possible.

Listening to music. Jessica and Yoyo emphasized how their experiences of hope involved music. For Jessica, music appeared to provide an emotional shift in a positive direction, in addition to an overall sense of excitement, hope and action:

> … there was this one thing I really wanted to take a photo of and it brings tons and tons of hope to me, a music note. I love singing and I've always wanted to have my own guitar, that's why I have a ukulele but I can't really play anything on it…. music like, when you're sad, and then you hear your favourite song, you're like, "oh my gosh I need to get up, I need to get dancing, I shouldn't be sad no more, this is like my favourite song and I know that I'll be all right."

Experiencing and engaging with music seemed to strengthen Jessica's experience of hope, particularly in moments of boredom or loneliness. Furthermore, Yoyo described the hope he experienced when engaging with music, stating, "…and the music actually reminded me of

everything I had and the music actually gave me a good feeling in my heart." Music appeared to

be a powerful form of art that generated a strong, unique and embodied sense of hope for both

Yoyo and Jessica.

     Creating art. Two participants discussed how an experience creating their own art led to

feelings of hope. Yoyo brought in several pieces of his arts and crafts, wanting to include them in

the hope project. When asked if his crafts bring him hope, Yoyo responded, "Yes I guess." The

very act of bringing in artwork to depict his hope suggested just how meaningful art was to his

sense of hope. Shay also took a photo of a clay dish he created. He

discussed his involvement in crafts as leading to increased feelings

of hope, especially in the realm of creating more art in the future:

> It gives me hope that sometime I'll make new clay dishes,
> cause I made that… I also made a plate… it makes me feel
> hopeful that I'll have the fun of making more, and actually
> using them because I do use these, they're not just displays cause they're bowls and
> stuff… I was hoping I would get to make another one.

Figure 16. Shay's photo of a clay dish he made.

Shay also shared positive memories that surfaced when talking about his creation, and embedded

in these memories seemed to be the presence of hope. Participant-made crafts appeared to

symbolize past experiences of hope, in addition to how participants viewed similar positive

experiences as possible in the future.

     Colours. A handful of participants noted how the liveliness of colors brought out a

unique sense of hope for them. Jessica and May discussed shifts in their mood with the presence

of colour. For Jessica, "…when you're sad and you look at a rainbow you're like, 'colours,

yay.'" Similarly, May described her experience of hope being affected by colours:

> I always used to talk about my Mom because she's always wearing ugly colours like
> brown and beige and I'm always wearing like pink and purple… and I noticed that the
> way she dresses, it kind of affects her mood. So I guess if you wear cheerful colours it

makes you more cheerful.

For Jessica and May, hope seemed to flourish from an increase in happiness and cheerfulness

when bright colours were present. There was an evident shift in their body language as they

spoke about the impact of colourful objects, going from calm to lively in a matter of seconds.

Yoyo also explored the relationship between hope and colour. When asked what he could

add to a picture of him and his mother to foster more hope, Yoyo remarked, "maybe I would add

more colour… it just would put a sense that I love her more." The addition of colour signified a

deeper emotional connection for Yoyo, strengthening his sense of hope. In all, it seemed that the

presence of colour sparked an otherwise overlooked sense of hope for participants. According to

them, colour fostered an emotional shift from depressed states to more

cheerful and hopeful ones.

Furthermore, two participants discussed how particular colours

represented hope and a lack of hope. In her voice-recorded journal, Tip

expressed, "A tree's green, and green feels like hope. You hope that

the trees that you see will be forever green." After Tip shared this
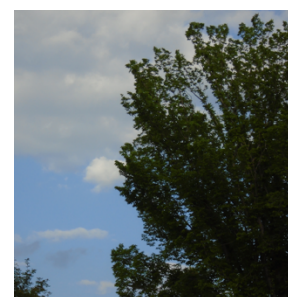
Figure 17. Tip's photo of a green tree.

recording, I asked her if there was a colour that would represent no hope for her. She noted,

> Black… black is kind of like… a shadow… it's kind of like untrust and trust…. black is like you're kind of lying to someone… [Interviewer: Oh. So black is no hope?] [Tip nods yes] Mmhmm, while green on the other hand is really hopeful.

Likewise, John discussed how the colour green is linked to hope, explaining, "…one of my

favourite colours is green and when I look at the open world or at least outside… it makes me

feel hopeful because I always love to see where nature's always so beautiful or something." Both

Tip and John associated the concept of hope with the specific colour green. The colour green

seemed to represent a sense of calm for participants, and was often associated with nature

(another aspect linked to participants' experiences of hope described below). Alternatively, the colour black seemed to represent darkness, distrust and a lack of all things hopeful.

Overall, various forms of art were experienced as part of children's unique and personal hope experiences. By simply being in the presence of art, or elements of art such as colours, participants discussed further experiencing hope and being aware of hope in their world.

Temporal aspects of hope. There was a clear temporal element to participants' unique and personal hope experiences. Children experienced hope in deeply meaningful moments focused in the past, in the present or directed towards the future.

Hope linked to the past. Participants highlighted how hope was influenced by positive memories from the past. For example, Cora smiled while recounting how a tree in her neighbourhood reminded her of fun moments with friends:

> … it gives me a lot of memories because I used to have a friend that lived in the same neighbourhood… people would tie tire swings and stuff to it and I think we made a swing once, and it just gives me a lot of memories of my friends who used to play with me there.

Figure 18. Cora's photo of a tree in her neighbourhood.

Cora emphasized the link between hope and past memories by stating, "…some things in the past, when you remember them, it makes you feel hopeful." She displayed how past-positive experiences proved themselves to be a hope resource, not only strengthening a sense of hope but also increasing positive feelings linked with these memories.

In a singsong voice, May recounted her experience of taking a photo of the sun coming out of the trees. She shared how this image reminded her of a memory from her childhood related to hope:

Figure 19. May's photo of the sun coming out of the trees.

> The way the sun is just coming down and it's shining… there's a

> forest and you see the rays of the sun… It reminds me when I was little, there's the song it's like "Mr. Sun, Sun" [singing] you know that one?... I used to love that song… it's just the sun and you know it's coming and it's bringing everything back to life.

May was able to share how this past memory provided her the opportunity to re-experience hope when reflecting on the memory in the present. Finally, John emphasized how an experience of hope from the past influenced his future hope when discussing his reaction to thunderstorms. He noted, "But you know when it stops then the next thunderstorm's okay. I have a little more hope every single time…" John appeared relieved as he recognized how his memory of surviving storms in the past fostered his current state of hope, and even made him feel more capable of overcoming future storms. The examples above demonstrate how past experiences and personal memories of hope can have tremendous impacts on children's present and future-oriented hopes.

   Hope in the present. Participants demonstrated that there was a component of hope focused on the present moment. For example, Clark highlighted a present-focused hope when taking a photo of the morning sky:

Figure 20. Clark's photo of the morning sky.

> … this is a sky… well it was sorta looking hopeful, it was just the morning, and it was a bit chilly… then the sky was all blue and sunny and just a few clouds, and it was looking pretty hopeful that it would become a nice day…

Clark's present-focused hope was equally related to his future hope of a "nice day" occurring, illustrating how hopes in the present could influence future hopes. Sterling also explained how present-focused hopes could have an impact on future hopes. She noted, "… sometimes if I'm having a really bad day at school and I get a test back and I got a hundred percent, that gives me hope again that I will get a good job and get a good house…" Sterling appeared to mean that positive, hopeful moments in the present could help nurture hope for the future. In this example, Sterling's hope appears to be informed by broad social norms of

what it is to be an adult (i.e., that doing well at school leads to a good job). This idea, and

implications of hope as understood by Sterling's statement, will be further explored in Chapter 5.

Even the act of looking for hope as part of the hope project implied a focus on the here-

and-now. For instance, Tip said, "… I still look around and think of hope," stressing how this

project got her to look for hope in the present moment rather than solely thinking about past or

future hopes. Participants like Tip appeared to learn how to be intentional in noticing hope by

being more mindful of the possibility of hope in the present.

Hope for the future. Every participant discussed his or her experiences with future-

oriented hopes. Future-focused hopes were often very personal and meaningful, and represented

a goal that the participant wanted to achieve or, according to Shay, a "hope that something in the

future will happen" (i.e., a goal-oriented hope).

Participants highlighted specific goal-oriented hopes directed towards the future,

Figure 21. Yoyo's drawing of him and his mom under the Northern Lights.

including accomplishments they hoped to realize, items they one day hoped to own, and hopes for a specific future occupation. Often, participants depicted multiple hopes for the future, not simply one. Yoyo, for example, depicted future goals of seeing a queen butterfly, building his own toy jeep, hoping for his dad to "come back alive," and travelling to Antarctica with his mother.

Furthermore, goal-oriented hopes were directed at hopes only a few hours in the future (e.g.,

Tip's "hope for a good day"), to hopes that were in the distant future, such as Sterling' very

personal and meaningful goal still years away from occurring:

> I hope to a have a farm with lots of horses, because I really like horses and they make me
> feel happy when I'm around them…. because I can have lots of animals and I really like
> animals and I wanna take care of them because they might be mistreated or hurt…

Sterling seemed emotionally invested in her future, goal-oriented hope. In fact, as participants

relayed their goal-oriented hopes throughout their interviews, it appeared that they were all

invested in these hopes, often going so far as to describe in detail how they could go about

reaching their goals (e.g., how a participant could save money to purchase a new toy).

The personal nature of goal-oriented hopes was beautifully verbalized by Sterling. She

highlighted how she actively tries to achieve, but is equally protective of, goal-oriented hopes,

stating, "...you might set your own personal goal to get something that you want, and you're also

gonna really hope and want and all that, to get this [goal]." She identified how her goal-oriented

hopes tend to be more personal than her wishes, sharing how "… wishes are things that you say

out loud and hopes are kind of ones that you keep to yourself and you don't really tell

everybody… hopes are more private than wishes…" According to Sterling, goal-oriented hopes

that were especially personal or important could be difficult to share, especially when the

possibility for these hopes to be realized was uncertain. She implied that some goal-oriented

hopes are worthy of protecting and keeping private. It was clear that future hopes and goals were

not only very important for Sterling, but were unique and meaningful for all participants.

Discussions about future-oriented hopes also included how hope was experienced as

possibilities. For example, Sam's positive outlook on life shone through as she discussed her

hope for a new day as the sun sets, sharing, "Sunset is the end of the day and it is a step closer to

a new day and a fresh start for people." She highlighted how the experience of hope is present

when thinking about new beginnings and new opportunities. After a long pause, Sam also

discussed how her experience of hope included a sense of anticipation and active waiting. She

noted, "Hope is when you're waiting. You know that something's going to happen but you don't

know when it's going to happen." Behind Sam's understanding of hope seemed to be a sense of

yearning for future possibilities, in addition to a sense of uncertainty. Clark also highlighted

future possibilities as being part of his hope experience. When asked how he understood that a

certain photo was about hope, he commented, "… I was sort of wishing it would happen. And

that's like hoping so I was like, 'oh I hope this is gonna happen. Oh, hope!' Click!.. And kind of

… hoping for it to go your way again." Along with a desire for future possibilities, Clark's

example displayed a self-oriented hope (i.e., hope directed towards himself).

A handful of participants also used the metaphor "journey of hope" when discussing the

experience of hope linked to possibilities. This metaphor symbolized the idea of a "path" or

"journey" towards hope, and highlighted a hope for direction and future possibilities in life. Tip,

for instance, took a picture of a pathway with no end in sight.

In reference to the photo, she talked about how hope can act as

a compass on the journey of life, helping an individual get to

where he or she wants to go in the future:

Figure 22. Tip's photo of a pathway with no end in sight.

> …when you go on a walk or a trip you always carry a
> map so you know where you're going. But just in case,
> but if you don't have a map you always hope that
> you're going where you need to go where want to go and where you want to be… Like it
> has a road, and it kind of has trees, and lights just like, kind of like leading you the way
> of where you want to go… hope is kind of like whispering into your like ear, so it's just
> like "go this way, go this way, trust me, trust me, go this way"…

Figure 23. May's photo of a bird, ready to take flight.

Tip both personified and externalized hope in this example. She explained

how hope acts as an escort towards a future with many possibilities. Hope,

for Tip, appeared to be a companion on her journey no matter where the

road ahead took her. The metaphor "journey of hope" was also

represented through May's photo of a bird ready to take flight. For May,

this represented the bird being independent and embarking on an

unaccompanied future journey full of possibilities:

> There's a bird right there, you can tell he's ready for take-off… You know the bird is just ready for flying, ready for freedom… by the looks of it, it looks like the bird is strong… they're [birds] so, you know, free.

May talked about having a sense of freedom when hope is present, in addition to the future possibilities that await the bird as it embarks on its next adventure.

Based on the stories provided by participants, the process of hope included temporal aspects. It was evident that hope could grow from past memories, be experienced in the present moment and be focused on future desires and goals. It was also clear that there was an active component involved in pursuing future hopes (i.e., it was important for participants to foster hopes through goal-directed behaviours rather than waiting around for goals to simply appear), and that hopes were often personal, deep and encompassing the potential for future possibilities.

Overall, each participant explored his or her personal and unique experiences of hope, discussing particular means and methods of finding hope and recognizing hope experiences. Similarly, participants described finding hope in, or through personally engaging with, various artistic expressions, and experienced meaningful hopes linked to the past, present and future.

Theme 3: Emotional and embodied hope. Many participants spoke about their experiences of hope in relation to emotions. They seemed to focus on the presence of hope being attributed to the presence of a positive emotion, while the absence or a depleted sense of hope was associated with negative emotions. They also shared what hope feels like, and where in their body they experienced the feeling of hope.

Hope and emotions. Participants' experiences of hope were often described as linked to various positive and negative emotions. Participants most commonly discussed their experiences of hope in relation to joy and happiness. For example, Cora described the presence of happiness

alongside her experiences of hope, stating, "… some of them [hopes] I guess represent happiness

to me… happiness is all about good feelings and hope is

about good things that can happen." Additionally, while

discussing a photo of her swing-set, Jessica was asked to

elaborate on how she knew the photo was about hope. She

Figure 24. Jessica's photo of her swing set.

noted how finding hope is similar to finding joy, using a movie character from Pixar's animated

film Inside/Out to describe this link:

> …when you're sad or scared and you're just like, you have no positivity in your body.
> You might think of the funny movie Inside/Out, and then you think of joy, the beautiful
> happy girl who's always happy in Riley's emotions, and you're like, "I'm going to
> pretend I'm Riley and that's Joy, the swing-set's Joy, and I'm happy now."

Jessica's example seemed to highlight her process of intentionally shifting emotions. There was

no mistaking how Jessica's voice went from a lowered tone when describing a lack of positivity

in moments she was scared, followed by an elated and high-pitched tone as she depicted her

hope associated to her swing set, and to the joy held by the character Riley in Inside/Out.

Many participants also emphasized how moments of silliness or laughter were present

when they experienced hope. Bill reflected on how the act of laughing and being silly fostered

hope, discussing how for him, being hopeful is healthy. He commented, "…silliness is hope

because it's healthy for you… when you laugh it's very healthy for you… it's because you're

happy about it…" Bill highlighted his certainty about how an increase in laughter and happiness

can strengthen his experience of hope. Similarly, Cora illustrated that hope is "… sort of

connected to happiness because laughter makes you happy, which is connected to hope."

Creating moments of humour and laughter also fostered a feeling of being hopeful for Cora. She

noted how hearing certain stories from friends and family "… always makes me laugh, which

leads to hope." It appeared that when participants were having fun or feeling happy, it was easier

for them to recognize and experience hope.

Alternatively, negative emotions appeared to be associated with a threatened sense of

hope for participants. Bill noted, "Hope is happy and then unhope is sad." Sterling also suggested

that a lack of hope "… means that your kind of wish or your want can't happen…and you can't

really change that." She further shared how for her, "…hope is kind of the opposite of bad and

grumpy and sadness." Finally, Tip discussed fear as creating a sense of worry and anxiousness,

suggesting how fear can weaken hope:

> … hope is really spectacular and cause it has good words kind of like positive, but if you
> say this, "I'm positive something's going to be wrong," that's not hope… Because it's
> like fear, you're fearing that you kind of are scared that something's going to happen…

Bill, Sterling and Tip's examples suggest that when negative emotions such as unhappiness or

fear were present, hope was often difficult to access, recognize or even find.

John summarized the experience of hope as associated with various emotions by sharing,

"… hope can be pretty much anything, it could be… a sad emotion, a happy emotion, a joyful

emotion, a depressed emotion, it could be all sorts of emotions that make you feel like that's

hope." Overall, many participants shared how hope was associated to both positive and negative

emotional experiences.

Felt sense of hope. Many participants were able to describe both what it feels like to

hope and the exact location that hope is felt in the body. A few participants even discussed

embodied experiences that they associated with a sense of hope.

Many participants were able to reflect on what it feels like to hope. For example, Jessica

shared how an experience of hope can physically alter sensations in her body:

> …it feels like your life is being turned upside down. Say your life was being faced up and
> you were all sad, then you took hope… say it was a bottle of hope and you drank it and

then here's your life, yip [motion of flipping over]…And your life would be happy again.

Jessica metaphorically described hope as an "object" or "thing," which appeared to help her more thoroughly explain her experience of hope. Her motion of turning "upside down" provided a feeling of being rejuvenated and positively changed by the presence of hope

Figure 25. Jessica's photo of the sun shining.

(i.e., the presence of hope can make a sad moment better). She also discussed her experience of

feeling hope when the sun is shining, stating, "… you see the sun shining in the background? I

was trying to get that in the photo… Because sunshine will hold a big bag of hope with it…"

Jessica's enthusiasm softened as she discussed how a lack of sun would feel like "my heart has

broken, it has fallen apart in my body." Jessica's evocative descriptions represented very

different embodied and emotional experiences when hope was present versus when it was not

present. The image of a "big bag of hope" seemed to portray hope as a full-bodied and gratifying

experience, while the image of her heart broken evoked a feeling of sadness and a sense of loss.

