

Narrative Inquiry Into the Experiences of Vietnamese Children and  
Mothers Composing Lives in Transition to Canada

by

Hang Thi Thuy Tran

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Elementary Education  
University of Alberta

© Hang Thi Thuy Tran, 2021

## Abstract

In this narrative inquiry, I attended to the experiences of three newcomer elementary-age children and their mothers of Vietnamese heritage who were composing lives in transition to Canada. My passion for this inquiry came from my experience as a mother as I lived alongside my young daughters and their struggles, tensions, and tears when we were first composing our lives in transition to Canada. Many of my daughters' storied experiences of their new schools were upsetting. As I began to think narratively with my daughters' and my stories, I better understood my children and myself and was able to dwell in/with my tensions in educative ways.

Attending the child and mother co-researchers' lived and told stories of their experiences, I came alongside them in their family and community places. The child and mother co-researchers and I came alongside one another for two years as we explored the mothers' stories of their homeland culture. We attended to past and present intergenerational narrative reverberations in language, culture, and education traditions and experiences that shape their familial curriculum making and too, the child and mother co-researchers' lived and told stories of composing lives in transition to Canada. Field texts for the inquiry included transcripts from audio-recorded monthly conversations in both Vietnamese and English, field notes of my experiences as the inquiry unfolded, family artifacts shared by the children and mothers, annals and journal entries the mothers made in Vietnamese and/or English, and drawings, writings, or artistic creations the children made in Vietnamese and/or English. Interim and final research texts were co-composed and negotiated with each child and mother co-researcher.

Our narrative inquiry shows significant aspects of the everyday fabric of the children's and mother's lives in the making, including the spatial, linguistic, and temporal nature of their lives

in transition as well as the children's familial curriculum making worlds. Our narrative inquiry opens potential avenues for understanding cultural ethics within the relational ethics of narrative inquiry, as well as familial narratives in relation to institutional and social narratives. Our narrative inquiry encourages teachers, researchers, cultural brokers, immigrant facilitators, education policy makers, teacher educators, and newcomer parents and families to more deeply understand and support, by travelling to their diverse worlds, children and families who are composing lives in transition to Canada.

## **Preface**

This thesis is an original work by Hang Thi Thuy Tran. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name “Narrative Inquiry Into the Experiences of Vietnamese Children and Mothers Composing Lives in Transition to Canada”, No. Pro00086360, May 7, 2019; research ethics were renewed May 19, 2020 and March 19, 2021.

## Dedication

Tôi đặc biệt dành tặng nghiên cứu này  
cho những trẻ em và bà mẹ Việt Nam mới đến Canada,  
và những trẻ em và bà mẹ khác  
đang viết lên cuộc sống của mình trong quá trình di cư đến những miền đất mới,  
và  
cho những người bà của tôi, mẹ tôi, và các con tôi,  
những người đã và đang dạy tôi cách làm một người mẹ.

I especially dedicate this research  
to Vietnamese newcomer children and mothers in Canada,  
and other newcomer children and mothers,  
who are composing lives in transition all the new lands,  
and  
to my grandmothers, my mother, and my children,  
who taught and are teaching me how to be a mother.

## **Acknowledgements**

*“Thank you! Cảm ơn!”*

### **To Lisa, Hồng, Ryan, Thanh, Alex, and Hiên**

Being alongside you as my co-researchers who named me an auntie, a sister, a teacher, and an advocate has been one of the most profound and significant experiences of my life. Thank you very much for your stories, time, care, love, trust, understanding, friendship, and family-ship.

### **To my incredible husband Khôi, and my daughters Khánh Như and Khánh Châu**

I cannot make it to this point of my journey without your love, encouragement, and support over the past six years. Thank you for always sustaining my courage, being with me in my challenges, tolerating for my messy kitchen, loving me unconditionally, and making me flourish. I love you.

### **To my Ancestors, my beloved parents Lan and Thân, and my parents-in-law, Sơn and Y, and my family and relatives near and far**

I cannot tell how much love and care you each supported me in many differently meaningful ways since I was born, to my growth up, being a mother, and becoming a scholar. Thank you so much. I love you all.

### **To my strong and sustaining supervisory committee, Janice, Bonnie, and Trudy**

Words cannot express how grateful I am for your tireless time, guidance, wisdom, love, care, and support for my studying and living in Canada as an international graduate student and a mother

of two young children. Thank you so much for being my “giants” and lifting me up on your shoulders. My life has entered a new flourishing chapter because of you all.

**To my supportive examining committee, Dr. Ross, Sharla, and Lydia**

Thank you so much for sharing with me so many constructive comments for the full draft of my dissertation. Your generous support contributed to making my dissertation and my research journey stronger and better.

**To Maryanne, Joanne, Nathalie, Tarah, Yuanli, Hiroko, Steven, Shalini, and Trâm-Anh**

Thank you so much for walking me through many ups and downs of my doctoral journey, for being my wonderful response community, and for celebrating every little achievement in my life.

**I would like to acknowledge Dr. D. Jean Clandinin and the Centre for Research for Teacher Education and Development, Antonella Scaccia-DeWitt and the Department of Elementary Education at the University of Alberta**

And a special thank you to Jean and beloved people at the Research Issues Table for your lead and support for my pathway as an emerging narrative inquirer. Thank you Antonella and amazing Professors and staff at our department who warmly welcomed me and supported my progress in this journey.

## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b>	p. ii
<b>Preface</b>	p. iv
<b>Dedication</b>	p. v
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	p. vi
<b>Table of Contents</b>	p. viii
<b>List of Figures</b>	p. xvi
<b>Chapter One: Narrative Beginnings</b>	p. 1
Experience Compels My Research	p. 1
Beginning to Wonder About Composing Lives in Transition	p. 7
Inquiring into Experiences of Transition in My Childhood	p. 9
Early Childhood With Very Few Friends	p. 12
Beginning to Wonder About Intergenerational Narrative Reverberation	p. 16
The Kitchen: Grandmother, Mother, and Daughter	p. 17
Beginning to Wonder About Familial Curriculum Making	p. 22
<b>Chapter Two: Theoretical Underpinnings of This Narrative Inquiry</b>	p. 32
Lingering with My Wonders of Experience, Lives in Transition, Familial Curriculum Making, and Intergenerational Narrative Reverberation	p. 32
Dewey's Theory of Experience	p. 32



Becoming Drawn Toward Lives in Transition	p. 34
Becoming Drawn Toward Familial Curriculum Making	p. 37
Becoming Drawn Toward Intergenerational Narrative Reverberation	p. 40
Additional Social/Theoretical Justifications for an Emerging Research Puzzle	p. 44
Attending to Children as They Compose Lives in Transition to Canada	p. 44
Attending to the Vietnamese Community in Canada	p. 47
Attending to “World”-Travelling	p. 50
An Emerging Research Puzzle	p. 52
<b>Chapter Three: Learning to Think Narratively</b>	<b>p. 53</b>
Gradually Awakening to the Centrality of the Relational Ethics as a Narrative Inquirer	p. 53
Continuing to Grow in Understanding What Narrative Inquirers Do	p. 57
The Centrality of Experience and Attending to Experience	p. 59
Co-Making Our Relational Narrative Inquiry	p. 63
Meeting Potential Co-Researchers	p. 63
Coming Alongside Co-Researchers and Co-Composing Field Texts	p. 64
Thinking Narratively With Our Field Texts to Shape Interim Research Texts	p. 66
Drawing on the Narrative Accounts to Shape Final Research Texts	p. 68
Looking Ahead	p. 70

<b>Chapter Four: Narrative Account of Coming Alongside Lisa and Hồng</b>	p. 71
Rooting and Co-Making Relationships	p. 71
Introducing Lisa and Hồng	p. 73
Narrative Threads Weaving Lisa and Hồng’s Familial Curriculum Making	p. 75
Living in Intergenerationally and Culturally Ethical and Respectful Ways	p. 76
In Relation With Bà – Numerous Stories Lived, Told, and Retold	
During Our Inquiry	p. 77
In Relation With Lisa – Numerous Stories Lived, Told, and Retold	
During Our Inquiry	p. 80
In Relation With Hồng – Numerous Stories Lived, Told, and Retold	
During Our Inquiry	p. 83
Valuing and Nurturing Relationships	p. 86
With Family Members	p. 86
With the Earth and Multispecies Living on the Land	P. 88
“Con Yêu Quả Đất” – Loving the Earth	p. 88
“Hãy Quan Tâm Đến Các Loài Vật!” – Caring for the Animals	p. 91
With Communities and Community Members	p. 94
Food as Always Present When We Met	p. 94
Desiring Good Relationships More Than Learning Languages	p. 96
Composing Lives in Two Languages	p. 99
Puzzles About Supporting Lisa’s Long-Term Interests in Vietnamese	p. 100
Place, Language, and People Tensions of Living Multiple Languages	p. 102
Facing Challenges with Language Learning	p. 104

Family as Always-in-the-Making	p. 106
Returning to the Piano	p. 109
<b>Chapter Five: Narrative Account of Coming Alongside Ryan and Thanh</b>	p. 111
Beginnings	p. 111
A Year Later, a Healthier Happier Story Begins to Be Lived and Told	p. 112
A Year Before: Thinking Backward and Forward from Our Days of Rooting	
Relationships	p. 116
Narrative Threads of Coming Alongside Ryan and Thanh	p. 120
Living Layers of Relationality	p. 120
Relationality Opens Potential for Co-Inquiry Into Family-Ship	p. 121
Relationality Opens Potential for Coming Alongside in Navigating	
Complexity	p. 122
Relationality Opens Portals Into Ryan’s Worlds	p. 125
“We Are the Game Partners.”	p. 125
“You Are My Teacher.”	p. 128
Relationality Opens Potential for Friendship and Advocacy	p. 129
“As We Are Newcomer Mothers, We Become Close Friends.”	p. 129
“Thank You for Being Our Advocate.”	p. 130
Being Afraid of Academic Failure as a Sign of Life Failure	p. 132
Intensive Fears and Worries at the Grade One New School Year Parent	
Meeting	p. 132

A Lonely and Hopeless Journey Alongside the Child’s Learning in School	p. 136
Losing Navigation Capacity Because of Difficulties in Language Acquisition	p. 137
“All We Care Is to Help Our Children.”	p. 141
Making Home a Loving and Learning Place	p. 141
Naming as a Way of Showing Care and Attention	p. 143
Valuing Supportive Relationships and Desires for Belonging	p. 146
Circling Back to School, Circling Back to Hopes and Smiles	p. 149
<b>Chapter Six: Narrative Account of Coming Alongside Alex and Hiên</b>	p. 151
Beginnings: The Ways Friends Become Co-Researchers	p. 151
Growing Seeds of Being in Relation in Narrative Inquiry With Hiên as Both Co-Researcher and Friend	p. 153
With Alex With Respect for His Characteristics	p. 156
Narrative Threads That Emerged Alongside Alex and Hiên “Early Childhood Education Is Not to Create a Genius, but to Help Children Develop.”	p. 160
Early Childhood Education Starts From a Very Young Age	p. 160
Rooting a Reading Habit for Children’s Development	p. 164
Playing Sports as Essential for Children as Eating and Drinking	p. 167

Significant Meanings in Children’s Free Play	p. 170
Bumping Stories Between Broader Social, Cultural, and Institutional	
Narratives and Familial Narratives	p. 173
Attending to the Holistic Development of the Child Rather Than Solely	
Focusing on Academics	p. 173
The Interconnectedness of Sports, Body, and Mind	p. 176
Sustaining the Relational Ontology in the Everyday Practices of Children and	
Family	p. 178
Music as a Friend	p. 179
Making Kin With Nature	p. 180
Cultivating the Spiritual Life of Children in Relation to Ancestral	
Practices	p. 182
World Travelling With and in Intergenerational Knowledge	p. 186
For Now—Rethinking Education for Children’s Flourishing	p. 188

## **Chapter Seven: Resonant Threads of Living Alongside Vietnamese Children and**

<b>Mothers Composing Lives in Transition to Canada</b>	p. 190
Thread One: Home Walks Between Lands	p. 191
Home Walks as a Bridging Space Between School and Home	p. 192
Home Walks Between the Home Country and the New Country	p. 194
Home Walks in Living in and With Liminality	p. 196
Thread Two: Home Walks Between Languages	p. 198
Languages in Connection With Places	p. 199

Languages in Connection With Playing	p. 200
Languages in Connection With Social and Community Contexts	p. 201
Thread Three: Home Walks With Temporality	p. 204
Living the Present While Remembering the Past and Imagining the Future	p. 204
Intergenerational Narrative Reverberations	p. 207
Thread Four: Home Walks Within, Between, and Across Families	p. 210
Multiple Cultural and Playful Co-Composers in Familial Curriculum	
Making	p. 211
Living Homeland Culture as Identity Making in the New Land	p. 214
Learning From These Resonant Threads	p. 217

## **Chapter Eight: “So What?” and “Who Cares?”: Returning Holistically to Personal,**

<b>Practical, and Social/Theoretical Justifications</b>	p. 219
A Looking Back	p. 219
Living in Culturally Ethically Relational Ways	p. 223
Living in Culturally Ethically Relational Ways With Co-Researchers	p. 223
The Significance of Grandmothers	p. 224
Learning From How Co-Researchers Named Me	p. 225
Awakening to How Friendship May Be Understood Differently	
Across Cultures	p. 227
Living Relationships Shaped by the Desires of Co-Researchers	p. 228
Newcomer Children and Mothers	p. 230
Home Walking	p. 231

Learning to Value the Meanings of ‘Home Walk’: For Myself As a Vietnamese Mother and for Other Newcomer Parents	p. 231
Learning of Home Walking Alongside Newcomer Children and Mothers: For Teachers and Educators	p. 232
Learning of Home Walking with Newcomer Children and Mothers: For Social Service and Community Workers	p. 233
Familial Curriculum Making	p. 235
Valuing the Importance of Newcomer Children and Mothers’ Familial Curriculum Making	p. 235
Sustaining the Cultural Wealth of Newcomer Families	p. 237
Flourishing	p. 238
Flourishing for Newcomer Children, Mothers, and Families	p. 238
Flourishing for Multispecies	p. 244
Closing (for Now) and My Forward Looking	p. 246
<b>References</b>	p. 248
<b>Appendices</b>	p. 259

## List of Figures

Figure 1.1. My Grandmother’s Kitchen	p. 17
Figure 1.2. Photo Collage of Making Bánh Chung	p. 28
Figure 1.3. Favourite Books in Our Family Story Time	p. 30
Figure 1.4. Canvas Paintings by My Children and Me	p. 31
Figure 4.1. Paper Carnations Co-Made by Lisa and Me	p. 81
Figure 4.2. Lisa’s “Who Am I” Artwork and Mine	p. 89
Figure 4.3. Lisa’s Letter	p. 92
Figure 4.4. Lisa Playing the Happy Birthday Song at Her Piano	p. 110
Figure 5.1. Ryan Carrying His School Supplies for Fall 2020	p. 112
Figure 5.2. The Halloween Corner Co-Made by Ryan, Brian, and Me	p. 127
Figure 5.3. Holding Willy and Playing Connect Four With Ryan and Brian	p. 128
Figure 5.4. Ryan’s Happiness After School	p. 149
Figure 6.1. Hiên’s Crocheted Witch for Her Children’s Halloween	p.152
Figure 6.2. Alex Going to Kindergarten With His Sister Beside Him	p. 157
Figure 6.3. Alex and Alana in a Snow Walk on the Mountains	p. 173
Figure 6.4. Making Bánh Chung for Tết in Hiên’s Family	p. 186



## Chapter One: Narrative Beginnings

### Experience Compels My Research

*First days in Canada*

*Summertime*

*So excited*

*To see the new school*

*Joey and Sherry<sup>1</sup> were so surprised*

*To see no school gate*

*No fence*

*“Incredible!”*

*Happily, they named it*

*“Trường học không biên giới”*

*(“The school of no border”)*

*Time flies*

*Learning Celebration Night comes*

*Mr. S,<sup>2</sup> the teacher*

*In Sherry’s class of Grade One*

*Felt not content*

*With Sherry’s reading level*

*He suggested*

*She should be*

---

<sup>1</sup> These are pseudonyms of my children.

<sup>2</sup> This is the pseudonym of my younger child’s elementary teacher at her first school in Canada.

*Level “E” instead of “C”*

*Sherry cried*

*I felt hurt*

*Mr. S also said*

*“Should not use mother tongue*

*Often in home places*

*And that mother tongue should be balanced*

*With using English”*

*I wondered*

*How he opposed our language*

*And how*

*This helped improve Sherry’s level*

*Of her reading*

*And why*

*School disengaged mother tongue*

*And did not support my child*

*To sustain her first language*

*Her Vietnamese culture*

*And identity*

*In her life-making.*

(poetic text, written winter 2016)

The poetic fragment above shows something of my daughter, Sherry’s, and my experiences as we were in the first year of composing our lives in Canada. Tensions, tears, loneliness, and silence shaped Sherry’s experiences of transition in a Canadian school alongside teachers and

peers. Although this experience happened in March during an event called Learning Celebration, how Sherry's teacher addressed her reading level was not experienced by Sherry, or me, as a *celebration*. Mr. S's question about speaking more Vietnamese than English at home left us feeling alone and ashamed.

I remember that in these moments I was shocked by his questions and disrespect for our mother tongue. He then added that Sherry's reading level was the lowest among the children in the class. In order to illustrate this, Mr. S showed us a sheet of reading levels expected for children in the first grade. He told us that most of the children were at an E or F reading level; some children were reading at level K. He compared Sherry to these children as he again highlighted that she was reading at level C, which he said was the lowest level for a child in Grade One.

Feeling so much tension, I almost forgot Sherry was standing next to me in the classroom until I heard her crying. She was so upset; she cried a lot. I could do nothing at that moment except try to comfort her by telling her that everything would be fine. After we got home, Sherry kept silent until bedtime when she hugged me tightly and sobbed, "Mom, I am sorry I didn't do well in my class. I am sorry I got the lowest level in my classroom. Please do not hate me, Mommy!" I almost cried but tried to keep calm as I told her I felt proud of her and loved her so much. In the days and weeks following this experience with Mr. S, his question and conclusion about Sherry's reading level gradually led me to many wonders about her using her mother tongue at home and its impact on her growth as a reader of English. Was it wrong of me, as her mother, to want Sherry to retain her mother tongue? Did Mr. S see me as a "bad" mother?

Over time, I continued to experience wonders about Mr. S and the school. I wondered, for example, about what shaped them to tell us to disengage from and disrespect our culture because

we spoke our mother language<sup>3</sup> in our home places. As this wonder turned my attention inward, I asked myself, “Was Mr. S’s telling me not to use my mother tongue at home an intentional decision? If so, why?” I wondered if Mr. S’s understanding was that preserving and sustaining mother tongue languages and home country cultures could lead to negative impacts on children’s transition to Canada as they learn English as a new language.

From Sherry’s crying story of Learning Celebration Night, I was reminded of my first daughter, Joey’s, experience of trying hard to communicate with her teacher in the English language when she first entered school in Canada:

*First month*

*Canadian school*

*Daughter Joey*

*Cried*

*Tried a lot*

*Could not understand the teacher*

*Felt bad*

*Did not know what to do*

*Left page blank*

*Remembered moments in Vietnam*

*Good marks*

*Compliments*

*From Grade One teacher*

---

<sup>3</sup> Our mother language is Vietnamese, which is the official language in Vietnam and is spoken by most of the population. The Vietnamese language is spoken by King people, the largest ethnicity in Vietnam, followed by 53 smaller ethnicities speaking many different ethnic languages.

*Upset and silent*

*Teacher's English language*

*Joey's Vietnamese language*

*How to communicate?*

(poetic text, written winter 2016)

Much earlier in my journal, I had written the above poetic fragment of how hard Joey was trying to communicate with her teacher in her early months of school in Canada. As I struggled with Sherry's situation, I remembered that as we walked home each day after school, Joey shared with me the tensions she was experiencing at school. During her first days, weeks, and months as she experienced life in this Canadian school and classroom, Joey cried after coming home when I asked her more about her school days.

In our Vietnamese culture, mothers always ask their children about their school days when seeing them after school, so I asked my daughters as my mother used to ask me in my childhood. Joey always said she tried her best but could not understand what the teacher told her to do. Thus, she felt inadequate for not being able to follow her teacher's instructions. While a friend in the same group of desks had already finished his language art exercise, Joey did not know what to do; she left her page blank. As she told me about this experience as we walked home from school, Joey said that when this happened, she remembered moments when she was in Vietnam and received good marks and compliments from her Grade One teacher. She said she felt lost and extremely despondent. However, she remained silent all the time in the classroom as she could not understand her teacher's English language, nor could the teacher or anyone else in the classroom understand her Vietnamese language.

In the midst of each of these experiences, I did not know what else to do except to comfort and encourage Joey and Sherry to try their best and to tell them that things would be fine.

However, as I lived in the midst of these moments, I almost burst into tears watching and listening to my daughters' distressing stories. As their mother, I tried to push my tears deeply into my heart in order to be able to smile at them and make them feel better. I now wonder about my Mom. I wonder how she experienced my school days' stories. I wonder if she, too, sometimes felt like crying as she listened to my stories.

As I continue to think with each of these experiences, I remember moments from when Joey was in Grade One at a small elementary school in Saigon, Vietnam. For the first months at school, she suddenly became quiet and introverted, inactive and less cheerful than she had been before. Though I tried many times to ask about anything not going well in her class, she just shook her head signifying "No" but said nothing to me. One day I was sitting behind her at the corner of an ice cream shop, and with a hug for her, I whispered, "Please let Mom know what happened in class! Mommy just wants to know. I promise not to punish you in any way, okay?"

After several deep breaths, Joey began to speak hesitantly: "My teacher hit me three times this week. I am so sorry, Mom," she said. "But," she continued after her tears dropped, "it is not my fault at all. I am so sorry, Mom." It was then I learned that the first time the teacher used the ruler to hit Joey's hands was because she got angry about the classroom noise after she left the room. The second time, the teacher punished Joey with a ruler on the butt because of something she felt was unacceptable. I further learned that after the teacher went out for a meeting, the monitor asked all the children to put their faces down on the tables so they could not talk to each other. Joey did that at first but then she got so tired she raised her head higher. The monitor captured that moment and reported back to the teacher, and for this, Joey got hit. The third time, Joey received a math test result of 9/10 with a correction in red pen from the teacher. Shortly afterwards, when Joey used her pencil to overwrite her teacher's words as she believed she could

do, the teacher got angry and accused Joey of not respecting her. Consequently, Joey was punished again.

As I listened to Joey's stories that day, I realized that Joey had been hurt many times by the teacher. I wondered if this was the reason why my daughter could not sleep well and seemed to be having nightmares. Soon after, I went to see the teacher and asked her to stop punishing my child. She refused to listen to Joey's stories but promised she would not punish Joey again. In time, Joey shared with me that the teacher showed less punishment than before but yelled more at the children.

### **Beginning to Wonder About Composing Lives in Transition<sup>4</sup>**

As I tried to understand Sherry and Joey's unhappy school days, I began to deepen my thinking in relation to their experiences. According to Dewey (1938), experience "is a moving force" (p. 38) that shapes and is constantly shaping who we are. For Carr (1986), a narrative is a form of experience and action. Therefore, as I continued trying to understand these stories in Sherry and Joey's life making, I began to sense the importance of my endeavouring to understand their composing of their lives in transition.

I remember when I took my first steps toward understanding the term *transition*; I viewed it as "any event, or non-event, [which] results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles" (Goodman et al., 2006, p. 33). At the same time, I learnt from the Concise Oxford Dictionary that transition is "passage from one form, state, style, or place to another" (Soanes & Stevenson, 1976, p. 1232). I kept these two definitions as an anchor until I gradually grew to understand transition from a narrative perspective. I then recognized that I initially understood

---

<sup>4</sup> This title is inspired by Clandinin et al.'s (2013) book, *Composing Lives in Transition: A Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of Early School Leavers*.

transition as something with fixed positioning, for example, that one place is *replaced* by another place. As I continued to grow in my thinking as a narrative inquirer, I slowly awakened to understanding transition experientially and narratively. Thanks to Clandinin et al.'s (2013) work in *Composing Lives in Transition: A Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of Early School Leavers*, I became acquainted with five qualities that shape a narrative understanding of transition. These are: transitions shift over time and place; we compose lives as a process of change; there is a need to stay open to understanding transitions as liminal spaces; improvisation is an integral part of transition; and imagination and relationship are not separated from transitions.

Significantly, when I began to think narratively about transition as a thread in Sherry and Joey's lives in the making, I began to sense more of the complexities shaping their experiences as they transitioned to this new country, new language, new culture, and more. In this way, I grew to understand the stories my children live by<sup>5</sup> in "more diverse and complex ways, in the shaping and reshaping in embodied moments of transition" (Clandinin et al., 2013, p. 256).

As I pondered this aspect of the shaping and reshaping of the stories each of my daughters live by in moments of transition, as well as their diversity and complexity, I questioned myself: *How can I come to understand the meaning of my children's and other newcomer Vietnamese children's lived experiences in their transitions to Canada?* Thanks to Connelly and Clandinin (1994), I knew that "thinking of life as a story is a powerful way to imagine who we are, where we have been, and where we are going" (p. 149). Seeing the power of thinking of life as a story, I realized that one way I could understand more about Sherry and Joey's lives in transition was to inquire into the experiences of transition that shaped my childhood.

---

<sup>5</sup> The term *stories to live by* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) refers to a narrative conception of identity at the nexus of narrative understandings of knowledge and contexts.



## ***Inquiring Into Experiences of Transition in My Childhood***

*It was a very dark night thirty years ago. Despite the anger of my grandmother, my father kept his decision to relocate to Southern Vietnam. Of all the large family, no one said a word. My mother kept silent and prepared the luggage: two bags of clothes, one bag of food, some water bottles, and a full backpack for my father. In my hometown, people always resided inside the bamboo ranges of their village,<sup>6</sup> year after year, and rarely changed to a new living place. Traditionally, the eldest son must take responsibility of living with his parents, caring for them not only when they are alive but also after they pass away. It is the eldest son whose destiny is attached to his parents from life to death. But my father, the eldest son of my grandparents, opposed that tradition. My father said he would like to change his children's future, for better living conditions and education. Hoping for a better life in a new place, we said goodbye to my grandparents, uncles, aunts, and other relatives.*

*Very clear in my memory is that this night was very cold. Even the feeling of being far away from my birthplace and beloved people made it much colder. The bamboo branches were swinging, which was like singing a goodbye song. The whole village was quiet, except for the croak of the frogs on the rice fields nearby. Along with our heavy hearts, we walked slowly in the darkness of the countryside. Everyone kept silent, trying to push the sadness into the deepest places in their souls. My father wore his backpack and held my second younger brother's hand. As a boy of two years old, he could hardly understand what was happening and sometimes cried on the road. My mother took the other bags, so heavy but she did not say a word. I was the eldest child of my parents and seven years old at that*

---

<sup>6</sup> In Vietnam, almost all of the villages are surrounded by bamboo ranges, which is a typical feature of our country.

*time. My duty was to hold my first younger brother's hand and step behind my parents.*

*Five people walked together silently for about four kilometres until we got to the national*

*road. There, we waited until early morning when we got on the first coach of the day.*

*From the moment I stepped on, I knew that coach would take me to a new land. The coach*

*passed the wheels forward, and gradually ran faster, leaving the village far behind my*

*eyes, until it looked like a tiny dot.* (memory reconstruction, written winter 2016)

My memory of this first experience of transition that I remember in my life happened together with my parents when we separated from *Văn Lối*,<sup>7</sup> our village, which is situated in what many people of Vietnamese ancestry see as a poor central province of Vietnam. This transition changed my whole family's life and my life, too; it now reverberates in my making of my life as a mother alongside my daughters as we presently compose our lives in Canada. As I now think across time and place, I find some similarities between this journey and my overseas journey to Canada, in relation with the reasons and purposes of these transitions, years and generations apart.