Yoyo also described an embodied experience of hope by stating, "…[hope] sort of hypnotizes

me, and then… it's like I'm a tiny kid… It has some magic power controlling me." This quote

illustrates how hope both captivated and influenced Yoyo's felt experiences. Finally, Tip shared

the difference she felt in her body when she had hope versus when hope appeared absent. She

expressed how being filled with hope felt "like you're getting loved", whereas a lack of hope felt

like "you kind of are left alone and you're not getting loved."

Moreover, participants identified specific locations in their body in which hope was felt.

Most participants described experiencing hope in one specific location in the body, while others

shared how hope was a full-bodied experience. For example, while Sam indicated a feeling of

hope in his head, Jessica noted a feeling of hope in her heart:

> It gives me a feeling in my heart like, I'm gonna be okay and nothing's gonna happen...
> [Interviewer: How do you know that it's in your heart?] Because I can feel this warm
> fuzzy feeling on the left side where my heart would be… and it feels like really nice.

Alternatively, other participants identified both the head and the heart as places in the body

where they felt and experienced hope. For Sterling, "… your brain kinda sets off all the feelings,

and then your heart, it's just something that kinda has a meaning to you." John further explored

the difference between hope experienced in his "head" and his "heart":

> It's way different because not only it's down here [pointing to heart] and not up there
> [pointing to head], it's also because your heart can actually make something happen…
> your head makes you think about it, because if you didn't have it then you wouldn't think
> about hope. But your heart makes you think about hope in a way cause then if you don't
> use your heart and you don't understand what hope is, cause you actually have to take a
> little bit of time out of your life to think with your heart about what hope is.

Finally, a few participants described hope as a whole-bodied experience. For instance, Cora said,

"I guess [I feel hope] all over my body, like everywhere," while Yoyo mentioned feeling hope

"in all places of my body… All good places… just collapsed into my heart very fast when I saw

it." The feeling of hope for Cora and Yoyo seemed so powerful that it took over the whole body.

Given some time to reflect on their experiences, participants were able to explain both

positive and negative emotions linked to hope, and were able to describe the feeling of hope

experienced in the head, the heart and all over the body. Participants throughout their interviews

commonly described embodied experiences of hope, and while these embodied experiences were

summarized in this section, additional examples can be found throughout other themes as well.

Theme 4: Hope challenged/Hope present. Participants discussed their experiences of

hope as being present, even when their hope appeared to be challenged. They described how a

sense of hope could exist despite the presence of poor circumstances, and referred to a feeling of

continued hope despite a specific hope not coming true. Participants used metaphors (i.e.,

blooming, regrowth, rebirth) or contrasting images (i.e., sunny versus cloudy) to explain how

hope is present or reoccurring, even when not presently visible.

    Existence of hope despite poor circumstances. Participants' experiences of hope

included an understanding that hope can be present despite the existence of obstacles in one's

life or poor life circumstances. For many participants, a negative event followed by something

encouraging could positively alter their overall experience of hope. May, for example, expressed

how a past bullying experience did not weaken, but rather fostered, hope:

> I guess that girl that was bullying me, she made me stronger… before I used to cry a lot if
> someone insulted me. Now I can take insults and bounce them off… if you're weak, you
> know you still have a chance of getting stronger. You know it's never too late…

When discussing her interactions with friends at school, Cora remarked on a shift from feeling a

low sense of hope when lonely and not being treated with respect, followed by a greater sense of

hope when thinking about the support she does possess at school:

> …whenever I'm always sad I always feel like there's no hope left when really there is… I
> have a lot of friends at school, but there's this one girl that's always being mean to me
> and I always go off crying and I feel like I have no friends. But really I have lots of
> friends… my friend always comes to me and cheers me up so I remember that I have a lot
> of good friends, so I just forget about that and go have fun.

Cora's face lit up when discussing how she intentionally thought about her situation differently

in order to recognize the presence of hope during her difficult experience. Refocusing attention

to the positive aspects of her life seemed to bring awareness to her continued experience of hope.

    Metaphors of hope. While participants commonly used metaphors to express their

experiences of hope throughout their interviews, metaphors appeared particularly useful to

children as they depicted their experiences of hope reoccurring. They described metaphors of

"blooming hope," "regrowth of hope" and "rebirth of hope."

    Sam highlighted the metaphor "blooming hope" as she described wanting to take a photo

of "tulips, and the blossoms about to bloom… They were in my garden except they were hidden

underneath snow when I came to take the picture." For Sam, tulips promised possibility and

represented burgeoning hope "cause tulips come back every single year… They came back this

year, they came back last year, and they were just about to bloom and then the snow came of

course. But they still lasted, and they still bloomed." This process-oriented nature of hope, in

which hope changed and bloomed, was evident in many

participant interviews. Hope was described as a feeling that

could resurface after it seemingly disappeared. In these moments,

participants recognized how hope may have been hidden

momentarily, but never disappeared. For instance, when pointing

out his hope from a budding tree, Clark stated,

Figure 26. Clark's photo of a budding tree.

> Those are the buds on our tree in the front yard. It was me sorta feeling hopeful that
> summer was coming and that it wasn't going to be spring anymore… summer was
> coming and mom said that these were going to turn into flowers. I thought they were just
> gonna turn into leaves, but apparently they're gonna bloom into flowers… they'll grow
> into something bigger.

For Clark, just as leaves and flowers temporarily disappear during winter but bloom once more

during spring and summer, so too will hope. His example illustrates how hope can continuously

grow, change and reoccur.

Cora displayed the metaphor "regrowth of hope" to

symbolize the continued presence of hope. She recounted her

experience of witnessing a tree on her front lawn survive a storm:

Figure 27. Cora's photo of a tree on her front lawn.

> …that's my tree, there was a really bad storm and it cut off
> a lot of branches… so guys had to come in and cut them
> [branches] all the way off because they were breaking,
> broken… and he [the tree] still grows so… I feel hopeful that way… It reminds me of
> hope because some branches cut off but it still grows.

This metaphor similarly highlighted how hope can flourish after a loss or negative experience, and displayed how hope can still be found in adversity. Optimistically, Cora pointed out how hopes could be regrown and restored, even when challenged.

The metaphor "rebirth of hope" was displayed in May's photo of a dying leaf beside a newly budding leaf, about which she commented, "So this is the last leaf that lasted all winter, right next to a new leaf that's being born… it was the beginning of spring…" This powerful image represented how hope could be experienced during moments of both loss and growth for May. She stressed how hope may be experienced beside different emotions (i.e., sadness in death and happiness in rebirth), yet still be present or reoccur no matter the situation.

Figure 28. May's photo of a dying leaf beside a newly budding leaf.

Contrasting images of hope. Alternatively, a few participants highlighted the literal and metaphorical interplay of light and shadow in the experience of hope. They discussed how the presence of the sun fostered hope, while the presence of clouds could take hope away. Despite negative feelings associated with a cloudy day, they described how their feelings of hope were never fully gone, but often briefly hidden. For example, Sam used a photo depicting contrasting images of "sunny" and "cloudy" to talk about her comfort and certainty in knowing the sun, like hope, will always be present. She stated, "It is supposed to be a picture of sunlight… we'll always have a light to look up at… I guess no matter what there will always be a light in the sky." She shared her underlying belief in hope's continued presence, even in darker and difficult circumstances. In an uplifting tone of voice, she also suggested that hope was always present, even if it was not presently visible. Sam noted, "Because no matter what there will be a light.

Figure 29. Sam's photo of sunlight.

Cloudy days you can't see [the sun] but you know it's there… you know that the clouds will go

away and you'll always see [the sun] again."

Overall, participants used metaphors to talk about how their sense of hope could be

rebuilt or could resurface, even if momentarily invisible. Even the prefix "re" used by many

participants suggested that hope was present, lost and somehow returned.

Continued hope despite a hope not coming true. Clark

and Sam reflected on their experiences of hope remaining present

despite their future-oriented goal not coming true right away.

Clark offered an animated story to describe this experience of

continued hope. He was full of glee when introducing his picture

Figure 30. Clark's photo of a potato.

of a potato. He began to giggle as he told me about his future-oriented hope, saying, "I was sort

of hoping that we'd eat mashed potatoes for dinner, which is one of my favourite foods." I could

see his excitement as he described his experience of hope through his photo. However, Clark

shared how his hope did not come true right away, as his mom did not make mashed potatoes for

dinner that night. Clark acknowledged his disappointment when finding out his hope was not

coming true, but stated that this hope continued as a future goal. He shared, "…it was like, 'aww

man!'… then I started hoping that it would happen another day coming soon, like tomorrow or

the day after or sometime this week…." Clark cited how he did not want to give up his sense of

hope, knowing that it was still present and would resurface once more in the future. Sam also

beautifully described her idea of continued hope even when something did not go the way she

planned. She shared, "…if something happens it's bound to happen again…" This suggested that

for Sam, if hope was experienced once, it could resurface and be experienced again in the future.

In sum, participants described the importance of recognizing hope was present despite

adverse situations, and the value of sustaining hope even when a goal-oriented hope did not

occur immediately. Participants also discussed how metaphors and contrasting images represented their experiences of hope as continually present even when challenged. Participants' examples suggested that children experienced hope as continually present, often seeing hope as sometimes hiding away, awaiting the moment in which it was needed again.

   Theme 5: Nature as a source of hope. Nature was described as an important source of hope for most participants. Children discussed elements of nature that strengthened hope (e.g., being outdoors, nature's role in human survival), and identified experiences with nature that took their hope away (e.g., thunderstorms, cold frost).

   Being outdoors. The experience of being outdoors in nature provided a sense of hope for many participants. For example, Sterling and Sam highlighted how many of their hope photos were either "more outdoors" (Sterling) or "weren't manmade" (Sam). They both identified a sense of hope that came from engaging with nature. Tip was excited to point out a fundamental similarity between all her photos during our interview, sharing, "They are all kind of outside… inside, you hope for a little bit, until you go outside, then you feel all that hope come out…" She identified an emotional shift that she experienced when outdoors, which she said helped her recognize the presence of hope. Other participants also indicated that interactions with the environment fostered experiences of hope. For instance, to strengthen hope, Sam stated, "I just go outside," while Clark recommended, "… be outside more cause… for me… I get hope in like being outside and like stories and stuff." Participants believed that the simple act of being outdoors strengthened their overall sense of hope.

   Human growth and survival. Participants also talked about their hope in relation to human growth and survival. Many participants discussed the health benefits of nature that could create a deepened sense of hope. For example, Bill was very vocal about how nature provided a source of oxygen and food to help humans survive, which in turn provided him hope:

…trees can help make us breathe… a tree is hopeful because it can grow us apples, it can grow a pear tree… it can grow another tree if it's a pinecone tree because a pinecone can grow a tree… it can make you healthier and healthier.

Bill appeared to strongly believe that nature helped foster hope, as evidenced by his response when he was asked what he would add to his photo of a rabbit in the garden to strengthen his hope. He replied, "Oh I will add some plants… the more plants, the healthier the planet will get." Similarly, a photo of a flower helped Shay explain his sense of hope fostered from being in the presence of nature:

Figure 31. Bill's photo of a rabbit in his backyard.

> It makes me hopeful that it will get bigger and that it will keep on growing… It will grow and nature will survive more… And humans… Cause humans need plants to live, cause plants make oxygen then we breathe that, then we breathe out CO_2… and plants can also make their own food… cause then planet earth will be able to live.

Figure 32. Shay's photo of flowers in his backyard.

For participants, nature represented hope and was associated with human growth and survival.

Natural events. John and Sam discussed how experiences witnessing events in nature, such as a thunderstorm or a cold shock, threatened their sense of hope. John described how the fear he experienced during a thunderstorm took away his hope, explaining, "…it doesn't give me hope in a way… I hope a lot that it stops, cause thunder does not only scare me, it scares my dog." In this example, John appeared to allude to both hope (i.e., hope in wanting the thunderstorm to stop) and no hope (i.e., feeling scared, leading to his hope being threatened) co-existing. Sam alternatively depicted how the death of nature (i.e., trees and plants dying) could threaten hope, even if the death was from a naturally occurring event like a cold shock. She explained, "…if you raised a plant and it was big except you just plant it outside and there's a cold shock, you had hoped that it was going to survive, but then it died." These examples suggest

an awareness that even when hope grows strong and tall, other things in nature often out of participants' control could weaken hope.

Overall, the significance of nature to children's hope experiences was evident across participant interviews. Being present in nature and engaging with nature further enhanced participants' experiences of hope. However, when uncontrollable environmental issues occurred, participants' hopes seemed challenged or deflated. Participants additionally discussed hope through positive action for the environment, but as this is a theme directed outwards towards helping the environment, it will be addressed in the superordinate theme of other-oriented hope.

Theme 6: Other-oriented hope. Themes depicted thus far in the findings highlight ways in which hope was directed inwards towards participants themselves. However, children's experiences of hope also included how participants held hopes for others. As Tip suggested, "…if it's selfish, it's not hope." In her interview, she highlighted how behaving in an altruistic manner helped her foster a sense of hope, which was a notion shared by many other participants in this study. Participants' experiences of other-oriented hope were discussed in relation to deep, rather insightful hopes that they held for others and the environment, and directed towards those in need, philanthropic endeavours, environmental issues and the happiness of others. This included hope directed towards a commitment to making changes in the world, and hope as a response to witnessing adversity and problematic environmental concerns.

Hope when witnessing adversity. Helping those in need and those who are less fortunate was a common aspect highlighted in children's experiences of hope. Participants' sense of hope often seemed to shift (i.e., either strengthen or weaken) as a response to witnessing or hearing about adversity in the world. Several participants hoped that the underprivileged would gain access to shelter, finances and food. For instance, the symbol of a fridge was representative of Sterling's hope directed towards the less fortunate:

> I took a picture of a fridge because I sometimes see people walking around with shopping
> carts and really ragged clothes and I kind of hope that they will have a home and they'll
> take good care of it and if they do find money they will take good care of it and they
> won't be hungry…

Similarly, Sterling provided a powerful example of hope directed towards others when she

discussed a hope for everyone in the world to have access to water. She shared, "…maybe you

don't have something that you really need, like some people in Africa. Or some places don't

have water, and they need that and that they might hope for water." Sterling touched on how

hope surfaces when a need for future survival exists, and displayed a recognition of the need for

hope to be directed towards helping others attain basic needs such as water. John also highlighted

a hope that everyone is fed around the world:

> … we should be joyful that we get food because right now there's kids out there who…
> have nothing to eat right… I always hope the world has food… it's hoping for millions
> and millions of people all across the world that they always have something to eat…

These examples demonstrate how participants' experiences of hope were directed towards the

well-being of others, and were particularly highlighted when they witnessed, heard about or

thought about others facing adverse situations.

The promotion of world peace and fulfilling good deeds in the world were also ways in

Figure 33. Cora's drawing of a peace sign.

which participants directed hope towards others. These examples again arose when participants gained an awareness of the hardships or misfortunes of others. For example, Cora shared her other-oriented hope for those in need by discussing world peace. She commented on how "… hope is something where good things can happen and peace is all about good… if there's no peace then everyone's going to be at war, and there will be no hope to stop it." Cora discussed how conflict could threaten hope,

especially if people are being hurt, whereas the presence of peace and hope could create a future

with more optimism and possibility for all to be cared for.

Conversely, participants reflected on how negative issues in the world or threats to social

justice adversely impacted their experience of other-oriented hope. Bill illustrated how his sense

of hope was threatened when seeing a homeless person having "no food so they have to pick

stuff out from a trashcan." Additionally, Cora talked about homelessness, war and robbery as

threatening her experience of hope, and explained how a group that is cruel to animals once fully

depleted her feeling of hope:

> …there's this one place, it's not in Canada though, but they take stray cats and pets, and they throw them into cages and they're all squished together, and they literally throw them in there and they don't give them back, they don't even care if they have collars on it, and they drown them and sell their fur and lie that it's rabbit fur or bunny fur.

Participants' stories of injustices in the world conveyed that any negative life event or experience

leading to negative feelings could threaten or deflate their hope for others. Tip even expressed

how hope was "hard to find" at all when "bad" or negative events occurred in the world:

> It's kind of hard [to find hope], cause there was a bad thing happening in France, like there were bombs put in there… there could be hope like, "I hope this doesn't happen again." But it could happen a little bit. But still it's kind of hard to find hope in something bad that happened.

These emotionally powerful examples display participants' experiences of hope when

witnessing or thinking about adverse situations in their immediate environment or in the world at

large. They also illustrate how participants' experiences of hope can be made vulnerable by

negative experiences impacting others in the world, and how hope can be enriched if others are

taken care of, nourished and living in a peaceful and loving world.

Hope for others' happiness. Three participants discussed how hope was a benefit of

making others happy and taking others' moments of sadness away. Bill described how one needs

only to "be a friend" to foster happiness and hope in others. With a smile from ear to ear, Jessica

discussed how the simple act of making others happy could strengthen her hope in return:

> …if I could make more stuff in the world that makes people happy, and they would be
> happy and I would be happy… if I know that others aren't happy then I can't be happy…
> The base of my life is happiness and if I were to lose that happiness and someone else
> wasn't happy I would be like, "oh no, I need to make them happy and fast, I need to make
> them happy or else I'll just fall to the floor and I'll be
> nothing."

May also discussed her experience of hope when witnessing

her younger brother emotionally support her friend, and help

foster a sense of happiness in this friend:

Figure 34. May's photo of her brother supporting her friend.

> That's my brother and that's my friend. We walked
> along all of the trail… And on the way there we just took a break and, I don't know my
> friend [Name] she just looked all depressed and it kinda looks like my brother's just
> helping her… My brother is really kind and he thinks about other people, so I just like to
> take that picture.

In this example, observing her brother attempt to support her friend's joy and happiness, and take

her friend's sadness away, appeared to evoke a feeling of hope within May. For these

participants, hope directed towards making others happy in turn strengthened their sense of hope.

   Hope through positive action directed towards others. Four participants shared how

engaging in, or hearing about, positive actions directed towards others was part of their hope

experience. These depictions of hope displayed participants' desires to promote the welfare of

others, targeting fundraisers for causes around the world and doing good deeds for others.