My parents strongly decided to leave *Văn Lối* village as they hoped for better living conditions for their children, whereas I tried my best to bring my girls out of Vietnam to Canada also hoping for better lives. Though my parents longed to find the affordable and better *com nuôi miệng*<sup>8</sup> (my father's Vietnamese words, which mean *foods for mouth* in English) and I aimed to find better *foods for thought* or *foods for knowledge* for Joey and Sherry, across time and place,

---

<sup>7</sup> This is the Vietnamese name of my village, which means a poor land but giving birth to many talented people in academics. According to an Elder, the village has been named *Văn Lối* for more than four hundred years.

<sup>8</sup> In my childhood, my father always used these words during his hard time of working and earning to help our family survive in the new land.

these intergenerational transitions were each shaped by dreams that the next generations in our family would experience health, hope, opportunity, and prosperity in their life making.

As I began to attend to the intergenerational transitions shaping Joey's, Sherry's, my own, and my parents' lives, I realized that my partner's parents, who are my daughters' paternal grandparents, also experienced transition in their lives a long time ago. It was in May 1954 when the French military was defeated and the French colonization in Northern Vietnam ended. In July 1954, a ceasefire agreement was issued by the Geneva Accords dividing Vietnam into two provisional states at the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel of latitude. Within this context, my partner's parents decided to leave their hometown in the North and head to the South, where they believed they might see the horizon of democracy and freedom, including religious freedom since they were Catholic.

As these stories turned me back to thoughts of Vietnam, I could see three main reasons for major transitions such as these in the lives of children, youth, and families in Vietnam. These include transitions in relation to politics, transitions in relation to hunger, and transitions in relation to education. The first transition wave happened in 1954 when millions of people from Northern Vietnam fled to Southern Vietnam due to political problems. At that time, my parents-in-law left all of their properties in their villages and joined big groups of people who were trying to escape to the South by the United Train; these people wanted to relocate to prosperous areas such as Saigon, Dong Nai, and Mekong Delta provinces.

The second biggest transition wave came during a boom between 1976 and 1998 when thousands of families stepped their feet out of the poor villages to escape hunger caused by the loss of crops. These people wanted to relocate at *Vùng Kinh Tế Mới*,<sup>9</sup> which means "New Economics Zones" (Banister, 1992). This was the life transition I was part of as a young girl.

---

<sup>9</sup> This was a national campaign aiming to bring people from the north to the south of Vietnam for developing the economy of certain areas in the prairie and the high land.

Together with other young couples, my parents decided to say goodbye to my grandparents and got on a coach with hopes to make better lives in a better place with affordable food where their daily needs were met. My parents and other people who left villages at this time chose destinations in the high land areas where there was rich land for growing vegetables, flowers, fruits, and coffee.

The third biggest and most recent transition time in Vietnam was shaped by education. The gloomy panorama of the education system with bureaucracy in education management, heavy theoretical curriculum, and lack of democracy and agency for teachers, children, and youth has urged more and more parents like me to think of overseas study for their children. People involved in this kind of transition are seeking a better education for their children's futures. As I remembered these desires strongly shaping my life making as I applied for and was accepted into the doctoral program at the University of Alberta, I recalled that a thread in my transition from my village was that I also experienced transition into a new school.

### ***Early Childhood With Very Few Friends***

*After stepping off the coach from the north, the seven-year-old girl entered new experiences with her parents and younger brothers in a small town in the south. Situated in the high land, this town was so cold for those from the other provinces. It was also much colder because the local people appeared to be unfriendly and kept distance with newcomers like the girl's family. As a sensitive young girl, she could feel the cold eyes of other boys and girls in her class of Grade Two.*

*It was recess time on the first day in the fall semester. The sky was blue with clouds flying lazily. Almost all pupils spilled out of class like the buzzing bees after the bell rang. Seeing a group of second graders playing rope skipping cheerfully under a jackfruit tree,*

*the young girl asked to join them. "Could I play with you a little bit, please?" she asked politely. Everyone suddenly kept quiet, stopped the game and stared at her little body. "Is it you who recently came from the north?" a big girl asked. "You are a Northerner, right? Hey! We don't like playing with those speaking in Northern voice." The little girl could not open her mouth as the others kept asking her continuously. Every word intended to come out was stuck inside when the classmates decided to go away from her. Then, they continued the game at a corner near the school canteen. She was left standing alone under the jackfruit, with her head looking down sadly at the yellow leaves falling down after a wind. At the same time, a new reckless thought arose in her mind.*

*Time went so quickly and it was the second month of the semester. She came to a group of second graders, who were chatting noisily about their birthdays. Being born in a poor village, the girl had never heard about the birth anniversary before, so it must be a very attractive topic. Moving slowly to the group, she opened her mouth with the southern voice: "Hi guys! Is it right that your parents buy beautiful clothes for your birthday?" The girls gave no answer but started laughing loudly. "Wow, we could recognize you. You could talk with a southern voice now. Amazing! But you are always the Northerner; the Northerners are still Northerners! We- don't - want - to - play - with - you," a blonde, curly-haired girl said word by word.*

*Since then, the young girl went to school like a small snail ensconced inside her tiny house. Just talking with very few boys at the same table, she concentrated more on learning, with an ambition to be the best student in the class. Apart from two male classmates, her friends were just the characters in her favourite comics and novels. The boy Tom in The Adventures of Tom Sawyer (Twain, 1876), Oliver Twist in the novel of the same name*

*(Dickens, 1837), and Remy in Sans Famille (Malot, 1878) were her close friends in those early lonely years of childhood.* (memory reconstruction, written winter 2016)

I remember that when I was a small child in my village, I heard some villagers say that although we all have good dreams, what truly happens in life is not always beautiful like our dreams. In fact, my experience in the new land of my parents' destination was at first very tough for me as a seven-year-old girl. As I remembered and wrote this story of my being in transition to a new school in the south, I remembered how my childhood was filled with very few friends due to the difference in Vietnamese language accents and regional discrimination.

At that time, the Southerners called the Northerners a scornful name, *Bắc Kỳ*.<sup>10</sup> By this name, people in South Vietnam treated the newcomers from the north as a lower class: they were distinguished as poorer, rustic, and dependent. I will never forget when growing up, I was in a Grade Five class in which my mother worked some days as a substitute teacher. My peers repeated my mother's northern accent at recess and laughed behind me. At first, I cried, but later, together with the unforgettable memory of not being able to play with friends under the jackfruit tree, I committed myself to become the best student in the class.

Thinking like that, though, I was very vulnerable. As I remember this experience now many years later, I remember the pain I felt at that time. Even more recently, when I retold this story, I could not write in the first person. Sometime later I read hooks (1997), who wrote that writing in the third person eased her pain and helped to mediate past, present, and future.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> *Bắc Kỳ* is a Vietnamese word, which is used to scornfully mention those people coming from the North.

<sup>11</sup> As in hooks' memoir *Bone Black*, as I think with these painful experiences:

I move back and forth between first person narration and third person. I conceptualize the third person voice as that part of myself that is an observer that bears witness. At times I also use the third person as an attempt to distance myself from the pain. The inclusion of the third person narrator who has both critical insight and an almost psychoanalytic power that enables critical reflection on events described is an act of mediation. When we rewrite the past, looking back with our current understanding, a mediation is always taking place. I give that mediation a voice rather than mask this aspect of any retrospective reflection on

In my Vietnamese culture, it is understood that when pain is shared it becomes less for the person suffering. My experience of retelling my story in a third-person voice also turned me back to my earlier reading of Chamoiseau's (1997) *School Days*, as he too shared stories of his memories of longing for school days and then surviving at school by creating a third person character—a young boy of Creole ancestry.<sup>12</sup> From hooks and Chamoiseau, I learned that when I am sharing stories, using a third-person voice can be a way to distance myself from the pain of these experiences.

As I again shifted forward from my childhood experiences to thinking again with Joey's experiences of her unhappy first months in a Canadian school and of Sherry's tearful Learning Celebration Night experience, I wondered if the experiences of being in transition are shifted over time and place. *Are experiences of transition always shaped by unexpected situations and feelings of not having enough knowledge or the right knowledge, or ways of being or doing? Being reminded of my mother, I wondered how she experienced the stories I lived and told of my experiences as I was in transition to the new school in Southern Vietnam more than thirty years ago.*

### **Beginning to Wonder About Intergenerational Narrative Reverberation<sup>13</sup>**

As I thought across these experiences in my young daughters' lives, my life, and the lives of my parents and my in-laws, I resonated with Young's (2005a) conceptualization of "intergenerational narrative reverberations" (p. 57). By thinking narratively with her experiences

---

our lives. (p. xxii)

<sup>12</sup> To tell his stories, Chamoiseau used "the little boy" or "he." The little boy experienced so much pain from his French language teacher, who always punished him because he spoke several words in his Creole language in the midst of French lessons.

<sup>13</sup> Young (2005a), in her narrative inquiry into the relationships between *Anishinaabe* language, culture, and identity, highlighted "intergenerational narrative reverberations" in relation to first- and subsequent-generation survivors of Canadian residential schools.

as a residential school survivor, and by showing how intergenerational narrative reverberations were shaped in the lived and told stories that she and many parents, grandparents, and great grandparents of Indigenous ancestry live and tell, Young's attention to the loss of language, traditional and cultural knowledge, and spiritual and relational practices, particularly in family relationships, was deeply meaningful to me.

When I attended to Young's (2005a) understandings alongside the stories I shared earlier of some of the experiences shaping Sherry and Joey's lives in transition to a Canadian school, I wondered about potential intergenerational narrative reverberations from my experiences after my family and I left *Văn Lôi* village. Earlier, I wrote about the transition of my parents to the fertile land in Southern Vietnam and my children's and my transition to Canada. Significantly, I sense intergenerational narrative reverberations are still being felt between my decision to leave Vietnam and my parents' determination to leave Northern Vietnam—reverberations of hope for better lives spread among generations of my family that continue to shape successive generations.

Every time I think with and across the reverberations of different generations of my great family, I recall Connelly and Clandinin's (1999) concept of "stories to live *by*," which asserts that understanding professional practice in narrative terms cannot be separated from the development of identity. Because this conceptualization grew to also show children and families as living and composing stories to live by (Clandinin, 2013), I see the meaning and power of stories as a way to understand identity as in the making. Okri (1997) writes:

In a fractured age, when cynicism is god, here is a possible heresy: we live by stories, we also live in them. One way or another we are living the stories planted in us early or along



the way, or we are also living the stories we planted—knowingly or unknowingly—in ourselves. (p. 46)

On one side, given the powerful meaning of stories to live by, I wonder what personal, familial, cultural, social, linguistic, and institutional stories children and mothers of Vietnamese ancestry might bump against (Clandinin et al., 2006) as they compose their lives in transition. On another side, I recognize that I have been living among many intergenerational narrative reverberations that have been shaped by the intergenerational stories of my great family for a long time—and that I am also now shaping these alongside my young daughters. As I am now telling and retelling these stories, I am again reliving our family traditions and culture, especially those of the female members of multiple generations in my family.

### ***The Kitchen: Grandmother, Mother, and Daughter***

#### **Figure 1.1**

*My Grandmother's Kitchen*<sup>14</sup>



*Note.* Photo taken in 2014.

*My Mom was young*

---

<sup>14</sup> This kitchen has been in our great family for almost 200 years and across six generations. The body of the kitchen is made of clay and the roof is made of palm leaves. Every six or eight years we replace the old palm leaves with new ones. Last year my Uncle rebuilt its body with bricks but still used the palm leaves for the roof. Interestingly, this kind of kitchen is a typical feature of our village as it helps people adapt well with severe weather; they feel cool in summer and warm in winter.

*My Grandma taught her cooking  
Those traditional Vietnamese foods  
The square Bánh Chung  
And lotus seed sweet soup  
Our little kitchen  
Brings all flavours of the countryside.  
I turned six  
My Mom taught me cooking  
In the same kitchen  
Same square Bánh Chung  
The lotus seeds  
And other cultural dishes  
All raised me up.  
My daughter is seven  
I teach her cooking  
Same square Bánh Chung  
Same lotus seeds  
In our new kitchen  
In a new country.  
Those traditional foods  
Since my Mom and Grandma  
Are now with us  
In our conversations*

*In our stories*

*Traditions*

*And wisdoms*

*Of family.*

(poetic fragment, written winter 2016)

In the three-and-a-half years since I came to Canada, on Joey's birthday, she has asked me the same question: "Mẹ ơi, Bà Ngoại đã dạy cho Mẹ nấu món gì khi Mẹ bằng tuổi của con?"<sup>15</sup> This question has opened unlimited conversations in both English and Vietnamese, about the very important kitchen in our big family, where women from many generations learn to cook and sustain the family traditions. Every time I hear Joey's question, I experience many thoughts and feelings. The very first feeling was about how beautiful Joey's question was with her locating three generations of our family in only one sentence. Her wonder about cooking traditions was meaningful to me but I was also surprised to see her way of putting my Mom, her, and me together in the context of teaching cooking. In this way, Joey inspired me to think back to the past stories around the kitchen of what my Mom taught me. I feel thankful for how Joey's question opened spaces for me to be reminded of the traditional cooking recipes in my family, which have now become valuable resources from which I can teach Joey and Sherry.

This question on Joey's birthday came up in the kitchen of our new house in Canada, which made me recall the special values of our Vietnamese culture. Kitchens are not simply a space for cooking; they are also spaces for sharing and shaping knowledge between mothers and daughters and for sharing cultural values of peoples from generation to generation. In this midst, I have a growing sense that as generations of our family have transitioned to a new land or a new country, these values are some of the most precious aspects we carry. In this story with Joey,

---

<sup>15</sup> The meaning of this question in English is kin with: "Mommy, what did my maternal grandmother teach you in cooking when you were the same age as me?"

Joey is a teacher to me about the importance of recognizing and understanding the reverberations of our intergenerational values and practices.

Kitchen stories like Joey's and mine have been told and retold across hundreds of generations throughout Vietnam, where the history of building and protecting the country has been ongoing for more than four thousand years. I sense that to all Vietnamese people, the kitchen is an important and sacred place in Vietnamese culture. Traditionally, the images of the kitchen always *follow* Vietnamese women wherever they travel in the world. With Vietnamese women like me and like Nguyen An Tinh in *Ru* (Thúy, 2012), and Thúy's aunties in *Le Secret des Vietnamiennes* (Thúy, 2017), the kitchen, as well as the traditional recipes, are truly a treasure, a way to not only preserve our culture of cuisine but also sustain our love for family and the pride of our people.

As I lingered with images and memories of our kitchen in the past and in the present alongside my wonders of the connections between being in transition, intergenerational narrative reverberations, and the stories my daughter's and I live by, with, and in (Okri, 1997; Clandinin, 2013) as we make our lives, I wondered about the intergenerational knowledge and education shaping my great family for a long time. For example, I wondered how these stories we live by, with, and in include our traditional and cultural knowledge as well as the spiritual and relational practices that we have long inherited from our ancestors. I also wondered if in our lives many everyday practices are lived and relived, told and retold in the intergenerational stories that live within, between, and across our family relationships. As I am coming to see the kitchen as not only a space at a certain time, I sense these everyday practices also shape Sherry and Joey's experiences as they are in transition to Canada; in this way, the kitchen "travels" back and forth

in me and other generations of our great family and may also similarly travel within other Vietnamese families in the world, wherever they are composing their lives.

As I thought with these images, memories, and wonders of the kitchen and its influence in my family among and across different generations, my attention turned toward the cultural stories Vietnamese people may live by, including that men's duty is to work and earn for the family's living while women's duty is to take care of the home and educate the children. For example, as my husband and I live in, by, and with stories, he and I agree that taking care of Sherry and Joey, and educating them, are mostly my responsibilities. Certainly, we share our roles in supporting our children, but I am the main person in charge and thus, the children get more influences from me as their mother.

Thinking with all of this, I found myself travelling back to Sherry's experiences at the Learning Celebration Night. I realized that my earlier wonder about whether I was wrong to encourage the girls to speak Vietnamese as much as possible was still with me. This wonder connected me with thinking again with Mr. S's words when he suggested using more English at home as a way to develop Sherry's reading level. My wonders grew as I deeply questioned myself while also remembering those first unhappy school days of Joey: *Was it the right decision to continue to speak our Vietnamese language at home? Have I been a responsible mother, especially as my daughter's Grade One reading level could not catch up with her peers?*

As I lingered with these questions, including whether I had been a good mother as I tried to support my children in their transition to Canada, I wondered if more intergenerational stories could be told in the families so that mothers like me could learn from their previous generations' experiences. For example, I realized that I did not know my mother's stories of how she tried to support my younger brothers and me as we transitioned to Southern Vietnam and into the

schools there. I now wonder about the intergenerational stories lived and told by Vietnamese newcomer families. *What might their stories help me to learn about the families' everyday practices? How might these everyday practices shape, and become reshaped by, the curriculum the families make as the children compose their lives in their families and communities and in schools?*

### **Beginning to Wonder About Familial Curriculum Making<sup>16</sup>**

*A winter night*

*My children asked me in English:*

*“What’s the meaning of your name?”*

*In Vietnamese, I replied:*

*“Nó là hi vọng xanh, con ạ.”*

*(It’s a blue hope, my dears.)*

*Thanking me, they asked:*

*“Why was so, Mommy?”*

*My mind travelled back*

*Five, ten years ago.*

*My Grandpa was old*

*And smart in his 90s.*

*I visited him*

*In our old home.*

*Hugging me, he said:*

*“Never forget, my dear*

---

<sup>16</sup> This title is inspired by Huber et al.'s (2011) conceptualization of familial curriculum making.

*Your name is a blue hope—  
Our family tradition  
Always live with hope and pride.  
Never give up, my dear  
But step far and farthest  
To make me proud  
On earth and in heaven.”  
Now, as I look at the altar,  
I miss him so much.  
His Vietnamese words are here  
To answer the children’s questions in English.  
What if one day  
Our traditions and language  
Go far away  
And are forgotten?  
What will happen in the life-making  
Of my children  
And the children of my children?* (poetic fragment, written winter 2018)

The poetic fragment above shows something of the practice of family story nights between me and Joey and Sherry as we have been in transition to Edmonton and Canada. We usually read out loud a bedtime story every weekday and live out family story night on the nights of the weekends. During family story nights, we read a book together—mostly in Vietnamese and sometimes in English—and then continue with long conversations about our great family: the

current members, the ancestors, the traditions, fun stories about happenings in our family, and more.

The family storynight that became somewhat visible in the above poetic fragment is special to me because when I shared with my daughters the names of their grandparents and great grandparents they asked me about the meaning of my name. More meaningfully, they raised the question in English while my story was in Vietnamese. Later, I explained my name's meaning with a small story in Vietnamese. Within that conversation, I used my mother tongue while my children used English, the language they have been learning since we came to Canada in summer 2015. I have been thinking so much about this experience as it has been repeated many times since that earlier family story night.

Over time, this experience supported me to explore how I, as a mother, have been trying to sustain the Vietnamese language for my children and with my children. Similarly, I am also attentive to knowing that my children are at a distance in relation to understanding the culture and traditions of our homeland and our great family. Acknowledging these experiences in our being in transition to Canada encourages me to nurture my children's love and understanding for our mother tongue and our familial and cultural traditions. As a newcomer Vietnamese mother living alongside my children in Canada, I do not want my children's making of their lives to no longer carry these treasures of my family and Vietnamese people. As I inquire into this experience and the everyday family practices it shows, I trace our ancestor's heritage in my homeland "where a country is no longer a place but a lullaby" (Thúy, 2012, p. 140).

Because I see the significance of sustaining our language, traditions, and culture, I have carried two wonders since the beginnings of our transitioning to Canada. In part, I have wondered about how to sustain and extend our everyday familial practices inclusive of our



homeland language, traditions, and culture. I have also wondered about my place as a newcomer Vietnamese mother in this process of sustaining these ways of knowing, being, and doing in Joey, Sherry's, and my ongoing lives in Canada. Even though these wonders shaped my experiences during the first year of our life making in this new country, I could not figure out how to inquire into them.

In part, I struggled because of a lack of available resources for Vietnamese newcomers like me to sustain our language, traditions, and culture. As well, as a mother, I had not experienced these tensions when we lived in Vietnam. I remember saving almost all of my familial time with my first daughter for her homework at our small house in Saigon. For those days, we had tried our best to fulfill her schools' requirements of weekly tests, monthly tests, mid-term tests, end-of-term tests, and so many further exercises—each of which required beautiful hand-writing practice.<sup>17</sup> Although Joey was just in Grade One, too much homework kept us far from thinking about our language and our everyday familial, cultural, and traditional practices. More obviously, when we still lived in our home country, the sense of the meaning of place was not coming as strong as in those moments after we moved to Canada. Here, I am reminded of Basso's (1996) understanding of certain places as being imbued with a power to teach individuals in the key ways of wisdom. Reading Basso has given me more thoughts on my puzzles around our familial curriculum in Canada and the shaping influence of our everyday practices in the lives we are each making.

It was not until I read *Places of Curriculum Making: Children's Lives in Motion* (2011), in which Huber et al. reconceptualized curriculum making<sup>18</sup> that I began to know familial

---

<sup>17</sup> This is a compulsory task that elementary students in Vietnam have to practice everyday to acquire beautiful writing in their notebooks.

<sup>18</sup> Huber et al. (2011) reconceptualized children's curriculum-making as occurring within family and community curriculum-making worlds as well as within school curriculum-making worlds. I attend more closely to this

curriculum making as the ways that parents, families, community members, and children live with one another in their homes and communities. This understanding supported me to begin to awaken to seeing that what I have been doing with my children at home is curriculum making.<sup>19</sup> Later, as I began to name this process *familial curriculum making*, I deeply sensed its importance in our daily life making. Thanks to Huber et al. (2011), I have shaped my knowledge of familial curriculum making around these understandings: “That it is intergenerational; that many curriculum makers come alongside; and that it is a kind of responsive curriculum making that begins with the child’s, [...], knowing, with [...] ongoing negotiation of [...] stories to live by” (p. 40).

Gradually becoming imbued with these features of familial curriculum making, I have carefully begun to shape our family story nights as a curriculum that starts from and with my children; that I, as a mother, and my children are co-composers in and of this weekend as well as other daily practices; and that our familial curriculum making stretches backward in time and across place to earlier generations of our great family. As my children love traditional Vietnamese foods, books, and arts, I decided that these three aspects could be the fertilized land for growing their knowledge of our mother tongue, traditions, and culture.

As I shared before, my daughters are interested in cooking even though they are still in the early grades of elementary school. I now understand that the love of cooking, especially cooking our traditional Vietnamese foods, is an important intergenerational narrative reverberation in our great family and in our past and present familial curriculum making. In our hundreds-year-old

---

reconceptualization in the upcoming section “Becoming Drawn Toward Familial Curriculum Making” in Chapter Two.

<sup>19</sup> I will further talk about “curriculum making” in the upcoming section “Becoming Drawn Toward Familial Curriculum Making” in Chapter Two.

kitchen located in my birthplace village, teaching and learning how to cook has been a curriculum passed from generations of our female ancestors. My great-grandmother taught my grandmother, my grandmother taught my mother, and my mother taught me the same lessons of making traditional dishes of Vietnamese peoples, in our village, and in our family. I now see these significant and unique teachings of different cuisine as spiritual treasures that I brought to our new kitchen in Canada, where I continue teaching my daughters how to cook. For example, for every Lunar New Year celebration, or *Tết* in Vietnamese, we always wrap and cook *Bánh Chung*, our traditional Vietnamese heritage food. Significantly, this cake symbolizes the earth and conveys the wish for a new year full of health and prosperity.

The preparation for this cake requires time, patience, and skilful techniques but the outcomes are wonderful. As usual, I soak the glutinous rice and mung bean in cool water, mix pork with some spices, and let them rest for a night. The following morning, we prepare the banana leaves and cords to get ready for wrapping the cakes. My children really enjoy the moments when we wrap the cakes together. Putting the banana leaves inside the wooden frames, we put rice for the first layer, steamed mung bean for the second layer, pork for the third layer but just in the centre area, then mung bean again for the fourth layer, and finally rice for the last layer. After that we wrap and tie the cake with the cord so it looks right in the square shape.

What makes the wrapping time more fun and meaningful is that I, as a mother, do not only teach my daughters the ways to make *Bánh Chung* but I also tell them stories about the meanings of the cakes and of family stories that have happened in our great family over time and place. Stories of our ancestors beginning life in the village four hundred years ago, stories of their great-great-grandparents building the church, stories of great-grandparents working hard to raise their grandparents during the periods of losing crops, stories of grandparents overcoming poverty

to fulfill the dreams of overseas study are among the important stories we tell and retell during every *Bánh Chung* preparation year to year. My children are always keen on these stories and raise many questions for knowing and understanding more.

Interestingly, my parents in Vietnam also make *Bánh Chung* at the same time, so we often have conversations via Skype or Facebook Messenger. Beautifully, three or four generations enjoy sharing stories, fun, and family love during the moments of wrapping *Bánh Chung* across the places of Vietnam and Canada, a distance of more than ten thousand miles. As I finish the eleven-hour boiling step, I choose the best cakes to put on the altar as a gift to our ancestors. Looking at *Bánh Chung* on the altar, I promise my ancestors to remain faithful to this tradition for my children, as it has become a sacred part of our familial curriculum making.

### **Figure 1.2**

*Photo Collage of Making Bánh Chung*



*Note.* Photograph taken during Tết 2018.

Another familial curriculum that Joey, Sherry, and I make together is reading books. As in the earlier shared poem of family storytime, reading books together is an everyday practice in our little family in Canada. For the weekdays, my daughters choose to read their favourite English books for bedtime after they practice their spelling words and do Mathletics online. For the weekends, we have more time as the children do not have school the following mornings.

I fill up our family time after dinner with many books in the Vietnamese language, some that I brought along as our journey to Canada began, some my mother had my friends carry from Vietnam when they visited us, some I borrow from the city library, and some are used books I buy online. Some family storytimes I spend time with my children reading Vietnamese poems like *Truyện Kiều* (The Tale of Kieu) (Nguyễn, 2015) written by Nguyễn Du, who is a poet of the world nominated by the UNESCO; sometimes we sing *Nghe Tinh Folk Songs*, an intangible cultural heritage of the world recognized by UNESCO, and read many more Vietnamese children books. We also read *The Lotus Seed* (Garland, 1993), an English children's book about Bà,<sup>20</sup> a special Vietnamese woman with a strong love for the lotus seed that she carried to America as a valuable gift of her Vietnamese history, the precious characteristics of Vietnamese women, and the strong spirit of Vietnamese traditions.

I mostly read but increasingly Joey reads with me. Sherry knows very few Vietnamese words so she remains quiet and listens to us. After a story or a part, many conversations unfold thanks to many questions from my children and little stories for further clarification or explanation from me. In *The Tale of Kieu*, for instance, it is not only about the stories of a Vietnamese girl who is beautiful both in appearance and in characteristics, but also about the ways people chose to sacrifice for country and family and the good ways sisters behave toward sisters. *Nghe Tinh Folk Songs* cover many meaningful lessons on love of nature, of the country, of the homeland, of the family, and of other people in our surroundings. I have found that as we have gradually read these books, more love of our mother tongue has grown for Sherry and Joey.