   Clark expressed how stories about "donating to charities" on the radio heightened his

feeling of hope. Similarly, Sam's face came alive as she proudly discussed two powerful

fundraisers she was a part of at school, both aimed at raising money for the less fortunate and

less able-bodied. She described a school fundraiser collecting bottle caps to buy wheelchairs for

underprivileged people, and talked about her experience of hope

linked to the following fundraiser:

Figure 35. Sam's photo of a container for a school fundraiser.

> Oh that's something that my school did. It's a fundraiser to buy baby goats for families in need in Africa… you collect money, it's $50 a goat. Then you give it to an organization which buys the goats… And then it just sends it to a town or family in need, that needs milk, cheese, stuff like that… as you can see, that's a piggy bank with a goat on it… that piggy bank is filled with money… and if we raise money for all the charities that are good, it will just be better… if you raise the money, it'll for sure go to something good. But the something good is hopeful to actually make a difference to families who need it.

Sam talked about how many children at school rallied together to work towards a common goal that would benefit the well-being of others. In Sam's words, students "wanted to do it, they weren't forced…they wanted to help." Tip also discussed a fundraiser at her school to help the less fortunate around the holiday season:

> At my school we have something called the Christmas spirit… they asked us to give donations until December 9th, and I gave some donations… it is hopeful that everyone gets something to eat over Christmas… being greedy is not so hoping… if you're donating, like donating might sound depressing for a rich person but sound really nice to a person that really cares a lot.

These examples depict how Sam, Tip and their schoolmates actively helped foster hope within themselves through their involvement in positive actions directed towards others.

Finally, helping those in need by being a good, caring and helpful citizen in the world was vital to Bill's hope experience as he stated, "…calling an ambulance… when someone's in a car accident and you can't get them out you just call an ambulance and then they come save their lives… you don't want someone to die so you should save their lives." When others were taken care of and kept safe, Bill's hope blossomed. For Bill, this displayed how hope could be found in the action abilities of others.

A sense of hope was ultimately strengthened for participants through positive actions directed towards the well-being of others, especially in the form of charitable work, donations or being a caring citizen. Directing hope towards other-focused endeavours also appeared to facilitate motivation, commitment and perseverance in participants, helping them reach their charitable goals and making a difference in the world. As Tip stated, "good things are happening in the world," and by listening to, embracing and engaging in these positive actions, participants reported hope would grow.

Hope through positive action directed towards the environment. Finally, participants discussed experiences in which hope was directed towards the environment and environmental concerns. They talked about how experiences involving taking care of the environment fostered hope, while conversely environmental concerns such as pollution or global warming threatened participants' hope, especially when these issues were ignored by society.

Participants discussed how doing small tasks to better the environment could help them grow hope. May provided multiple ideas on ways in which others can foster hope by helping take care of the environment, including walking rather than driving places, reusing paper bags or planting trees in the yard. She came alive in our interview as she

Figure 36. May's photo of two individuals canoeing down the river.

discussed her photo of kayakers and the importance of finding other means of transportation to decrease pollution in the environment. She shared, "… not much people do kayaking anymore… These people, instead of using cars and stuff, polluting the air… they just decided to use nature and water… And you know, they're not really polluting anything because they're not using a car..." Similarly, Bill believed that taking care of the environment by taking other modes of transport could be one small thing a person can do to foster hope, stating, "Electric cars are hope

because they do not do pollution, like do not use gas. They just use electricity and are good for

the environment."

The topic of being good to the environment also appeared to be very important to

Sterling. She talked about experiencing a lift in both mood and hope accompanied by witnessing

others helping keep the environment clean. This shift was evident in her tone of voice as she

contentedly explained how she experiences "happiness when I see people picking up garbage

and planting new trees." Sterling passionately continued to discuss how her sense of hope was

strengthened through her own positive actions of taking care of the environment, but could be

jeopardized when witnessing a friend pollute:

> … when I stop my friend… she sometimes just throws all her wrappers and I go and I
> chase after them if they blow in the wind and then I stuff them in my pocket so then I
> throw them in the garbage later so that the world is greener.

Sterling also sounded sad as she described seeing "people be mean to wild animals or… breaking

trees or pulling out plants from the grass." She continued to express example after example of

her deflating hope when seeing others involved in negative actions towards the environment:

> …my hope is that people won't build over things like wetlands and parks. And that
> everybody can enjoy nature. Cause a lot of people are destroying nature and that makes
> me feel kind of sad…when I see construction workers… they cut down trees just to build
> another [store] even though we've got one down the block... I don't understand that and
> that makes me upset…they might need to build new houses, but it makes me feel sad that
> they're taking away animals' homes and plants' homes just for us…

When speaking about the destruction in her community, Sterling's voice faded. Taking care of

the environment through positive action seemed so important to her that any threat to the

survival of wildlife or nature threatened her hope. While Sterling was the most vocal about

experiences of hope directed towards environmental issues, she was not the only one to discuss

this topic. Most participants were adamant about how the act of being environmentally conscious

fostered hope, while witnessing others treat the environment poorly threatened hope. These examples depict the importance of participants' hope directed towards not only people, but also the environment.

Overall, other-oriented hope experiences directed towards people and the environment appeared to strengthen participants' personal hopes. Other-oriented hopes were often deeply meaningful and socially oriented. Participants described many selfless examples of how acts of kindness, philanthropic endeavours, and advocating for others and the environment highlighted the experience and presence of hope. By way of negative experiences, their examples suggested how hope was threatened when having no control over injustices that affected others in the world, or when witnessing others mistreat the environment.

Summary of Themes

Participants' experiences of hope are conceptualized as six main superordinate themes: hope as relational, hope as personal and unique, emotional and embodied hope, hope challenged/hope present, nature as a source of hope, and other-oriented hope. Evidence suggested that participants' hope was fostered in trustworthy and secure connections with people, animals, objects and places in their lives, and that the feeling of mistrust, disconnect or a sense of loss weakened their sense of hope. Participants learned about hope from themselves and others, and were able to find and recognize hope when provided the opportunity. Participants used both active (e.g., striving for something, such as a goal) and passive (i.e., hope surfacing without needing to do anything to bring it on) approaches to locate hope. In addition, past experiences of hope helped foster experiences of hope in the present and future, and hope was both future-oriented and experienced in the here-and-now. Participants had multiple sources of hope, including art and nature, and described embodied experiences of hope. Participants

experienced hope alongside various positive feelings (e.g., happiness or joy) and actions (e.g.,

philanthropic endeavours), while their experience of hope was weakened alongside negative

feelings (e.g., sadness) and events in the world (e.g., death, homelessness, pollution). There was

often a selfless nature to participants' hope, in which hopes were not solely directed towards

participants themselves, but were also directed towards others and the health of the planet.

In sum, findings of this project demonstrate the complexity and personal nature of

children's hope experiences. Participants' stories seem to highlight the significant and

meaningful impact a sense of hope can have on children's lives as a whole. These findings are

further explored in Chapter 5.

Additional Knowledge about Children's Hope Experiences

Two additional areas are important to highlight when discussing children's hope

experiences. First, I discuss how participants talked about and developed hope by taking part in

the study. Second, I present advice children had for parents, teachers and other children in

regards to talking and teaching about hope.

The interview process and hope development. Participants described how engaging in

this study, and being provided with an opportunity to discuss hope, helped them learn about

hope. They discussed how talking about hope and taking photos representing their hope

experiences fostered hope. Participants also acknowledged some difficulties talking about hope.

Engaging in the study. Participants shared how the project helped them think about hope

more deeply, and look at objects in the world differently, in order to identify hope. They stated

that the project offered them a chance to learn about hope by working explicitly and intentionally

with hope. For example, May explained, "I didn't really used to look at something and think

about it. I would just see it [and] you know, get on with my life. But now I think about stuff and I

go through a deeper story into it.*"* Similarly, Yoyo was enthusiastic as he described how he

"learned about new types of hope I didn't recognize in the past." Sterling also depicted how her understanding of hope changed due to the project:

> …I guess before I started, I never really understood what hope kind of was. Like I knew that it was a feeling, but I never understood what it was or what represents hope… [Interviewer: And now?] I learned a lot and I have been feeling hope, I just never knew that that was hope.

Participants noted how engagement with hope through the project, and the specific action of looking for hope, helped them experience a richer appreciation for, and understanding of, hope.

In addition, Cora discussed the project's effects on her ability to learn about and use hope. She described how implementing a project like this one in classrooms might help teach children about hope since "[m]aybe they'll realize like I realize that some things aren't as bad as they seem." It was fascinating to witness Cora's recognition of change in her sense of hope after the completion of the study, as she commented, "Yeah I think there's changes, cause after this [project] I think I feel more that I don't really care that people are bullying me." Furthermore, Cora discussed how the project was going to help teach other children about hope, stating, "…well my Mom told me that you were gonna share it to other people who didn't understand hope or something?... So I guess that gave me hope." Cora illuminated the direct, positive experience that engagement in the project had on her personal hope, in addition to the impact a project like this could have in a school setting.

Through participant interviews, it was evident that the simple act of talking about hope assisted children's discussions about the elusive concept of hope. Intentionally discussing hope, and purposefully bringing awareness to hope, seemed to help participants foster hope and create new experiences of hope.

"Hope finders." The process of taking photos of hope helped participants actively and reflectively experience hope differently, and helped them create a better understanding of their

personal hope. Each child appeared to have their own unique process of looking for hope photos.

For example, Sam explained the following:

> I think whenever I saw something I would think about it and say, "should I take this picture, is it actually worth taking a picture?" And then I would decide on that, then if it was a no I'd move on, and if it is yes then I'd take the best picture I could.

According to some participants, the process of finding hope for this project consisted of looking

explicitly for hope photos, and thinking about and connecting with hope differently. It was also

apparent that photos representing participants' experiences of hope could be found in many

places, with John even stating, "I didn't have to leave the house [to find hope]."

Moreover, May discussed how certain photos representing her experiences of hope

simply emerged during the project. She described her experience of finding hope in her photo of

two birds swimming down a stream:

> … there's some stuff I wouldn't take a picture of, like I wouldn't take a picture of those two birds but I looked at them and I thought, "oh they're having a conversation, that's hopeful"… [before the project] I'd just maybe see the birds and take a picture of them, well they're pretty birds. Now, I'm thinking "okay it looks like they are having a conversation. They're, you know, doing something." I

Figure 37. May's photo of two birds swimming.

> wouldn't think about it like that before… Just keep your eyes open because you know, you take a picture of something, now you could think about something differently later.

May's explanation of finding hope through the photo component of this project illuminated how

the act of reflecting on an object or photo, and explicitly thinking about and looking for hope

photos, could even foster hopeful experiences.

During their experiences engaging in the project, participants became "hope finder[s]"

according to Tip. The title "hope finders" represents how most participants actively pursued hope

in their world for the photo-component of this project, helping them better understand and

explore their personal experiences of hope.

Difficulties putting words to the experience of hope. Several participants shared some difficulties or challenges speaking about hope in the project. For example, Shay described how it was "hard to explain all the reasons" why something may or may not be hopeful. While participants often knew hope was present and could confirm that hope had been experienced, they shared how they occasionally had a hard time describing hope's presence and the feelings attached to hope. Sterling, for instance, discussed her ability to recognize when hope was present, but found it challenging to put words to the feeling of hope, sharing, **"**I do feel hope, I just never knew what it was… it's not something that you talk about a lot."

Despite some difficulties talking about hope, participants seemed to find a way to share their experiences of hope. Several participants described how the act of talking about hope in the form of the project helped clarify their understanding of hope. For example, Clark said,

> I guess it kind of made me think of hope more. Because before I didn't think about some of these things until now. But now that you like mentioned them and everything and like talk about them and we're talking about them and stuff, now I like notice it [hope]…

John also described how talking about hope became easier as the project progressed:

> It was actually pretty hard because expressing your emotions can be… scary, cause some people handle it really, really well, like "okay here's what I thought about hope," but other people can have trouble telling it to other people… I had trouble when we started, but as soon as we hit that picture [points to one of his pictures], I kinda got the hang of it, and what to say and what to do.

Finally, at the end of Yoyo's interview, he called himself "the hope master" and "the hope provider." He used these titles to describe how he felt he had "mastered" the art of talking about hope by the interview's end (i.e., his belief that his hope-finding skills were improved by the study's end) as he was able to provide concrete ideas about his hope experiences.

In sum, participants talked about how their involvement in the hope-based research

activity fostered a deep sense of hope, strengthened their knowledge about hope, and helped

them begin to talk about hope. Despite some initial difficulties discussing and describing

experiences of hope, most participants expressed recognizing the value of hope through the

project. This idea was perhaps most succinctly summarized by Sterling who stated,

> The more I learned about [hope], the more I felt like it's something that we feel a lot, we
> just don't know that it is that, and that maybe even if [hopes] don't come true now as
> we're kids, maybe we'll still feel [hopes] when we're older and be able to achieve the
> hope that we have.

Advice about hope. To further explore children's experiences of hope, participants were

explicitly asked to reflect on advice they would give others about hope. Advice was directed

toward three separate audiences: (a) children, (b) parents, and (c) teachers.

Advice to children. When it came to providing advice for other children in relation to

hope, participants in this study had much to say. Every participant was able to identify one

important piece of advice they would relay to other children in regard to hope. Sterling was very

adamant about how children should teach other children about hope:

> …if you really have this hope then maybe you could tell more people so that they know,
> so it kind of becomes more like a wish so then maybe that's going to become their hope
> too. And so, if my hope is that everybody will keep the world green, maybe that'll
> become their hope and then they'll help pick up garbage, and then they'll tell somebody
> and that will just keep happening.

She noted the importance of children communicating about hopes to others, and sharing and

spreading an understanding of hope with others in order to strengthen a sense of hope. Sam also

discussed the importance of children growing their own hope. She wanted to tell children how

investing in nature could be one small thing they could do to foster their personal sense of hope:

> I guess in places where there aren't any or that much plants, you could take a seed and
> bury it in the ground and give it some water… they [kids] could come back and see that
> it's, it had sprouted in[to] a huge plant.

Bullying, and counteracting the emotional effects of bullying, was also a subject

highlighted in participants' advice to other children about hope. For example, Jessica relayed the

importance of standing up to bullying:

> If I could tell other kids about hope, which I will probably, I will say to them, "if you
> were ever bullied, you go to that old bully right now and you say to them, 'you can bully
> me all you want, but my life isn't based on my sadness it's based on my happiness. So
> you can make me sad, but I'll make you happy and you won't want to make me sad
> anymore if you're happy from me' … Because then the bully will be happy and they
> won't hurt them anymore or say mean things to them…

Jessica powerfully displayed how every child can have some form of control over his or her own

experience of hope by focusing on positive attributes of life instead of the negative behaviour of

a bully. In a similar fashion, Tip suggested that children should think about happy and positive

memories or future moments rather than letting others affect or take away their hope. She shared,

"Always say these two words: I hope… always think about the positive things…" Tip appeared

to display an active, intentional orientation to hope. Children seemed to relay pieces of advice

they received from others, in addition to highlighting how important it is for children to remind

themselves to have hope in difficult situations.

Advice to children also stressed the importance of maintaining values to help foster a

sense of hope. Participants spoke about being kind, building connections, listening to others,

helping others out, following rules and avoiding violence. For Bill, this meant that children

"…should be nice… you should listen to adults, you should listen to the teacher and that stuff so

you won't get in trouble…" Also, Yoyo shared, "All kids should always have hope. They should

have a good heart. They should not have a bad one… We should hope not to learn how to punch

or kill each other, or hurt each other." Fostering hope for some children appeared to revolve

around issues of morality, and appeared to have a prosocial quality (e.g., helpful, cooperative,

positive). They shared how hope would be present, or even grow, if one acted in ethical ways.

Clark also wanted other children to be aware that hope can be found in many things:

…it [hope] can be anything, I guess? Because I took a picture of like, a potato… I don't think I really thought of that until I did this activity… some stuff is more obvious like the cats, I sort of already knew that… I already sort of felt hopeful with them, but not as obvious as something like, I don't know, like the potato [laughter].

In other words, Clark wanted others to recognize how hope could be obvious or explicit, and alternatively how hope could be a kind of personal discovery in which one is able to experience life in a different way and see hope. Clark's narrative was to challenge other children to go out and find hope in unique and unsuspecting places.

Finally, John talked about the value of putting energy and effort into hope, and strongly stressed how children should never give up on hope:

To just like never give up on it [hope] because, if you give up on anything, like any dream or anything, it will never happen… Cause if you don't have hope for anything anymore, you're gonna be sad almost all the time. And hope can make you sad… but it can also make you happy for people around you…

Overall, participants had very specific and thoughtful pieces of advice to share with other children about hope. What remained clear from project interviews was that participants viewed hope as an important and valuable concept for children to learn about and talk about with each other, whether it be in the classroom, at home or anywhere in between.

Advice to parents. Participants also provided advice about hope to parents. One valuable theme that arose was the importance of parents teaching about hope, talking about hope and having hope in their children. John emphasized this idea when stating the following:

…it doesn't really take time, so you don't have to really rush… you have to [talk about hope] now or it's never going to happen because every now and then, hope always happens. As long as you have hope in them, it always will happen… actually it's not about their kids, it's if [parents] have hope, because if you've never have had hope, you

don't know what it's like and then why are you teaching?

John stressed how parents' hope is vital for children's hope to flourish. He cautioned parents who are lacking in hope to avoid teaching children about hope, and stressed how there was no time like the present to talk about hope with children. Similarly, Sterling wanted parents to give children more credit for their understanding and ability to talk about hope. In a proud tone of voice, she exclaimed, "…maybe [hope] doesn't seem important because we're so young and we don't know what we're talking about, but maybe it is important and can't you just see that?"

Alternatively, some participants stressed the importance of parents recognizing that by providing comfort, support and basic needs to children, children's feelings of hope can flourish. Jessica discussed how parents could help children foster a sense of hope by spending time with them and providing them security. Tip provided an example of how a parent could approach his or her upset child and introduce the concept of hope:

> … if your kid's kind of sad, if it looks sad then just… come up to your kids [and] say, "hey, is anything the matter, is anything bad? Can I help you?" And if it says "blah blah blah this blah blah blah that, it's not that good," you say, "hey maybe you should hope for tomorrow to be a better day than today."