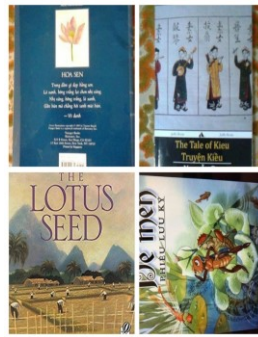
---

<sup>20</sup> Bà is a Vietnamese word that conveys the meaning of Grandmother.

Also, seeds have been planted for their growing understandings of our traditions and culture that shape our familial curriculum making.

### **Figure 1.3**

*Favourite Books in Our Family Story Time*



*Note.* Photograph taken winter 2018.

In addition to cooking and reading, together we also co-compose a familial curriculum around and through painting. Across the generations, I have seen the love of painting spread from my grandfather's cousin, who is an artist, to me, and now to my daughters. We all show deep interest in the combination of colors and shapes. With painting, my daughters can spend much of their free time making canvases of flowers, young children, family, natural landscapes, and more. On some rainy or snowy Sundays, we stay at home and paint the same topic together. As I now think with these images and memories of these experiences alongside Joey and Sherry, I find it interesting that we tried to simulate some famous masterpieces in the world and then share what we see different or similar among the three 'masterpieces' we created. As painting requires much time and effort, we sing or talk together during the painting time, which is then followed by many stories about arts, about the beautiful landscapes of my home village, and about some members in our great family. Again, painting has contributed to shaping my children's knowledge of our great family and homeland.

## Figure 1.4

### *Canvas Paintings by My Children and Me*



*Note.* These paintings were done in 2016 and 2017.

As I have been co-composing this familial curriculum with my children, I have seen the power of cooking, reading, and painting in supporting my hope to sustain our mother tongue, traditions, and culture for and with my children. Often, as I reflect on these moments, I wonder about other Vietnamese mothers who are also newcomers to Canada. I wonder how they preserve and sustain Vietnamese language, traditions, and culture for and with their children, each of whom are also composing lives in transition to Canada.

## Chapter Two: Theoretical Underpinnings of This Narrative Inquiry

### Lingering With My Wonders of Experience, Lives in Transition, Familial Curriculum Making, and Intergenerational Narrative Reverberation

#### *Dewey's Theory of Experience*

In Chapter One, I noted Dewey's (1938) sense of the continuous nature of experience. Clandinin and Connelly's (1994, 2000) early development of narrative inquiry situated Dewey's theory of experience as central, noting that for Dewey (1938), "education, experience, and life are inextricably intertwined" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. xxiii). They write that "when one asks what it means to study education, the answer—in its most general sense—is to study experience" (p. xxiv). Clandinin and Connelly (1994) further assert that "the study of education is the study of life... One learns about education from thinking about life, and one learns about life from thinking about education" (p. 415).

Central in Dewey's (year) theory of experience and education, according to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), is his understanding of situations, which he sees as shaped by two criteria—*interaction* and *continuity*. Interaction refers to the intersection of internal and existential conditions. Continuity accounts for the temporality of experience. For Dewey, situations do not just happen but are historical and temporally directional according to the intentionality of the person in the midst of the situation (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). Dewey (1938) stated that the conceptions of *situation* and *interaction* are inseparable from each other:

An experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment, whether the latter consists of persons with whom he is talking about some topic or event, the subject talked about being also a part of the situation; or the toys with which he is playing; the book he is reading (in



which his environing conditions at the time may be England or ancient Greece or an imaginary region); or the materials of an experiment he is performing. The environment, in other words, is whatever conditions interact with personal needs, desires, purposes, and capacities to create the experience which is had. Even when a person builds a castle in the air he is interacting with the objects which he constructs in fancy. (p. 26)

As I brought these understandings alongside the stories I earlier shared of my daughter's and my experiences, I understood, for example, that when Sherry and I participated in the Learning Celebration night, the situation of Mr. S's discontent with Sherry's reading level was shaped by the previous situations each of us had experienced up to that time in our lives. Consequently, Mr. S's encouragement for Sherry and me to communicate in English as we interacted with one another in our home, drew forward my earlier experiences of learning to value our Vietnamese language, and my hopes and desires that as Sherry and Joey were in transition to Canada and their school that their Vietnamese language, culture, and traditions would be sustained. As a result, Mr. S's directions shaped discontinuity for me, and for Sherry.

As Dewey (1938) drew on his theory of experience in relation with education, he highlighted that experience happens in the context of both control and freedom. Regarding control, Dewey argued that in order to facilitate learning, each child needs to be considered part of a community, voluntarily participating in common activities and not being forced by teachers. On this point, Dewey affirmed:

No one would deny that the ordinary good citizen is as a matter of fact subject to a great deal of social control and that a considerable part of this control is not felt to involve restriction of personal freedom. (pp. 32-33)

On freedom, Dewey (year) asserts that the freedom of intelligence—the act of freely thinking, observing and judging—is the only freedom of enduring importance. Allowing children freedom of intelligence gives them the power to frame purposes, judge wisely, and evaluate their desires. Children need time to make observations of their worlds. Cultivating this freedom of intelligence means allowing children ample opportunity to reflect on their natural impulses through nurturing their thinking, reflection, and inquiry. As I continued to think with Dewey’s theory of experience, I wondered about teachers’ and parents’ roles in creating environments of education that provide continuity and growth for a child. While Dewey believed continuity is an essential part of all experience, he considered growth as the overarching goal of any experience—in terms of the quality of experience. Meaningfully, as each experience unfolds, each subsequent situation offers us “a novel perspective to look back on the experiences leading up to, and out of, an experience, making growth provisional and emergent rather than fixed and found” (Downey & Clandinin, 2010, p. 384).

### ***Becoming Drawn Toward Lives in Transition***

Earlier in Chapter One, I noted that as I began to wonder about how my daughters and I were composing our lives in transition, I highlighted that I initially read literature in which the phenomenon of transition was understood through particular categories.<sup>21</sup> I also noted the

---

<sup>21</sup> For example, Ramey and Ramey (1994) describe the transition to school as a developmental and transactional process. It is developmental in that children’s concerns evolve and change as they move from preparing for and then entering school to becoming adjusted to the school environment; it is transactional in that schools, families, children, and communities all are involved in creating a supportive educational experience for children. Additionally, Schlossberg (1981) identified four resources of social supports for children in their transition, including intimate relationships, family units, networks of friends, and institutions/communities. Intimate relationships involve “trust, support, understanding and the sharing of confidences” and “are an important resource during stressful transitions” (p. 10). The family unit as a resource contributes to a family’s ability to adapt to a crisis or to ease the process of adaptation for its members. A network of friends is believed to build mutual support and comfort for children in their transition. Institutional supports include occupational organizations, religious institutions, political groups, social welfare or other community support groups. While these understandings of transition gave me some understanding of how the phenomenon of transition has been conceptualized and studied, as I grew in thinking

significance of my gradual coming to a narrative understanding of lives in transition through the work of Clandinin et al. (2013). Connecting their narrative understanding of lives in transition is the understanding that the stories people live and tell of transition are always in motion. As a way to not lose sight of the importance of the continuous nature of people's experiences, Clandinin et al. (2013) drew attention to exploring transitions *within* lives. They note that understanding transition in this way requires attentiveness to what is "normal":

Normal may not have been the ways they chose to compose their lives but there was always the presence of normal as they negotiated their lives. This sense of knowing the plotlines of the dominant narratives, that is, what they saw as normal, provided a way of composing a life with divided attention, one imagined as normal, and one which was responsive to the lives they were composing over time and in different places. (p. 212)

This thinking called me back to the early days after my daughters and I moved to Canada. We were excited to discover new things in this new country where we believed we would have a better life than in our homeland. I expected the school to be open to my daughters' tensions with a new language and new cultures. However, Joey's tears (because of her and her teacher's inability to communicate with one another) and Sherry's tears at the Learning Celebration night (due to the opposing stories I sensed Mr. S. and our family lived by in relation to our familial practices of speaking our mother tongue—Vietnamese—at home) gradually showed me that my imagined normal was in tension with our composing of our lives in a particular time and place in response to particular situations.

Another aspect highlighted by Clandinin et al. (2013) is people's situatedness within webs of relationships. For example, these webs could be family webs of relationships, webs of friends

---

narratively I wondered about the wholeness and ongoingness of the lives of the people who participated in these studies. I wondered too about the multiplicity of the co-researchers' experiences.

and communities, webs of school relationships, and relational webs that “were at play in the youth’s life composing” (p. 214). Connected with this understanding of the webs of relationships in peoples’ lives is a thread that attends to conflicting responsibilities in composing transitions, in which, for example, stories of “success” in the story of school could crumble as the youth “bumped up against family responsibilities that were more pressing” (p. 215).

The fourth thread in Clandinin et al.’s (2013) research focused on the composing of forward-looking stories amidst transitions in which the youth “told their stories in ways that allowed us to see them making their way as best they could in the contexts within which they found themselves” (p. 217). Finally, the fifth thread showed “transitions and identities intertwined as the youths’ embodied imaginings composed new ways to shape a life allowing their stories to live by to continue” (p. 218).

As I thought with these five threads of composing lives in transition and remembered my daughters’ disappointed stories as they experienced their early months at a Canadian school, I wondered about children’s stories of success alongside dominant stories of school. *Are newcomer children expected to have stories of success similar to or different from children who were born in Canada? Is there any space for the family’s stories to meet and negotiate with the school story about what success might mean or look like for each particular child? Who decides what and whose knowledge is most worth learning, and how do these decisions influence the success stories and stories of success that newcomer children are in the midst of as they compose their lives in their families, communities, and schools?*

Additionally, Clandinin et al. (2013) foregrounded five qualities that shaped their narrative understandings of transition. First, transition is shifting over time and place: when we think narratively about lives in the making, we are attending to ways our past experiences shape our

continuous making and remaking of the present and forward-looking stories by which we live or imagine living. Second, with narrative inquiry, “we understand life making as a process; composed over time, in places, and in different relationships” (p. 220). With this understanding, I saw that people lives are in continual movement, therefore, the phenomenon of transition needs to show the *unfolding* of lives. Transitions are also understood as liminal spaces, drawing on Heilbrun’s (1999) description of the “in-between” state created in experiences of transition. Clandinin et al. (2013) note that Heilbrun (1999) portrayed this state as “a liminal one, an indeterminate stage where we are neither here nor there” (p. 221). Clandinin and colleagues (2013) additionally gave me a way to see that improvisation is an integral part of transition. This point came from their research with early school leavers and from Bateson’s (1994) suggestion that moment-to-moment embodied ways of improvisation give us a way to compose lives within and across transitions. Finally, Clandinin et al. (2013) noted how thinking narratively opens potential so that imagination and relationships are not separated from transitions:

Relationships ignite imagination even as imagination ignites relationship. Relationships provide grounding from which to feel at ease, to make up other worlds, other ways of being. Relationships also provide opportunities to see things differently; broadening imagination of what could be when prescribed plotlines are no longer available. (p. 223)

As I thought more deeply with these qualities of narrative understanding of transition that Clandinin et al. (2013) highlight, I wonder how I would attend to my co-researchers’ experiences of composing lives in transition contextually and temporally. I wonder how I could value their experiences of living in, with, and across liminal spaces and amidst their different personal and social relationships.

### ***Becoming Drawn Toward Familial Curriculum Making***

Earlier I showed how Huber et al.'s (2011) conceptualization of familial curriculum making supported me to re-story the significance of Sherry's, Joey's, and my interactions with one another and others in our home and community places. As highlighted by Huber et al., while the concept of curriculum making has been significant in education for many years, it mostly applied to "teachers and others who attended to curriculum making in relation to the mandated or planned curriculum, that is, to curriculum documents or plans and to curriculum materials" (p. 9). Huber et al. drew on Clandinin and Connelly's (1992), who drew on Dewey's (1938) theory of experience, to suggest that curriculum could be understood as:

an account of teachers' and children's lives together in schools and classrooms .... [In this view of curriculum making] the teacher is seen as an integral part of the curricular process ... in which teacher, learners, subject matter, and milieu are in dynamic interaction. (p. 392)

As Murphy et al. (2012) showed, this narrative understanding of curriculum opened the potential for understanding curriculum not only as a course of study but as a course of life (making): "We understood curriculum making as a life-making process (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992) in which identity making, that is, stories to live by, was central" (p. 221).

When Huber et al. (2011) attended closely to the worlds of children in their narrative inquiry into the experiences of children, families, and teachers in an era of growing standardization and achievement testing, they saw another place of curriculum making that was different from school curriculum making; they conceptualized this as "familial curriculum making." In their perspective, familial curriculum making is:

an account of parents'/families' and children's lives together in homes and communities where the parents and families are an integral part of the curricular process in which

families, children/learners, subject matter, and home and community milieu are in dynamic interaction. (pp. 7-8)

Based on this conceptualization, I grew to see *lives* in curriculum making and that curriculum is continuously being made by children as they compose their lives at school and in their homes and communities.

Significantly, Huber et al. (2011) shaped my knowledge of familial curriculum making around five aspects. First, they viewed familial curriculum making as intergenerational; this view allowed me to see the potential of the family's language, traditions, and culture to be lived, told, retold, and relived across different generations. The second aspect of the familial curriculum is its responsiveness in the midst of the daily interactions happening among family members, such as the interactions between children and parents, brothers and sisters, and more. Familial curriculum making could include a wide range of interactions, such as "baking, singing, making puzzles, learning the alphabet, cleaning, name printing, drawing, telling stories, making plays, watching TV or a movie, taking walks, going for bike rides, picking flowers, and resting" (p. 41). Deeply meaningful to me was that "the activities emerged less from ... [a] predetermined plan and more from composing lives, both as individuals and as a family" (p. 41).

A third aspect is that familial curriculum making can start from the child, which means that the child's identity making is in focus in the curriculum making. I learned from this aspect that children, like all humans, carry all of our experiences in our bodies; thus, understandings of knowledge as embodied, relational, and intergenerational are central. Connected with this is a fourth, which is that familial curriculum making has multiple co-composers. These diverse co-composers are people in the child's family and in their surroundings, and they could also be more-than-human beings in the home and community contexts of the child, such as music,

books, animals, and natural worlds. Life in the long term is another aspect of familial curriculum making.

As I lingered with these understandings of familial curriculum making, I realized how this conceptualization offered another way for me to attend to the wholeness and complexity of composing lives in transition. Alongside my stories shared in Chapter One, I gradually realized that in Sherry's and Joey's lives in transition to school, school curriculum making has been privileged. In my thinking narratively with these experiences, I saw the urgency of my also attending to our familial as well as their school curriculum making. *I wondered if this multi-perspectival attending could better support children and mothers who are in transition to composing their lives in Canada.*

### ***Becoming Drawn Toward Intergenerational Narrative Reverberation***

As I thought about who I am and who I am becoming and how my experience has brought me to live and study in Canada, I was reminded of my extended family back home and of our family stories and the stories I lived before my life began to become shaped and reshaped through my transition to Canada. I remembered experiences alongside my Grandpa, who always told me about the family tradition of hoping for better education and a better life. "Our family tradition is to keep hope and never give up with difficulties," he often shared, along with "although I am an illiterate farmer, your father, uncles, and aunties are all good citizens and contributed a lot for our country and the global friends." I felt like his words were flying in the wind and pouring into my ears.

My Grandpa and my Dad used to tell me proud stories of the education traditions of my great family. Of all the eight children of my grandparents, one uncle sacrificed his life in the war, and my Dad and his three younger brothers and a sister were the first ones to step out of the



village for overseas study in Russia, Czech Republic, Germany, India, and China. This story became a story of pride in my family; my grandparents could not read or write any letter in the alphabet, but they fulfilled their dreams of sending their children overseas to study the modern technology and military systems of the world. This spirit of overseas study has been passed through our family stories and has nurtured the next generations' hopes for their global learning opportunities.

My study in Canada, and later, my younger brother's study, were inspired by this tradition that has been reverberating in our family stories and practices over many years. When, in Chapter One, I recalled the transition in my childhood thanks to my parents' decision for our better education, I awakened to reverberations in my decision for my children to transition to Canada. Although I was not certain about our futures, I hoped my children could complete their high school in Canada and that doing so will support them to have a better future—a happy life with good health, a good education, and job opportunities. Thinking with these stories showed me that intergenerational influence has had a strong influence on my life; family stories have and continue to reverberate across generations, time, and places.

According to Young's (2005a) research in *Pimatisiwin: Walking in a Good Way. A Narrative Inquiry Into Language as Identity*, intergenerational narrative reverberations show shifts and changes in families and communities as they composed lives across time, in particular places, and in the midst of particular situations and relationships. For example, as a person whose life composing was shifted and changed as a result of the residential school where she was forced to assimilate and only speak English, Young shared how not knowing her Anishinaabe language affected her:

I feel bad that I haven't devoted all of my energies toward learning it. I feel mad as the way things are set up here in Canada make it really difficult to learn the language again, especially in the education system! (p. 61)

I was drawn in by Young's (2005a) stories of the loss of her language, as I deeply resonated with her sense that language, culture, and identity are strongly connected, and that losing our first language is like losing a part of our body, a part of ourselves.<sup>22</sup> As I thought with Young's stories of her father's encouragement for her to speak the Anishinaabe language when she returned home from the residential school, I pondered the role and meaning of Vietnamese language with Vietnamese families as they compose lives in transition in Canada.

In my family, my daughters prefer speaking English; they say English is simpler than Vietnamese in terms of reading and writing, but I am keen on talking with them in Vietnamese. In my home my daughters speak to each other in English, and they speak to me in English after hearing my Vietnamese words. In their future life making, I do not want Joey and Sherry to suffer the kind of unhappy feelings that Young did. When they are grown up, I want Sherry and Joey to connect deeply with their identity as people of Vietnamese language, culture, and traditions. Young supported me to understand that language is key, which drew me to *wonder if other mothers who are in transition to Canada also have a passion to attend to their children's experiences of speaking and sustaining the Vietnamese language. If so, I wonder how the children are experiencing their mothers' passions.*

---

<sup>22</sup> I deeply acknowledge and recognize that unlike Mary (Young) who was forced to not speak her Anishinaabe language in the residential school, my daughters' experiences are not part of the colonial legacy of assimilation of which Battiste (2004) wrote as she described the reverberations of residential schools or of which Mary (Young, 2005b) wrote when she described that "the federal government's new direction on Indian education was the establishment of industrial schools. 'In these new institutions, Indian children were insulated from the influences of their own people and subjected to a program designed to lead them to forget who they were and to adopt the ways and values of their teachers' " (p. 33).

Young (2005a) supported me too, to recognize the reverberations of traditional and cultural knowledge within intergenerational stories. For example, her telling of her father's threading of the beaver belt deeply exposed the power of tradition and culture across generations in her making of her life. Earlier in Chapter one, I wrote about my extended family's tradition of cooking and my homeland's culture of singing folk songs and that these have continued to shape my instincts as a mother living in a foreign country and attempting to sustain my own and Joey's and Sherry's knowing of ourselves as people of Vietnamese ancestry even though we are thousands of miles from our birthplaces and homeplaces. As I thought with our experiences alongside the experiences Young inquired into, *I wondered what other mothers of Vietnamese ancestry who are new to Canada wish for their children in relation to sustaining their traditions and cultures.*

Two other intergenerational narrative reverberations that Young (2005a) turned my attention toward were her stories of the spiritual and relational practices she experienced in her home and community places. She wrote of "see[ing] all living things as having spirit" (p. 100), which turned me to thinking about my homeland's beliefs and practices in relation with more-than-human beings. Villagers, like my ancestors, saw every mountain, every river as having spirit. Beautifully in our language, we use the word *đất* for land and *nước* for water, and when we combine land and water, the word that emerges is *đất nước*, which means *country*. As Young showed me, her language was central in her life making:

There is so much to learn. A lot of the teachings are based on simple realities, simple truths but at the same time there is so much knowledge out there. We are always learning and it's a lifelong process. It's about life; that's when we speak about *pimatisiwin*. The good life. That's what it's all about. It's a search for a good life and being well, to heal. (p. 101)

I felt great humility when I read Young's understanding of *pimatisiwin* and experienced her drawing on this wisdom in her life making. Young's stories supported me to continue to think about our language and how Vietnamese people nurture about eight thousand ceremonies and festivals per year; many of these, which many families and communities organize and participate in, also connect our language and the everyday spiritual and relational practices we live by. As I continued to think with my stories, *I wondered how other families of Vietnamese ancestry who are composing lives in transition to Canada are sustaining these stories, knowledge, and practices in their everyday lives.*

### **Additional Social/Theoretical Justifications for an Emerging Research Puzzle**

#### ***Attending to Children as They Compose Lives in Transition to Canada***

As I earlier retold stories of Sherry's, Joey's, and my experiences, and as I lingered with wonders of Dewey's (1938) theory of experience, understandings of lives in transition, familial curriculum making, and intergenerational narrative reverberations, I gradually began to read literature attentive to newcomer children in Canada. Data from the 2016 Canadian Census showed that Canada had a foreign-born population of about 7,540,830 people, who represented 21.9% of the total population—the highest proportion among the G8 countries (Statistics Canada, 2016). More particularly, between 2011 and 2016, around 1,212,075 foreign-born people immigrated to Canada, which made up 16.1% of Canada's foreign-born population (Statistics Canada, 2016). It is noted that children and youth coming to Canada from refugee backgrounds will represent a vulnerable portion of the population as “many of these young people have experienced war, violence, separation from family and friends, loss of home and country, and/or interrupted educational experiences” (MacNevin, 2012, p. 49).

Children who are new to Canada are diverse in their educational backgrounds. However, an aspect that can become common across their experience is that “immigrant children and youth with an English as a Second Language (ESL) background are often at risk in terms of literacy, academic achievement, and dropout” (Adams et al., 2006). According to Watt and Roessingh’s 2001 study conducted with 540 youth with ESL experience who attended a Calgary high school between 1989 and 1997, there was an overall “dropout rate” of 74%—a rate two and a half times that of the general student population. Not surprisingly, youth who arrived in Canada and were only then learning English were described as the most likely (93%) to leave school early (Watt & Roessingh, 2001). Together, these figures showed that a significant number of children and youth who are composing lives in transition to Canada had experienced struggles in their transition into Canadian schools. From these two studies, I sensed that proficiency with the English language was one of the most challenging issues that children new to Canada face in Canadian schools. Similarly, Gunderson (2009) compared the test scores of 2,213 students of immigrant backgrounds with a similar-sized sample of Canadian-born students in the Vancouver School District. He concluded that immigrant children and youth “tended to disappear<sup>23</sup> soon after moving out of ESL classes and into the mainstream” as “most of them could not handle regular classes without language support” (p. 2).

In this place now known as Canada (Battiste, 2004), there is a long history of language diversity among the First Peoples who have lived on and with this land for thousands of years. This language diversity continues since there are presently many peoples in Canada of Indigenous, immigrant, and refugee backgrounds whose mother tongue is neither English nor

---

<sup>23</sup> By saying “tended to disappear”, the author meant his research showed that the immigrant children and youth left school because their knowledge was not sufficient to attend the regular classes, mostly due to their lack of English competence.

French. In addition to English and French, it is estimated that there are more than 200 other languages spoken in this country as mother tongue, including Indigenous languages (Statistics Canada, 2011). However, given the dominance of the English language, children who speak languages other than English can experience many complexities as they seek to communicate in school with friends, teachers, and other people and then at home and in their communities with parents, family, and community members as they—similar to my daughters—begin to speak more English than their mother language. I sense these situations can become even more difficult when there are different accents in the English language being spoken due to the diversity of children and youth from many regions of the world. *I wondered how children composing lives in transition to English experience conversations and instructions in the English language and how they understand these experiences? How are these experiences shaping their identities and their ongoing making of their lives? I wondered too about the cultural challenges children in transition to Canada may experience.*

Recently in Canada, the ideas of integrating different cultures into the same values and establishing “a mutual national identity” were shown as an important aim of government policy (Adams et al., 2006). However, in spite of the existence of this political objective, parents from immigrant backgrounds like me, who are also international graduate students, have struggled to choose public schools, religious schools, or preferred alternatives for our children in order to sustain our cultures. In this struggle, our children are located in between cultures as they compose their lives in their homes, community, and school places. *I wondered about the being-in-between-culture stories that children who are composing lives in transition to Canada are living and telling. How are these lived and told stories shaping the children’s identities and their ongoing making of their lives?*

### *Attending to the Vietnamese Community in Canada*

As I often returned to my growing wonders, as noted in the previous sections, I began to imagine coming alongside children and mothers of Vietnamese ancestry to engage in narrative inquiry. In this process, I awakened to how attending to the lived and told stories of our home country of Vietnam, as well as the history of Vietnamese peoples and communities in Canada, is important. Located in mainland Southeast Asia, Vietnam is bordered by China, Laos, and Cambodia, and it has an extensive coastline along the South China Sea and the Gulf of Tonkin. In 1965, the United States began to send troops to assist Southern Vietnam in the war with Northern Vietnam. In 1975, the Northern Vietnamese, supported by China and the Soviet Union, successfully forced out the Americans and reunited the North and the South under communist rule. Fearing reprisal for their support of the United States or Southern Vietnam, many Southerners sought an escape from the country. Canada admitted 5,608 Vietnamese people between 1975 and 1976 in the first refugee wave.

The second wave took place from 1979 to 1985 and consisted of Southern Vietnamese refugees who suffered under the harsh conditions of the new Communist regime. These refugees were often referred to as “boat people” because many made dangerous journeys from Vietnam on overcrowded boats to refugee camps in Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Indonesia. An estimated one-third of the refugees who escaped by boat did not survive the journey. Canada was one of the main resettlement countries; it accepted more than 50,000 Vietnamese refugees during the second refugee wave, as well as additional Vietnamese people who immigrated to Canada.

Recent data from Statistics Canada (2016) reported about 220,425 Vietnamese Canadians living mostly in Vancouver, Calgary, Montreal, Edmonton, Toronto, Ottawa, and Hamilton. In

addition to this, strong growth was shown from previous years of Vietnamese students studying in Canada in 2016, 7,500 students (Kennedy, 2017). Altogether, the number of people of Vietnamese ancestry living in Canada in 2016 was approximately 227,925 people, which accounted for 0.66 percent of Canada's population.

Regarding social and cultural life, Vietnamese refugees and immigrants in Canada respect their community in which cultural values and practices such as religion and language are well maintained. To prevent cultural erosion, formal networks, such as the Vietnamese Canadian Federation, as well as informal social networks, have assisted the community in maintaining their cultural identity. Approximately half of all Vietnamese Canadians identify as Buddhist, while more than a quarter identify as Christian; there are both Vietnamese Buddhist temples and Vietnamese Christian churches in cities across Canada. Temples and churches play an important role not only in religious practices but in celebrating Vietnamese holidays, performing weddings and funerals, and organizing social gatherings. I remember when we first came to Canada, my family and I experienced many challenges in surviving without any friends or relatives in Alberta. As we are Christian, the only place we could think of to ask for help was the church. There, we met new Vietnamese Canadian friends, who supported us immensely.

My spouse and I often name ourselves *education refugees* since it was our desire for Joey and Sherry to experience a different system of education, and for me to have an opportunity to complete doctoral studies, that shaped our desires to come to Canada. Some of my Canadian friends found our naming of ourselves as education refugees uncommon; they had never heard this term and asked me to explain. As I shared earlier, there were two refugee waves during and after the Vietnam War. These people were commonly called *war refugees*. Currently, there is no war happening in my home country, but the education system in Vietnam is suffering from many



drawbacks. As I earlier noted about Joey's experiences in Grade One in Vietnam, the Vietnamese government is carrying out a number of educational policies that are having negative impacts on children's experiences, as well as on the development of education and society. Thus, many families are trying to use their savings for their children's better education in countries believed to have progressive educational systems, such as Canada and the United States. My family and I are not an exception.