Participants' advice to parents illustrated how parents are a fundamental component in both teaching hope to children and fostering a sense of hope in children.

Advice to Teachers. Lastly, participants were asked if they had advice about hope that they would like to share with teachers. Participants' advice focused on protecting and supporting students to increase hope, explicitly bringing hope into the classroom, and the value of teachers having hope for their students.

Participants wanted teachers to ensure that students are protected from being hurt or upset. They implied that students' hope would develop by ensuring students are safe, respected

and happy. Tip, for instance, discussed how teachers should check in with students who appear

upset or distressed. She explained how teachers should "…always keep an eye on [students].

Like… if you see them kind of sad…" Also, Jessica stressed how teachers should take on the

responsibility of ensuring that bullying in the classroom is stopped, which she felt would

ultimately foster hope in students:

> …if someone got sad because someone else was bullying them you should go to that
> bully and you should say, "there ain't no bullying in this class. If you want to bully, go to
> another school because this school's not for bullies, it's for people who need happiness."

According to participants, the involvement of teachers in creating a safe learning environment,

and always supporting students who may be struggling at school, could help create more hopeful

classrooms, and in turn, foster more hopeful students.

Many participants advocated for bringing hope explicitly into the classroom. For

example, Sterling spoke about how teachers could involve and engage students in learning about

hope through direct conversations about hope:

> That you [teachers] had [hopes] too, and that they were important to you too when you
> were younger, so they're just as important to us now. And I think teachers help us
> through our hopes because going to school, getting a good job, getting a good house,
> that's my hope and they're going to teach me and then I'm going to be able to get a good
> job… so they're kind of helping give a push for the hope.

Sterling noted the important role teachers play in children's hope development and future

successes. Yoyo felt similarly, as he spoke about how teachers should make an effort to "interest

[children] more… By telling them about hope in their life, and hope in their culture and their

family..." For Yoyo, activities in the classroom aimed at exploring students' hope could help

children understand personal hope more fully.

Finally, John urged teachers to value the experiences of children, and allow children the

opportunity to explore and discuss hope. In this manner, he reported that children could teach

other children about hope, explaining, "…maybe it's not even a teacher, like maybe it's a kid telling the teacher like what hope is and [teachers] could pass it down." He also urged teachers to carry hopes for their students, stating, "…their job is technically to have hope, cause they need to have hope for the students that they always do well on the tests or something."

Overall, teacher-led discussions of hope and teacher-informed understandings of hope seemed to be seen as a necessity by the participants to help children's hope blossom. To participants, engaging students in the discovery of hope and encouraging uses of hope in the classroom could foster their overall feelings of hope.

Altogether, participant-generated advice to children, parents and teachers highlighted the value of hope for children and the importance of teaching children about hope both in the home and in the classroom. Participants showcased how hope could foster change in both self and others, and could bring about positive, emotional experiences when made explicit. Even the simple act of allowing children to have an open forum to discuss the concept of hope and learn about hope with adults and peers was underlined as invaluable, and deemed worthy of a permanent platform and/or space to continue strengthening children's hope.

Summary of Additional Knowledge about Children's Hope Experiences

While some participants initially found it challenging to talk about hope, they all found ways to express and explain their hope experiences. Participants even shared profound advice for parents, teachers and other children. This advice centered on the importance of using hope, learning about hope and teaching children about hope. Participants ultimately highlighted the importance of fostering hope in children, and emphasized how the presence of hope could affect their lives in significant and meaningful ways.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This study is amongst the first research to explore how children in middle childhood experience hope, including an investigation into how children understand, describe and employ hope in their lives. The goal of the study was pursued through semi-structured, photo-elicited interviews with 11 participants in middle childhood. Six themes representing participants' experiences of hope were illuminated using the methodology IPA, which focuses on exploring a participant's subjective experience, perception and understanding of a given phenomenon (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). These six themes include: (1) hope as relational, (2) hope as personal and unique, (3) emotional and embodied hope, (4) hope challenged/hope present, (5) nature as a source of hope, and (6) other-oriented hope. Two additional findings respectively address (a) how participants discussed and developed hope through their involvement in the study, and (b) advice participants had for parents, teachers and other children based on their experiences of hope. Themes were discussed in relation to commonalities found among participants, while also highlighting personal and unique hope experiences. Overall, findings suggest that hope is an important experience for all child participants. Participants all appeared actively engaged in the project via different activities (e.g., drawings, photos, writing). In addition to gaining an understanding of children's experiences of hope, the participants seemed to benefit from being invited to make hope visible through this project.

This chapter begins by exploring and reflecting on the above eight findings about children's experiences of hope (i.e., six main themes and two additional findings on participants' involvement in the study and advice for others). A discussion of the findings aims to provide a deeper understanding of hope experienced in middle childhood as related to previous and relevant hope and developmental literature. Moreover, while some current findings offer further support of previous research within the field of hope, other findings present novel information

about the ways in which children in middle childhood understand, experience, use and describe

hope. Second, I reflect on the hope-based activity, and highlight developmental findings and

observations most salient to my research question. Third, I address potential implications for

multiple areas relevant to the study (i.e., research, counselling psychology, school and education,

parents and caregivers). Fourth, I review limitations of the study. Finally, I explore future

research directions on children's experiences of hope in middle childhood.

Discussion of Key Findings

In this section, I discuss the previously enumerated eight findings about children's

experiences of hope in relation to existing theory and research. I also highlight how the findings

contribute novel ideas to the literature on hope in children.

Reflections on the theme "hope as relational." The richest and most detailed finding in

this study suggests that children often describe experiencing hope in relationships with others

and in connections with objects or places that make them feel safe and secure. The relational

nature of hope as a whole is very prominent in hope literature (e.g., Erikson, 1964; Forbes, 1994;

Shorey et al., 2003; Snyder, Hoza, et al., 1997). The importance of relational connections is also

highlighted as a core component of hope in several leading hope theories (Dufault & Martocchio,

1985; Farran et al., 1995). Participants' experiences of hope as relational include many diverse

aspects, such as hope being strengthened: (1) when feeling a sense of trust, safety and comfort,

(2) when relating with a higher power, and (3) through physical contact.

Trust, safety and comfort. Children discussed how their experiences of hope were

strengthened when in the presence of family members, animals, community members, objects

and places that made them feel safe and comforted.

Hope and family members. Every participant talked about family members as being a

vital aspect of many hope experiences. Conversely, participants highlighted how their hope could

be weakened by the loss of a family member, or if they did not feel supported, validated or cared

for by close family members. This finding parallels pre-existing hope and attachment literature.

Attachment research, as outlined in the literature review, elaborates on the valuable link between

the development of hope through trusting, secure attachments with primary caregivers.

Specifically, Erikson (1964) theorizes on how hope is maintained in trustworthy relationships

with those close to us, and alternatively weakened when relationships are untrustworthy or

unstable. Within hope literature, Snyder (1994) emphasizes how hope develops in the context of

secure relationships with supportive caregivers in childhood. One important qualitative study

displaying the value of relational connections with family members is that of Herth (1998). A

hope-engendering strategy that emerged from Herth's study with 60 homeless children and youth

was that of connectedness, described as a meaningful link to significant others in participants'

lives. Alternatively, research findings suggest that parental rejection, low support or limited

guidance from parents towards children at a young age can lead to lower levels of hope as

children become adults (Rieger, 1993; Snyder, 1994). The loss of a parent has also been

indicative of a sense of hopelessness in child orphans (Atwine, Cantor-Graae, & Bajunirwe,

2005; Stein, 2006).

The current study offers additional qualitative support for the foundational importance of

positive, supportive and trusting relationships with not only parents, but also other family

members. Children in this study discussed how a feeling of connection, safety and trust with

parents and family members fostered hope (e.g., May feeling unconditional support from her

mother), while familial rejection (e.g., Jessica's sister ignoring her) or the death of a parent (e.g.,

Shay recounting how a death in the family would cause him to feel "less hopeful") can ultimately

threaten their sense of hope. Like previous literature, findings from this study highlight how

important strong relational connections are to children's hope experiences.

Hope and animals. Participants highlighted how their experiences of hope included

connecting to and being around animals, particularly their family pets. Every participant who

owned a family pet described the positive impact his or her pet had on strengthening, or bringing

awareness to, his or her personal sense of hope. This was particularly true when participants

were facing threats to hope (e.g., getting through a nightmare) or were faced with uncertainty

(e.g., a potential thunderstorm). Participants also pinpointed the loss of hope that accompanies

the experience of a pet being harmed or dying.

The value of animals, specifically family pets, to children's relational experiences of

hope is a unique finding that has no comparable finding in adult hope research. After a thorough

review of hope research, the significance of pets appears unacknowledged in the literature to

date. This finding suggests the value of animals in facilitating the feeling of comfort and safety

in children, thus fostering a sense of hope in children. This finding may also indicate how

building a sense of hope through trusting and caring relationships with animals may help foster

the development of hope in children that face difficulties locating or experiencing hope (e.g.,

have insecure attachments or may be dealing with a difficult life situation). Moreover, it may

suggest that when pets are harmed or they die, children's hope may be threatened in a similar

manner as the loss of a significant person in their lives.

Hope and community members. Participants in this study also found hope in their

experiences with community service providers like teachers, police officers and community

workers. They discussed how such individuals in their environment enhanced their experiences

of hope by making them feel safe and supported. This finding could be explained, in part, by

looking at Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory of development (1979). This theory highlights

the value of a child's interactions with his or her external systems (e.g., school, neighbourhood,

religious institutions), discussing how these systems affect one another. Also, positive aspects of

children's macrosystem (i.e., broader influences on a child's development, such as Bill's

example of police helping to uphold community values) can in turn affect children's hope

development. Taking Bronfenbrenner's theory of development into consideration, when a sense

of safety and connection is built through relationships with community members (i.e., within a

child's microsystem), and when children's values appear upheld by those in the community (i.e.,

within a child's macrosystem), it may create another avenue for children's experiences of hope

to grow. Alternatively, negative experiences with community members within a child's micro or

macrosystem may weaken the child's sense of hope.

The current finding also parallels Cherrington's (2015) research on hope with rural South

African primary school children. Cherrington discusses the notion of "collective hope," as her

participants reported experiencing hope and well-being when witnessing others in the

community behave in ways that promote togetherness and respect. Similar to Cherrington's

finding, three participants in the current study mentioned how connecting with community

members, and witnessing these members uphold values and roles in the community, fostered

hope experiences. When reflecting on Canadian culture (predominantly seen as an individualist

culture) (Thomas, Ravlin, Liao, Morrell, & Au, 2016) and South African culture (predominantly

seen as a collectivist culture, as alluded by Cherrington, 2015), it is valuable to note how

overlaps exist on the importance of hope from community members identified by both studies.

With a past argument in hope literature stating that current theories of hope are based on a

"disjointed model of agency common in Western individualistic cultures" (Du & King, 2012,

p.1), one may not have expected overlap on the value of community to children's hope among

differing cultures. However, perhaps these shared findings among Cherrington (2015) and the

current study raise the possibility of "collective hope" being more in common amongst children

of all cultures than one may have previously imagined.

Hope objects. Hope objects were part of participants' hope experiences. Hope objects included items that offered participants a sense of security and connection, and made them feel more hopeful, such as a stuffed animal or the presence of the moon. Findings from this study align with existing literature on the value of safety, comfort and security established when a hope object is present. Herth (1993) identifies the value of hope objects for older adults in long-term care facilities. Symbols of hope, such as a stuffed animal or a book, have also been discussed in hope literature as providing children with a sense of trust and hope. One eleven-year-old female participant in Yohani and Larsen's (2009) study of refugee and immigrant children's perceptions of hope during their early years of adjustment in Canada indicated how holding a stuffed animal strengthened feelings of comfort and hope when she was scared or unhappy. In addition, Herth's (1998) study on hope found that the presence of a hope object (i.e., a favourite toy) was vital to the attainment and maintenance of hope in homeless children and adolescents.

Similar to past research, hope objects appear hope-engendering to participants in the current study, as these meaningful objects seem to facilitate feelings of safety and connection. These hope objects, particularly items that participants can physically touch (e.g., a stuffie), appear to provide an enhanced ability to help children self-soothe in moments of distress, and strengthen their personal sense of hope.

Hope places. Hope places were also part of participants' hope experiences. As two participants indicated, the feeling of comfort and safety derived from having a home enhanced the presence of hope. This finding parallels a handful of qualitative research studies indicating the value of specific places to individuals' hope experiences. Herth (1998) mentions a component of homeless children and youth's hope as consisting of an outer-directed hope towards having a place of their own. Brar-Josan (2015) highlights how a condition that

facilitated a sense of belonging in six former young refugees was that of feeling comfortable, secure and at ease in their home, which in turn helped foster hope for the future. Also, one participant in Parkins' (2004) research on exploring hope with Tanzanian adolescents saw her house as a representation of hope because it made her feel safe, secure and stable. Finally, Cherrington (2015) addresses how rural South African primary school children found hope through having a home, and thereby having shelter and protection.

Taken together, these research findings suggest that the development of a safe and secure home life, and the strengthening of a feeling of belonging and connection to home, may be crucial to the experience of hope in children and youth. The current study adds further support to the importance of hope places to children's experiences of hope. Participants' ideas about home and hope suggest that the home can represent a metaphorical "home base" to which a child can return day in and day out. With this safe home base, a child can go out and explore the wider world, and come back at the end of the day to reflect on their experiences, whether positive or negative, without feeling vulnerable because they have a place that will provide safety, shelter, support and comfort. This ability may ultimately foster a child's sense of hope.

Relationship with a higher power. Findings indicated that participants' experiences of hope often included a connection to a higher power. Spirituality and a connection to a higher power are not always associated with experiences of hope in the literature. For example, Snyder's (1995) leading theory of hope in children does not discuss the link between spirituality and hope, and Hinds (1984) did not find spirituality to be an important proponent of adolescents' conceptualizations of hope. Also, Herth (1998) reported a lack of spiritual hope-engendered strategies in homeless children and youth, stating that this finding may be a reflection of age and/or the need for homeless children to focus on obtaining the basic necessities of life. The

current study differs from the above hope theory and research, as spirituality was acknowledged

as part of children's hope experiences. The current study also did not find age to be a factor in

participants' ability to speak about the connection between religion and hope, as one of the

youngest participants was able to discuss his experiences with hope and religion. Without any

leading questions about religion, two out of six participants identified as ascribing to a specific

religion (i.e., on the participant questionnaire) spoke about the value of spirituality and religion

to their hope experiences. Perhaps with explicit questioning about this topic, spirituality and

religion may have been more commonly linked to children's hope experiences.

Findings in the current study on hope and children's relationship with a higher power are

more consistent with other hope theories and research. First, an affiliative dimension of hope,

which includes a religious and spiritual component, is present in two major hope theories.

Dufault and Martocchio's (1985) hope theory focuses on six qualitatively generated common

dimensions of hope. Within the affiliative dimension, these researchers discuss how individuals'

experiences of hope are connected to things outside of themselves, described as relationships

with higher powers. Also, in the Hope Process Framework by Farran and colleagues (1995),

hope consists of four main dimensions, one of which is the inclusion of a spiritual or

transcendent process. Other hope literature apart from hope theories currently exists delineating

the importance of spirituality to children and youth's hope experiences. For example, two

participants in Parkins's (2004) dissertation exploring hope in Tanzanian adolescents referred to

God as an important source of hope. They discussed how a connection with a higher power, and

religious teachings learned through others, helped foster a sense of hope. Also, Cherrington's

(2015) findings display how rural South African children had experiences of hope associated

with religion and faith. Through images and stories, participants in Cherrington's study discussed

how hope was fostered when they felt connected to, or protected by, religious or spiritual beliefs

when facing adversity or uncertainty in life. Findings from these studies align with the current

study, in which a connection to a higher power provided children both safety and comfort. Also,

the belief in an afterlife and in a benevolent creator-figure appeared to help the current study's

participants through moments of uncertainty (e.g., fear of the devil, thoughts of dying), fostering

feelings of hope and comfort. As such, it appears a relational connection to a higher power can

play an important role in children's experiences and understanding of hope.

  Physical contact. Participants described examples of how relational connections included

such actions as hugging and touching friends, family members, pets and objects. These

connections appeared to be an important part of children's hope experiences. While physical

contact is presumably important in hope experiences within adults, it appears absent,

uninvestigated and unacknowledged in hope literature to date. Thus, the value of physical

contact to one's experiences of hope is unique to children at the moment.

  Despite this novel finding, there is evidence in developmental literature on the

importance of touch to a child. Stack and Muir (1992) highlight how touching increases positive

emotion and visual attention during parent-child interactions, while interventions involving the

use of touch have been shown to produce more secure attachment relationships between children

and their caregivers (van den Boom, 1994; van IJzendoorn, Juffer, & Duyvesteyn, 1995).

Applied to the results of the current study, it may be that as children engage in physical touch as

a means of gaining comfort and support, their sense of hope can strengthen. Touch may also help

a children soothe, perhaps serving as a coping strategy in difficult and emotional circumstances.

  Reflections on the theme "hope as personal and unique." Findings in the study

indicated that children experienced hope as both personal and unique. Participants had an early

understanding that hope was subjective, and that one must protect one's own understanding of

hope. The subjective nature of hope and hope experiences has been highlighted by several hope

researchers (e.g., Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Hinds, 1984). In a study on cancer patients'

speech, hope was subjectively held, and patients' personal sense of hope was seen as something

to be protected (Eliott & Olver, 2002). Jevne (1994) discusses the personal nature of hope as she

describes how an individual's culture, genetics and environmental situations combine to

"generate a distinctive encounter with hope" (p.9). Findings in the current study on the personal

and unique nature of hope align with the above hope literature. Hope appeared subjective to all

participants, and Sterling, in particular, made mention of the need to protect hope, specifically

when hopes were personal and meaningful.