With Canada's reputation for democracy, freedom, cleanliness, safety, a relatively low cost of living, and high-quality education, Vietnamese people are likely to continue coming to Canada seeking either permanent residency or study/work permits. While the number of Vietnamese people in Canada is sharply increasing (Statistics Canada, 2016), to date there is very limited research that has focused on the experiences of Vietnamese children and mothers as they compose lives in transition to Canada.

As a mother, daughter, educator, and narrative inquirer, I have many wonders about the stories my children and I have lived and told as people new to Canada. Thinking with these stories has drawn me toward wondering about our experiences and the experiences of other children and mothers of Vietnamese ancestry who are composing lives in transition to Canada and Canadian schools. I want my research to support the life making of children and mothers of Vietnamese ancestry who are composing lives in transition to Canada. In the literature, I found no research that focused on the experiences of children and mothers of Vietnamese ancestry who were composing lives in transition to Canada and Canadian schools. I longed to engage in narrative inquiry that would support children and mothers of Vietnamese ancestry who are in this midst. Their stories of their experiences of composing lives in transition to Canada are important.

### *Attending to “World”-Travelling<sup>24</sup>*

As I lingered with the many wonders I shared in the previous chapter and sections in this chapter, I increasingly resonated with Huber et al.’s (2011) understanding of Lugones’ (1987) concept of “world”-travelling, particularly that “not only are children’s worlds of familial and school curriculum making shaped by differing physical places but also by differing ways of being and interacting and, therefore, of knowing and knowledge” (p. 108). Inspired by this perspective, as my earlier shared story of family story nights shows, I have been trying to shape a practice of “world”-traveling in our familial curriculum. Slowly, I have become intentional about living out “world”-traveling so that Joey, Sherry, and I can experience openings to travel within, between, and across the multiple worlds where we are composing our lives in transition. Being introduced to “world”-traveling has also turned me back to Sherry’s, Joey’s, and my experiences with their new school. In this turning back, *I wondered what might have happened if during Sherry’s Learning Celebration Night, a space had opened for Mr. S, Sherry, and me to travel to one another’s worlds?*

The stories I lived in Vietnam with Joey and Sherry greatly affected my decision to leave Vietnam. Our composing of our lives in transition to Canada was not only for my professional learning but it was also a decision for their ongoing life making. As Joey’s mother, I was initially fully certain I made the right choice for her to continue her life making in Canada, the cold country with the warm hearts, as many Vietnamese people would say. Joey is now in a junior high school where she has started living new stories of herself in a new country, in a new school, and with a new language. As I have recently become more awake to and intentional about growing Sherry’s, Joey’s, and my practice of “world”-travelling I have wondered about the

---

<sup>24</sup> This title has originated from Lugones’ (1987) article, “Playfulness, “World”-Travelling, and Loving Perception”.

stories she lived in our home country that she carried to the new school. *How has the mis-educative experiences<sup>25</sup> in Grade One in Vietnam shaped her wonders and her hopes for each new school she has attended in Canada? How has she experienced speaking Vietnamese to herself and struggling to speak English as a second language with her new teachers and peers? Is she experiencing tensions I am not yet awake to as she moves within, between, and across her Vietnamese culture and the “normal” culture of each new school in Canada?*

Retelling and thinking narratively with stories that shape who I am and am becoming alongside and stories Joey lived in Vietnam, I recognized that I neglected the importance of her school experiences in the wholeness of her life making. I forgot that school days could be happy or unhappy, as I was busy working and earning for our family life. Most of our familial time, we just talked about the marks my children received during their school days, the homework they needed to complete, or the assessment coming up with the examinations. I have felt deep regret in my awakening to my neglect of so many other stories of who they were and were becoming in those days. In their earlier situations, society and education were different from my subjective beliefs; my mistake was to forget the existence of my daughter’s multiple worlds. Delpit’s (1995) advocacy for educators to be aware of the existence of the worlds of other peoples’ children is something I will now remember as I am alongside my children:

We educators set out to teach, but how can we reach the worlds of others when we don’t even know they exist? Indeed, many of us don’t even realize that our own worlds exist only in our heads and in the cultural institutions we have built to support them. (p. xiv)

---

<sup>25</sup> An understanding of “mis-educative experience” is stated by Dewey (1938) as:

Any experience is mis-educative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience. An experience may be such as to engender callousness; it may produce lack of sensitivity and of responsiveness. Then the possibilities of having richer experience in the future are restricted (p. 12).

This understanding of mis-educative experience helps me attend to Joey’s experience of being hit, needing to live silently, writing many exams, and so on in her previous everyday life-making.

### *An Emerging Research Puzzle*

Thinking narratively with the stories my children and I have lived and told since coming to Canada alongside Dewey's theory of experience, understandings of lives as in transition, familial curriculum making, intergenerational narrative reverberations, and "world"-travelling has drew me toward wanting to engage in narrative inquiry with children and mothers of Vietnamese ancestry who are also composing lives in transition to Canada. I wondered about the personal, social, cultural, institutional, political, traditional, linguistic, familial, community, and intergenerational narratives shaping the children and mothers as they compose their lives. I wondered about the intergenerational narrative reverberations and the new possible intergenerational narrative reverberations of composing lives in transition that shape, and are shaped by, the children and mothers. How might these lived, told, retold, and relived stories shape and reshape their familial curriculum making? How might the children and mothers' familial curriculum making sustain their ongoing life making as they are composing lives in transition to Canada?

### **Chapter Three: Learning to Think Narratively**

My journey of continuing to become a narrative inquirer has been shaped and reshaped by my ongoing attendance to what narrative inquirers do (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I still remember the first time I came to the Research Issues Table at the Centre for Research for Teacher Education and Development. It was a Tuesday in the summer of 2015 and just three days after my arrival to Canada. Experiencing jet lag because of the time difference, I was exhausted after a long flight of forty hours. However, the excitement to sit at the same table and have tea with many professors and other graduate students soon made me happy.

That day, the table gradually filled up with stories people shared about their research and lives. When the Research Issues bracelet was passed into my hand, I was encouraged to tell and think with my stories. Feeling a bit shy, I told stories about my flight to Canada, which was full of ups and downs due to the delays. I cried when sharing about my worries when my children and I slept overnight on the floor of the Vancouver Airport. However, after sharing my stories, my tears were slowly washed away as others at the table began to think with my experiences. I remember feeling blessed by these people and their showing me how they were thinking with my stories as some people shared wonders and puzzles they experienced as my stories called them to consider who they were and were becoming alongside me. Through these first moments and many more moments I lived at the Research Issues Table over the past six years, I learned that lives and thinking narratively with peoples' stories of their lives matter deeply. These experiences also drew forward my knowing of living in relationally ethical ways, which is a key aspect of what narrative inquirers do.

**Gradually Awakening to the Centrality of Living Relational Ethics as a Narrative Inquirer**

As I retell this experience of my first experience at the Research Issues Table, I remember my surprise when I was warmly welcomed by many people in the room. My present sense of my relational responsibilities (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) as I participate alongside others in a space in a post-secondary institution where we can share and think with all of who we are and are becoming, also calls me. In my early days at the Centre and the Research Issues Table, I often wondered if the ways people shared and thought narratively with one another's stories were related to narrative inquiry. As I continued to learn alongside the narrative inquirers at the Centre, I gradually awakened to the relational ethics shaping how narrative inquiry was both talked about and lived in this space. I now recognize these relational ethics and ways of knowing and being have been guiding me from my early moments as a doctoral student.

Recently, I read Clandinin and Murphy (2009) who emphasized that “the ethical stance of narrative inquirers is best characterized by relational ethics” (p. 600). For them, narrative inquirers are

attentive to the practical and social justifications of our work and to how we can best respond to the necessary research questions “So what?” and “Who cares?” But as we do this, we cannot sacrifice our ethical commitments to ... research participants. (p. 600)

Linking these understandings with my narrative inquiry, I recognized that as I began and continued my journey of thinking narratively with the children's, mothers', and my experiences as we composed our lives in transition to Canada, we would continuously be co-making our relationships and the relational ethics we lived by as our inquiry unfolded. As Downey and Clandinin (2010) highlighted, these are key ontological and epistemological commitments of narrative inquirers: “Stories are not just about experience but experience itself; we live and learn in, and through, the living, telling, retelling, and reliving of our stories” (p. 387).

Here, I was reminded of Lessard's (2014) commitment to relational ethics, which I first noted through reading his narrative inquiry into the experiences of Aboriginal youth and families. He shared these details:

Many of the families I have worked with have taught me to go *sideways* when asking questions. What this means is that I do not ask the questions directly. I take time, am patient, and engage in discussions, recognizing that the answers to the questions will eventually emerge. Conversations cannot be rushed and it is impossible to consider the sharing of stories if I do not understand the place and its ability to create or limit conversation. I have learned that questions to answers sometimes take time to find themselves and that there are often reasons that some questions are not answered. Narrative inquiry as a relational research methodology reminds me of past teachings and the importance of process, relationships, time, and place. (p. 46)

As I continued to grow in my journey of attending the co-researchers' living and mine in relationally ethical ways with one another, I noted how Lessard's teaching—that narrative inquirers are always in relation with co-researchers and that attending to the relational ethics of the relational narrative inquiry space that is continuously shaped in the meeting of narrative inquirer and co-researchers' lives—is important and echoes in the writings of other narrative inquirers (for example, Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Huber et al., 2006; Huber, 2000). These understandings shaped how I came alongside the children and mothers, which shaped an ethically relational journey that Clandinin (2013) highlighted when she wrote that “although ethical review is mandatory for all research with people, the relational ethics of narrative inquiry need special consideration” (p. 198). Earlier, Connelly and Clandinin (2006) underlined the following:

In narrative inquiry, inquirers must deepen the sense of what it means to live in relation in an ethical way.... Ethical considerations permeate narrative inquiries from start to finish: at the outset as ends-in-view are imagined; as inquirer-participant relationships unfold, and as participants are represented in research texts. (p. 483)

Gradually, I became awake to how the relational responsibilities of narrative inquirers to attend to backward looking and to imagine forward looking stories is one way to respect the short-term and long-term relational responsibilities in my relationship with each child and mother. Importantly, Huber et al.'s (2006) work further taught me that holding central our living of relational ethics opens potential for narrative inquirers, co-researchers, and readers of our work to imagine living by different stories as we all continue composing our lives. Important too was Lessard et al.'s (2015) situating Lugones' (1987) "world"-travelling as a ground for living in relational ways alongside co-researchers.

As I became drawn toward Lugones' (1987) understandings of "worlds", "world"-traveling is playfulness, I noted her emphasis on how playfulness is "the attitude that carries us through the activity" and that "a playful attitude, turns the activity into play" (p. 16). This understanding of playfulness has been vital in supporting building relationships with the children and mothers as co-researchers. Further, ontologically, Lugones (1987) described "world"-traveling as a process of trying to stay awake as we travel to "[participants'] worlds" so that we "can understand what it is to be them and what it is to be...[ourselves] in their eyes" (p. 17). Lugones believed that only when we attempt to travel to each other's worlds is there hope for us to become fully present with each other. Epistemologically, Lugones also taught me that my knowing the children's and mother's worlds is part of knowing them and knowing them is part of "loving" them; she described "loving perception" in the following way:



Loving my mother required that I see with her eyes, that I go into my mother's world, that I see both of us as we are constructed in her world, that I witness her own sense of herself from within her world. Only through this travelling to her "world" could I identify with her because only then could I cease to ignore her and to be excluded and separate from her. Only then could I see her as a subject even if one subjected and only then could I see at all how meaning could arise fully between us. We are fully dependent on each other for the possibility of being understood and without this understanding we are not intelligible, we do not make sense, we are not solid, visible, integrated; we are lacking. So traveling to each other's "worlds" would enable us to *be* through *loving* each other. (p. 8)

Lugones (1987) additionally supplemented my courage when she wrote that "without knowing the other's world, one does not know the other, and without knowing the other, one is really alone in the other's presence" (p. 18). Each of these ontological and epistemological commitments that I learned from Lugones was key in building ethical relationships between me as a researcher, and each child and mother co-researcher.

### **Continuing to Grow in Understanding What Narrative Inquirers Do**

During the Winter 2016 term, when I attended the Narrative Inquiry course, I experienced important opportunities to continue to learn what narrative inquirers do. I still remember that in the second week of the course I was introduced to the first chapter in *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research* by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), one of the course books. I experienced much excitement when I discovered their conceptualization of narrative inquiry:

Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social

interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in this same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that make up people's lives, both individual and social. Simply stated, ... narrative inquiry is stories lived and told. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20)

From this conceptualization, I learned that narrative inquiry is the relational, contextual, and temporal study of experience, that experience is always central, and that the closest we can come to experience is through the stories people live and tell:

People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 477)

As I read this knowledge I felt an immediate personal resonance as story has been an important aspect in my life since childhood: I was nurtured by the murmurings of my Grandma and my Mom. I remember falling to sleep with their stories still echoing in my body; their stories, especially of my great family's traditions, gradually become planted in me. The many stories of our hundred-year-old kitchen, for example, have deepened the recipes, the tastes, and the practices of making *Bánh Chung* across many generations of females in my great family. My Grandma told this story to my Mom; my Mom told me; and now I tell my daughters. While I realize I did not earlier know the language of narrative inquiry, nor the theories shaping its practices, early on, I could see that stories of experience had been shaping how I was composing and recomposing my life. It is profound to me now how my study of narrative inquiry has given me a language and a way to talk about these early and intergenerational practices in my life

making and of thinking and becoming with stories. (I say more about my gradual awaking to my living in culturally relationally ethical ways in Chapters Four, Five, Six, and Eight).

### **The Centrality of Experience and Attending to Experience**

Over time I grew to understand that narrative inquiry is both a way to study experience and a way to understand experience as a narrative phenomenon. Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) approach to narrative inquiry is directly influenced by the work of Dewey (1938) and his philosophy of experience, which they cite as a constant "conceptual, imaginative backdrop" (p. 2) to their living as narrative inquirers. For them, Dewey "transforms a commonplace term, experience, ... into an inquiry term" (p. 2). Their conceptualization of a relational "three-dimensional narrative inquiry space" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 54) reflects Dewey's theories of experience. The relational three-dimensional narrative inquiry space is shaped by "the personal and social (interaction); past, present, and future (continuity); combined with the notion of place (situation)" (p. 50). Coming to think narratively in this way shaped how I came alongside the child and mother co-researchers.

Later, when the Narrative Inquiry course progressed to the seventh week, I learned from the work of Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) that:

Dewey's ontology is not transcendental, it is transactional. The epistemological implications of this view are nothing short of revolutionary. It implies that the regulative ideal for inquiry is not to generate an exclusively faithful representation of a reality independent of the knower. The regulative ideal for inquiry is to generate a new relation between a human being and her environment—her life, community, world—one that "makes possible a new way of dealing with them, and thus eventually creates a new kind of experienced objects, not more real than those which preceded but more significant, and less

overwhelming and oppressive” (Dewey, 1981b, p. 175). In this pragmatic view of knowledge, our representations arise from experience and must return to that experience for their validation. (p. 9)

What they supported me to understand is how the centrality of experience is a key ontological commitment for narrative inquirers. As I progressed in learning to think narratively, the clearer I saw the centrality of experience in the relational three-dimensional narrative inquiry space.

One aspect drawing my attention in this space is temporality, which attends to the past, present, and future. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) reminded me this when they wrote that “When we see an event, we need to think of it as happening over time. Any event, or thing, has a past, a present as it appears to us, and an implied future” (p. 29). As I attended to temporality, I strongly began to understand how past experiences in my co-researchers’ life were continuing to shape who they are at present and who they want to become in the future. It was when I attended the temporal aspect in their life making that I was able to strengthen our relationship, help ease their tension, and support the growth of their experiences in positive ways.

Another place of attention in the relational three-dimensional narrative inquiry space is sociality, or the interaction of the personal and the social, which includes my relationships with co-researchers. According to Clandinin (2013), “social conditions refer to the milieu, the conditions under which people’s experiences and events are unfolding” (p. 40). In particular, “the conditions are understood in terms of cultural, social, institutional, familial, and linguistic narratives” (p. 40). When I came alongside the child and mother co-researchers, I was awake to my need to attend to the interactions within, between, and across their personal and social conditions and how these shaped their composing of their lives in transition, as did our experiences and our relationships as our inquiry unfolded. Attending to sociality kept me awake

to how the co-researchers' lived and told stories are shaped by the cultural stories they live by, the societal stories shaping the social contexts where they interact with one another and others, the institutional stories from where they are studying or working, their family contexts, their languages, and more.

Another dimension is place. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) defined place as “the specific concrete, physical, and topological boundaries of place or sequences of places where the inquiry and events take place” (p. 480). A key aspect related to my becoming as a narrative inquirer in relation with place was my growing recognition that “all events take place some place” (p. 481). As I continued my journey in the Narrative Inquiry course, a small group of class members and I read Lessard's (2014) dissertation as a course experience designed to support us to attend to the inquiry journey of one narrative inquirer. Lessard's dissertation opened me to more meanings of place when he shared:

Reflecting on the importance of place within experience and the multiple meanings within its definition helps me inquire into the stories that are shared on various landscapes but also the places that we have travelled to as we share our stories. (p. 46)

My learning to think narratively continued to deepen through a subsequent opportunity to take a course with Sean. Below is a poetic fragments I created to show some of the ways Sean has taught me to attend to place:

*Holding his coffee, Sean said<sup>26</sup>:*

*“You do not pick the participants, they pick you.”*

*He had started looking for the youth whom he was alongside,*

*but they led the decision to join*

---

<sup>26</sup> Sean's sharing is on the left side of the page and my thinking is on the right side.

*I was so surprised.*

*“This is really incredible.”*

*I thought.*

*Sean highlighted*

*the importance of careful listening*

*and assuming disruptions*

*and differences between what we are told and what we perceive.*

*I pondered then how*

*all these aspects are interwoven*

*in all the moments of living*

*alongside participants.*

*Sean shared how living life on a landscape*

*is not always smooth and clear*

*for those who decide to weave*

*narrative inquiry into their research.*

*I felt myself wake up then*

*to how all of the stories lived and told*

*that shape a narrative inquiry process*

*are not linear and transcendental.*

*Sean acknowledged the meaning of place*

*in creating “magical moments”*

*And that’s not only physical space,*

*but also places formed in memory.*

*This expanded my understanding:  
How past places shape current experiences,  
and how meaningful this understanding of place is  
alongside participants,  
who are living far from their homelands.*

(personal notes, Mar. 2016)

As Sean shared his wisdom and knowledge, he inspired my narrative inquiry journey.

## **Co-Making Our Relational Narrative Inquiry**

### ***Meeting Potential Co-Researchers***

I engaged in this narrative inquiry with three Vietnamese children who were in elementary school and their mothers. As my research puzzle focused on their experiences of composing their lives in transition to Canada, I came alongside children and mothers who were in this midst for six years and less. After my research ethics was approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta, I sent my letter of invitation in both English and Vietnamese to centres for newcomers in the city where I live, Vietnamese language schools, Vietnamese churches, and pagodas. I shared hard copies of invitation letters with my friends and colleagues so they might connect me with Vietnamese newcomer mothers who might be interested in my research.

I had earlier met the first mother co-researcher, Hồng, and her daughter, Lisa, at my Korean friend's house. After my research ethics was approved, I telephoned Hồng to ask if she might consider participating at which time she invited to her home to introduce my research and invite her and Lisa into the inquiry. I became connected to the second mother, Thanh, and her son, Ryan, through a parenting group at a centre for newcomers where I had previously sent my letter of invitation. I met Ryan when I was invited to facilitate an event for newcomer children

and parents; I met his mother Thanh at their home at a later date when she invited me to visit and to describe my research.

I shared about my research with the third mother, Hiên, and her son, Alex, six months after I came alongside Hồng and Lisa and Thanh and Ryan. For six long months I searched for a third mother–child co-researcher pair. One day as Hiên, a friend I had known since I arrived in Canada, listened to my stories of my research she suggested that she and her son could become my third child-mother co-researchers.

Each mother invited me to interact with each child and herself on a monthly basis during the course of almost two years from May 2019 to March 2021. We were flexible when we arranged meetings, which mostly happened in their homes but some also happened in community places a child or mother chose.

Our conversations varied from two hours to four hours in duration. Lisa, Hồng, and I spent time together in eight research conversations at their home and in 10 other family gatherings: outdoor camping, birthday celebrations, and Vietnamese festivals. Ryan, Thanh, and I engaged in six research conversations at their living room and kitchen table, and two long video calls due to COVID-19 social distancing requirements. We also exchanged many short phone calls and text messages to check-in with each other and support Ryan in his school transfer.

Hiên, Alex, and I met each other mostly at the waiting room of a city chess club and sometimes at a recreation centre lounge. We engaged in six research conversations, two phone calls, and many text messages. Meeting the co-researchers at their favourite places, using their comfortable communication methods at a time convenient to them was important to me as I was always wanted to live respectfully alongside them.

### ***Coming Alongside Co-Researchers and Co-Composing Field Texts***



As I entered into the relational space shaped by each child, mother, and me, this space shaped the field texts that emerged from our inquiry (Clandinin, 2013). At times we co-created field texts in the form of transcripts of our audio-recorded conversations, the majority of which happened in Vietnamese. At other times I lived alongside the child and mother co-researchers, meaning that I went where they invited me to go and/or to be with them. For example, the three children and mothers invited me to meet their families and/or friends and/or to enter alongside them into the places that were important to them (Clandinin, 2013). As a result, as Lessard (2014) taught me, these places and relationships also shaped, as well as called forth, the stories we each lived and told.

When each child and mother pair and I negotiated the University research ethics, I carried to each of these meetings a copy of my narrative beginnings i.e. Chapter One. While we did not read this document together it gave me a way to both tell, particularly the mothers, some of the stories that had drawn me to the research focus, and too, to show them a bit about my process with autobiographical narrative inquiry (Cardinal, 2011). As a way to start conversations with the mothers, I also often brought traditional Vietnamese foods such as *Bánh Chung* and spring rolls and shared their recipes.

Alongside the children—Lisa and Ryan—I always brought my craft bag to every visit to their homes. In this craft bag, I had coloured paper, pencil crayons, coloured markers, scissors, glue, glue sticks, paper flowers, metal craft threads, erasers, beads, sewing threads, and canvas for painting. I learned from my earlier experiences as a mother alongside Joey and Sherry and as a facilitator of parenting groups that young Vietnamese children love making crafts. Therefore, I introduced my craft bag with these child co-researchers from our first days of meeting each

other. From that moment onward, I was happy to see that Lisa and Ryan liked using items from this bag to create their own “artistic masterpiece.”

For example, Lisa and Ryan made their own posters of “Who Am I” when we played this game as a way of getting to know each other. These children free-played with materials from my craft bag and they were very happy when they saw their crafted creations, such as Lisa’s paper carnations and Ryan’s Halloween corner. They also often asked for paper and crayons for their drawing as their mothers and I were in conversations. My craft bag opened potential for these two children’s playing and sharing throughout our co-inquiry. With Alex, I did not meet him at his home so we had no opportunity to play with my craftbag. However, through my conversations with him and his mother, I knew that Alex enjoyed making craft with his sister in their free play at home.

Additional field texts included artifacts connected with the children’s and mothers’ experiences across times, places, situations, and relationships and various documents (i.e., photographs, my field notes of our meetings, and journals and/or drawings that the children, mothers, and I each made). The children, mothers, and I also co-made some additional field texts, such as reading and writing poems and stories in our Vietnamese language. Additionally, together we cooked Vietnamese traditional foods such as *Phở*, *Bánh Chung*, and other special dishes.

### ***Thinking Narratively With Our Field Texts to Shape Interim Research Texts***

Downey and Clandinin (2010) mentioned the tension and uncertainty as narrative inquiries unfold:

We see narrative inquiry as a muddle through the much more spongy terrain of experience, one which pulls us in, gets us muddy and shows our tracks. ... In narrative inquiry, we find

that we continue to compose our inquiries and lives within spongy uncertain ground. We stay, we might say, within the peaty spaces of possibility. (p. 394)

I learned from this understanding that my process of thinking narratively with field texts to create interim research texts could be marked with tension and uncertainty. In part, I experienced feelings of tension and uncertainty as I moved away from the close intensive contact I had been living with the children and mothers over time as I began thinking with and across the field texts to create interim research texts, which are the upcoming narrative accounts in Chapters Four, Five, and Six. These co-composed texts show our thinking narratively with the experiences they, and I, storied and re-storied as we inquired into my initial research puzzles and as their and my lives unfolded. Through this process the children, mothers, and I met numerous times to read over, and to thinking again alongside one another.

Negotiating each narrative account was both flexible with different with co-researcher pairs. I sent the first child–mother pair (Lisa and Hồng) and the third child–mother pair (Alex and Hiên) our narrative accounts both in hard copy and electronically because Hồng and Hiên were fluent in English and they could read our English narrative accounts.

Hồng got back to me two months after I brought the copy of our narrative account to her home, saying that she loved the way it showcased how she remembered our experiences. Hiên connected with me again three months after receiving a full draft of our narrative account, and she sent me an electronic document with her thoughts, all of which are now woven into the account.

I brought a hard copy of Ryan, Thanh's and my narrative account to them at their home. Sitting side by side, I slowly read every paragraph and then expressed to Thanh in Vietnamese what the English words were with in Vietnamese. We worked in this process for a long day.

As a Vietnamese researcher conducting research in both English and Vietnamese, I acknowledge the role of language in sharing knowledge in global contexts. My positioning in this narrative inquiry is located in between the dominant use of English in research and academia globally and my wish to think and express in Vietnamese, which is each co-researchers' and my mother tongue. I learned from Hoang and Nguyen (2021) that the perceived importance of each language, which was noticeable in the positioning of the participants, was mainly due to the opportunities or constraints that each language could create for researchers. Therefore, in the narrative accounts, I kept as much of the Vietnamese language as possible. I respect and value the co-researchers' ways of knowing and being in Vietnamese because this integral in their identities. As I previously mentioned, my relational ethical responsibilities during this co-inquiry journey also showed me that I had not, at the outset of my inquiry, thought carefully enough about intersections between this living and the Vietnamese language. Including both English and Vietnamese was also from my learning that “considering the historical and sociocultural context of Vietnam, [...], and the facts that knowledge in social sciences is strongly attached to sociocultural values, it would not be a good idea to focus only on English” (Hoang & Nguyen, 2021, p. 14).

### ***Drawing on the Narrative Accounts to Shape Final Research Texts***

As I thought with and across each of the three narrative accounts to foreground the resonant threads they made visible, I was guided by Downey and Clandinin's (2010) insights about shaping these kinds of texts:

People, places, other events, emotions, moral judgments, and aesthetic responses continually shift and change the array of possible plotlines open to each person. As narrative inquirers we can map out possible plotlines, hint at that array of possibilities but

all we can say is that this is how inquirers and co-researchers are living and telling the stories for now. We follow one possible trajectory and move forward into other possible uncertainties. Our research texts point to an array of possibilities. (p. 394)

Similar to how the children, mothers, and I co-composed and negotiated the narrative accounts we also negotiated the final two dissertation chapters. I did not make public any final research texts that were not fully negotiated with each child and mother co-researcher. (Co)-composing narrative accounts and final research texts for broader audiences in English challenged me as a Vietnamese emerging narrative inquirer. As a Vietnamese doctoral student who speaks English as a foreign language, I needed an enormous amount of time to transcribe the audio recordings in Vietnamese and then write the narrative accounts and final research texts in English. Altogether, the 24 audio recordings with varying lengths from two to four hours yielded approximately 400 pages of transcription. I then printed the pages and spent many months reading and rereading to deepen my understanding of the co-researchers' experiences. I also attended deeply to the sounds, silences, deep sighs, and many other non-verbal language aspects of the co-researchers, as well as my many wonders during and as I read and re-read our conversations.