Worthy of note is a unique finding in the study in which Jessica and Yoyo identified the

concept of hope itself as having a mystical, spiritual or ineffable quality, and referred to their

experience of hope as "magical" or having "some magic power." While only two participants

used this kind of language to describe hope, it appeared that other children also found the notion

of hope to have somewhat mystical or mysterious properties. For example, Tip alluded to

potential magical properties of hope when she recounted how she "just say[s] a little word"

called "hope" in order to turn her fear into hope, while other children described hope just

"coming up" suddenly for them. This finding is quite novel to children's hope literature, as only

one study has yet to identify a "magical" quality to children's experiences of hope (i.e., Erdem,

2000). Perhaps the use of this imaginative language is a way for children to describe hope as an

abstract concept, and describe the elusive feeling that may accompany their experiences of hope.

Other aspects of participants' personal and unique hope experiences deserve some

attention. Presented below are reflections on how hopeful stories, art and temporal aspects were

dimensions discussed as important parts of participants' unique hope experiences.

Hopeful stories. Engaging with literature was an important aspect of children's hope

experiences. Both Tip and Clark acknowledged the value of telling stories and reading stories to

facilitate a sense of hope. Previous hope literature links the value of hope stories to one's hope

experiences. Snyder, McDermott and colleagues (1997) illuminate how children's storytelling

and the act of hoping are intertwined. They discuss how "the components of hopeful thinking can

emerge in a personal story" (p.25), highlighting how a child's unique story can be inherently

loaded with ideas about how he or she aims to pursue goals in his or her life, and may be linked

to events that occurred in the past, appear in the present or are tied to the future. Jevne (1991)

acknowledges how a story can help strengthen one's connection to a personal sense of hope, and

Herth (1998) notes how characters in books that exemplify hope served as hope role models for

homeless children and youth. Findings in the current study parallel previous research on the

value of stories to children's hope. Specifically, Tip alluded to a story's ability to strengthen

hope as she described how a story with a happy ending increased her personal sense of hope.

Another finding that arose from Tip and Clark's discussion of hope stories was the notion

of making something impossible seem possible. They spoke about how a good story, and a shift

towards positive feelings, led to a strengthened sense of hope. In highlighting this notion, they

unknowingly touched upon a very important concept in psychotherapy literature: that of the role

of a therapist as change agent (Bordin, 1979; Prochaska & DiClemente, 1982; Scheel, Davis, &

Henderson, 2013). In fact, Bordin (1979) stresses the valuable relationship between client and

clinician in therapy in order to enhance change, stating how "…the working alliance between the

person who seeks to change and the one who offers to be a change agent is one of the keys, if not

the key, to the change process" (p. 252; emphasis in the original). In the current study, an

unanticipated by-product of my role as researcher appeared similar to the role of a hope-focused

therapist in a clinical setting. That is, by asking hope-related questions, it appeared that I became

a change agent, helping children process their experiences of hope and come to a deeper

recognition of how hope shifts and changes while engaging in or telling a story. This idea

appears to align with research by LeMay, Edey, and Larsen (2008), who discuss how prompting

stories from clients, and engaging clients in activities that direct their attention toward hope, can

activate the experience of hope. They state that a facilitator, or in the case of this project, myself

as the interviewer, ultimately "uses conversational cues to elicit stories… or engage[s] them

(children) in activities that focus their attention on hope" (p.9). Their findings, and findings from

the current study, suggest that through research conversations about hope stories, one's sense of

hope can be altered or shifted in unanticipated ways (similar to the unexpected shifts and

changes in hope within the context of the therapeutic relationship).

   Art and colour. Participants discussed art as being part of their hope experiences. They

highlighted how art could shift their mood, and how an engagement with art could provide a

sense of hope. When looking to the literature, research findings suggest that arts-based

approaches to studying hope can increase an overall sense of hope in children, and help children

further understand their personal understanding and meaning of hope (Cherrington, 2015; Herth,

1998; Yohani & Larsen, 2009). Researchers indicate that through children's stories of artistic

expression, meaning is created (e.g., Gilbert, 1988; Rasmusson, Jonas, & Mitchell, 1991). In

particular, Parse (1992) discusses how art can help elucidate the lived experience of a child,

especially when he or she gets to recount a story associated with artwork. Parse examines how

artwork can "symbolize what was, is and will-be, all-at-once" (p.39).

   Similar to the above research, participants in the current study appeared to use art as a

way to explore and create new meaning in reference to their hope experiences. The fact that

artwork was even brought into the room with Yoyo is indicative of the way personal creations of

art can assist in fostering hope discussions. In the hope literature to date, various researchers

include art as a data collection process specifically for the purpose of helping children describe

hope (e.g., Cherrington, 2015; Herth, 1998; King, 2014; Yohani & Larsen, 2009). However,

despite the apparent benefits of discussing art and engaging with art as described above, there is

no hope research to date on art's ability (save for when used in research) to strengthen children's

day to day hope experiences, making this a novel finding to hope literature. Thus, from findings

on the personal and unique experiences derived from children looking at, and being engaged in,

art arises the possibility of the value of art to children's hope and hope experiences.

   Another noteworthy finding in this study was how participants discussed specific colours

in reference to hope. Two children identified the colour green as representative of hope, and the

colour black as representative of a lack of hope. When reviewing hope literature, limited research

arose linking specific colours with hope or a lack of hope. One 18-year-old participant in Yohani

and Larsen's (2009) study on refugee and immigrant children's perceptions of hope described

the colour green as part of his hope experience when in nature. Similarly, a 14-year-old

participant in King's (2014) study on hope experiences in adolescent girls noted how the green

colour of grass was a component of her hope when witnessing the coming of spring. Finally, the

connection between hope and the colour green was a direct finding in a study by Elliot and Maier

(2012), in which green was associated with hope, life and growth. Findings from the current

study parallel findings from the above research, in which participants discussed similar concepts

(i.e., connecting hope to life, nature and growth) as being associated with the colour green. While

some research on the link between green and hope exists, it seems that no previous hope research

explicitly discusses the connection between black and a weakened sense of hope. This makes the

finding indicating the colour black as representative of a "lack of hope" in children's hope

experiences novel to the field of hope research.

   The idea of how colours can assist in retelling a story, and how colours can evoke

emotions, is worthy of highlighting briefly. A recent article within the world of arts and design

by writer Kate May (2017) discusses how colour helps a movie tell its story. The author

highlights how colour can: (1) assist in simplifying a complex story, (2) help evoke certain feelings in audience members, (3) support a movie character's journey, and (4) communicate the movie's ideas. In a TED talk, Danielle Feinberg (2015), Pixar's director of photography, discussed how "lighting and colour are part of the backbone of emotion." There were striking similarities between the above literature on the connection between colour and emotion, and children's discussions about colour in this study. Colours helped bring participants' hope stories to life, and helped participants express their experiences of hope, the feelings experienced when hope was present, and their journeys towards finding hope. However, the aspect of colour appears to be a previously overlooked component of children's hope.

Temporal aspects of hope. Findings indicated that participants' sense of hope was linked to future-oriented hopes, past experiences of hope and present moments of hope. Temporal aspects of hope have been previously highlighted in hope literature, particularly future-oriented hope. Foundational research on children's hope to date (e.g., Snyder et al., 1991; Snyder, 1994) recognizes hope as principally goal- and future-oriented. The value of future-oriented hope is also addressed in Hinds' (1984) conceptual view of hope in adolescence, in which participants discussed two themes related to hope for the future: (1) expectation of a better tomorrow and (2) anticipation of a personal future (i.e., future-oriented hopes and possibilities). Goal-related hopes also appeared to be valuable to adolescent girls in King's (2014) study, in which these hopes were directed towards what adolescents wanted to achieve or who they hoped to be in the future.

Findings in the current study are similar to the above research. Every participant in this study recognized how his or her hope experiences included future-oriented aspects. Children referred to hopes directed towards personal future goals (e.g., Cora wanting to own a farm) or something they wanted to continue in the future (e.g., Shay hoping that his family would visit buffets more regularly). In fact, "hope for the future" was the subordinate theme that most

intersected with other themes, in which hope experiences in many areas (e.g., viewing art, building relationships, not polluting) fostered participants' future hopes.

Despite the value of goal-oriented hope for children in the current study, findings also indicated that children's hope was not simply goal- and future-oriented, as some foundational hope researchers suggest (e.g., Snyder et al., 1991), but rather included multiple temporal aspects. The temporal dimension of children's hope in this study appear to have more in common with Dufault and Martocchio's (1985) temporal dimension of hope, involving how an individual experiences hope in the past, present and future. Therefore, mainly focusing on children's future, goal-oriented hope (as is emphasized in the Children's Hope Scale) (Snyder, Hoza, et al., 1997) appears insufficient when attempting to capture the complex nature of children's hope, especially when considering the other aspects of hope deemed extremely valuable to children in the current study (e.g., relational, spiritual, emotional, other-oriented).

More recently, hope literature has highlighted the existence of a past temporal aspect to hope. McElheran's (2012) study with Canadian adults indicates that warm memories of the past (i.e., past-positive oriented hopes) were associated with participants' overall hope for the future. Also, adolescents between the ages of 13 and 16 described how past memories or small successes in their lives engendered their hope (Herth, 1998). Both McElheran (2012) and Herth's (1998) findings parallel findings in the current study, in which children spoke about how memories of hopeful moments in the past strengthened their future-oriented hopes.

Furthermore, research also supports the existence and importance of present-oriented hope, especially in children. Findings from Yohani and Larsen (2009) and Herth (1998) indicate that hope tends to be more present rather than future-oriented for children. The current study also showcased a present aspect to children's experiences of hope (e.g., ability to talk about hope in the here-and-now within their interviews). A worthy observation to mention was participants'

present- and future-focused hopes in post-interviews. In participant follow-up interviews, it appeared that they had not given the concept of hope much thought since their initial interviews. Although three interviews may not be reflective of all children, it seemed that an awareness of hope was triggered when it was brought up in the follow-up interview, but it appeared that the concept of hope was not in the participants' continuous awareness since the primary interview. In the follow-up interviews, children seemed more focused on present hopes (e.g., what was going on for them that day) and future hopes (e.g., upcoming events in their lives), rather than past experiences of hope. Engagement literature could account for this present- and future-focused shift (i.e., as engagement with the hope project came to an end, so too did participants' engagement with the material they discussed) (e.g., O'Connor, 2011). This could suggest that children focus their attention more in the present and future, rather than thinking about the past. Also, without a continual reengagement with the concept of hope, a focus on hope and the value of hope may be overlooked or temporarily forgotten by children.

Altogether, findings suggest temporal aspects of children's hope experiences including a link to past hopes, hopes in the here-and-now, and future-oriented hopes. David Whyte (2017), a poet and leadership author, discusses how human beings have the capacity to live in all these tenses at once: the past, the present and the future. Jevne (1994) also highlights the important link between all tenses as she discusses how hope is informed by the past, focused on the future and experienced in the present. Perhaps what makes hope unique is this capacity to engage with all three tenses simultaneously. For participants in the current study, what made a future possible was that they had a past on which to reflect. They indicated that if hope happened in the past, it was sure to happen again. Additionally, hope experiences from the past and future-oriented hopes were discussed and re-experienced in the present moment in two ways: (1) as children took hope photos (i.e., hope in the here-and-now at the time of photo-taking), and (2) as they

discussed their hope experiences in their interviews. Even though participants in the study were young, the capacity to engage all three tenses together remained, and they were able to reflect on how all three temporal aspects of hope contributed to their overall hope experiences.

Reflections on the theme "emotional and embodied hope." Participants discussed their hope experiences in reference to positive and negative emotions, and indicated an embodied sense of hope. Discussions on both of these findings are found below.

Hope and emotions. Participants identified the presence of hope as linked to positive emotions (e.g., happiness, joy), and the absence of hope as linked to negative emotions (e.g., sadness, fear). This finding aligns with pre-existing hope research. For example, increased levels of hope were associated with emotions such as happiness and joy (Aspinwall & Leaf, 2002; Ciarocchi, Heaven, & Davies, 2007). King (2014) also discusses how hope for adolescent girls was connected to emotions, with positive emotions linked to positive experiences and negative emotions linked to negative experiences in participants' lives.

Another important finding in the current study was how participants identified many similarities and differences between hope and related or opposing affective concepts such as happiness, joy, wish, trust, need, love, peace, anticipation, fear and selfishness. Despite clear differences in the literature between other affective states such as optimism, wanting, desire or wishing (Bruininks & Malle, 2005), the differences between hope and related concepts for children have yet to be illuminated in research. In the current study, distinctions between hope and other concepts appeared to be less obvious than in Bruininks and Malle's (2005) study with adults (discussed extensively in Chapter 2). Some participants had difficulty verbalizing the parallels with and distinctions between each concept, with a few participants occasionally conflating similar, positive emotional states to hope (e.g., using the words "joy" and "hope" interchangeably). Perhaps the developmental level of children makes the differentiation of

concepts such as joy and hope more difficult, since children, especially the younger participants, are still developing the ability to understand and discuss abstract concepts (Zembar & Blume, 2009). Sterling, one of the oldest participants, can be cited as one example of how a child's development may facilitate a more nuanced differentiation between hope and other related concepts. Her understanding of hope was more in line with Bruinincks and Malle's (2005) differentiation of a hope as she discussed hope as being more personal than a wish, and hope having an increased emotional commitment versus a wish (i.e., Sterling viewed a wish as less likely to occur). While some participants were unable to fully differentiate between related emotions in a similar fashion to Sterling, they were still aware of, and could discuss, feelings as being generally related or unrelated to each other.

Finally, fear also seemed to be both the opposite of hope and potentially different than the feeling of hopelessness (e.g., "unhope") for participants. Fear and moments of hopelessness appeared to take away or endanger participants' sense of hope. These current findings are in line with ideas in previous hope literature on fear, hopelessness and hope. Scioli and Biller (2009) contend that the most terrifying fears are those that jeopardize the intentions underlying hope. Hope has been identified in the literature as being the opposite of fear, or in Jevne's (1991) case, the "antidote" to fear (p.149). Edey and Jevne (2003) also describe how many individuals maintain unrealistic hopelessness or false despair, which they say "prevents them from seeking solutions and listening to advice" (p.48). Similar to these studies, participants in the current study saw fear as opposite to hope, as seen in children's discussions of how moments of fear appeared to weaken their sense of hope. When reflecting on hope and fear, one sees that they are both future-oriented and deal with uncertainty. However, hope projects forward in a positive way (e.g., imagine a future in which the desired is possible), while fear projects forward in a negative way (e.g., imagine a future in which the aversive is on the horizon) (D. Larsen, personal

communication, June 2017). Overall, limited knowledge exists on children's differentiation between concepts of hope, fear and hopelessness in hope literature, making it somewhat difficult to distinguish participants' experiences of these concepts.

Embodied hope. Participants in this study identified that they could feel the presence and absence of hope physically in their bodies. The finding of a felt component to hope is in line with previous research on hope. Jevne (2005) discusses how an individual relies on his or her body to indicate a presence or absence of hope, and that an individual's experiences often trigger an embodied awareness of hope. In children's hope literature, Parkins (2004) found that immigrant children and adolescents' descriptions of hope included feeling hope in their heart (i.e., "the heart of hope"). Yohani and Larsen (2009) discuss how hope for refugee children in Canada was also experienced as embodied, and linked to both energizing and calming activities. Also, King (2014) conveys how adolescent girls experienced both hope and hopelessness physically in their body, while Herth (1998) describes a felt "energy" as a component to homeless children and adolescents' experiences of hope.

Similar to the research above, the current study noted how a bodily awareness prompted participants to notice the presence or absence of hope. Many children further described needing their whole body to feel hope, as hope in itself was "a huge emotion to think about" (John), and discussed the heart and the head as part of their embodied hope experiences. Current findings about children's experiences of embodied hope add to the already existing body of qualitative hope literature on this subject, and suggest that children's physical reactions may act as "clues" for the presence or absence of hope and hopeful experiences.

Reflections on the theme "hope challenged/hope present." Findings indicated that participants' experienced the presence of hope even in the face of challenges or difficult life circumstances. Findings also highlighted how a sense of hope could bloom, return or resurface

when participants explicitly brought hope to awareness. This section will explore findings in

relation to: (1) the presence of hope despite poor circumstances, (2) metaphors and contrasting

images of hope, and (3) how hope shifts and changes.

Hope present despite poor circumstances. Participants discussed how hope existed and

was sustained despite poor circumstances. Even when participants endured hardships (e.g., being

bullied, hearing about a horrible incident in the world), they described how their sense of hope

was not completely lost. The notion of hope as continually present despite difficulties in life is

not novel in hope literature. The early works of Menninger (1959) highlight how one becomes

mindful of hope when facing life difficulties since this is when one understands the need for

hope the most. Snyder, McDermott, and colleagues (1997) state how even those with low hope

are not completely without hope, and Jevne (1994) writes about how hope is "ever-present in our

lives" (p.8). More recently, King (2014) reports how the hopes of adolescent girls were sustained

despite negative outcomes in their lives, and Yohani and Larsen (2009) describe a continuous

presence of hope in refugee children, as children viewed hope as constant despite potential life

difficulties (i.e., stating how hope "never goes away") (p.252).

Similar to previous research about the presence of hope despite poor circumstances,

participants in the current study recognized how their sense of hope may weaken when facing

life difficulties, but did not ever fully disappear. This suggests how children in middle childhood

understand hope as robust, and demonstrates how children of this age are capable of recognizing

when hope is present or when it is weakened.

Metaphors and contrasting images of hope. Though unsolicited, participants in this

study used metaphors to explain and explore their experiences of hope. Tip discussed the

metaphor "journey of hope," depicting her understanding of hope as finding the right path and

having future possibilities in life. This use of metaphor parallels Jevne's (1994) description of

hope as not knowing the way, but "being willing to listen for directions" (p.136). For children, especially Tip, I saw the role of hope as being equivalent to the role of a compass, not only guiding children towards future goals, but also providing emotional cues to help them recognize when the "journey" ahead (i.e., a person, situation or thing in their world) was safe (i.e., strengthening hope experiences) or potentially unsafe (i.e., threatening hope experiences).