Challenges also came because many Vietnamese words and expressions cannot find their exact equivalence in English. Therefore, in my explanation or footnotes, I did not use "the meaning of this word in English is." Rather, I said, "the meaning of this word in English is kin with." I believe this way helped show the kinship between the meanings of the words or expressions in the two languages rather my pretending that there is any neat, direct correspondence between the two words.

Throughout I was grateful for the tireless support from my response communities, which including my ongoing conversations with Dr. Janice Huber, and her ongoing response to all of my chapter drafts and the full dissertation draft, as well as occasional meetings with Dr. Bonita Watt and Dr. Trudy Cardinal, and their responses to all individual chapters as well as the full dissertation draft. Another response community was at the Centre for Research for Teacher Education and Development, where I attended the weekly Research Issues Table to share and to think with other professors and graduate students. And, too, “The Awesome Ladies Group,” was a beloved response community where I will always feel blessed to have been closely accompanied by my friends—Nathalie, Tarah, Yuanli, and Joanne—in not only my research journey but my everyday life making throughout my doctoral program. In all of these response communities, I was privileged to have been lovingly uplifted by amazing people. Their feedback, comments, wonders, and suggestions continuously supported me in this journey.

### **Looking Ahead**

The next three chapters (Chapters Four, Five, and Six) are narrative accounts that show Lisa and Hông, Ryan and Thanh, and Alex and Hiên’s and my coming alongside one another in relationship and narrative inquiry. Chapter Seven shows the threads of experience that resonated across the three narrative accounts. Chapter Eight shows my bringing of these threads alongside my initial personal, practical, and social/theoretical justifications for the inquiry, and the ways I imagine our co-inquiry could shape future stories, in schools, teacher education, newcomer centers, and more.

## Chapter Four: Narrative Account of Coming Alongside Lisa and Hồng

### Rooting and Co-Making Relationships

One Saturday night in the early spring of 2019, my Korean neighbour celebrated her daughter's birthday. Before the party, I had been excited to know I would meet their Vietnamese friend Hồng,<sup>27</sup> who had been in Canada for two years. I came early with some spring rolls I had made especially for my neighbour's daughter, who loves Vietnamese traditional foods. It was in my neighbour's living room that I first met Hồng. She told me she was currently living with her two young daughters, Lisa and Misa, and her mother (hereafter referred to as Bà<sup>28</sup>), who was a short-time visitor. Hồng and I exchanged phone numbers for further contact and then joined the cheerful birthday celebrations with our friends.

Two weeks passed and on a Sunday my family decided to go camping in Elk Island National Park. At our Korean friend's house, I remembered Hồng had shared that she would like to join us if we had any gatherings for our children. Therefore, I called her, and she was very happy to embark on their first camping trip in Canada. Together, we arranged foods, drinks, and toys for the children.

That Sunday was sunny and windy with gentle white clouds hanging over the sky. I was glad to meet other members in Hồng's family: Bà; Lisa, the older daughter, and Misa, the younger daughter. We chose a spot near the playground of the Elk Island's day-use area. Sáng,<sup>29</sup> my husband, built the fire, and everyone was excited for the barbeque. Hồng and I put up the tent for Lisa, Misa, and my two girls Joey and Sherry, to play UNO.<sup>30</sup> We enjoyed the whole day

---

<sup>27</sup> Hồng, Lisa, and Misa are pseudonyms. This mother co-researcher chose the name Hồng as it is a popular name of Vietnamese females and means "pink." The children asked their mother to choose pseudonyms for them with the condition that they must be in English. Hồng picked the names Lisa and Misa and they happily agreed.

<sup>28</sup> Bà in Vietnamese means Grandma in English.

<sup>29</sup> Sáng is the pseudonym of my husband.

<sup>30</sup> I got this description from the game itself:

UNO is a classic card game of matching colors and numbers that is easy to pick up and impossible to put

under the sun barbequing and baking corn and sweet potatoes. The children played frisbee and flew a kite with my husband while Hồng, Bà, and I walked along the trail and watched the seagulls flying. As we walked, we shared about our families back home in Vietnam and how our life was different in Canada. Together, we had an enjoyable time and also enjoyed seeing the bison.

The following Tuesday I received the good news that my research ethics was approved. Feeling both encouraged and nervous, I knew I could begin to invite potential co-researchers to consider my coming alongside them. As I recalled my conversation with Hồng during our camping, I remembered she shared about challenges in teaching Vietnamese to Lisa. I sent her a text asking if I might call her at a convenient time to invite her and Lisa to consider participating in my inquiry. An hour later, Hồng returned my text with a phone call during which I briefly shared my research puzzles and my commitment to living ethics of care (Noddings, 2013) alongside the co-researchers. Hồng said she understood all points, and we scheduled a visit to her home in early June so she could learn more about my inquiry.

Shortly afterwards, on a weekend in mid-June, Hồng invited me, Joey, and Sherry to their home for dinner. When we arrived, Bà was cooking Vietnamese vermicelli and frying spring rolls. The aroma of delicious food filled the house, and Lisa and Misa ran to the door with wide welcoming smiles. I offered to help with the cooking, but Bà declined my assistance saying she was happy to do it herself. Still holding cooking chopsticks in her hands, Bà told us to go swimming for a while and to return when the food was ready. In our culture, it is thought that being active before meals makes us hungry; thus, the feeling of good eating was sure to come.

---

down. Players take turns matching a card in their hand with the current card shown on top of the deck either by colour or number.



Quickly, Hồng, the four children, and I grabbed our swimming suits and walked to the swimming pool of their residence. I swam in the big pool with Joey, Sherry, and Lisa while Hồng enjoyed the small whirlpool with Misa. An hour in the pool ensured our appetites, making us thrilled to have delicious foods from Bà's kitchen. We talked and drank tea after eating all of the delicious Vietnamese dishes. When teatime was over, I asked for Bà's permission to talk in private with Hồng and Lisa because in our culture, younger people always request approval to do things from the eldest person in the home, whether we are family members or guests. Bà enthusiastically agreed saying she was glad to spend time playing with Misa, Joey, and Sherry.

Meanwhile, Hồng and Lisa invited me to their room where I shared about my research puzzles in more detail, my desires to live in ethically relational ways, and how I imagined the inquiry might unfold. Hồng carefully read all the points in the letters of information and consent for Lisa and herself. As Lisa was six years old at this time, I was grateful for Hồng's presence for Lisa's consent as I sensed this process may have felt more comfortable to her than if she and I had talked through the points without her mom's presence. As part of this, I shared a short description with Lisa about what I imagined we could do together as we engaged in inquiry. Hồng and Lisa were each excited to hear what I had imagined about our upcoming research journey. Hồng signed the consent letters for Lisa and herself,<sup>31</sup> and together we booked a date for our first research conversation.

### ***Introducing Lisa and Hồng<sup>32</sup>***

#### *Lisa in Her Words*

#### *Hồng in Her Words*

---

<sup>31</sup> In my Research Ethics application, I had prepared the assent forms for the children to sign for themselves, apart from the consent forms. When I received the acceptance from the Research Ethics Board, they approved the consent forms and said that consent forms alone were enough.

<sup>32</sup> After discussions with Lisa and Hồng, we decided to co-compose this narrative account as one combined account showing each of their lives as their familial curriculum making is not separated one from the other but closely blended and interwoven within their shared family and community contexts.

<p><i>My name is Lisa.</i></p> <p><i>My mom gave me this English name, a preferred one at home and in class.</i></p> <p><i>I also have a long Vietnamese name.</i></p> <p><i>My middle name is the same as my Mom's, and my first name rhymes with my sister's.</i></p> <p><i>I love my two names, as I love to speak Vietnamese and English.</i></p> <p><i>I like making friends; my BFF is my younger sister Misa.</i></p> <p><i>I could spend hours playing board games and doing physical activities.</i></p> <p><i>My other hobbies are painting and crafts.</i></p> <p><i>I enjoy playing piano but find it hard.</i></p> <p><i>Anyway, I love being active all the time.</i></p> <p><i>This year I am six and in Grade One.</i></p>	<p><i>First time I was far from home for overseas study was in Singapore.</i></p> <p><i>Doing undergrad in English was tough; it was a new language for me.</i></p> <p><i>Second challenge was the learning method; Singapore uses bell curve assessment.</i></p> <p><i>I studied as hard as I could to be above the class's average scores.</i></p> <p><i>The second time I was far from home was to immigrate to the new land in Canada.</i></p> <p><i>First year doing MBA was so lonely.</i></p> <p><i>I brought my children in the second year.</i></p> <p><i>Studying and working at the same time raising my kids was so hard.</i></p> <p><i>But I'm determined to overcome challenge, being a mother of two in transition.</i></p>
--	--

(interim research texts, created summer 2020)

I created the above poetic fragments by pulling from the field texts of Lisa's, Hong's, and my inquiry over the course of a year, during which Lisa, Hong, and I spent time together in seven research conversations and enjoyed ten other family gatherings that included outdoor camping, birthday celebrations, celebrating the Lunar New Year and Christmas, a farewell party for Bà, and gatherings on long weekend holidays.

As the fragment of *Lisa in Her Words* shows, as Lisa and I engaged in inquiry, her hobbies shaped our interactions. From her lived, told, and retold stories, I learnt that Lisa values that she has two different names, one in English and another in Vietnamese. Lisa also often shared stories about her hobbies: making friends, playing board games, doing physical activities, painting, and crafts. I was often drawn toward her critical thinking as shown in her thoughts about how she loves playing the piano but that practicing piano lessons is a harder experience. I often wondered how I would draw on my experience alongside Lisa as she engaged in hobbies and challenges during the year we were alongside one another. My understanding of Lisa's lived, told, and retold stories is shared in upcoming sections.

As is shown in my poetic introduction to Hồng, attending to transition was a very important aspect in her life. It was during my first conversation with Hồng that she expressed excitement to know more about how I came to my research puzzles. I told Hồng how my life had been full of transition, from my childhood in Vietnam to my time in college, to moving to Canada. I also shared stories my daughters and me when we were in transition in Canada; I told Hồng how these experiences were full of tears, tension, and loneliness. Hồng had resonated with my stories, saying that being a mother living alongside children in transition to a new country with a new language and a new culture was a "triple challenge," after which she told me stories of the many transitions in her life, first as an undergraduate in Singapore and then as an immigrant mother in Canada. Weaving across Hồng's lived, told, and retold stories were her experiences with loneliness, her hard work to earn good grades, her need to work during the day and study at night, and often, being a mother raising two young children by herself.

### **Narrative Threads Weaving Lisa and Hồng's Familial Curriculum Making**

Having opened some small windows into Hồng and Lisa's lives in the making and our continuous co-making of relationships with one another, this narrative account of our inquiry journey now turns toward showing the narrative threads I slowly awakened to: Living in Intergenerationally and Culturally Ethical and Respectful Ways; Valuing and Nurturing Relationships; Composing Lives in Two Languages; and Family as Always-in-the-Making. Since this account of Hồng's, Lisa's, and my experiences was the first narrative account I wrote, I long struggled about how to co-make with them a narrative account that respected the "touchstones of narrative inquiry" (Clandinin & Caine, 2013). Revisiting Young's (2005a) writing about how her earlier experiences of "threading the beaver pelt" with her father while she was growing up supported her to create and think with the narrative accounts in her narrative inquiry was key:

I begin this chapter by pulling the narrative threads that Niin, Aanung, and I share. I want to attach these threads to a circular piece of red willow, like my father taught me so many years ago. These are stories and experiences about how we have been shaped by the relationships we have had and to some extent how our relationship within the inquiry developed and grew. (p. 149)

It was the knowledge that Young (2005a) remembered making alongside her father's teaching on threading a beaver belt that gently guided my imagining and coming to understand how I could show the narrative threads I became awake to in Hồng and Lisa's lives and familial curriculum making. There are four narrative threads shown in our co-composed narrative account: Living in Intergenerationally and Culturally Ethical and Respectful Ways; Valuing and Nurturing Relationships; Composing Lives in Two Languages; and, Family as Always-in-the-Making.

***Living in Intergenerationally and Culturally Ethical and Respectful Ways***

From the beginning of our earliest time of starting to root and co-make relationships with one another to when Lisa, Hồng, and I sat together to negotiate the earliest and then final draft of this narrative account, I awakened to their knowledge and practices of living in intergenerationally and culturally ethical and respectful ways. This thread is significantly shaped by three lived, told, retold, and relived stories that I gradually awakened to as braided together and across their and my interactions with one another and with Bà: In Relation With Bà—Numerous Stories Lived, Told, and Retold During Our Inquiry; In Relation With Lisa—Numerous Stories Lived, Told, and Retold During Our Inquiry; and, In Relation With Hồng—Numerous Stories Lived, Told, and Retold During Our Inquiry.

**In Relation With Bà—Numerous Stories Lived, Told, and Retold During Our Inquiry.** These days my mind recalls my past visits to Lisa and Hồng’s home when my arrivals were warmly welcomed by not only Hồng, Lisa, and Misa but also Bà. Every time I reached their home, Bà greeted me at the door with happy smiles: “Chào con gái. Con có khoẻ không?”<sup>33</sup> Having called me her daughter, Bà made me feel as a family member. In addition, of all the time I lived alongside Lisa and Hồng, I felt privileged and grateful for Bà’s support whenever I asked her for permission to have conversations with them. Bà always smiled with me, told me not to be shy, and said that she would help baby-sit Misa during the time Lisa, Hồng, and I talked with each other in their own room.

In Hồng’s home at that time, Bà was the eldest person, so everyone asked for her permission for going out, talking in private, serving tea, and more. During our earlier visit to Elk Island Park, and also during this weekend visit to their home, I had noted how Lisa and Misa asked for Bà’s permission. This reminded me of my childhood when my siblings and I were

---

<sup>33</sup> The meaning of this greeting in English is kin with: “Hello daughter. How are you?”

taught to obtain our parents' acceptance to go out with friends or when we waited for our Grandpa's permission for picking the oranges in our garden. I understood these relational cultural ethics that Bà, Hồng, Lisa, Misa, and I engaged in as we always asked for Bà's permission not only because of the hierarchical order in the family but too because we respected and honoured Bà as the eldest person in our midst. It would have been relationally and culturally disrespectful for me to not request Bà's permission to have a private conversation with Lisa and Hồng.

I also believe the support I received from Bà was a blessing in my research journey with Lisa and Hồng; in the winter of 2018 when I started writing my research proposal, I never thought I would be privileged to have Bà's presence in our narrative inquiry. Drawing forward from my memory the images I carry of her smiling greetings to my visits in Lisa's home in Canada, my mind travels across time and place from the Canadian city where we came alongside one another to Saigon, Vietnam where Bà reunited with Lisa's Grandpa after six months. From there, she sent me loving messages such as her wish for Hồng and me to live alongside each other like sisters. Bà also emphasized that as two Vietnamese women living far from homeland, Hồng and I should nurture reciprocal support in both sorrow and happiness.

I treasured these meaningful messages from Bà and carried them forward when living alongside Lisa and Hồng as co-researchers and people I have grown to think of as family members and friends. Recently, Hồng's family and mine experienced a tough time due to the tensions, uncertainties, and negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, as we followed Bà's guidance and tried to "support each other in sorrow and happiness," we were not prevented from continuing to grow in closeness and in supporting each other.

In time I saw again that Bà was also trying to be close and to support me in the gloomy panorama of this pandemic when my mother-in-law passed away in Vietnam. Sadly, we were not able to fly to Vietnam because of travel restrictions. I was thankful that Bà comforted me over the phone and later, she visited my home in Saigon and attended my mother-in-law's funeral. Bà's visit with flowers for our late mother and her sharing condolences with our family in Vietnam moved me to tears. "Hồng's parents attended your mother's funeral. Bà said she was the mother of your friend, Hồng, in Canada. Please tell her and Hồng that we are very grateful," my father-in-law told me during our phone conversation some days after our mother's funeral.

Profoundly, the experiences of being in relation with Bà recalled my earlier memories of my childhood when my grandmother taught my mother cooking, and later my mother taught me cooking. It is culturally significant that grandmothers are wisdom keepers and transmitters of knowledge in Vietnamese families and communities. As I have always treasured the knowledge passed from my grandmother to my mother and then, to me, I felt grateful for Bà's sharing of her life experiences, love, and care for all of us. I also find myself resonating with Minh-Ha's (1989) "Grandma's story," in which, as a Vietnamese feminist scholar, she emphasized the value of grandmothers' presence and voice:

Tell me and let me tell my hearers what I have heard from you who heard it from your mother and your grandmother, so that what is said may be guarded and unfailingly transmitted to the women of tomorrow, who will be our children and the children of our children. (p. 126)

**In Relation With Lisa—Numerous Stories Lived, Told, and Retold During Our Inquiry.** Throughout my time living alongside Hồng's family, not only did the stories Bà lived of intergenerationally and culturally respectful and ethical relationships become known to me,

but I also saw how her living in this way shaped how Lisa lived with her, with Hồng and Misa, and with me. Right from the beginning, when I first met Lisa at our camping trip to Elk Island, she named me “Bác,” which means “Auntie”. Every time I arrived, Lisa was either practicing her Vietnamese writing or playing with Misa, but she always stood up and greeted me, “Con chào Bác.”<sup>34</sup> Over time, I also noted that whenever I asked Lisa about certain things, she smiled at me with a Vietnamese confirmation, “Dạ Bác,” which means a polite and respectful “Yes, Auntie.”

As I experienced Lisa interacting with me as her Auntie, I often reflected on my life as an Auntie alongside my nieces and nephews in Vietnam. I was hopeful of bringing a playful environment to Lisa’s and my ongoing conversations and interactions with one another. For example, as we co-made paper carnations from coffee filters I had dyed with food colouring the night before, Lisa and I lived out the story I show below:

*Hằng: Lisa, now we will make paper carnations. What is your favourite colour?*

*Lisa: I love yellow. Could I have yellow, Auntie? I want to do it myself.*

*Hằng: Beautiful! You should fold it twice and cut the petals in scallop shapes.*

*Lisa: Yes, Auntie.*

*Hằng: Now you will make three and twist them together. Look! We have the first carnation.*

*Lisa: I find it so hard to twist them. Could you please help me, Auntie?*

*Hằng: Yes, Auntie will help you. Lisa, look at me please: Hold them, twist, staple, and then attach with a metal thread. And now you have a beautiful flower.*

*Lisa: So amazing. Thank you, Auntie.* (research conversation, Jun. 30, 2019)

---

<sup>34</sup> The meaning of this sentence in English is kin with: “Hello Auntie.”



As this above conversation shows, Lisa called me Auntie in all of her responses. Spending time together as an Auntie and a niece, Lisa and I created five paper carnations. Lisa was happy to put these into a vase on her piano and showed them to her mother with great excitement. Hồng was surprised to see our beautiful products and said the flowers would remind Lisa about her joyful time with me. Lisa was also thrilled to phone Bà and tell her about our co-made carnations, as shown in Figure 4.1.

**Figure 4.1**

*Paper Carnations Co-Made by Lisa and Me*



*Note.* Photograph taken Jun. 30, 2019.

Over time, I noted that as Lisa continuously called me “Bác,” my responsibilities as an Auntie became awakened; accordingly, I became aware that I was treating her as I do my nieces and nephews. Back home, I am an Auntie to thirteen nieces and nephews on both sides of our great family, and I have loved and cared for them in ways similar to how I love and care for my children. Besides, I am also a niece to ten Aunties in my patriarchal and matriarchal lines, and to me, they are strong women who have bravely transcended many hardships and earned many rewards of life. They always created comfort for me when I stayed at their homes as they did for their children. Situating myself as a niece of my Aunties and as an Auntie of my siblings’ children, I came to better learn that following the common intergenerational ways in Vietnam I

would be responsible for Lisa as a co-researcher and as a beloved niece. As is evident in the conversation of our making paper carnations, to Lisa I was “Bác” and to me, she was “con,”<sup>35</sup> just as I always call my children.

Thinking backward, I had not imagined this Auntie way of living with Lisa before it happened. I believe it was because early on as a graduate student, I became interested in the coming alongside in the living (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006) that I read from the work of many narrative inquirers (Huber, 2000; Huber, 2008; Lessard, 2013; Cardinal, 2014; Kubota, 2017; Swanson, 2019); these works drew me to want to engage in this kind of narrative inquiry. Even so, I did not know or imagine at the beginning of Lisa’s and my coming alongside one another, that the loving and caring between us—which sustainably developed as we spent time in research conversations, family gatherings, community events, camping trips, and even after we finished our co-inquiry—would shape an important thread in what I have come to know of Hồng and Lisa’s familial curriculum.

**In Relation With Hồng—Numerous Stories Lived, Told, and Retold During Our Inquiry.** As is present in many of the above told, retold, and relived stories of my unfolding relationship with Bà and Lisa, I also became drawn toward Hồng always calling me “*Chị*” (Sister). In our Vietnamese language, *Chị* denotes an older sister in a family; people also say *Chị* to show their respect in communication with a woman. Since our earliest conversations, Hồng shared the following:

*Nhà em rất vui kể từ khi biết bác Hằng. Với em thì bác như là chị gái của em. Có gì chị em mình cứ chia sẻ với nhau và em cũng học được nhiều điều mới về cách dạy con và nấu ăn*

---

<sup>35</sup> The literal meaning of this word in English is “a child.” Vietnamese parents call their children “*con*” and the children respond to their parents as “*con*” as well.

*nữa. Lisa và Misa thì lúc nào cũng muốn gặp Bác để chơi cùng hoặc là đi cắm trại. Còn Bà thì thích nói chuyện với Chị vì rất hiểu ý nhau.*<sup>36</sup> (research conversation, Nov. 11, 2020)

I remember that the first time Hồng named me *Chị* and shared the above story, I could not say any words but “Cám ơn em gái” (“Thank you, my younger sister”) as in that moment I was wholeheartedly moved by her sincerity, trust, and care. I felt grateful she called me *Chị* and expressed her seeing me as an older sister, a member in her family, and an Auntie of her children. Being named in this way reminded me of the beautiful hope my Grandpa embedded in my first name; it also reminded me that I am the oldest sister of three siblings in Vietnam. Despite our distance geographically and the busy-ness of our working, earning, and raising children, we are always by each other’s side. I love and care for them as a responsible sister, and they show their love “to the moon and back” across my life.

Over time in our inquiry, Hồng continuously lived with me as her older sister. In part, this meant we shared in the lows and highs of one another’s life making. Having felt empathetic with each other’s stories of raising our children in a time of transition, Hồng often told, retold, and relived her struggles and tensions with me, for example, in relation to Lisa’s piano practice:

*Hồng: Sister! Lisa likes drawing lessons, but she doesn’t like learning the piano.*

*Hằng: So how have you done?*

*Hồng: I have to force her and sit beside her; otherwise, she does not practice willingly.*

*Hằng: How about Bà’s opinion?*

---

<sup>36</sup> The meaning of this sharing in English is kin with:

*My family have been very happy since when we knew Auntie Hằng. With me, you are like my older sister. As sisters we should share with each other our life sorrow and happiness, and I have also learnt many new things in educating my kids and in cooking as well. Lisa and Misa have always longed to meet Auntie for playing or going camping. As for Bà, she loves to talk with you as you both share mutual understandings.*

As I explained in Chapter Three, this quotation, and the first block quotation for each co-researcher in each chapter, is in Vietnamese because it is important for this work to present my co-researchers’ words in their first language (the language in which they spoke with me) at least once. Please see Chapter Three for a detailed explanation.

*Hồng: Bà and my spouse say that piano lessons are costly and that I shouldn't force Lisa if she doesn't like them.*

*Hằng: But you are still determined?*

*Hồng: Yes, because I know Lisa's characteristics. She only likes activities, jumping, and running but it's hard to tell her to sit in one place. She has never done a thing when being asked to patiently do that. She just wants things to be done quickly, which makes it impossible to learn the piano. Very difficult, Sister.*

*Hằng: So, what does Lisa think?*

*Hồng: She said: "I try, Mom, but I can't do it." However, I told her it's because she had not tried her best. If she tries her best and practices many times, she can nail it. I want to educate her in that personality, from little things: trying to sit quietly in one place, practicing carefully, and being persistent until she can achieve it. I myself also feel tired: having to spend for her piano tuition and spending time supervising her practice. Giving Lisa piano lessons was because I want to educate her personality, rather than hoping she will become a professional pianist.*

(research conversation, Sep. 29, 2019)

As Hồng and I discussed Lisa's challenges in learning the piano numerous times, I really admired Hồng's perseverance in helping her daughter overcome her impatience. I understood that as a mother who was always trying to slow down in the busyness of her life to understand her child's experiences, Hồng was not desiring the piano lessons for Lisa so she would become a professional pianist. Rather, Hồng embraced piano as a medium in their familial curriculum making from which Lisa's personalities would be nurtured—in particular, that through this practice she would learn to value perseverance and working at developing a skill even when it is

challenging. Often, Hồng and I wondered how Lisa might experience her piano learning in the future as well as how her personal traits might grow through this practice.

Seeing herself as my younger sister, Hồng did not only share her tensions with me in our meetings. In time, I realized she also came to me whenever she encountered questions in her family's life making. When we were suffering negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, Hồng and Lisa called me, and I texted them more often to be updated about their family members' health conditions—and to update them on ours—and to share things about which we worried or had learned. Sometimes, I helped Hồng with caring for Lisa and Misa, and Hồng brought me a hand sanitizer bottle and some facial masks. As we shared time and space with each other and with our families, our sistership was strengthened, even after our research conversations were over. Hồng often told me:

*Since I am the only child of my parents, I feel happy to have you as an older sister when living in Canada; we are here to help each other.* (field notes, Mar. 14, 2020)

When hearing Hồng tell and retell this story, I missed my younger sister who was living in Vietnam because I could not live close to her and support her childbearing and rearing. Thanks to Hồng's kind heart, I felt warm to have her as my second younger sister, which meant a lot to me because I have no relatives in Canada. As we engaged in co-making responsible and ethical relationships, not only as co-researchers but as sisters, Hồng and I shared many commonalities and parallel thoughts about living alongside our children as we were all in transition to Canada; we also shared many nostalgic feelings for our homeland and families.

### ***Valuing and Nurturing Relationships***

Throughout the time Lisa, Hồng, and I co-inquired into our experiences as a newcomer child and as mothers in transition to Canada, I witnessed their valuing and nurturing of

relationships. In time, I saw that this thread was woven by three strands: With Family Members; With the Earth and Multispecies Living on the Land; and, With Communities and Community Members.