The metaphor "regrowth of hope" was also discussed as part of children's experiences of hope, describing this metaphor as hope regrowing after a loss or negative experience. Similar to the current study, Larsen and Larsen (2014) identify the theme "regrowth" of hope in a study of adolescents as reflected in self-metaphors, in which the adolescents described their lives as marked by growth and change. Metaphors that are not as prevalent in the current literature on hope, but were considered important by children in the current study, are the ideas of "rebirth" and "blooming" hope. These metaphors provide novel understandings of how children express their hope experiences, and the creative nature behind some of their descriptions of hope.

As a whole, describing hope in terms of metaphors was found in previous hope literature. While adult hope research identifies the use of metaphors as a way to express how hope is experienced (e.g., Hall, 1990; Flemming, 1997; Turner, 2005), more recent literature on children and adolescents highlights the use of metaphors in discussions on hope. For instance, Yohani and Larsen (2009) found that children engaged in the use of metaphors as a strategy to describe their experiences of hope. Similarly, child participants in Cherrington's (2015) study employed metaphors to further describe their experiences of hope. Metaphors also appeared to help children describe and explore hope experiences in the current study.

Alongside metaphors, children in this study used contrasting images to describe their experiences of hope. Several participants mentioned images of light as representing the presence of hope versus the image of shadow as representing an absent or misplaced sense of hope. There

is evidence in previous hope literature relating the experience of hope to the image of light or the

sun. For example, one participant in Cherrington's (2015) study on hope in South African

children remarked, "Hope is like the raising [rising] sun. The reason why I choose the sun as my

hope is because the hope is light" (p. 200). Despite this example, the use of contrasting images to

describe a sense of strengthened or weakened hope seems absent from hope literature. While

contrasting images once again appeared to help participants relay their hope experiences, they

also seemed to suggest the use of concrete thoughts around the concept of hope. For example,

children highlighting the presence of hope represented by the sunlight, or missing/absent/

weakened hope represented by shadows or darkness. Observations regarding the use of concrete

language in children's depictions of their hope experiences will be further discussed below.

   Hope shifting and changing. There were indications in the current study of participants'

hope shifting and changing. In fact, shifts and changes in hope were evident across most themes.

For example, shifts in emotions were noted when a sense of hope was present versus when hope

was weakened. The idea of hope shifting and changing has been explored and discussed in

previous hope literature. Larsen and Larsen (2004) highlight how students' understanding of

themselves may shift within different contexts, potentially leading to shifts and changes in hope

experiences. Hinds and Gattuso (1991) created The Hopefulness Scale for Adolescents as a way

to measure hope, believing that hopefulness was neither present nor absent, but occurred in

degrees. They viewed their scale as a way to "more accurately reflect levels or the extent of

hopefulness" (p.93) in adolescents. Findings in the current study align with the above research,

as children discussed the seemingly fluid nature of their hope experiences throughout interviews.

In fact, I even observed participants' understandings of hope shifting and changing as they talked

about their photos. For example, body language, tone of voice and enthusiasm appeared to

change when children were discussing hopeful experiences versus experiences that took their

hope away. This finding is consistent with Eliott and Olver's (2002) observation in discourse research that hope shifts fluidly in conversation.

Participants in the study additionally emphasized how the act of adding something to, or taking something away from, their hope photos could alter their sense of hope either positively or negatively. Research on hope reveals that circumstances appear to strengthen or diminish/ threaten hope (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Miller, 1989). In fact, the term "hope suckers" has been used by Cherrington (2015) to define objects or events that took away the hopes of South African children. While the term "hope suckers" was not used by participants in the current research, there were clear accounts of people, events or objects that could weaken children's hope, ranging from large events (e.g., war, death of a loved one) to smaller incidents (e.g., cold frosts). Along with the term "hope suckers" in hope literature, one could make a case for discussing a new term entitled "hope growers" with children, representing the ways in which hope grew for participants (a common discussion in interviews). The use of these terms, and hope-focused language, could facilitate discussions about hope experiences and the concept of hope with children, specifically as hope shifts and changes during a child's life.

Reflections on the theme "nature as a source of hope." All participants in this study highlighted nature as an important part of their hope experiences. While academic literature links being in nature to well-being (Mayer & Frantz, 2004) and positive affect (Passmore & Howell, 2013), there is little research on nature's role in hope experiences, especially for children. First, neither hope theory (Snyder et al., 1991) nor Hinds's (1984) view on hope (the two conceptualizations of children/adolescent hope previously discussed in Chapter 2) illuminates nature's potential influence on children's experiences of hope. However, Dufault and Martocchio's theory (1895) on hope does pinpoint how contextual dimensions (e.g., settings or

circumstances) can have an impact on an individual's hope. When looking to children's hope

literature, one adolescent participant in Parkins's (2004) study on Tanzanian children's hope

described nature as her way of having confidence that there is a God, while Yohani and Larsen's

(2009) study found that hope was connected to nature through feelings of peace, belonging and

renewal. Children's descriptions of nature as a component of their hope experiences in the

current study went beyond what was described in previous hope literature. Participants focused

on the sheer beauty of nature, and the value of nature to animals and humans. Nature seemed to

provide participants with a feeling of being grounded, and appeared to help them live in the

present moment.

        Moreover, participants in both the current study and Cherrington's (2015) study indicated

the value of nature and its association with growth and survival in order to: (1) have oxygen to

breathe, (2) help plants grow, and (3) provide healthy food for everyone. The connection

between hope and survival can also be found in Herth's (1998) study as well, in which children

experiencing homelessness described a connection between hope and "having adequate food"

(p.1057). The importance of survival to children's hope experiences, while not new in child hope

literature, is one that is highlighted by participants in this study as directed towards themselves

(i.e., their need food, water and oxygen to grow) and others (i.e., hopes for the survival of others

through the attainment of basic needs). The concept of survival appears particularly important to

highlight as it seems to be a finding across different cultural and environmental contexts. For

instance, the link between hope and survival is similarly discussed among homeless children

(Herth, 1998), South African children (Cherrington, 2015) and Western Canadian children (the

current study). Therefore, nature's role in children's hope experiences, especially in regards to

survival, appears to have no cultural bounds.

Reflections on the theme "other-oriented hope." Every participant in the current study discussed hopes that were directed towards others. The altruistic nature of children has been discussed previously in children's developmental literature. Research findings suggest that children's ability to act in an altruistic manner is strengthened from the early elementary-school years onwards (e.g., Underwood & Moore, 1983; Whiting & Edwards, 1988), but then tends to decline once children progress towards their adolescent years (Shaffer, Wood, & Willoughby, 2005). This developmental research, and the current study's findings, could indicate the importance of fostering a sense of hope when children are young, which may perhaps help nurture altruistic, hopeful children, adolescents and adults.

Furthermore, children's experiences of hope oriented towards others have been previously highlighted in hope research. Snyder and Feldman (2000) state, "The process of helping in turn may fuel hopeful thinking. In other words, helping people and hope probably spark one another" (p. 398). Dufault and Martocchio (1985) also discuss a sense of hope outside of the self as part of the affiliative hope dimension within their hope theory, while Snyder (2000) highlights the value in sharing hopes with others. Recent studies focusing on adolescents' and children's hope additionally found an other-oriented component to hope (Cherrington, 2015; King, 2014; Yohani, 2008). The current study further suggests children's abilities to hope beyond just themselves. Participants provided many examples of hope directed towards others (e.g., hope for the less fortunate, acts of kindness), and emphasized the strengthened sense of hope derived from helping others in various ways.

Moreover, Howell and Larsen (2015) devoted a book to the concept of other-oriented hope, exploring how other-oriented hopes: are influenced by relationships in one's life; have relatively low controllability; are possible even if unlikely; are characterized by some uncertainty; occasionally stimulate feelings of engagement or vitality; and sometimes occur as a

response to adversity. While Howell and Larsen (2015) discuss the presence of other-oriented hope in such populations as parents of ill children, informal/formal caregivers, teachers and those with serious illnesses, they fail to account for other-oriented hope among children. This attests to the limited attention children's other-oriented hope has received to date in hope literature. Despite the lack of child-specific other-oriented hopes in Howell and Larsen's (2015) research, findings from the current study's subordinate themes (i.e., hope for those in need, hope through positive action and hope for others' happiness) highlight many of Howell and Larsen's (2015) identified aspects of other-oriented hope in adults. For example, participants talked about such experiences as hope directed towards making sure everyone's needs are met, a strong sense of hope for others despite negative things occurring in the world, and hope directed towards helping others via a classroom charity event. These findings indicate that children may experience other-oriented hope in a similar manner to adults.

Furthermore, one finding that has had limited attention in previous hope literature is children's experience of other-oriented hope directed towards the environment. Apart from Hinds and colleagues' (1999) research, which identifies "having a safer and cleaner global environment" (p.612) as an other-oriented hope held by adolescents newly diagnosed with cancer, there was limited support in the literature for children's positive actions towards the environment. However, children in the current study were emphatic about the value of taking care of the environment, indicating the effect that negative actions towards the environment could have on their sense of hope (e.g., weaken hope). These examples of participants' hope directed towards others and the environment suggests that children's definition of hope goes beyond their personal well-being.

Reflections on the hope activity. When participants were intentional about looking for hope, it appeared to shift their experience and understanding of hope. The photo-based activity

appeared to prompt new and different life experiences, and participants reported being able to

see hope where they stated they had not seen hope before. This finding parallels previous hope

literature, which indicates that explicitly engaging children in hope-based activities can begin to

make hope more visible (Edey & Jevne, 2003; LeMay et al., 2008). It seemed that the nature of

the activity itself brought a new, explicit awareness of hope to the children in the current study,

providing them a new "hope lens" through which to view hope in a more meaningful way.

Making hope more visible seemed to shift children's hope experiences in the home, the

classroom and their environment, such that everyday objects or experiences appeared to be seen

in a different, more hopeful light.

Furthermore, there appeared to be benefits for the participants in being invited to discuss

their experiences of hope. Participants communicated feeling an enriched sense of satisfaction

and hopefulness from thinking and talking about hope, which seemed to cause a shift in their

overall sense of hope. These findings contribute to existing literature on the value of talking

about hope (e.g., Edey, Larsen, & LeMay, 2005; Yohani & Larsen, 2009) and how intentional

and explicit hope conversations can nurture children's hope experiences (Yohani & Larsen,

2009). The process of being involved with research in and of itself has been acknowledged as

building emotional strength and practical resources in research study participants (De Lange,

2012), in addition to facilitating meaningful discussions about hope experiences and

strengthening participants' personal sense of hope (Cherrington, 2015; King, 2014; Yohani &

Larsen, 2009).

In regards to children's hope, Cherrington's (2015) findings highlight how research itself

can serve as a hope intervention for children. In her study, Cherrington indicates that visual

participatory group work helped children explore the concept of hope, and in turn enhanced their

personal sense of hope. The value of hope conversations emphasized in the above studies is

paralleled in the current study. Meaningful hope-based conversations seemed to act as a de facto intervention in this project (though no change was intended), facilitating hope-based discoveries and strengthening an overall sense of hope in children. Also, the reflective nature of the photo-elicited interview, and the recognition that participants' experiences would be shared with others, appeared to foster participants' awareness of hope and sense of hope. As counselling psychology research findings indicate, discussions between a client and counsellor can allow for the discovery of opportunities for hope that have been previously unimagined (Larsen, Edey, & LeMay, 2007). Perhaps discussions between participant and researcher in research studies can similarly open up new hope avenues in children.

Notably, there was also a shift in two of the participants' personal descriptions of themselves based on their role in the photo-based activity. Yoyo described himself as "The Hope Master" and "The Hope Provider," while May shared how she was on "Mission Hope" when looking for hope photos. These very powerful statements suggest that talking about hope with an appreciative witness (i.e., me as the researcher) was helpful for participants to learn and express their understandings of, and experiences with, hope. These descriptors also suggest that the activity itself was empowering, as children seemed to gain confidence in their ability to identify and describe their hope experiences through photo-elicited discussions about hope. This self-empowerment could perhaps help children access and use hope in the future more confidently.

Reflections on children's advice about hope. This research is the first of its kind to ask children about advice they have for others regarding hope. As indicated by participants, it is important for teachers, parents and children themselves to get involved in strengthening children's hope experiences, and helping children better understand this elusive yet important concept. Similar results have been documented in previous hope literature, indicating how both parents (Erikson, 1964; Jevne, 1994; Snyder, 1994; Snyder, Cheavens, & Sympson, 1997;

Snyder, Hoza, et al., 1997) and school systems (Jevne, 1994; Larsen, 2014; Li & Larsen, 2012; Snyder, McDermott, et al., 1997) are starting points to help foster hope in children, as well as help implement hope-based conversations and initiatives. This finding suggests how parents, teachers and other children can strongly influence children's hope experiences.

A finding raising potential concern in this study is the possibility of problematic goals-focused thinking that may be present in some children. This finding arose in Sterling's interview when she was asked about advice she has for others in regards to hope. In her response, Sterling suggested that attaining a grade of 100% on a test at school would provide her hope for the future, as this would help her get a good job. Sterling's quote invites concern about how hope is possibly understood by children, as her response to what may help strengthen hope seems to be informed by a broad societal norm of what it is to be an adult, and what an external indicator of success may be (i.e., attaining a 100% and being seemingly perfect means achieving success and setting oneself up for a successful future). This mindset appears problematic as it may foster an unrealistic, inflexible or distorted view on hope.

Holleran (2008) highlights the above concern in her dissertation on the experience of hope in academically gifted high school students. She found that the meaning of hope often appeared distorted or monolithic in these adolescent high-achievers as their narratives suggested a connection between imperfection and diminished hope or that only one hope existed – that of perfection academically. According to Holleran, the inflexible nature of perfectionists and those with some perfectionistic tendencies may lead to an inability to see new possibilities, or even see a future in which a child wishes to participate. Larsen and colleagues (2014) also reference the idea of unrealistic hope as a dilemma met by clinicians in therapy, which they describe as a hope that seems idealistic or improbable for a client's possible future (from the perspective of the clinician). Larsen et al. (2014) recommend guiding hope-based conversations from a *hoped for*

*object or outcom*e to exploring *hope-for ways of being*, which may highlight or broaden a desired

sense of self. By facilitating discussions around hoped-for ways of being, the child may engage

in thinking about such aspects as what he or she hopes to be, and how he or she is living some of

what he or she hopes to be.

Ultimately, the above research points to the importance of creating an understanding in

children of hope being multidimensional. It also highlight the value of helping children diversify

their hope portfolios to include many meaningful aspects of life (e.g., academics, relationships,

pets, etc.), which has been identified in previous research findings as being useful in hope-

focused therapy (Harris & Larsen, 2008; Larsen & Stege, 2010). In this manner, children may be

encouraged to reflect on and identify many hopes and hoped for objects, strengthening the

opportunities for some of their hopes to be realized.

Summary Statement on Key Findings

As study findings suggest, children's hope is not one-dimensional. Children explicitly

depicted aspects of their hope experiences previously unaccounted for in the leading theories on

children's hope (i.e., Hinds, 1988; Snyder et al., 1991). These main areas included: hope as

relational, emotional and embodied hope, spiritual components of hope, hope through artistic

expressions, temporal aspects of hope, nature as a source of hope and other-oriented hope. The

various areas discussed by participants as being valuable to their hope experiences highlight how

hope is multi-dimensional to children. This finding is consistent with hope theories of Dufault

and Martocchio (1985) and Farran et al. (1995), and depicts the complex and unique nature of

children's understandings and experiences of hope. Additionally, children in this study indicated

that experiences of hope are both personal and important, and displayed how they are able to

discuss their experiences of hope and employ hope in their daily lives.

Observations on the hope-based project

In the following section, I address: (a) some general observations witnessed during the research interviews about the photo-based activity, and (b) developmental observations most salient to my research question, specifically in the context of the hope-based project.

Engagement. Most participants in the study alluded to the fact that they actively sought to engage with hope and identify hopeful images in their environment through the study's photo-based activity. Engagement in this project through photography and photo-elicited discussions appeared to enhance participants' involvement and effort at depicting their hope experiences. Research findings suggest the importance of engagement to enhance children's learning (Hauser-Cram et al., 2006; O'Connor, 2011). Hope-based activities are identified as one means to inspire student engagement (e.g., Larsen, 2014). In the current study, the use of photos was identified by participants as engaging, and seemed to foster reflections on hope and hopeful experiences.

Children additionally engaged with the concept of hope through the use of technology (i.e., digital cameras). In a world where children's lives are saturated with technology at a young age (Mizen, Hutchby, Pole, Moran-Ellis, & Bolton, 2001), and electronic devices seem ubiquitous among children in Western society (Mizen et al., 2001), using technology to engage children in a concept such as hope appeared to be a worthwhile endeavour. Participants discussed having fun using the cameras, and with this interest in technology appeared to come increased excitement over documenting hope experiences. This method of child engagement seemed to help foster conversations and reflections on hope, and looked to make the often implicit and personal experience of hope more visible and explicit. Sadly, limited research exists on the use of technology or photo-based strategies to facilitate children's engagement with hope.

A by-product of talking about hope. Interestingly, the study itself caused a shift in a few of the participants' families. For example, May depicted how the project influenced changes in her family's lifestyle (e.g., walking more instead of using the car) and expressed how they

"got to see a bunch of new things" from exploring their neighbourhood during the photo activity.

Thinking about and talking about hope within the context of the study also engaged parents and

siblings in hope-related activities and conversations as a by-product. Family members seemed to

act as a sounding board for participants' hope-related ideas (e.g., Bill checking in with his dad to

confirm that an experience he encountered was representative of hope) or inspiration for hope

photos (John's sister sparking ideas about the relational nature of hope). The effect on family

members as a by-product of a hope project appears to be a novel contribution to hope literature.

This finding demonstrates the powerful relational connections and occasions for discussions

about hope that can be facilitated by a hope-based, photo-elicited project such as the one in the

present study.

       The media. Several participants used the media (i.e., television shows or movies) as a

cultural reference to help them convey their experiences of hope. Two participants brought up

hope and its connection to the Pixar movie Inside/Out (a new movie at the time of this study),

discussing emotions in relation to the movie and the link between the concept of hope and the

movie character Joy. To date, there exists no literature on hope in children identifying the media

as an avenue for the exploration of children's experiences of hope. In fact, the opposite is

showcased in hope literature, in which Snyder, McDermott and colleagues (1997) make a plea to

eliminate electronic media from children's lives in order to engage children through stories and

books instead. Findings from the current study do not align with Snyder, McDermott et al.'s

viewpoint, as children in this study demonstrated how the media (e.g., television shows, movies)

helped engage them in discussions about hope, and further illuminated their hope experiences.