**With Family Members.** As I grew to attend more deeply to our living in intergenerationally and culturally ethical and respectful ways as our inquiry unfolded, I slowly saw that connected with this was Lisa and Hồng's valuing of relationships with both physically present and non-present family members in their everyday life making. For example, raising Lisa as the older child, Hồng was keen on guiding her to be a responsible grandchild, both in their little family in Canada and in their greater family back home. During a conversation at the farewell party for Bà when she was returning to Vietnam before Christmas 2019, Hồng wholeheartedly expressed the following to me:

*I always tell Lisa that I love her to be an obedient and caring granddaughter. Whether she is here with Bà or comes back to Vietnam and spends holiday with her paternal grandparents, Lisa always shows respectful behaviour and helps them when in need. She loves all the Vietnamese foods that Bà cooks for her in Canada. She enjoyed the hours playing with her paternal grandparents in the beach and in their rose garden. (field notes, Dec. 10, 2019)*

Over the year of our inquiry, I never met Hồng's father, Lisa's maternal Grandpa. Although he was not physically present in Canada, images of him were visible in many of Hồng's told and retold stories: her childhood memories, the first piano lessons, and the music knowledge he transferred to Hồng and then to Lisa. Sometimes in my visits, I was lucky to see Lisa playing piano for her Grandpa, who was sitting in front of his cell phone screen in the distance of more than ten thousand miles:

*Lisa: Grandpa! Now I will play “For Elise;” do you like it?*

*Grandpa: Yes, I love this classic so much. Please play it for me.*

*Lisa: Yes, Grandpa.*

*[Piano music playing]*

*Grandpa clapping his hands: Lisa, you played very well. I see that if you can play the final notes a bit more slowly, it will be more wonderful.* (field notes, Sep. 29, 2019)

In addition to these happy moments Lisa shared with her Grandpa, like this piano playing conversation, Hồng usually encouraged Lisa and Misa to talk with him via video calls. During these conversations they had many questions about how he was spending his days exercising, cooking, and doing self-care. Hồng shared with me a fun story that she did a haircut for Bà under Grandpa’s observation from their kitchen in Saigon. Beautifully, I could see that while Grandpa was not physically living with Hồng, Lisa, and Misa, he still had a strong presence in their home. Indeed, despite the inability to meet him in person, Grandpa was still part of Lisa and Hồng’s everyday life making; he was also a significant co-curriculum maker of Lisa and Hồng’s familial curriculum making in Canada.

Co-curriculum making was also present in Lisa and Hồng’s everyday life-composing when Lisa taught Vietnamese to Misa. I was privileged to have witnessed many moments of this teaching between the two sisters, similar to the story below:

*Lisa: Misa, please read after me.*

*Misa: Yes, Sister.*

*Lisa: be bè bé bẻ bẻ*

*Misa: be bè bé bẻ bẻ*

*Lisa: Good job. Now you read again! be bè bé bẻ bẻ*

*Misa: be bè bé bẻ bẹ*

*Lisa: Well done. Now you can go and play.* (field notes, Sep. 29, 2019)

Having seen how Lisa acted like a teacher and Misa practiced as a studious pupil made Hồng and me smile. Later, Hồng explained that she wanted Lisa to learn Vietnamese well so she could teach her younger sister. It made sense to Hồng that being a teacher would again make Lisa a good Vietnamese language learner: “She learns when she teaches; that is why I emphasize the importance of doing so to Lisa,” Hồng had insisted (research conversation, Sep. 29, 2019). I also observed many times that Lisa reminded Misa about cleaning up toys and storybooks in their play corner. Hồng often told me she was happy when Lisa encouraged and supported Misa, and that Misa also loved and cared for her older sister.

**With the Earth and Multispecies Living on the Land.** Over time, another way I saw stories of respectful relationships being lived, told, and retold in Lisa and Hồng’s familial curriculum making was in relation with the Earth and multispecies living on the land where they are composing their lives.

**“Con Yêu Quả Đất”<sup>37</sup>—Loving the Earth.** As our inquiry unfolded, I grew to understand something of and to admire how deeply Lisa loved and cared for the Earth. Lisa’s thoughts on the Earth first arose on a day when we played the game “Who Am I”, which I hoped could be a way for us to begin to come to know each other. During the game Lisa decorated her paper by gluing a pink heart and writing “blue” on it. She then added an ice cream with some cherries as this was her favourite drawing style. Lisa also drew a rectangular shape on the top left of her paper and asked me to guess what it was. “Could it be a TV?” I asked. Lisa laughed excitedly and shared, “I enjoyed the show Baby Bus, but I preferred to call them Khi Khi Mu Mu. That’s

---

<sup>37</sup> This is Lisa’s Vietnamese sentence. The meaning of this sentence in English is kin with: “I love the Earth.” In this conversation, Lisa spoke the first sentence in Vietnamese while the rest was in English.



the funny sound repeated by the main character, so I like it” (research conversation, Jun. 30, 2019). She also added “the earth” and sketched a tree with the words “my friend”, which she later explained, “I love playing with friends at school and at home. My BFF<sup>38</sup> is sister Misa. The trees are my friends, too” (research conversation, Jun. 30, 2019).

#### **Figure 4.2**

*Lisa’s “Who Am I” Artwork and Mine*



*Note.* Photograph taken Jun. 30, 2019.

Later, when I was curious with Lisa about her “the earth” words, she explained these to me in a beautiful way:

*Con yêu quả đất.*

*(I truly love the earth)*

*because it’s very important.*

*Why is it important?*

*Because the Earth protects us.*

*It gives us food and water.*

*What I need to do for the Earth?*

*Uh, I need to protect the trees*

---

<sup>38</sup> This is the acronym meaning ‘Best Friend Forever.’

*as well as protect the water*

*in the same way that we protect our home.* (research conversation, Jun. 30, 2019)

In the moment of this conversation, inwardly, I had been wondering about “the Earth” in Lisa’s artwork and was puzzled by many of her stories before she transitioned to Canada. However, in the busyness of the moment, I had not asked Lisa; this happened later in the day when I shared my wonder with Hông, who told me:

*In Vietnam, Lisa never talked about the Earth. It just happened after she moved to Canada. At school, Lisa enjoys learning about the Earth, planets, and life-worlds in her surroundings. I also borrowed storybooks from libraries and bought used books as Lisa likes reading, and books help broaden her knowledge. Besides, I think her love of the Earth was thanks to the natural living environment that we are lucky to have here. Take our home walks as an example. Everyday Lisa walks home through a park and she enjoys watching the leaves changing colour and the rabbits and squirrels running. She tells me that we need to protect the trees and the animals.* (research conversation, Jun. 30, 2019)

Hearing this story from Hông, I was grateful that she showed me the school story of “loving the Earth.” What Hông told me about Lisa’s love and care for the trees and animals as they walk home from school strongly rewound for me my images of afternoon home walks when Joey and Sherry cried with me about their unhappy school stories.

Later when I had some time with Lisa, we came to this beautiful conversation:

*Hông: Lisa, you like learning about the Earth. Don’t you?*

*Lisa: Yes, Auntie. I like reading books about the Earth that I’m living on, and other planets.*

*Hông: Please tell me some of your favourite books.*

*Lisa: I like Our Planet Earth in my classroom. It's very thick so I just read in class. At home I like Picture the Sky or Three Apples that Mom bought for me.*

*Hằng: What about other things you learn about the Earth at school?*

*Lisa: Oh Auntie. I love going on field trips to the Nature Centre and the zoo.*

*Hằng: Great. So did you bring notebooks to learn there?*

*Lisa: Not really. I did not bring a notebook. I saw the trees and the animals at the zoo. Our teachers told stories about the trees and we learn ways to love the trees. I also love to make friends with the cute animals. (research conversation, Oct. 12, 2019)*

From this conversation with Lisa, I learned that she was very intelligent in understanding the Earth from books, her teachers, and experiences during field trips. She showed me that her learning was not only with books and pens but also by attending to the real life of the Earth and more-than-human-beings outside the school.

**“Hãy Quan Tâm Đến Các Loài Vật!”<sup>39</sup>—Caring for the Animals.** Approximately three months after my conversations with Lisa about “the Earth,” we had a picnic at a lovely park. While Hồng was busy watching Lisa and Misa playing in the playground, Bà suggested a lake walk with me. As we walked and talked together, she found it interesting that I loved Lisa’s story of “the Earth” and—to my surprise—Bà shared another of the “the Earth-loving” stories Lisa was living by:

*One day, Lisa looked out of the house’s window and saw a person holding a stick hurt a stray cat on the road. She automatically looked for a pencil and paper to write something and hang it on the building’s entrance. She wrote: “Dear everyone, don’t hit a cat or dog. I saw a person hit a cat. That is a boy in the minimart. Thank you! I will tell the police. You*

---

<sup>39</sup> The meaning of this sentence in English is kin with: “Let’s care for the animals.”

*don't have to tell the police.” Another day when seeing a wild rabbit running across the street, she said: “Bà! We should not use real leather because we would kill the animals when doing it. Instead of using the real leather, we should use the fake one only. Let's care for the animals.” Lisa also explained to Bà about the reasons why the rabbits could hear excellently, why the owls could see well in the dark, why the earthworms could feel with their whole bodies, and why there is fog. Lisa has been able to do these as she has been taught about loving and protecting nature and animals. (field notes, Sep. 22, 2019)*

As I listened to Bà's stories about Lisa's care for the cat, the rabbit, and other species living in their neighborhood in this new place of Canada, and after I saw Lisa's letter (as shown in Figure 4.3), I understood more about Lisa's connection to the land she had been walking and living on and with. Through these stories, I grew to know Lisa as a young girl whose care and love for nature and the multispecies in her environment was growing as she composed her life in transition in a new country and culture.

### **Figure 4.3**

#### *Lisa's Letter*



*Note.* Photograph taken Sep. 22, 2019.

Coming to understand Lisa as a young girl attentively caring for multispecies also reminded me of our camping trip to Elk Island, a land and place significant in Treaty 6 Territory. One of my treasured experiences during my transitioning to Canada was my privilege to live on

this and with land where I have learned something of the ways of knowing of the First Nation and Métis Peoples, including some of the sacred teachings shared by many Elders. I remember the surprise of Lisa, Misa, Bà, and Hồng when first seeing the bison as we drove along the bison loop. Later that day, we visited the exhibit area and attended a session on the bison's roles in the First Peoples' lives in this place now known as Canada. At that time, Lisa told me:

*I love the bison as they are huge and strong. I like the stories of bison and Indigenous people, too. The narrator even gave me an activity book and very cute souvenir cards. I will stick them on the fridge when I come home.* (field notes, Jun. 9, 2019)

Seeing her excitement, I wondered how Lisa would build her relationship with this land of Treaty 6 Territory and the First Peoples and their ancestors as she continues to make a life here.

After that camping trip and during many other conversations with Lisa and Hồng, my mind often travelled back to my earlier connections with land in Vietnam. There, my children grew up in a big city where concrete covered everything from sidewalks to city parks. It was rare to see green trees or grass. Moreover, due to the heavy traffic, we became accustomed to using motorcycles to drive children to schools and back. Not once when Joey was in Grade One in Vietnam had I walked home with her, nor did I talk with her about the trees or wild animals when driving my motorcycle. Travelling forward to our camping trip in June 2020, I spoke with Hồng about these memories of my experiences with the land. She made a deep sigh when narrating the following story:

*Back in Vietnam, I was just like you. I spent my childhood in Hanoi mostly inside the home and at school. Very rarely did my parents bring me to the lakes and the botanical garden because they were busy working. When I grew up, got married, and settled down in Saigon, things were similar. Young kids like Lisa and Misa did not have many chances to play with*

*the soil and the trees. The city had unlimited concrete buildings but lacked green spaces for children. Even in the rural areas, countryside children learnt about the Earth in books rather than from practical lessons on the green fields.* (field notes, Jun. 6, 2020)

As I continued to think with this story alongside Lisa's living, telling, and retelling stories of "caring for the animals," I saw how Hồng was opening "new possible intergenerational narrative reverberations"<sup>40</sup> (Young et al., 2012, p. 57) in their familial curriculum making. Although Hồng's experiences of city life with concrete buildings and without green spaces was an intergenerational narrative reverberation that shaped the time of her childhood and her children's childhood across the place of major cities in Vietnam such as Hanoi and Saigon and the country's rural areas, she was gradually inventing a different story for Lisa, Misa, and herself to live by.

#### **With Communities and Community Members.**

*Food as Always Present When We Met.* Of all our times together, I was privileged that Hồng sometimes invited me to join her family for dinner after our research conversations. In similar ways, Hồng and her family became my family's guests at traditional Vietnamese festivals. In our gatherings, it was not by chance that traditional Vietnamese foods were always present when we met since this cultural aspect lives deeply in each of our identities. Throughout the year, we often shared and talked about our favourite recipes; we also cooked together and enjoyed sharing foods with our families:

---

<sup>40</sup> Earlier in Chapter One, I mentioned how Young's (2005a) conceptualization of intergenerational narrative reverberations helped bring to me the wonder about new possible intergenerational narrative reverberations, the intergenerational stories lived and told by Vietnamese newcomer families in transition to Canada as they compose their lives in their families and communities and in schools.

*June 2019, I came for sharing about my research;*

*it's hot and Bà cooked "Bún chả cua."<sup>41</sup>*

*July 2019, Bà and Misa left Canada;*

*Hồng and I rolled "Gỏi cuốn"<sup>42</sup> and cooked "Phở."<sup>43</sup>*

*September 2019, Bà returned, and she brought dried bamboo shoots;*

*we were happy to try her "Bún măng vịt."<sup>44</sup>*

*October 2019, we celebrated Lisa's birthday;*

*Bà steamed "Xôi vò,"<sup>45</sup> Hồng made "Nem,"<sup>46</sup> and I brought "Chả giò."<sup>47</sup>*

*January 2020, Tết came as our Vietnamese's New Year festival;*

*together we wrapped, boiled, and ate Bánh Chung for celebrations.*

(combined field notes, Jun. 2019 to Jan. 2020)

As these field notes show, a plethora of Vietnamese traditional dishes have shaped our inquiry, whose ingredients were mostly brought to Canada along with our transition. It was not until later in our inquiry that I realized how this food meaningfully connected Hồng and Lisa with me, and Hồng's family with my family. Every kind of vermicelli soup, noodles, cakes, and rice have carried not only our homeland's cuisine to our new place in Canada; these foods are also important in our composing our lives in transition.

Thinking deeply with how food was present in our time together, I found myself increasingly attentive to our happy moments of sharing delicious foods and happy stories with Lisa and Hồng's family. In time, I also learned of Hồng's serious anxieties about the picky eating

---

<sup>41</sup> The meaning of this dish in English is kin with "Crab meat vermicelli."

<sup>42</sup> The meaning of this dish in English is kin with "Vietnamese spring roll".

<sup>43</sup> "Phở" or Pho in English is a very typical dish of Vietnamese cuisine and well-known all over the world.

<sup>44</sup> The meaning of this dish in English is kin with "Duck meat and bamboo shoots vermicelli."

<sup>45</sup> The meaning of this dish in English is kin with "Glutinous rice steamed with split peas."

<sup>46</sup> The meaning of this dish in English is kin with "Vietnamese fermented pork roll."

<sup>47</sup> The meaning of this dish in English is kin with "Fried spring roll."

habits of Lisa and Misa. In our teatime, Hồng expressed her feelings of uncertainties regarding what she should do to build healthy eating habits for Lisa and Misa:

*Hồng: I remember when Lisa was at Kindergarten in Vietnam, she always finished her lunch at school. Kids like her were “scared of” teachers so they never dared to skip lunches.*

*Hằng: I see. How about when Lisa attended Grade One here?*

*Hồng: Oh, she always brought the whole lunch home after school. Here kids have freedom in their eating at school, so Lisa liked to skip her meals to play with friends.*

*Hằng: So, did she feel hungry?*

*Hồng: Not at all, Sis. Lisa told me she was never hungry. But I was worried sick.*

(research conversation, Sep. 29, 2019)

This lunchtime story was repeated so many times that even Bà became concerned. Consequently, after schooltime, Bà began to ask the girls to eat more at home. I witnessed many moments of Bà teaching her grandchildren that the farmers worked hard to plant vegetables and raise pigs and cows so that they could have foods to eat, and that they should have respected the farmers by finishing the foods in their plates and not wasting them. As always, Lisa and Misa thanked Bà for her teaching and they also said thank you to those unknown farmers. Happily, they finished the meals together.

**Desiring Good Relationships More Than Learning Languages.** As I was alongside Hồng and Lisa, I often witnessed between them the intergenerational narrative reverberations of how sustaining good relationships always mattered more than the hardship and rewards in learning languages. I recall, for example, the Saturday morning of our first research conversation



when I entered their home in the middle of Lisa's practice of writing the Vietnamese language in her notebook:

*Hằng: Hi Lisa. What are you doing?*

*Lisa: Hi Auntie Hằng. I'm practicing writing Vietnamese.*

*Hằng: Do you find learning Vietnamese easy or difficult?*

*Lisa: I find it very difficult. I don't like practicing writing.*

*Hằng: But I see you are very hard working.*

*Lisa: Mom told me to complete writing so that I could play. I want to make her happy.*

(research conversation, Jun. 30, 2019)

During this conversation, I noticed Lisa held her pencil firmly and kept writing Vietnamese words until she completed the page. I then saw her smile since she could now clean up the desk for play time. Apparently, I realized, Lisa did not practice Vietnamese writing because it was her favourite activity; she did so because she wanted to be an obedient daughter, which was a way of respecting and pleasing her mother. A week after hearing that Lisa wanted to play instead of practice Vietnamese, I saw Hằng again and she shared her tension about Lisa's difficulties learning Vietnamese.

Having seen how Lisa struggled with learning Vietnamese at home combined with my early sensing that Hằng was experiencing some tension about her teaching method, I recalled Hằng earlier retelling her memories of learning English, first in Singapore and then in Canada:

*After graduating from high school in Vietnam, I was awarded a scholarship to follow an undergraduate degree at a Singaporean university. I was far from home for the first time*

*and learning in English was so difficult.*

(research conversation, Jun. 30, 2019)

When Hồng first told this story, she showed me that she found learning in English challenging; adding to this difficulty was that her courses were graded on the bell curve system. Hồng described how this form of assessment created much stress for her as she tried to learn English. As she continued this retelling, Hồng noted that even though she experienced high levels of stress she “*did not give up learning English*” (research conversation, Jun. 30, 2019). After a few moments of quietness, as Hồng seemed to continue to remember this experience, she then added:

*Nine years later, I came to Canada to pursue an MBA program and I had no problems when doing my program in English. I believe this advantage was thanks to my English learning in Singapore. I see that learning a new language is very hard at first, but following the time and practice, everyone will find it more feasible.* (research conversation, Jun. 30, 2019)

As I continued to inquire with Hồng and Lisa, in time, I began to deepen my understanding of the intergenerational narrative reverberations of Hồng’s experiences learning English in Lisa’s making of her life in transition in Canada. Hồng once told me the following:

*Prior to coming to Canada, Lisa had never experienced any English lessons. Her struggle with English was visible for the first months at the Canadian school but with teachers and Bà’s help, Lisa did well at the end of her first semester. She enjoyed learning English, so her progress was amazing.* (research conversation, Nov. 11, 2019)

With my deeper attending to Lisa and Hồng’s stories of everyday life making, I began to see glimpses of these intergenerational narrative reverberations in Hồng and Lisa’s familial curriculum making. A mother and a child, they both showed tireless effort and transcended difficulties in language learning. And even more than language learning was the desire for good relationships among family members. Lisa practiced writing as she loved to please her mother;

resonantly, Hồng kept their tradition of speaking Vietnamese at home to nurture the mutual love and care between the children and their grandparents and parents.

Another time this thread—desiring good relationships as connected with learning languages—became visible, was during Lisa’s and my playing of the “Who Am I” game, which I noted in an earlier section. As we played this game, I could see Lisa’s pride when she chose Vietnamese words to write on her paper for the game. She wrote “*cô*” (teacher), “*bé*” (baby), “*sáo*” (flute), “*chó*” (dog), “*cá*” (fish), and “*cho*” (give). As she wrote these words, Lisa told me she was fond of not only the beautiful meaning of these words but also the action of writing them on the paper: “*It’s not that I’m writing, but I’m drawing these words. I like drawing words*” (research conversation, Jun. 30, 2019).

I remember feeling deeply drawn in by the ways Lisa was thinking with these Vietnamese words. Additionally, I was intrigued that Lisa felt passion for our home language. In time, as I previously showed, I also grew to understand how central maintaining good relationships was in supporting Lisa’s learning of both Vietnamese and English. I wondered if this centrality of maintaining good relationships would continue for Lisa, especially if the focus on learning only English and French in her school curriculum-making world continued to dominate.

### ***Composing Lives in Two Languages***

Following my careful and slow attending to Lisa and Hồng’s familial curriculum making, I found strong evidence of them composing their lives in two languages. I pull this thread from three story strands to which I became awake across the stories Lisa and Hồng lived, told, and retold during our inquiry: Puzzles About Supporting Lisa’s Long-Term Interests in Vietnamese; Place, Language, and People Tensions of Bilingual Living; and Facing Challenges With Language Learning.

**Puzzles About Supporting Lisa’s Long-Term Interests in Vietnamese.** Hồng, in her efforts to teach Lisa, faced many challenges in choosing Vietnamese texts she felt would be appropriate for and accessible to her daughter. During every one of my visits, Hồng told me about this challenge:

*I had brought “Tiếng Việt 1,”<sup>48</sup> the official Vietnamese textbook for Grade One in Vietnam, on my travel to Canada. It was a good book to help Lisa learn Vietnamese at a basic level, from the alphabet to simple spelling and pronunciation. However, after Lisa finished learning this book and we planned to move to Tiếng Việt 2,<sup>49</sup> I recognized that she was not able to progress with this series. Tiếng Việt 2 was so challenging with long sentences that Lisa felt bored and confused. She wanted to give up. (research conversation, Nov. 11, 2019)*

As I listened and continued to think with Hồng’s story, I learned to slow down in the ways that Lessard (2015) taught me. For example, in my slowing down, as I moved inward with Hồng’s story, I shared empathy with her as I had been in the same situation; I also carried the series *Tiếng Việt 1/2/3/4/5* to Canada intending to use them to teach Vietnamese to my daughters, but it turned out that only *Tiếng Việt 1* was usable. As I moved outward with Hồng’s story, I thought about the many comments I have heard Vietnamese parents make about how the current textbooks are too academic and theoretical for children to understand and that they are learning Vietnamese mechanically and not with their interests.

Parents have suggested that officials in the Vietnamese education system reduce the theoretical content and increase the practical lessons on living skills for children, but the

---

<sup>48</sup> The meaning of this title in English is “Vietnamese 1.”

<sup>49</sup> The meaning of this title in English is “Vietnamese 2.”

Ministry of Education is still making these changes and have not yet come up with a long-term textbook system. Thinking backward with Hồng's story, I missed the old school days when my younger siblings kept using the same textbooks I had used before. These textbooks were simple and interesting, and we understood them. We enjoyed reading out loud our favourite stories and singing poems before heading to school or during our home walks. I now believe this singing and reading was truly a showing of "children's ways of knowing" in my childhood. Re-embracing these joyous Vietnamese learning experiences in the past also raised questions about the days forward. I wonder if children in Vietnam will ever have a textbook system that would make their learning experiences as happy as those of my siblings and me during our childhood.

As I continued to think with Hồng's story, I began to wonder about Lisa's forward-looking story of tensions in learning *Tiếng Việt 2*, about which, Hồng had shared,

*One day Lisa was reading the textbook. She suddenly stopped and ran to me: "Mom, I don't want to read any more. I want to sleep." I asked her why and she showed me this sentence: Bin đem vở và bút ra tận chuồng ngựa tập vẽ, hí hoáy một lúc lâu, vẽ rồi xoá, xoá rồi lại vẽ.<sup>50</sup> It turned out that the sentence was too long and difficult for Lisa that she wanted to give up. This sentence has complex phrases, diverse punctuations, and confusing meaning. Even with certain words like 'hí hoáy,' I think it's unlikely to find an equivalent word in English. Therefore, if I explain these words in English, they could become more complex and tricky for Lisa's understanding. (research conversation, Sep. 29, 2019)*

Hồng's story of Lisa's experiences showed me again that part of the challenge around

Vietnamese texts lies not only with the sentence structures but also with sentence meanings.

---

<sup>50</sup> This Vietnamese sentence could be roughly translated into English as "Bin took his notebook and pencil to the stable, neighing passionately for such a long time, drawing then erasing, erasing then drawing." However, the underlined words are not really equivalent in (emotional) meaning.

Slowly, amid these lived, told, and retold stories I recognized that Hồng valued understanding, which is much deeper than merely practicing and memorizing. Hồng confirmed my understanding when she shared:

*I'm aware that I should not continue with Tiếng Việt 2. It doesn't make sense when Lisa can't get through those words. I think it is most important that Lisa can understand the meaning of poems and excerpts she reads. Once she understands a piece, she will remember it for long.* (research conversation, Sep. 29, 2019)

**Place, Language, and People Tensions of Living Multiple Languages.** I learnt from Young (2005) and the sacred teachings of Indigenous ancestors that land, place, language, culture, and identity are intertwined. This learning offered me an interconnected and multi-perspectival way to understand the importance of attending deeply to Lisa and Hồng's stories of tensions when they experienced living two languages in transition from Vietnam to Canada. I gradually grew to see Lisa and Hồng's hardship in living the connections between place and language. One day Hồng brought me into an instance of this:

*Taking the word "thiên lý" from the sentence "Sau cơn mưa, chuồn chuồn bay trên giàn thiên lý"<sup>51</sup> as an example. Lisa has never encountered this word in her life making, and she has never seen this kind of plant in her neighbourhood. It's impossible for her to understand the word as well as the object that it denotes. (research conversation, Nov. 11, 2019)*

As I listened to Hồng's puzzle, my mind travelled back to Vietnam. I remembered that "thiên lý" is a kind of flowering vine plant and a popular vegetable for people living in the north; it also appears in folk songs from these regions. But what about the Southerners like Lisa who were

---

<sup>51</sup> The meaning of this sentence in English is kin with: "After the rain, the dragonflies flew above the scaffold of tonkin creeper."

born in Saigon? Many of them have no idea what *thiên lý* is as this plant is/was not in their place and would be unlikely in their experiences of gardening or cooking. I admired Hồng in the ways she could understand Lisa's triple challenge of learning those unfamiliar words: not growing up on the lands of this plant, never having opportunities to encounter this plant in her everyday life-making, and living far from the cultural context of this plant. Obviously, these challenges, as Hồng was aware, were impacting Lisa's learning of the Vietnamese language.

Hồng also continually worried about Lisa's English language learning. During our year of inquiry, Lisa was a Grade One learner at a Canadian school. As Hồng described, the tensions she felt continued to thicken when she learned stories from her friends in Eastern Canada being able to differently support their children's learning of English:

*When my friends come to Canada, they feel anxious that their children are not able to catch up with English. A friend in Ontario keeps taking her child to extra English classes at the weekend. I wondered how they manage doing that in the midst of intensive working and living.* (research conversation, Sep. 29, 2019)

With such stories from her Vietnamese Canadian friends, Hồng felt embarrassed, but she tried to connect them with her own situation and think about solutions for Lisa's language learning (research conversation, Sep. 29, 2019). I found it meaningful to see how Hồng inwardly travelled across the North and the South in Vietnam, and the West and the East in Canada to better understand how place and language learning were connected. Through this story I was awakened to how Hồng inwardly travelled back and forth with her relationship with her friends and her own particular family situation. As our narrative inquiry came to a close, my sense was that Hồng was still thinking with this difference between her family and her friend's family.

However, as shown earlier, Hồng had also become clearer about how central it was for Lisa and her to sustain good relationships with one another as they composed their lives in two languages.