Developmental Observations

       Findings from this study offer one data point contributing to the overall understanding of

children's hope development. Findings indicate that children in middle childhood were capable

of understanding and discussing their experiences of hope. While all children could depict hope

experiences, there were developmental differences observed throughout the project. As

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory highlights, differing experiences, changes and challenges during

a child's life may impact their development, and influence their understanding and interaction

with a concept like hope. To better highlight some of the apparent differences, observations in

the following developmental areas will be discussed: (1) age, (2) gender, and (3) language.

Additionally, observations within the area of family composition will be addressed.

  Age. Age was not observed or interpreted as being a determining factor in participants'

ability to discuss their experiences of hope as much as initially anticipated. Developmental

literature suggests that older, more mature children are more capable of expressing themselves

verbally, have a richer knowledge base and are more capable of retaining and retrieving

information (Kail, 1990, 1991; Zembar & Blume, 2009). Also, younger children are seen as

having more difficulty with abstract concepts and when discussing thoughts and feelings

compared to older children (Kail, 1990, 1991). Thus, one would expect older children in this

study to be more capable of talking about the somewhat elusive concept of hope. While

occasionally older children could describe their experiences of hope in more elaborate terms

(e.g., expand on their experiences, use more advanced vocabulary), and younger children may

have had some difficulties answering all questions (e.g., answering "I don't know" to a few more

questions compared to older children), differences due in part to participants' ages were not as

obvious as was originally expected. While this observation could be due to the project selection

strategy (i.e., participants chosen for their ability to articulate ideas and express themselves), it

strengthens the notion that even younger children can discuss and explore their hope experiences.

  Gender. While not overly apparent, male participants were observed and interpreted as

being slightly less reflective, and at times less vocal, than female participants during their interviews. Female participants were also observed as focusing more on emotional and embodied aspects of hope compared to male participants, who appeared to have more difficulty describing, identifying and being reflective about emotional aspects of their hope experiences. For example, most females described finding hope during the hope-based project quite easily, while several male participants indicated having difficulty finding more than a few photos depicting hope. For the most part, female participants also tended to have longer responses to questions compared to their male counterparts. These observations seem to complement research on gender differences and language development, which suggests that girls are seen as generally more talkative than boys, especially in the realm of child-adult interactions (Leaper & Smith, 2004).

Little is also mentioned in hope research on possible gender differences and hope. Parkins' (2004) study suggested no gender differences on scores of hope (using Snyder's hope scale) in Tanzanian adolescents, while Larsen and Larsen (2004) indicated differences between female and male experiences of hope in both genders' personal self-descriptions. This later study highlighted how adolescent male participants mainly associated their ability to be productive with hope, while female participants depicted a strengthened sense of hope when they were capable of successfully negotiating social situations. Overall, observations in the current study hint at the possibility of gender differences in children's abilities to express experiences of hope, though more research is needed to understand these possible differences.

Language. In the current study, it was observed that children tended to use quantifying language when discussing their experiences of hope (e.g., more or less, bigger or smaller hope, increased or decreased hope). They also tended to use concrete language to discuss hope (e.g., no hope versus having hope). Participants' use of quantitative and concrete language may be explained by their stage of cognitive development, as according to Piaget's (1963) theory of

cognitive development, children of this age may have less facility with reasoning about abstract concepts. Notably, there is some evidence in adult hope literature suggesting that hope is also often described in a concrete fashion. For example, in a study by Eliott and Olver (2002) looking at the discursive properties of hope within 23 adult oncology clinic outpatients, describing hope as a concrete entity was relatively common for participants. Perhaps concrete language helps children and adults further understand and explain their personal experiences of hope.

One participant, Clark, offered a particularly insightful reflection on hope language, identifying how the word "hope" can be classified as different parts of speech. He discussed hope as a noun, an adjective and a verb, similar to Farran et al.'s (1995) classification of hope in relation to parts of speech. While the remaining participants did not comment on hope in relation to parts of speech, they employed hope in the form of a noun (e.g., "there will be no hope to stop it"), an adjective (e.g., "someone is not hopeful when…"), and a verb (e.g., "…hoping they're going to be okay") within their interviews. Notably, no participant identified or used hope as an adverb (e.g., hopefully), despite hope literature identifying hope as such (Eliott & Olver, 2002). Perhaps observations on participants' use of language suggest that children begin to gain the ability to explicitly recognize the syntactic functions of hope as they develop.

Finally, Zembar and Blume (2009) indicate that aspects such as a child's memory, knowledge base, attention level and ability to problem solve can tremendously affect a child's capacity to discuss his or her understandings and experiences of abstract concepts such as hope. In addition, differing cultural upbringings can shape children's development and what they may see as important elements to an experience (Gurian, 2011; Vasta et al., 2004). Therefore, the above areas may also help explain some of the language differences between participants, and the different ways in which children spoke about hope.

Family composition. In the current study, all participants except for one were part of a

two-parent household. While every child mentioned parents as important, the one child from a

single-parent household seemed to continually express the critical role his mother plays in

fostering his sense of hope (e.g., facilitating hope for the future, teaching him about the concept

of hope). This one child had lost his father at a young age, which perhaps fuelled a deep

connection and relationship with his mother. It was evident throughout this child's interview that

his mother predominantly nurtured his sense of hope.

When looking to hope literature, research on family composition and children's hope

experiences appears absent. The one potentially relevant study about hope and family dynamics

was on parental loss and hope among orphaned children in South Africa (Adamson & Roby,

2011). Findings from this study indicated that levels of hope in orphans who had a network of

support were not significantly different than levels of hope in non-orphans with strong relational

support (as measured by the Children's Hope Scale). Thus, while one may have expected

orphaned children to have a weakened sense of hope due to family difficulties, supportive

connections with others appeared to compensate for this life circumstance. Therefore, perhaps

supportive connections in general can address differences in family composition. However,

because this study was once again quantitative in nature, it does not account for qualitative

descriptions of children's hope experiences that may be present and different among orphaned

and non-orphaned children. While one participant in the current study does not provide enough

support for conclusions or generalizations to be made about hope and family composition, it may

begin conversations on how differing family compositions may affect children's hope

experiences.

Potential Implications

The current IPA study aimed to answer the research question: "how do children in middle

childhood (ages nine to 11) experience hope?" Related objectives included exploring how

children: (a) understood hope, (b) described hope, and (c) described employing hope in their lives. Results from this study contribute to the literature on children's experiences of hope. While the topic of children's hope is beginning to gain some attention in hope research recently, much is still uncertain about children's understandings and experiences of hope. Thus, the current study has launched new insights into how children in middle childhood experience hope, use hope and describe employing hope. Although findings from this qualitative study are not generalizable, they do provide us with valuable information that can be implied to various contexts and stakeholders. Therefore, potential implications will be addressed in four areas: (1) research, (2) counselling psychology, (3) teachers and the school system, and (4) parents and caregivers.

Research implications. Results from this study can inform future research on the study of hope with children. Findings suggest that the use of photo-elicited discussions was both a suitable research method to use with children and was useful in eliciting discussions about children's hope experiences. This method appeared to help create engagement in the project, and according to developmental research, engaged students tend to learn more and feel better about themselves and their academic environment in contrast to their less-engaged counterparts (Hauser-Cram, Erickson, Stadler, & Sirin, 2006).

Furthermore, there were anticipated individual differences in children that may have affected their ability to discuss and participate in the hope-based project (e.g., maturity level, level of development, more or less advanced linguistically or emotionally). Despite differences across participants, all children were able to discuss their personal experiences of hope. This finding suggests that hope-based discussions facilitated by photos may be an effective way to start conversations about hope given individual children's unique characteristics and differences.

Additionally, children were able to engage with the photo-based hope project in different ways. While some participants chose to use the provided journal to remember ideas about their experiences of hope, others chose different means to help process their ideas about hope (e.g., audio-recording ideas about hope or drawing depictions of hope experiences). With respect to discussing hope, this may indicate the value of having multiple ways in which children can research and reflect on topics such as hope (e.g., journal for those who like to write, photos for visual learners, audio-recorders for those like to talk out ideas). As prominent child educators suggest, children learn in various ways (e.g., independently, talking concepts out with a group, through creative means) (Holt, 2017; Tomlinson, 2014). To involve children in their own reflection and learning, O'Connor (2011) indicates that we must meet them where they are at developmentally. This means that allowing flexibility in the project, and the ways in which children document and present their experiences of hope, may help different types of learners express themselves in ways that best suit their learning styles and needs.

Finally, the photo-elicited interview method also seemed to help children feel both comfortable with and excited about the research interview. Children mentioned their enthusiasm in taking part in the study as they were contributing to research. The act of talking about photos and experiences of hope appeared to limit the power differential in interviews, as the children and I were co-constructing an understanding of their hope experiences together. Providing children a platform to have their voices heard and acknowledged seemed to foster a feeling of hope within participants in and of itself, and is useful considering when approaching future hope research with children.

Implications for counselling psychology. To date, there are no empirically supported explicit interventions for children based on the concept of hope. For counselling psychology specifically, this research can inform future practices on working with children and hope within a

psychotherapeutic context. For example, it can provide mental health professionals with a better understanding of how to begin and facilitate conversations about hope with children. This is particularly relevant given that hope is considered to account for approximately 15% of client change in adults (Asay & Lambert, 1999; Hubble et al., 1999; Lambert, 1992; Snyder et al., 1999). Areas identified as important to children's experiences of hope (e.g., nature, past memories, relational connections) can also help begin these conversations around hope. Additionally, as many studies suggest, simply talking about hope can help strengthen children's experience of hope (Edey et al., 2005; Yohani & Larsen, 2009). Therefore, opening up discussions about hope in counselling sessions may strengthen a child client's sense of hope.

Another implication for counselling psychology is the value of activating hope in session through the use of symbols, photos, metaphors or even various artistic endeavours. A counsellor does not simply need to use language to access hope. To better access a child's hope experiences, counsellors may engage arts-based methods, working explicitly with such avenues as drawings, photos or music. Through these means of inquiry, counsellors can enable clients to engage in conversations around memories that remind them of hope from the past, present moments that inspire hope, or future goals that sustain, or are attached to, their experiences of hope. Facilitating client discussions in these areas can allow counsellors to expand their knowledge about their child clients and enhance understandings of how their clients uniquely experience hope and the world around them. Additionally, it allows the counsellor to step away from problem-focused or solution-focused conversations, and incorporate approaches from a positive psychology perspective that invite explicit hope-focused discussions (i.e., moving from a focus on the problem, to fostering meaning-making through hope-focused discussions in session).

Participants also discussed connection and trust as valuable aspects to children's hope experiences. These are important areas for counsellors to consider when working with children

and hope. These findings suggest strong implications for the importance of building a positive

and safe therapeutic alliance with child clients. Through a trusting and supportive relationship,

hope can flourish.

Implications for teachers and the school system. There are a few implications to note

for both teachers and the school system. First, children identified the value of teachers'

influences on their experiences of hope, in addition to the importance of bringing hope directly

into the classroom. Participants encouraged teachers to discuss hope and reinforced the value of

teachers having hope in their students. Participants also suggested that teachers need to be aware

of how teachers' personal experiences of hope may influence their students' hope. Results from

this study may not only help inform teachers about the significance of making time for hope-

based discussions with students, but may also emphasize just how valuable a teacher's personal

sense of hope is in strengthening a child's sense of hope in return.

Second, findings from this research suggest the potentially problematic goals-focused

thinking that may occur in children (e.g., perfectionistic thinking patterns discussed previously).

Teachers can possibly help monitor these types of problematic thinking patterns within the

classroom. By engaging in discussions with children about the value of hope in the face of

challenges or adversity, and the presence of hope despite not reaching all societal indicators of

success, teachers can begin to assist children in creating a more realistic and healthy view of

hope. They may also assist in fostering a diverse hope portfolio with children (i.e., hoping for

many different things at once), which according to Harris and Larsen (2008), may improve the

likelihood of some hopes being realized and possibly help develop a strengthened sense of self in

children.

Third, and similar to counsellors, teachers can use arts-based exploratory approaches to

help provide a space for hope to flourish. Teachers can target hope activities that encourage

storytelling about moments in which students felt hope, recognized hope or engaged with hope. Teachers may also engage in various other activities to help children navigate their personal hope experiences (e.g., take students on walks to find hope, engage with nature or animals to foster hope, create opportunities for hope collages, hope photos or hope drawings). These hope-based activities may not only help students with hope development on a personal level, but they may also engage students to learn about the nuanced nature of hope from other children. The use of media, technology and metaphors, in addition to exploring and locating potential hope objects or hope places within classroom discussions, are other avenues to investigate that may help facilitate conversations about hope and hope experiences with children at school. In all, findings from this study can help guide developmentally appropriate hope-based curriculum for those in middle childhood. In this manner, teachers may more accurately convey the concept of hope to their students based on a more informed understanding of children's hope experiences, and use activities children in the current study identified as being helpful to their discoveries and discussions of hope.

Finally, this study highlights a few important aspects of children's hope to be considered by educators. First, as was witnessed in the findings and as indicated in research, children tend to move on to other activities quickly, and tend lose sight of previously learned material, unless the material is continuously used (Zembar & Blume, 2009). Thus, it may be valuable to remind children about the concept of hope, and reengage children with hope-generating activities periodically, in order to help them continue to think about hope and use hope during their everyday life. Second, it can be helpful for teachers to engage students in different ways by altering hope-based activities to suit the needs of every type of learner. Finally, given the personal and unique nature of hope for children, it is important to allow kids to explore their individual experiences and understandings of hope.

Implications for parents and caregivers. Findings from the current study indicate that parents and family members are a crucial part of children's hope experiences. Children also stressed how their sense of hope was fostered when they felt safe, protected and secure in trustworthy relationships with their loved ones. When reflecting on these findings, it then appears valuable for parents and caregivers to work on building a sense of safety and trust within their relationships with their children in order to help strengthen their children's sense of hope. Furthermore, recognizing the potential value of touch to children's hope experiences, parents and caregivers can work to create or develop opportunities for physical contact between themselves and their children (e.g., a hug before school or a kiss before bed). Strengthening physical and emotional bonds with children can perhaps foster a greater sense of hope in children.

Ultimately, parents and primary caregivers can be seen as the first line of hope defense when it comes to fostering a sense of hope in children. Children in this research identified the importance of having these primary supports begin to engage children in discussions about, and explorations around, hope at home. By simply talking to children about hope, and even discussing hopeful stories with children, parents can assist children in building positive hope experiences. Additionally, participants identified the home as a hopeful place. Thus, by creating a sense of home for children, and feelings of safety and security within the home, parents and caregivers may continue to strengthen and nurture hope and hopeful experiences in children.

Finally, parents can continue to explore aspects of hope identified as part of children's hope experiences. Not only can they facilitate hopeful conversations through photos or stories in a fashion similar to this research, but they can also consider exploring how areas such as spirituality, family pets or even connection with nature may affect their child's personal sense of

hope. By utilizing knowledge gained from this study, parents and caregivers may help improve the everyday life of their child by helping the child build more hopeful experiences, as well as assist the child in maintaining a hopeful orientation.

Study Limitations

Several limitations to this study require consideration. First, being a qualitative study, the sample size of participants is limited. This suggests that findings are not representative of all children in middle childhood. However, the objective of this project was not to generalize to all children, but instead was an attempt at providing a preliminary understanding of children's experiences of hope that was rich in detail and could potentially highlight important variables to consider in other children. Furthermore, because this study addressed experiences of hope from children between the ages of nine to 11 means that voices of older and younger children are excluded. Further research is needed to build a more comprehensive understanding of children's experiences of hope at all ages and stages of life.

Furthermore, since recruitment was done by word of mouth and advertisements within my professional and acadmic contacts, participants interested in the project were predominantly from well-educated families and came from households with generally high income levels. This may have influenced findings. For example, growing up in educated households may have influenced the development or encouragement of abstract reasoning. Moreover, parents with an academic background may have been interested in the concept of hope and research on hope from an academic standpoint, making them more likely to want to include their child in such a study. Also, experiences from a participant coming from a financially secure household would potentially be different than experiences from a participant growing up in a household where basic needs were not being met. Therefore, the context of the participants in this study is important to consider when transferring these findings to other populations. Future studies in

which participants are sampled from a number of different contexts are necessary to enhance

transferability of results. Future research should additionally continue to build an understanding

of children's hope experiences from various socio-economical, cultural and religious

backgrounds, which will help build a broader picture of children's hope experiences.

Finally, there were some issues with scheduling interviews, and therefore some

participants discussed their understandings of hope in relation to their photos several weeks after

completing the hope-based project. A large gap in between photo-taking and photo-elicited

discussions may have led to participants forgetting the importance of hope behind their photos in

the interim before their interview. Therefore, talking to children about their photos shortly after

they complete the hope-based project may enhance a child's ability to access their experiences of

hope related to their specific hope-based photos.

Suggestions for Future Research

As this study was the first of its kind to investigate children's experiences of hope in

middle childhood, there are innumerable future research initiatives to consider. While not an

exhaustive list, the following areas can be seen as possible next steps to continue illuminating the

multifaceted experiences of hope in children of all ages.

First, this research provides some overview of children's experiences of hope in middle

childhood. Therefore, there is much to be learned about children's hope experiences. Future

research on factors such as age, cultural background and gender could help build a stronger

understanding of potential differences in children's experiences of hope, in addition to possible

developmental shifts and changes of hope experienced throughout a child's life as they transition

into adolescence and adulthood. Given that adolescents in King's (2014) recent study

remembered hope in childhood as being different from their current experiences of hope in

adolescence, additional research on potential changes in conceptualizations and experiences of

hope throughout a child's development are warranted. Thus, there is a need to work on research

supported theory development of hope across the developmental life span, filling in identified

gaps on our understanding of children's hope experiences and hope development highlighted in

past literature (Larsen & Larsen, 2004; McDermott & Snyder, 2000) and this study. While this

study is a first step towards understanding children's hope, additional research is needed to work

towards a more comprehensive and definitive theoretical framework of hope in this population.