**Facing Challenges With Language Learning.** I always admired that Hồng consistently welcomed me with smiles even though I knew her life in Canada was not easy. Helping Lisa with Vietnamese and English at home was one among multiple difficult experiences. While Hồng saw the importance of sustaining Vietnamese for Lisa's life composing in Canada, she also knew this was challenging:

*Lisa says learning Vietnamese is too difficult. She can't concentrate on writing or reading over ten minutes. I face struggles in persuading her. And as you know, I'm not a teacher so I don't know anything about teaching methods. I have no other ways but to force Lisa to learn Vietnamese, although I know that forcing is not good. (research conversation, Jun. 30, 2019)*

Listening to Hồng's understanding of her situation as a mother without a background in teaching, I better understood her determination to continue to find ways to support Lisa to read and write Vietnamese. Hồng was not happy about what she described as "forcing" Lisa to learn Vietnamese but expressed not knowing any other way. Hồng's tension about this threaded many of our conversations:

*Hồng: I read some books and they say that forcing is not appropriate in teaching children.*

*Rather, we should use elicitation instead. But I don't know how, so I have to force*

*Lisa first and then compensate with other things. Sis, have you got any solution?*

*Hằng: I think it depends on the age and psychological features. With a young child like*

*Lisa, forcing may be effective. However, when our children grow up, we need to tell them the meaning and benefits of their knowing Vietnamese.*



*Hồng: Yes, I agree. I will do as you say.*

*Hằng: I tell Joey and Sherry that they need to learn Vietnamese to not forget their mother tongue. It significantly bridges their understanding toward their root as Vietnamese people and keeps them from losing the communication medium with grandparents, uncles, aunties, cousins, and relatives.*

*Hồng: I think so. I always remind Lisa about learning Vietnamese so that she could understand the country of Vietnam and the people, and to keep talking with grandparents in Vietnamese. Bà often reminds us to always maintain Vietnamese at home.*

*Hằng: So true. I remember five years ago when we fare-welled our great family to fly to Canada, my parents shared their hope that I sustain Vietnamese for my children, that losing Vietnamese means losing our roots. (research conversation, Sept. 29, 2019)*

This conversation shows that as newcomer mothers, Hồng and I experienced commonalities in connecting Vietnamese learning as a part of our familial curriculum making with our Vietnamese identity and origin, as well as with family and relative bonds back home. Here, again, I am reminded of Young's (2005a) experience when she was forced to only speak in English at a residential school, instead of speaking her Anishinaabe language:

*I feel bad that I haven't devoted all of my energies toward learning it. I feel mad as the way things are set up here in Canada make it really difficult to learn the language again, especially in the education system! (p. 61)*

Young (2005a) helped me to more clearly see the difficulties of learning a home language after losing it for a long time, through which I grew more empathetic with Hồng's hope to keep alive Vietnamese lessons for Lisa. Moving forward, I learned that not only was Hồng determined to

support Lisa to continue to learn Vietnamese as she composed her life in Canada, but she was also determined to support Lisa's English learning, starting from the first day of Lisa's Canadian schooling:

*I talked with my Vietnamese friends in Ontario but personally, I don't agree that extra English classes at private learning centers is necessary. Lisa may find learning English difficult at first. But she is just in Grade One; I believe she will catch up after some months.* (research conversation, Nov. 11, 2019)

Hearing Hông's story I understood that she meant her worry about Lisa's English had been replaced by worrying about Lisa's Vietnamese. Again, Hông reflected that parents' perspectives are very important for children new to Canada since they help the children to navigate appropriate ways for learning language in the midst of transition.

### ***Family as Always-in-the-Making***

I grew to name this final thread "Family as Always-in-the-Making" as I could see a strong connection between this thread and Greene's (1995) writing about community as always-in-the-making. In her book, *Releasing the Imagination*, Greene (1995) indicated that a democracy is a community that is always in the making, a "community that offers the opportunity to be otherwise" (p. 23). In my view, every family can be understood similarly, as a family-always-in-the-making. In Lisa and Hông's family, there have always been open and safe spaces for every member of their family, as I have come to know their family, to have "the opportunity to be otherwise".

I began writing this narrative account one week after we went on a camping trip to Lac La Biche Provincial Park. Lisa's father, Nam,<sup>52</sup> had recently come to Canada, which made Lisa and

---

<sup>52</sup> Nam is the pseudonym of Hông's husband. This pseudonym was chosen by Hông.

Misa very happy, especially since he could stay for a longer time than before. Seeing the girls cheerfully roasting marshmallows with their father, I was drawn to the moments when Lisa missed Misa a lot and when they both missed their father and Bà. At Christmas 2019, when Bà left Canada, Misa and Lisa did not want her to go. Lisa once told me, “I always wish that my grandparents and father could come to Canada and live with us in the same house” (field notes, Dec. 2019). During this year of living alongside Lisa and Hồng, I witnessed many farewells and reunions in their family.

Thinking with stories of Hồng’s family transitioning across different lands and places, I travelled through memory to the beginning days of our inquiry when Hồng shared a story about some of these significant journeys:

*I was born and grew up in Northern Vietnam, but after graduating from Singapore, I came back and decided to start my career in the South. I worked there for ten years until my Singaporean alumni shared that they immigrated to Canada as skilled workers. Therefore, I applied for Canadian permanent residency and was lucky to be approved. Then I applied for the MBA program and departed for Canada alone. (research conversation, Jun. 30, 2019)*

Later, as I thought with this story and asked Hồng why she had initially come to Canada without her family, she sighed and then explained:

*I would have loved to do so but practically I could not. I had decided to travel alone first, so that I could know how living in Canada looked like: weather, culture, and studying and living conditions. As a mother, I did not dare to bring my young children to a new country without knowing if they could adapt. I spent my first year studying and getting to know Canada better, but I missed my family so much. In wintertime, I felt cold and stressed but I*

*told myself to hang on. Summer finally arrived and I travelled back to Vietnam and brought my daughters to Canada.* (research conversation, Jul. 6, 2019)

However, even though during her second year in Canada Hồng lived with Lisa and Misa, she still saw herself as a “single mom” struggling alone while she worked to raise her children, to manage her graduate study, and to earn a salary:

*At the same time with my program, I needed to work in order to cover my family’s expenses as well as my tuition. It’s challenging to manage working, studying, and taking care of the children. Working during the daytime and going to night classes make me tired. However, I’m grateful that Bà comes here sometimes and provides support with caring for Lisa and Misa.* (research conversation, Nov. 11, 2019)

Knowing Hồng’s tireless perseverance, I had much admiration for her when I heard about her achievement of a Masters’ degree with a good standing. I felt thankful and happy to join their family celebration on the day she convocated.

Lingering with stories of Hồng’s family as in flux over time and place, I reflected on these our more present days. Bà had left Canada six months ago at the end of 2019, and since then, Hồng had been taking care of the children and working full time. Thankfully, as time passed, Nam was finally able to come to Canada for a longer stay. Hồng told me that Nam had lived at-a-distance from his children and her for almost two years as he was doing his full-time job in Vietnam, which provided support financially for the entire family in Canada. When I wondered about her future plans, Hồng expressed the following:

*I’m very happy that Lisa’s father could stay longer this time. I love to see all family members live together in harmony and happiness. However, I acknowledge the family shifting so I would respect it if my husband finds it hard to adapt and wants to come back.*

*And as you see, I'm keen on teaching Vietnamese for Lisa not only because I want to sustain our home language, but I can also prepare for the case that they may come back to schools in Vietnam.* (research conversation, Mar. 14, 2020)

As Hồng retold this story, she supported me to better understand her life as a young Vietnamese mother who was brave and strong and who had great care and compassion for her children, as well as openness and optimism when living in the midst of fluidity that had become a continuous thread in their lives. Still, I could always sense that in Hồng's family's everyday living, every member's perspective was welcome and respected.

While I see many families in Vietnam living with two or three generations under the same roof, Lisa and Hồng's family was brave to live at a distance from each other. Moving backward, I remembered the farewell and reunion moments of Lisa and Misa with Bà and with Nam, together with their family visit trips to grandparents of both sides. I wondered then how their family may again shift in the future, whether they will stay in Canada or go back to Vietnam and how Lisa, Misa, and Hồng's experiences may continue to shift and grow depending on what the family decides.

### **Returning to the Piano**

More than a year has passed, and I have been blessed with Lisa and Hồng's sincerity and trust during our seven research conversations and many occasions of family and community gatherings. In the middle of June 2020, I visited their home to express my gratitude for their inviting and welcoming me to inquire into our shared experiences of composing lives in transition to Canada. I knew from Lisa that, that day, was her father's birthday, so I felt grateful and excited. As I watched Lisa at the piano playing the "Happy Birthday" song for Nam, (as shown in Figure 4.4 below), I remembered so many moments in Lisa and Hồng's stories of

loving the piano, their challenges with piano lessons, and the intergenerational reverberations of music making across their great family.

As we sang the “Happy Birthday” song in Vietnamese, I was reminded of both the tensions and the perseverance of Lisa and Hồng in their endless efforts of composing lives in transition in Canada. When I looked at the paper carnations on the piano that Lisa and I had made together during our first research conversation, their diverse shapes and colors reminded me of all the beauty and bumpings and meanings and multiplicities in the lived, told, retold, and relived stories in their familial curriculum making.

**Figure 4.4**

*Lisa Playing the Happy Birthday Song at Her Piano*



*Note.* Photograph taken Jun. 6, 2020.

## Chapter Five: Narrative Account of Coming Alongside Ryan and Thanh

### Beginnings

Tensions draw our attention to the inquiry edges where we can learn most by staying awake to the bumping places, to places where we feel the dissonance, the uncertainty, the sense that something is not quite right, the places that call us to ask ourselves, what is happening here? (Mello et al., 2016, p. 567)

I started writing this narrative account in July 2020 after a year and two months of coming alongside Ryan and Thanh<sup>53</sup> as co-inquirers. My writing progressed slowly during the summertime when I revisited Ryan and Thanh's experiences that were full of worries, fears, tears, and loneliness. During our time together, we lived, told, retold, and re-lived many repeating stories of academic failure alongside Thanh's feeling that she was not able to support Ryan in his school learning. After three months, I realized that my first draft of this narrative account had become stuck and that I did not feel right to go on with my writing. The insight from Mello et al. (2016) at the beginning of this chapter supported me to slow down and to gradually understand my experience of coming alongside Ryan and Thanh amid many tension-filled experiences. I shared this insight about "inquiry edges" and asking "what is happening here" with Thanh, who also felt we could slow down our inquiry journey by beginning with where we are at the present; this was different from when Ryan and Thanh experienced many fears for many months. The following four main sections now comprise this narrative account: A Year Later, a Healthier, Happier Story Begins to Be Lived and Told; A Year Before, Thinking Backward and Forward From Our Days of Rooting Our Relationships; Narrative Threads of

---

<sup>53</sup> Ryan and Thanh are pseudonyms of the child co-researcher and the mother co-researcher respectively. These pseudonyms were chosen by the co-researchers themselves. Ryan took this name because it is his favourite Thanh took this name as its meaning is similar to her preferred name at home.

Coming Alongside Ryan and Thanh; and, Circling Back to School, Circling Back to Hopes and Smiles.

## A Year Later, a Healthier Happier Story Begins to Be Lived and Told

### Figure 5.1

*Ryan Carrying His School Supplies for Fall 2020*



*Note.* Photograph taken by Thanh, Sept. 2020.

Thanh took this photo of Ryan right after an exciting tour of his new school on September 3, 2020. In this photo, Ryan is holding his new school supplies box that he received during the tour; he is smiling happily. After sending me the photo, Thanh telephoned and shared that Ryan kept smiling from that early morning when he knew he would become a Grade Two student at School Z:<sup>54</sup>

*Ryan chạy ủa vào trong trường cùng với em và bé rất thích xem ngôi trường mới và gặp thầy cô giáo và bạn bè mới. Đến khi thầy cô giáo gọi tên Ryan thì bé nhảy lên và cười rất vui. Cả lớp vỗ tay chào đón Ryan và Ryan được nhận đồ dùng học tập mới nữa.<sup>55</sup>*

---

<sup>54</sup> This is the pseudonym for the new school where Ryan attended Grade Two during the 2020–2021 school year.

<sup>55</sup> The meaning of this sharing in English is kin with:

Ryan ran into the school with me, and he really enjoyed seeing his new school and meeting new teachers and new friends. He then jumped up and laughed happily when the teachers called his name. The whole class was clapping for him and the new school supplies were handed over.

As I explained in Chapter Three, this quotation, and the first block quotation for each co-researcher in each chapter, is in Vietnamese because it is important for this work to present my co-researchers' words in their first language (the language in which they spoke with me) at least once. Please see Chapter Three for a detailed explanation.



(field notes, Sept. 3, 2020)

Thanh also said that Ryan wanted to thank me and that he was very happy, much happier than when he was in Grade One at the old school:

*Ryan feels happy and grateful. Seeing his smiles, my husband and I feel happy, too. We hope his new school experiences will be better than those that happened last year.* (field notes, Sept. 3, 2020)

As I hung up my phone after that short conversation about Ryan's excitement for the new school year, I travelled back in memory to our earlier experiences of Ryan transferring schools. Following our research conversation on June 15, 2020, Thanh and her husband, Việt,<sup>56</sup> asked for my help in calling School Z on their behalf to ask about the possibility of transferring Ryan because they were not able to communicate fluently in English. I made the call with my phone speaker on so they could hear the whole conversation. The office administrator of School Z picked up my call and said she would report back after talking with the principal. The day after, I phoned School Z again and surprisingly, the principal answered. He told me he had contacted School A<sup>57</sup> to verify information about Ryan. After School A agreed to move Ryan to School Z, the principal accessed Ryan's profile on the school district's online system. I thanked the principal on behalf of Ryan and his parents for his generous support. The principal shared that while Ryan was maybe at a "low learning level" (field notes, Jun. 16, 2020), he and the teachers at School Z would try their best to support Ryan's growth. In response, I explained that Ryan was speaking two languages, Vietnamese and English, and that his father could speak English for basic communication while his mother mostly did not speak English. These language stories in

---

<sup>56</sup> This is the pseudonym of Ryan's father. Thanh helped me by asking Ryan's father to choose a pseudonym; he chose "Việt" as it is a part of "Việt Nam," the name of our home country.

<sup>57</sup> This is the pseudonym of the school Ryan attended for Grade One.

Ryan's family's life impacted his English language skills at school and Ryan's parents needed School Z to support Ryan.

The principal listened attentively to me and said he appreciated our sharing so that he could better understand Ryan. Adding that he had been working with many children at School Z whose families were new to Canada, he described his awareness of how being bilingual could impact children's English language learning. However, this principal, unlike Sherry's teacher in Grade One, told me to advise Ryan's parents to continue speaking Vietnamese at home so that Ryan would not forget his mother language. The principal said he and the staff acknowledged cultural and linguistic diversity. Moreover, he emphasized that children in early grade levels who lived in another language environment at home would become bilingual over time. He felt their multiple languages were strengths.

The principal noted too that Ryan's difficulties pronouncing several complex sounds were likely connected to his zone of proximal development.<sup>58</sup> Again, he assured us that School Z would support Ryan in his learning. Eventually, the principal told me School Z accepted Ryan for Grade Two. He advised me to contact School A to let them know Ryan was accepted at School Z for fall 2020, while his younger brother would remain at School A. Feeling moved by what the principal shared, I thanked him on behalf of Ryan's family. I was impressed that he talked with me for more than half an hour.

After I contacted School A via email and shared with them the decision for Ryan and his brother, I received a confirmation email from the principal's assistant. With excitement, I texted

---

<sup>58</sup> The "zone of proximal development," a theory developed by Vygotsky (1978), is defined as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86).

Thanh to give me a call. That afternoon Thanh spoke to me via video call on the FaceTime app, and I shared with her my conversation with the principal of School Z. Thanh smiled as she said,

*Thank you very much for helping our family. We thank the principal of School Z for understanding our situation and accepting Ryan. Ryan is so happy, and he keeps asking when he can go to the new school. My husband and I also feel happy and lucky. But do I need to visit School Z and submit any documents?* (field notes, Jun. 17, 2020)

Thanh's words showed me the happiness spreading among Ryan and his parents. I also let Thanh know she did not need to visit the new school to submit Ryan's documents, such as his report cards, since the principal was able to access Ryan's profile on the online district-wide system. Thanh responded that she knew School Z was a good one based on the principal's help, and that she hoped Ryan would be happy and learn well at this new school.

Thanh then asked me about the preparation for the next school year for Ryan, and we discussed the school supply list. I visited School Z's website to view their instructions about purchasing school supplies. Following this, I searched for Ryan's Grade Two list so Thanh and I could work together to discuss the items. We eventually came up with a final list, and Thanh asked me to help her complete the online transaction since she did not know how to do this. In the middle of our call, Ryan came on the screen and excitedly said, "Chào cô giáo,"<sup>59</sup> as he greeted me cheerfully as always: "cám ơn cô giáo đã cho con trường mới và sách vở mới."<sup>60</sup> Indeed, Ryan was excited to know he would be going to a new school and would have beautiful supplies for the new school year.

Finally, Thanh expressed a feeling of restfulness about Ryan's school transfer:

---

<sup>59</sup> The meaning of this greeting in English is kin with: "Hello teacher!"

<sup>60</sup> The meaning of this sentence in English is kin with: "Thank you teacher for 'giving' me a new school and new school supplies."

*I can rest assured for now. We no longer feel stressed as in the past year. When Ryan was in Grade One, we felt worried when he did in-person classes, but we felt even more tired during the online learning because of the COVID-19 pandemic. For the whole semester Ryan could learn only a few lessons but I didn't know how to teach him. I felt so upset throughout that semester as I thought Ryan could not go ahead to Grade Two. Now that Ryan will move up to Grade Two, hopefully he will receive supports from the teachers and learn better next school year.* (research conversation, Jun. 17, 2020)

## **A Year Before: Thinking Backward and Forward From Our Days of Rooting**

### **Relationships**

These stories of a happier Ryan and a more comfortable Thanh gave me courage to travel back to the past year. I remembered clearly the day I first met Ryan, his younger brother Brian,<sup>61</sup> and later, his father Việt. I was honored to facilitate a parenting workshop one weekend in May 2019. My first session was instructing young children how to make paper flowers for the upcoming Mother's Day celebration. There were 16 children, and they enjoyed making paper carnations with colored paper, glue, and metal threads. Meanwhile, their parents were having a conversation circle on parenting with two social workers. Forty-five minutes passed and it was time to gather children and parents into a bigger sharing circle. I was happy to see the children excitedly gift their beautiful flowers to their mothers. The mothers thanked their children for the gifts and said they were grateful for my help. Together, everyone laughed and sang about mothers and grandmothers in the world.

---

<sup>61</sup> This is the pseudonym of Ryan's younger brother. Thanh helped me ask Brian to choose his pseudonym. He took this name as it rhymes with Ryan.

Soon after was break time for snacks and getting to know each other. While I was cleaning up and rearranging my craft bag, two young boys ran to me saying “Chào cô giáo.”<sup>62</sup> I remembered that the senior social worker had introduced me as a Vietnamese language teacher, so I wondered if this was why they greeted me in my home language. I felt surprised and happily responded, “Chào các con. Hai con tên gì?”<sup>63</sup> The bigger boy said, “I’m Ryan and this is my younger brother, Brian.” The smaller boy ran to the room corner and came back with his father, who greeted me and introduced himself as Việt. He thanked me for teaching his sons to make flowers, which they would bring home for their mother. I thanked them all and shared that it was my pleasure to know them and that I felt happy when they loved the paper flowers.

At the end of the workshop, the senior social worker wrapped up and saved the last words for me as the event facilitator. I sent my best thanks for their attendance and collaboration and wished them all a happy Mother’s Day. I also took that opportunity to briefly share that I was doing research with Vietnamese children and mothers<sup>64</sup> who are newcomers to Canada.

A month after the workshop, I received a call from Việt; he shared that his wife was interested in meeting me to know more about my research as she had been struggling over the children’s learning for a long time. Having told Việt I was happy to hear about his wife’s interest in my study, I asked him to tell her that I wished to see her at her convenience. Later that day, Việt texted me that Ryan and Brian’s mother wanted to invite me to their home on July 5, 2019.

---

<sup>62</sup> The meaning of this greeting in English is kin with: “*Hello teacher.*”

<sup>63</sup> The meaning of this greeting in English is kin with: “*Hello dears, what are your names?*”

<sup>64</sup> Two days before the workshop, I met the senior social worker who had founded the parenting group. I wanted to share about my research project and my invitation to the potential co-researchers. She suggested that I could facilitate their upcoming workshop. Therefore, when the workshop came to an end, she created a bridge between me and the attendants, followed by my handing over the letter of invitation with my contact information to the parents. Please see Appendix A for a copy of this letter.

With gratitude, I replied that I was excited to visit their house and share information about my study.

Time flew and July arrived. I took a long bus ride to their home at the other end of the city. As I stepped off the bus, I recognized their house number. In front of the house was a beautiful maple tree and two gorgeous cedars. I felt excited when seeing their front yard, which was full of Vietnamese herbs and green onions. As I was about to press the doorbell, Brian looked through the big window and saw me. He ran to open the door and happily welcomed me saying “Brian chào cô giáo,”<sup>65</sup> after which he ran back to the kitchen, shouting to his Mom that I had arrived.

Ryan, Brian, and their mother invited me to the living room and offered me some water. I thanked them for welcoming me and introduced myself again to their mother. She then told me that her actual name means “bright green” according to her mother. I was glad she shared the beautiful meaning of her name. I told her my name is *Thúy Hằng*, which my mother embedded with the meaning “blue hope.” Thanh and I smiled with each other as we recognized how each of our mothers embedded our names with colors. When I asked Thanh how she was doing, she told me she felt tired as she was in the seventh month of pregnancy. Then Thanh was silent for a bit and made a deep sigh. In those early moments, my gut told me she was in tension and tired amidst her pregnancy, working, caring for her sons, and helping with their school learning. I expressed to Thanh my respect for and valuing of the stories she shared of her everyday life.

Since my reason for being at their home was to share further about my doctoral narrative inquiry at Thanh’s request, these moments created a bridge for my sharing this information. I opened my folder and took out the letters of invitation for the mothers and children, one pile in English and the other in Vietnamese. As I mentioned that the contents of each letter in the two

---

<sup>65</sup> The meaning of this sentence in English is kin with: “Greetings teacher from Brian.”

different languages were equivalent, Thanh decided to take one in Vietnamese. I went through the letter of information related to my research, especially my commitment to the relational ethics of care for the potential co-researchers. Thanh wanted to know more about confidentiality so I described how I would use pseudonyms rather than their real names and remove identifying information to protect their privacy. In addition, I shared how I would negotiate with Thanh when I wrote the narrative account of our experiences and that nothing from our co-inquiry would be published unless I obtained Thanh's agreement. I checked with Thanh if she understood my points and she confirmed.

After Thanh signed the consent form, she called Ryan to our tea table so I could share with him what our conversations would look like. Ryan and Thanh agreed with all the points I mentioned, and Thanh signed the consent form for Ryan as a child co-researcher. Again, I expressed my appreciation for their willingness to come alongside as co-researchers. Thanh also thanked me for coming to their home to share about my research. Before I left, Thanh mentioned that though she was not feeling well due to her pregnancy and responsibilities caring for her two sons, she still wanted to share more with me about her worries of helping Ryan learn at home. Eventually, Thanh told me she would invite me to come over after her baby's birth.

Hearing these good-bye words from Thanh, I encouraged her to take good care of herself as good pregnancy health is important for both mother and child. I wished for her to stay well and safe for a smooth child delivery. Saying more thanks to Thanh, Ryan, and Brian, I left their home with excitement. As I walked to the bus stop, my mind kept reverberating with Thanh's stories. Though our first meeting was for rooting relationships, and we had only had a short conversation, Thanh's worries, tiredness, upset feelings, and silence, as well as her deep sighs, altogether showed me her tensions and painful experiences as she cared for her children and their

school learning. I kept wondering and imagining what our further conversations would look like until I met Thanh again in October, a month after she gave birth to her third child, Willy.<sup>66</sup>

### **Narrative Threads of Coming Alongside Ryan and Thanh**

Coming alongside Ryan and Thanh over the course of almost two years, we lived, told, retold, and relived many stories during our research conversations, phone calls, text messages, and family and community gatherings. Later, as I lingered with all of the field texts and many memories, I gradually saw three narrative threads strongly reverberating across our co-inquiry: Living Layers of Relationality; Being Afraid of Academic Failure as a Sign of Full Life Failure; and, “All We Care Is to Help Our Children.”

#### ***Living Layers of Relationality***

From the beginning of our relationships when I first met Ryan, Brian, and Việt to the later time of my coming to know Thanh as we co-made our inquiry, I found myself not only coming into relation and growing relationships with Ryan and Thanh as co-inquirers but also with other members of Ryan’s family, including his younger brothers Brian and Willy, his father, and his grandmother. As I lived alongside Ryan and Thanh’s family, I often felt deep gratitude for not just inquiry relationships with Ryan and Thanh.

In time, as the process of growing relationships became visible, again and again, across the field texts, I slowly awakened to how strongly Ryan, Thanh, Brian, Willy, Việt, and Grandma lived stories of relationality with me. I created this narrative thread from four lived, told, and retold story strands: Relationality Opens the Potential for Co-Inquiry Into the Family-Ship; Relationality Opens Potential for Coming Alongside in Navigating Complexity; Relationality

---

<sup>66</sup> Willy is the pseudonym of Thanh’s youngest child; it was chosen by Thanh.



Opens Portals Into Ryan's Worlds; and Relationality Opens Potential for Friendship and Advocacy.

**Relationality Opens Potential for Co-Inquiry Into the Family-Ship.** Since the beginning, I entered into this narrative inquiry in the midst of my own life and in the midst of the co-researchers' lives, knowing that when I was co-composing this inquiry and a narrative account with each of them we were all still in the midst of our inquiry. Over time, I learned that unexpectedness is always living within our midst and that it is relationality that weaves across the ups and downs of our story living, telling, retelling, and reliving, including the potential for our co-inquiry into the family-ship that shapes and reshapes each of our home places.

I think of Brian coming first in this story strand of relationality as Brian was the first family member I met at the May 2019 parenting group. I remember my first impression of him: a young boy who always smiled, talked a lot, and liked playing with the materials in my craft bag. In his sweet voice, Brian had said to me that he would like to use coloured paper and scissors to make flowers for his mother. I showed Brian how to make paper carnations and invited him to use more coloured paper from my craft bag.

From the beginning of our time together to these present days, Brian always called me "Cô giáo," which is the same way children in Vietnam name their female teachers. Although I was not Brian's teacher, I think Brian, and later, Ryan, called me "teacher" and interacted with me in this way, partially because we first met each other when I taught them how to make flowers. Brian's warm greetings and his excitement when looking at my craft bag helped ease my nervous feelings, especially during my first visit to his home. When I arrived, Brian held my hands, waited for me to hang up my jacket, and walked me to the living room. I felt humbled by Brian's

hospitality, which made me more comfortable to enter their home when I still had no idea how my conversations with Ryan and Thanh might unfold.

In addition, Thanh often told me that Brian always talked about longing for *Cô giáo* to come and play with him. I was disappointed when we could not meet in person during the second half of winter and the whole spring of 2020 due to the social distancing COVID-19 pandemic requirements. Whenever Thanh video called me over FaceTime, I always saw Brian's smiling face when he suddenly showed up and said he missed me and wanted me to come over. I responded that I also missed him, Ryan, and everyone in the family. Later, Thanh explained to Brian that *Cô giáo* was busy and would come when the COVID-19 situation got better. Even so, the two boys phoned me and asked when I could visit.

That was also the reason they waited for me in the front yard before my arrival when I visited again in June 2020. As soon as they saw me, both sons quickly ran to hug me tightly. While Ryan held my hand and smiled quietly as he always did, Brian told me in a quick voice, "teacher, please enter by the back door; the front door is broken; Daddy is fixing it" (field notes, Jun. 15, 2020). Their words and hugs warmed my heart as I could feel they missed me, as I missed them. Every one of their greetings, smiles, pleasant words, and warm hugs brought to me a familiar feeling of being at home: a sense of belonging to a family-ship. I believe these two young boys wished to make my visits smooth and happy; these beliefs encouraged me to engage deeply with the lived, told, retold, and relived stories of painful experiences that Thanh shared with me over the course of our co-inquiry.