Second, it would be beneficial to have research studies focused on each of the themes

found in this study: for example, a study devoted to children's experiences of relational hope,

children's other-oriented hope experiences, or children's use of metaphors when describing hope

experiences. This would be particularly interesting with respect to the finding that were novel to

this study (e.g., pets/animals, colours, nature, art and their link to hope in children). While hope

research with adults in some of these areas exists (e.g., other-oriented hope described in Howell

& Larsen, 2015), our focus should now shift to understanding these experiences for children,

especially given the researched importance of developing hope early in life to help during

difficult life transitions (Shorey et al., 2003). Gaining a deeper understanding of each area may

eventually lead to a theory of children's hope targeting children as they grow, in addition to

addressing the complex, multidimensional nature of children's hope experiences.

Third, researching different arts-based approaches to the process of generating and

understanding children's hope could expand our repertoire of how to engage children in

conversation about hope. While there are tools already in existence that identify ways to engage

children in the classroom (e.g., Edey et al., 2005; Larsen, 2014), evidence-based research on

these tools is essential. Researching different hope tools will also help target different types of

children and different types of learners. For example, one of the participants in this study

suggested that allowing kids to draw pictures to represent their experiences of hope could help

children express their experiences of hope more fully. In addition, learning about hope through written or oral methods (e.g., hope journals – either written or voice recorded – or hope poems) could elicit different experiences of hope.

Additionally, modifying this project for children that are different types of learners or who may possess learning, physical or mental disabilities could be an important next step to understanding the experiences of hope across different child populations. For example, this project could be modified for those who may be hearing impaired by creating an arts-based hope project around images and written narratives of hope, or for those who may be vision impaired creating an arts-based hope project around the sounds of their hope experiences. Such accommodations may help expand knowledge around hope in all children, and help differentiate between the needs of different populations when it comes to hope interventions and development. This may also help us explore the utility of various types of hope tools with different populations of children.

Fourth, understanding the discourse of hope, and how the word is defined and used by children, would be a vital next step in children's hope research. Findings from adult hope research suggest that the word "hope" is used and understood in various ways as a folk term (i.e., everyday language), and that adults can differentiate between similar terms such as hope, joy and wish (Bruininks & Malle, 2005). Findings from the current study also suggest that the language children used to describe hope may have been different than that of adults. For example, differentiation between the concept of hope and other related terms, such as joy, appeared less apparent than previous hope research (e.g., results in Bruininks & Malle, 2005). Therefore, a discourse analysis could help us better understand children's use of language when describing and exploring hope and hope experiences.

Fifth, since results from this project indicate that children's hope extends far beyond that of a uni-dimensional approach to hope, the continued use of the Children's Hope Scale (Snyder, Hoza, et al., 1997) seems inappropriate. Therefore, further research is needed to create novel approaches to measuring children's hope. Clinical and research settings may benefit from a quantitative measure to study children's hope and thus, a new quantitative measure using a multi-dimensional approach to children's hope should be created in the future.

Finally, given the apparent connection between hope and the parent-child relationship, investigating how parents' understandings, experiences and enactments of hope affect children's hope development could be valuable. In addition, further exploring the link between hope and attachment styles in parents and their children could help further illuminate the development of hope and a hopeful orientation.

Conclusion

The goal of the current study was to investigate how children in middle childhood experience hope, and explore how they understand hope, describe hope, and describe employing hope in their lives. Through photo-elicited interviews with 11 participants, six main themes among children's experiences of hope were identified. Participants' hope was fostered in trusting and secure relationships with people, objects and places, while hope was weakened when trust, connection and security was not present in participants' lives. Participants described the experience of hope as personal and unique, and hope was often directed towards others rather than simply towards the participants themselves. Children connected both positive and negative emotions to the presence and absence of hope, while there was also an embodied, felt sense of hope attached to participants hope experiences. Participants' hope experiences included an understanding that hope was present despite challenging circumstances, and that hope could

resurface and/or blossom no matter the context or situation. Finally, participants discussed nature as a source of their hope experiences. In addition to these six main themes, participants discussed how hope activities, and simply talking about hope, could help foster a sense of hope. They were also able to highlight advice they would share with teachers, parents and other children about hope and the value of hope.

During my time with participants, one observation became fundamentally clear to me: children see hope as important in their lives, and can describe the value of hope to themselves and those around them. Each participant displayed a remarkable ability to express their personal experiences of hope, and depicted how a sense of hope was both meaningful and treasured in numerous ways. Their discussions indicated how the presence of hope could act as a protective factor (e.g., helping strengthen them when they were bullied or alone), could be a change agent (e.g., fostering action or the pursuit of a goal), and could direct them when they are metaphorically lost in the world (e.g., providing emotional support). They demonstrated how hope was present, temporarily missing, fostered and/or maintained during good and bad moments in life, and how hope for every child is unique and personal in nature. Also, experiences and understandings of hope were continually shifting and changing as children continue to comprehend hope, and the world around them. Supporting previous hope theories and research, hope appears to be a multidimensional concept for children, in which participants' experiences of hope are shaped by personal, social and environmental factors.

Ultimately, it is hoped that findings from this study will: (1) begin to illuminate children's experiences of hope, (2) illustrate the value of engaging with, and talking about, hope with children rather than imposing adult views of hope on children; (3) emphasize the importance of further developing hope tools and techniques that may foster children's hope

experiences, and help children develop a more comprehensive awareness of hope; (4) highlight

the value of hope research as a potential intervention which also helps to strengthen children's

hope experiences, and (5) support the need for theory development regarding children's hope –

theory that accentuates the complex, multidimensional nature of children's hope experiences.

With further discussions about hope with children, and the development of a strengthened sense

of hope in children, children may begin to see hope as a strength in times of need, and turn to

hope as a resource during both positive and negative experiences. Since hope has been shown to

be a valuable asset to children in middle childhood in various circumstances throughout this

project, hope and hope research are worthy of continued investment.

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Appendix A: Guiding Interview Questions

The following questions are meant to provide a guide for the interview; however, other questions may also be asked depending on the information provided by the participant.

a) How come you decided to take this picture? Any reason?

b) What does this picture say about hope for you?

c) What about this picture makes you feel hopeful? Or how did you know that this picture was about hope?

d) What was happening before you took this picture? What happened after?

e) What similarities/differences do you notice between your pictures of hope?

f) If you could add something to the photo that would tell me a little more about your hope, what would you add?

g) Is there anybody in your life that seems connected to hope for you?

h) Is there anything that you wanted to take a picture of but couldn't? Tell me about it.

i) Are there feelings attached to these hope pictures? If so, which ones? Do you feel hope in your body?

j) Can you think of other examples of hope in other places in your life that you would have liked to photograph?

k) What takes away your hope?

l) What is the smallest thing that you could do to get more hope?

m) Do you have a story that others have told you that gives you hope?

n) Do you have any advice to give other kids (parents/teachers) about hope?

o) What was it like to talk with me today?

p) What was it like to talk about hope?

q) Is there anything you would have wanted me to ask today about hope that I did not ask?

Appendix B: Information Letter and Parental Consent

An Exploration of Experiences of Hope in Middle Childhood

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Thank you for considering permitting your child to participate in my research study exploring children's experiences of hope in middle childhood. The goal of this research is to explore how children (ages 9-11) experience hope, understand and describe hope, and use hope in their lives.

PARTICIPATION
Should you agree to have your child participate in the study, their involvement would include:
- A 15-20 minute meeting with your child to describe the project and the photo activity for the project.
- A photo activity where your child will take home a camera for one weekend in the next few months to take pictures of anything that represents hope to them or makes them feel hopeful in their lives. They will also be asked to write about their photo activity experiences in a journal.
- A 30-40 minute interview with your child about his or her understanding and experiences of hope after the photo activity. Your child's photos will prompt the interview.
- A 10-15 minute follow-up interview with your child, which will only be necessary if I have questions about any of the responses your child provides in his or her first interview.

Please note that a digital camera and a journal will be given to your child for this activity. The digital camera is to be returned after you child's photo activity is complete, but your child may keep the journal after its use in the interview. I will take full responsibility for any damage or difficulties with the digital camera.

For this research, please try to avoid helping your child complete the photo and journaling portion of this research, as we wish to allow him or her to independently take pictures of hope and hopeful experiences. This is because we are trying to target child specific experiences and understandings of hope. If your child comes to you with any questions during their photo activity, you can call or email me (Kristine Iaboni, see below for contact information).

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION
Your child will also be asked to assent to participate in this study before the research begins. He or she will be reminded throughout the study that they can opt out at any time, that their participation is entirely voluntary, and that they will not be penalized in any way if they decide not to take part in the study.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY
Since the information your child provides will be used in future publications and presentations, a pseudonym will be provided for your child so that confidentiality and anonymity of your child is maintained. In addition, all identifying information from your child's photos, journal and interview will be removed. Further, all identifying images of anyone else in the photos (e.g., family or friends) will be blurred to maintain their anonymity. All final data will be kept on a

secure password-protected computer and locked in the researcher's office for a minimum of five years. You may request a copy of your child's interview transcript once the data has been collected and transcribed.

RISKS AND BENEFITS
The topic of hope, or the thoughts and feelings that come up from interviews, may be sensitive, confidential and/or private in nature. Your child may prefer not to share their hopeful experiences, or may experience anxiety, stress and other uncomfortable thoughts and emotions as a result of being asked to reflect on his or her experiences of hope. I will actively listen for any signs of discomfort or concerns from your child throughout the research, and will terminate or postpone your child's participation if any issue arises. The likelihood of harm to your child during this project is anticipated to be very low. But if risks exist, I will ensure that I provide necessary support and assistance for you and your child, with recommendations to local low and no cost resources for professional counselling.

There are many benefits that can arise from your child's participation in this research. He or she may feel a sense of satisfaction and an increased sense of hopefulness from thinking and talking about hope. There is research support for the notion that simply talking about hope enables children to experience an increased sense of hope (Yohani & Larsen, 2009). Further, findings from this may ultimately be used to develop programing or techniques to foster hope at not only an individual level, but also at a school and familial level.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS
The Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta has reviewed this study to ensure that it meets ethical standards for research. If you have questions about your child's rights or the ethical behaviors of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615. If you have any other comments or questions about the study, please contact us by the phone numbers or email addresses listed below.

Your consent for your child to participate in this study would be greatly appreciated. If you are willing to allow your child to take part in this research, please sign the attached consent form and return it to school with your child.

Principle Investigator: **Supervisor:**
Kristine Iaboni, M.A.   Dr. Denise Larsen, Ph.D., R. Psych.
Department of Educational Psychology   Department of Educational Psychology
iaboni@ualberta.ca   djlarsen@ualberta.ca
780-994-9203   780- 492-5897

Parental Consent

An Exploration of Experiences of Hope in Middle Childhood

Name (please print): _____ Date:_____

I consent to have my child participate in the following:
- A 15-20 minute meeting with your child to describe the project and the photo activity for the project.
- A photo activity where your child will take home a camera for one weekend in the next few months to take pictures of anything that represents hope to them or makes them feel hopeful in their lives. They will also be asked to write about their photo activity experiences in a journal.
- A 30-40 minute interview with your child about his or her understanding and experiences of hope after the photo activity. Your child's photos will prompt the interview.
- A 10-15 minute follow-up interview with your child, which will only be necessary if I have questions about any of the responses your child provides in his or her first interview.

I have read and I understand the details in the information letter, and give my consent to allow my child, _____(name of child) to participate in this research project.

_____
        Signature of Parent or Guardian

Please check the boxes below if you would like reports on this research:

☐ I would like a copy of my child's interview transcript.

☐ I would like a copy of the final research report.

If you have checked either of the boxes above, please provide an email or address so we can send you reports at a later date:

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

             _____

             _____

EMAIL: _____

Please contact the Research Ethics Office at 780-492-2615 if you have questions about your child's rights as a participant, or concerns about how this study is being conducted. Note: this office is not affiliated with the study investigators.

Appendix C: Recruitment Email

An Exploration of Experiences of Hope in Middle Childhood – Volunteers Needed

If you have a child between the ages of 9-11, they may qualify to volunteer for a research study on the exploration of how children experience hope, understand and describe hope, and use hope in their lives.

Should you agree to have your child participate in the study, they would be involved in a digital photo activity where your child will take home a camera for one weekend in the next few months to take pictures of anything that represents hope to them or makes them feel hopeful in their lives. They will also be asked to write about their photo activity experiences in a journal. A 30-40 minute interview with your child about his or her understanding and experiences of hope will follow the photo activity, with your child's photos prompting the interview. The study will be conducted at the most convenient location for you.

There is research support for the notion that simply talking about hope enables children to experience an increased sense of hope. If you feel that you would be interested in hearing more about this opportunity or having your child participate, please contact the principal investigator Kristine Iaboni (a third year PhD student in Counselling Psychology) via her email: iaboni@ualberta.ca

Appendix D: Participant Assent

An Exploration of Experiences of Hope in Middle Childhood

Name (please print): _____ Date: _____

I agree to take part in:
- A 15-20 minute meeting to talk about the project and the photo activity for the project.
- A photo activity where I will take home a camera one weekend and be an "expert on my hope", taking picture of anything that represents hope to me or makes me feel hopeful in my life. I will also be asked to write about my hope experiences in a journal.
- A 30-40 minute conversation about my understanding and experiences of hope after the photo activity, using the photos I took.
- A 10-15 minute meeting to talk about any questions Kristine may have about my photos or my answers to her questions (but only if there are questions).

I have spoken to my parent(s) or guardian(s) about being part of this research project, and I understand all the steps of this project. I would like to take part in this project:

_____
   Signature of Child Participant

Appendix E: Demographic Data Questionnaire

Name of your child participating in the study: _____

Age of your child participating in the study: _____

Gender of your child participating in the study:
☐ Male
☐ Female
☐ Transgendered
☐ Other

What is the primary language spoken in your home?
☐ English
☐ French
☐ Other (please specify) _____

How would you classify your child's ethnicity?
☐ North American Aboriginal origins (e.g., First Nations, Inuit, Métis)
☐ Other North American origins (e.g., Acadian, Canadian, Québécois)
☐ European origins (e.g., English, Flemish, Scandinavian)
☐ Caribbean origins (e.g., Haitian, Jamaican, West Indian)
☐ Latin, Central, and South American origins (e.g., Brazilian, Hispanic, Mexican)
☐ African origins (e.g., African-Canadian, Egyptian, South African)
☐ West Asian and Middle Eastern origins (e.g., Afgani, Armenian, Saudi Arabian)
☐ South Asian origins (e.g., East Indian, Pakistani, Punjabi)
☐ East and Southeast Asian origins (e.g., Chinese, Filipino, Thai)
☐ Oceania origins (e.g., Maori, Pacific Islander, Polynsian)
☐ Multi-ethic / mixed race origins
☐ Other (please specify) _____

What is your child's religious preference?
☐ Roman Catholic
☐ Protestant
☐ Seventh-Day Adventist
☐ Christian Scientist
☐ Jewish
☐ Mormon
☐ Muslim
☐ an Orthodox church such as the Greek or Russian Orthodox Church
☐ Would rather not say
☐ Something else (please specify) _____

What is your current marital status?
☐ Divorced
☐ Married

☐ Common Law
☐ Separated
☐ Single / Never Married
☐ Widowed
☐ Would rather not say

What is the current annual income in the home?
☐ Under $20,000
☐ $20,001-$40,000
☐ $40,001-$60,000
☐ $60,001-$80,000
☐ $80,001-$100,000
☐ Over $100,000
☐ Would rather not say

What is the highest level of education in your home?
☐ Less than grade 12
☐ Grade 12 diploma
☐ Some post-secondary / Trade
☐ Diploma program or Trade program
☐ Bachelors degree
☐ Masters degree
☐ Doctoral degree (Ph.D., M.D., etc.)
☐ Would rather not say
☐ Other (please specify) _____

How many children under 16 years old live in your household?
☐ 1
☐ 2
☐ 3
☐ 4 or more

Appendix F: Local Resources for Professional Counselling

FREE SERVICES
Aboriginal Consulting Services (those of Aboriginal decent only)
#204, 10010-105 Street
780-448-0378
www.aboriginalconsultingservices.ca

Community Services, City of Edmonton
Short-Term Counselling (4 sites in Edmonton)
780-496-4777
http://www.edmonton.ca/for_residents/programs/counselling-services.aspx

The Urban Counselling Network
10616-105 Ave
780-424-4106
www.boylestreet.org

LOW-COST COUNSELLING
Catholic Social Services
Several Offices in Edmonton Area
780-420-1970
www.catholicsocialservices.ab.ca

Jewish Family Services
#200, 10235-124 Street
780-454-1194
www.jfse.org

YWCA Counselling Centre
#440, 10080 Jasper Ave
780-423-9922 ext 222
www.ywcaofedmonton.org

SLIDING FEE SCALE COUNSELLING (Based on Income)
Walk-In Counselling Society of Edmonton
#200, 9562-82nd Ave
780-757-0900
http://www.walkinedmonton.org

Aspirations Counselling & Training Centre Inc.
9853-90th Ave
780-468-1366
www.asafeplacetogrow.ca

Community Counselling Centre Inc.
#202, 10534-124 Street

780-482-3711
www.communitycounsellingcentre.ca

Cornerstone Counselling Centre
#302, 10140-117 Street
780-454-1194
www.cornerstonecounselling.com

Insight Psychological Inc.
Edmonton South & North & Spruce Grove Offices
780-461-1717
www.insightpsychological.ca

University of Alberta, Clinical Services
780-492-3746
www.edpsychology.ualberta.ca

VOLUNTEER or GOVERNMENT SERVICES 24HR CRISIS
Children's Mental Health Crisis Line……. 780-427-4491
Kids Help Phone………………………….. 1-800-668-6868
Distress Line……………………………… 780-482-HELP (4357)
Mental Health Help Line…………………. 1-877-303-2642