**Relationality Opens Potential for Coming Alongside in Navigating Complexity.** I feel blessed to have had the opportunity to also come alongside Ryan's Grandma (hereinafter called

*Mệ*<sup>67</sup>) during her eight-month stay at Ryan and Thanh's home. January 2020 was the first time I met *Mệ* during my sixth visit to Ryan and Thanh's home. I remember when I was playing Connect Four<sup>68</sup> with Ryan and Brian, she stepped into the living room holding new-born Willy. I greeted her, "Con chào Bà,"<sup>69</sup> and she responded, "*Mệ* chào con."<sup>70</sup> At that moment, even though I was in a playing spirit with the two boys, my mind raised a question, "why does Ryan's Grandma say *Mệ*?" Very quickly my thoughts connected with her accent, which I recognized was the local accent of Vietnamese people in the areas of Huế City. I had known that Việt was from the Imperial City, but I had never connected that truth with the way Ryan might call his grandmother. I had not known I would meet *Mệ* in my research journey so it was not until our meeting that my earlier knowledge of Huế people saying *Mệ* was called forward. I saw deep meaning and beauty when Ryan's family addressed Grandma as *Mệ* and she addressed herself as *Mệ*. This supported my gradual awakening to their ways of sustaining Vietnamese language, regional culture, and family traditions, which become visible in some of the upcoming narrative threads.

Later during teatime, *Mệ* and I talked while playing with the three boys while Thanh was at the kitchen table cooking dishes for their dinner. As I asked *Mệ* how she felt about living in Canada, she said she came to visit her children and grandchildren and to help Thanh and Việt take care of Willy. *Mệ* also thanked me for coming and playing with Ryan and Brian. Months

---

<sup>67</sup> The word *Mệ* has cultural, regional meaning. In Vietnamese culture, people usually call Grandma *Bà*<sup>67</sup> while the citizens of Huế city, the former imperial capital under the Nguyen Dynasty from 1802 to 1945, say *Mệ*. I learned from Việt that *Mệ* used to be the way to call grandmothers in the Imperial City as a mark of honour. As Ryan's paternal grandmother comes from Huế city, everyone in the family calls her *Mệ* instead of *Bà*, as we do in my family.

<sup>68</sup> Connect Four is a favourite children's game of children in which the players drop their red or blue discs in the grid and try to be the first to get four in a row.

<sup>69</sup> The meaning of this phrase in English is kin with "Greetings Grandma."

<sup>70</sup> The meaning of this phrase in English is kin with "Greetings from *Mệ*."

after she returned to Vietnam, Thanh shared with me that Mệ had no idea I was a researcher; instead, she thought of me as a teacher who came and played with her grandchildren.<sup>71</sup>

Mệ also invited me to come for Brian's birthday when Thanh cooked *Phở* as a treat for the celebration. As we sat together at the dining table, we invited Mệ to hold the chopsticks first as she was the oldest person there. First, Mệ thanked our Vietnamese ancestors for bringing us together on the land of Canada. Then she invited me to join the meal with her whole family. Later at our teatime, Mệ showed me the ingredients for *Phở* that she had brought from Vietnam, including cinnamon, anise, licorice, cloves, cardamom, and coriander seeds. Việt said that those processed ingredients that Thanh bought from the Canadian supermarkets were not able to bring together a great *Phở*, so Mệ had carried many ingredients along her visit to Canada. I thanked Mệ for her invitation and for sharing about her amazing *Phở* herbs; I remembered that those organic herbal ingredients have always been present in my luggage after every visit to Vietnam and that I have seen many families of Vietnamese ancestry cooking and eating *Phở* in Canada.

In Mệ's and my relationship making, I now realize we were not only alongside each other in these above noted happy moments. Mệ and I also grew a closer relationship due to the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in June 2020 when I visited Ryan and Thanh's family and learned that Mệ could not fly back to Vietnam due to travel restrictions and border closures. Ryan's paternal grandfather, Mệ's husband, was sick in Vietnam, and Mệ felt very worried for Ôn<sup>72</sup> but she could not find a way to fly home. Having witnessed her tensions and worries, I tried to calm her as I inwardly committed to looking for solutions.

---

<sup>71</sup> Back home in Vietnam during the time of my grandparents—and Mệ's time—there were traditional cultural stories that the teachers at the villages' schools sometimes visited the students' homes to better understand their families' situation and to talk with parents about the children's learning. In recent time, such teacher visiting stories have decreased due to the appearance of modern means of communication, but they have still been a meaningful tradition across many Vietnamese generations.

<sup>72</sup> In Mệ's hometown, Huế city, people call a grandfather as Ôn.

When I returned home, I sent an email to the Vietnamese Embassy to book Mệ on the July “rescue flight” of Vietnamese students and visitors who could not leave Canada. Three days later, the Embassy responded saying there was no seat left. When I shared this result with Mệ and Thanh, their frustration grew my commitment to try again. In mid-July I tried again and was also not successful. It was not until the end of August that I received an email from the Vietnamese Embassy that they could save a seat for Mệ, since she was a senior. I quickly informed Thanh so they could arrange the ticket purchase.

In early September 2020, Mệ landed in Southern Vietnam where she immediately quarantined for fourteen days until she received negative COVID-19 test results. After she flew to Huế, she was again required to quarantine. Mệ had to wait until October to meet Ôn, after eight months in Canada and four weeks after arriving home. When I phoned her to celebrate their reunion, Mệ expressed her thanks for my support. I told Mệ it was my pleasure to offer help as I know how important it was for her and Ôn to be reunited for his faster recovery.

**Relationality Opens Portals Into Ryan’s Worlds.** My slowing down to think carefully with the stories of relationship that Ryan, Mệ, and I continue to live and tell has showed me how the respect and care that shaped the relationships among Ryan’s family members influenced my relationship with him. As I lived alongside Ryan, a child co-researcher, I gradually awakened to two ways the relationality within his family and between me and his family supported my travelling into Ryan’s worlds: “We Are the Game Partners”; and, “You Are My Teacher”.

***“We Are the Game Partners.”*** Since the beginning, one way Ryan’s and my relationship grew was as “game partners,” which are Ryan’s words for me as he always wanted to have someone to play with. I played with him, and with Brian and Willy, whenever I visited. Learning

from Swanson (2019)<sup>73</sup>, I knew that playing could open potential for my travelling into children's worlds. Spending time with each other in many games contributed to Ryan's and my mutual understanding and co-making and sustaining of our relationship. For example, during the 2019 Halloween season Ryan and I enjoyed decorating his Halloween corner:

*Ryan: Teacher, Halloween is coming. I wanna make paper pumpkins.*

*Hằng: Yes, Ryan. What colour do you like?*

*Ryan: I like purple. Oh, a purple pumpkin?*

*Hằng: Sure. Take the paper you like and scissors.*

*Ryan: Thanks teacher. See, I'm cutting. I wanna make a Halloween corner, please.*

*Hằng: Good idea. How many pumpkins would you like?*

*Ryan: A hundred! I'm drawing.*

*Hằng: Very nice. What are these ornaments?*

*Ryan: A purple spider. A candy. A number 8. And number 6.*

*Hằng: Are they your favourite numbers?*

*Ryan: Yes teacher. I draw people too.*

*Hằng: Is this your family?*

*Ryan: Yes, my Dad, Mom, Brian, and me.* (research conversation, Oct. 20, 2019)

Following this conversation and co-making between Ryan and me, with a little help from Brian, we created a Halloween corner for the boys. They were excited to see Halloween decor in their home. "Thank you, teacher; now we can't wait to Treat or Trick and have more candies," they shouted happily.

---

<sup>73</sup> I came into relationship with Dr. Cindy Swanson when we were both doctoral students at the Centre for Research for Teacher Education and Development, University of Alberta. Her narrative inquiry alongside young children of Indigenous ancestry and their families has been very important in shaping my narrative inquiry.

## Figure 5.2

*The Halloween Corner Co-Made by Ryan, Brian, and Me*



*Note.* Photo taken Oct. 2019.

Thinking with these play-filled moments with Ryan and Brian, I also remembered another story of our playful experiences when Ryan told me the following:

*Ryan: Today I saw a butterfly. I like it.*

*Hằng: Why do you like that butterfly?*

*Ryan: Because a caterpillar eats one apple, two carrots, three grapes, four strawberries.*

*He climbs on a tree. He lays down and falls. He doesn't feel good. He's a big fat caterpillar. He eats a lot. He turns into a butterfly, and makes more big fat caterpillars.*

(research conversation, Jun. 15, 2020)

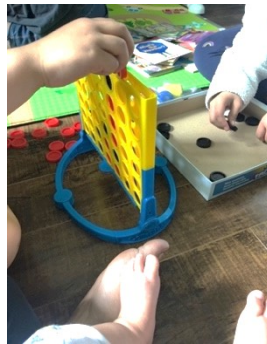
As Ryan and I played outside together during this conversation, he beautifully shared the reason why he liked the butterfly. That was his whole story about the caterpillar, which Ryan saw as his friend. Numerous times I witnessed how much he understood and loved small creatures like this caterpillar. Following this conversation, Ryan asked if he could draw and cut out an image of a butterfly; I was happy to agree. After we finished making a butterfly, Thanh told me, "Ryan loves reading about the animals, but I don't know where to buy or borrow storybooks for him" (field notes, Oct. 20, 2019). Knowing Thanh's desire to support Ryan's

reading, I quietly started collecting storybooks my daughters no longer read or from bookstores that sold gently used books. Later, I gave several books to Ryan and Brian during my visits, which they were very interested in.

Over the course of one and a half years, playing games at the beginning of my visits became a routine for Ryan, Brian, and me. Having learned that the boys loved crafts and mathematical games, I always carried my craft bag with me, as well as math puzzles and *Connect Four*. At Christmas 2020, the boys were happy when they received my gifts of books and a new game. Thanh told me they had much fun with these items and also learned a lot.

### Figure 5.3

*Holding Willy and Playing Connect Four With Ryan and Brian*



*Note.* I held Willy while playing *Connect Four*. Photo taken Nov. 2019.

***“You Are My Teacher.”*** Since first meeting each other at the parenting group workshop, Ryan has called me “*Cô giáo*”<sup>74</sup> since, in his mind, I was always a teacher. In addition, Brian, Việt, Thanh, and Mệ also called me “*Cô giáo*,” which strengthened our ways of being alongside each other as interchangeable learners and teachers. Together in this spirit of co-learning, we learned math, Vietnamese, and English during our meetings, either in person or via video calls;

---

<sup>74</sup> Ryan and Brian could understand Vietnamese, yet they could only speak Vietnamese in basic daily communication. In our conversations, I usually spoke Vietnamese and they responded in English. This is also the same as in their conversations with Thanh.



in this way we grew more playful with one another.<sup>75</sup>

Ryan told me many times, “*Teacher, could you please teach me math? I like learning math with you,*” to which I often responded by asking if he wanted to do math on paper or play some math games. “*I want game, game,*” Ryan often exclaimed! As Thanh was always sitting nearby feeding young Willy, she added that she needed help since Ryan did not like learning with his Mom though he was interested in doing math with teachers and friends. In these moments, I felt both honour and responsibility as I awakened to how they positioned me in our inquiry, and maybe also in their lives.

**Relationality Opens Potential for Friendship and Advocacy.** Earlier in this chapter, I shared my struggles as I began to write a first draft of this narrative account. I believe my growing wakefulness to the ethical commitments in my relationships with Ryan, Thanh, Brian, Việt, Willy, and Mệ gradually opened potential for friendship and advocacy. Two story strands interwove to shape this thread: “*As We Are Newcomer Mothers, We Become Close Friends*”; and, “*Thank You for Being Our Advocate.*”

“*As We Are Newcomer Mothers, We Become Close Friends.*” While I first came into relationship with Thanh two months after meeting Brian, Ryan, and Việt, our coming alongside each other in living, telling, retelling, and reliving our stories of the hardships and rewards of raising children in a new country brought Thanh and me into a close relationship. Recently Thanh shared the following:

*Teacher, how are you? I want to ask for your help in booking the flu shot for my family.*

*Yesterday we visited the clinic, but they didn’t accept us as we hadn’t booked in advance. I*

---

<sup>75</sup> Talking about playfulness, Lugones (1987) notes that it is “the attitude that carries us through the activity” and that “a playful attitude, turns the activity into play” (p. 16).

*don't know English, so I have no idea of how to do online flu shot booking. I think our family has you alone as a friend, so I want to ask you.* (field notes, Oct. 23, 2020)

Although I had never done an online flu shot booking, I promised to help. Later that night, I googled the city's website and figured out the steps. I quickly texted Thanh for personal information for members of the family. The following day she got back to me with pictures of health care cards and personal ID and information about birth dates, address, email, and health conditions. Thanh showed her trust when sending me their personal information. *"You usually help our family and I have known you for one and a half years. Once anything critical happens, I always think of sharing with you. As we are newcomer mothers, we have become close friends,"* Thanh had replied to me, followed by "thank you" after I was successful with the flu shot booking and sent her the confirmation. I felt gratitude for Thanh's shift in naming me "friend" in addition to "teacher."

As I attended to Thanh's thoughts, I was able to see that as a narrative inquirer coming alongside Ryan and Thanh, I was guided to support them as much as I could whether they were in healthy conditions or not. As we were often focused on tension-filled moments and situations in their lives, my heart felt right when I could do little things for them. Playing with Ryan and Brian, finding books, and taking care of Willy when Thanh was busy with cooking or picking up the sons from school, were ways I grew to live reciprocally with them. In this way, in Thanh's words, I became *"a friend, a helper"* of the whole family during my research journey.

***"Thank You for Being Our Advocate."*** Thanh often told me she was grateful I came alongside them as an advocate during their difficulties. I recall our last in-person research meeting when Thanh smiled with tears in her eyes after knowing that Ryan was accepted to join School Z:

*Thank Ms. Hằng very much. Now that Ryan is accepted to School Z, Ryan and our family are so happy. Thank you for being our advocate. During four months doing online classes due to COVID-19, Ryan had very few lessons. Việt and I were worried that Ryan couldn't make it to move up to Grade Two. Even when he could, School A might continue to say that Ryan is at a low level and suggest to us to transfer him to a private school. For Grade One, Ryan didn't like to go to school; however, he wants to for Grade Two as he knows he will have a new school and new school supplies.* (research conversation, Jun. 17, 2020)

These stories Thanh told and retold, together with her tears and smiles at the same time, returned me to her earlier painful stories of worrying for Ryan's learning:

*I'm afraid that Ryan will not be able to transfer to School Z. I observed that Ryan was progressing slowly and during the time at School A, he was grouped with other slow learners, so he did become slower. Therefore, I am hopeful that Ryan could join School Z because several Vietnamese families say it is a good school. Could you please help us to ask School Z?* (research conversation, Jul. 15, 2020)

Following this conversation, as I earlier showed, I asked for Thanh and Việt's oral consent and then contacted School Z on their behalf. Then, I orally translated the phone conversation into Vietnamese so that Thanh could understand, and we felt optimistic. However, her worry still hung in the air. While Thanh could finally put down her tension and rest assured with the news that Ryan would become School Z's student beginning in September 2020 she needed time to determine if this had been a good decision for Ryan.

The lived, told, retold, and relived stories that Thanh experienced through the process of changing schools for Ryan recalled my memories of changing schools for my daughters Joey and Sherry in their second school year after our transition to Canada. As I travelled across time to

those memories of past days, I remembered a significant and meaningful meeting of the Research Issues table of the Center for Research for Teacher Education and Development when I shared my confusion about my children's unhappy school stories. At that time, Dr. Raymond and Dr. Huber shared their willingness to be my advocates. Even now I am grateful for their advocacy as they walked alongside my children and me; thankfully, with their guidance and support, I was successful in transferring my children to a new school where Joey and Sherry have had happier learning experiences, alongside love and care from their teachers and principal.

### ***Being Afraid of Academic Failure as a Sign of Life Failure***

Throughout our inquiry I attended to the stories Ryan and Thanh lived, told, and retold about academics. At first, what puzzled me was that weaving within, between, and across these stories were no stories of success or happy stories about the children's learning. Instead, there were many stories about their fear of academic failure as a sign of life failure. As we gradually inquired into these stories, I grew to understand three ways these stories were lived, told, retold, and relived: Intensive fears and worries at the Grade One new school year parent meeting; A lonely and hopeless journey alongside the child's learning in school; and, Losing navigation capacity because of difficulties in language acquisition.

#### **Intensive Fears and Worries at the Grade One New School Year Parent Meeting.**

Apart from a conversation in which we celebrated Ryan's admission to School Z, I gradually awakened to how the rest of our meeting conversations, phone calls, and text messages were full of Thanh's deep sighs, silences, worried and frustrated eye contact, and tears. I remember when I first met Thanh and shared about my research that she shared feelings of worry for Ryan's school learning; there was an intensiveness to her sharing that signaled that I needed to stay attentive to this worry as our journey continued. Three months later, during our first research conversation,

Thanh shared many stories that confirmed my earlier sense of needing to stay awake. When I wanted to know about Ryan's first months of Grade One, Thanh sadly looked at me while she said:

*I had never expected Ryan's first parent meeting to be so sad. When I was excited to know about Ryan's first month at school, his teachers mentioned Ryan was a slow learner.*

*Therefore, School A suggested we move Ryan to another school, which they assumed to be better for Ryan. They introduced that school as a private one offering individual learning opportunities for children. I was shocked when I heard that such a private school's tuition was about 300 Canadian dollars per month. That amount was much higher than our financial situation allowed so obviously we could never afford it. (research conversation, Oct. 20, 2019)*

As I attentively listened to Thanh tell this story I also felt shocked. I could not believe Thanh's first-ever parent meeting in Canada happened with such negative experiences. In our Vietnamese culture, Grade One is the very first grade in school and is understood as shaping an important foundation for the child's whole school journey. Therefore, we always hope that our children will have smooth and happy learning experiences with teachers and friends in Grade One. However, Thanh's meeting with Ryan's teachers and principal turned out to be full of frustrating moments. When I asked Thanh the reason why School A suggested a school transfer for Ryan, she responded:

*Ryan's teachers said Ryan had a low language capability. He could do math or any lessons coming with pictures, but he was not able to write the words when assignments did not come with visual illustrations. The principal also contributed that Ryan had been having slow progress since Kindergarten. All these reasons together led to School A's*

*suggestion of changing Ryan's school. They concluded that Ryan should have moved to that private school for a year, and later when he could have the same language capability as his peers, he could move back to School A. I was so worried for Ryan. I almost cried and could not say a word.* (research conversation, Oct. 20, 2019)

As I heard this tearful story, and felt Thanh's enormous fear and tension conveyed through her eyes and words, my response was, "how could your first parent meeting happen like that, so unbelievable that they suggested Ryan change school right at the new school year meeting?" Saving my own stories of changing schools for Joey and Sherry for a later time, I asked Thanh to tell me what happened next. Thanh had continued:

*My English ability is not good enough to discuss with School A. I was able to understand that conversation thanks to a social worker whom I knew previously when attending pregnancy health care. Before the parent meeting, I had asked if she could help with interpretation and she was willing to help. After interpreting what Ryan's teachers and principal said to me, she told me that School A was not forcing Ryan to leave; rather, they suggested we should have done so. They continued to ask if I agreed or not. I became very nervous. The social worker understood my feelings and whispered to me in Vietnamese. I then replied to School A that I would discuss more at home with Ryan's Dad and let them know in a few days.* (research conversation, Oct. 20, 2019)

In our next meeting, Thanh told me that she and Việt decided to keep Ryan at School A as they could not afford to transfer him to the private school. They hoped that as time passed Ryan would grow stronger in his learning at School A with support from his teachers. In part, this decision was shaped by what Thanh had learned from the social worker:

*After meeting at School A, the social worker drove me home. On the way she said that she had had similar experiences when she first came to Canada 17 years ago. Her son's school had suggested that she should have changed him to an individual learning institution because they thought her son was not capable of learning English. However, she had not agreed to do so; instead, she let her son stay in the same school. He progressed a bit slowly, but upon reaching Grade Three, his English became better. From her story, I am advised not to do a transfer from Ryan's school. (research conversation, Nov. 17, 2019)*

As the months passed from November to June, I kept hoping Ryan would be happy in his experiences in school and that he would experience growth. However, as I shared earlier in this account about our meeting in June 2020, when the school year was about to finish, Thanh continued to retell this story of Ryan's school changing:

*Eventually we decided to let Ryan stay in School A. However, I observed that he did not learn well and found it hard to keep up with his peers. Now I want to transfer Ryan to School Z, but I wonder if they are still accepting new students. If Ryan stays at School A, I'm afraid that he will face more tensions in Grade Two. I fear that academic failure will follow him his whole life ... [a deep sigh]. His future will not be happy and successful. I could not imagine how his two younger brothers would go to school if Ryan fails in his learning. (research conversation, Jun. 15, 2020)*

As I stayed over time with Thanh in this conversation, I deeply felt her tensions, worries, and frustrations regarding the possibility of changing Ryan to School Z. Her fears thickened when she thought that Ryan's academic failure could lead to his complete failure for his whole life. In Thanh's storytelling and retelling she travelled across the relationship among her three children

as she wondered about possible mis-educative<sup>76</sup> reverberations of academic failure not only for Ryan's life but also for Brian and Willy's lives. For the entire school year, Thanh's deep concerns about Ryan's academic failure did not lessen.

**A Lonely and Hopeless Journey Alongside the Child's Learning in School.** I shared earlier about Thanh's and the social worker's hopes for Ryan to have better learning experiences in school after Thanh decided that Ryan should stay at School A. This was also my hope. However, our collective hopes were disrupted as Thanh told and retold stories of what she described as her lonely and hopeless journey alongside Ryan's learning of the school curriculum at home. Central in Thanh's stories were her feelings that there was a lack of communication between Ryan's parents and Ryan's teachers and school.

Amidst the decision to have Ryan continue his learning at School A, Thanh was keen on the thought that Ryan's learning would be fine given the guidance of his teachers at school and his parents' support with the school curriculum at home. However, as time passed, I recognized that Thanh's hopes were disrupted as she shared her disappointments with me:

*That first parent meeting was also the only one we had during the school year. I knew from Ryan that there would be a learning celebration at the end of the Fall semester. Ryan's Dad tried to book a 15-minute meeting, but he did not receive any answer, so we missed that chance to know more about Ryan's school days. We hoped to have at least one meeting with Ryan's teachers, but we didn't have any opportunity to meet and talk. We couldn't know how he did at school for five months.* (field notes, Jan. 22, 2020)

---

<sup>76</sup> Rury (1997) explained "miseducative experiences" that:

We know from reading Dewey that not all experiences result in learning, or at least not in the same types or degrees of learning. Dewey is quite clear on this point that some experiences are "miseducative," which is to say that they do not contribute to further growth. (p. 2)



Hearing about Thanh and Việt's efforts to contact Ryan's teachers, I suggested they try to book a short meeting either before school or when Việt picked up the sons after school. However, Viet never had that conversation with Ryan's teachers because, as Thanh explained, "from March, School A closed due to COVID-19 and there was no more parent meetings until the end of the school year; we could not contact teachers for Ryan's learning."

Following the appearance of COVID-19, Thanh's tensions and worries for Ryan's learning thickened:

*For all of four months learning at home, Ryan received six weekly lessons from the email that his teachers sent to Việt. Some weeks came with assignments while the others did not. Moreover, I didn't see any word spelling lessons or English writing homework for his practice. There were only some Math calculations and games and a few music lessons. Every time when Ryan finished math work, Việt took photos of them and sent e-mails to the teachers. But we didn't know how Ryan's work was assessed because there was no response from the teachers regarding Ryan's task results. (research conversation, Jun. 15, 2020)*

Together, these lived, told, retold, and relived stories of a lack of communication with Ryan's teachers showed me that Thanh and Việt were struggling to figure out how to shape their familial curriculum making to support Ryan's school curriculum. Their school curriculum-making stories and their familial curriculum-making stories were interwoven, but unfortunately, the gap between these worlds for their child was large, due to the lack of communication between Thanh and Việt and Ryan's teachers.

**Losing Navigation Capability Because of Difficulties in Language Acquisition.** As I came to know Thanh and Việt's feelings that they were losing the capacity to support Ryan's

school learning, I slowly realized that they were also feeling unable to navigate other institutional and social contexts. According to Thanh, their feeling of loss in navigating the children's school learning and other social contexts and supports came from their being English language learners. One day Thanh told me, "we finished the flu shot yesterday and I'm thankful for your help with booking. Otherwise I couldn't do that with my limited English." As I lingered with this story, I was reminded of an earlier conversation, which conveyed Thanh's struggles with teaching Ryan the school curriculum at home:

*Honestly, I can't speak much English. I can use English in basic communication such as greetings and grocery shopping, but for teaching Ryan and Brian at home I find it impossible. For example, while we were doing math, I don't know how to say "addition," "subtraction," "multiplication," and "division" in English, so I pronounce them in a wrong way. At the time, Ryan said, "Mommy, you don't know that." Things kept happening like that until one day Ryan told me, "Mommy, please stop teaching me English because you don't understand." Although I try very hard, I have never been able to help Ryan with math and English.* (research conversation, Nov. 17, 2020)

As Thanh told me about her feelings of failure despite her enormous time and effort teaching Ryan Math and English at home, I saw how silent the stories of parents new to Canada can be, especially for parents in the process of learning English and institutional, social, and cultural norms alongside their children in school and beyond. I kept wondering how their teaching and learning experiences of the school curriculum at home might progress, and I wanted to know more. In response, Thanh shared:

*At present Ryan wants his Daddy to teach him because Việt can speak English better than I. Whenever arriving home after school, Ryan would take out the books borrowed from the*

*school library and ask Việt to read with him. After that Việt would write some calculations of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. Ryan is very good at math so he can finish such assignments from Daddy very well. Although Ryan is interested in learning with Daddy, I think doing so is not effective because Việt lacks understanding of the Grade One curriculum. I see the problem, but I don't know English. Việt knows more English but he doesn't know how to teach Ryan in a better way. (research conversation, Nov. 17, 2019)*

These dilemmas that Thanh dealt with in every moment of trying to teach the school curriculum to Ryan at home grew more pronounced when she learned that her co-worker could help her daughter:

*My co-worker says that her daughter brings home several spelling words each day. They are based on a list and learn three new words per day. On the contrary, Việt teaches vocabulary to Ryan but he doesn't know how to do that in a systematic way. Instead, Việt usually writes down several random words in his mind or from Ryan's storybooks and asks Ryan to read and practice writing. I wish we could know the spelling words that Ryan learns from school so that we could help him practice and consolidate them. I believe if we have such lists for further practice at home, Ryan's foundation knowledge will not be as weak as it is. (research conversation, Jan. 22, 2020)*

Being alongside Thanh as she attempted to navigate this situation called me to share with her that when Sherry was Ryan's age, she had an agenda from school, which had helped me know what she had learned in school that day. However, Thanh made a deep sigh and said that she had never seen an agenda from Ryan's or Brian's teachers. When I suggested that reading books at home would be helpful, Thanh's response was that each day Ryan could borrow two books from school, but he wanted to read more. There were other factors too:

*Thanh: I wanted more books for Ryan to read at home, but I don't know how.*

*Hằng: You may also borrow books from our city's library.*

*Thanh: Oh, I have never gone to that library but Việt drove the sons there twice. Việt said the boys liked playing games over there and he found it hard to ask them to read books only. Thus, we stopped visiting the library. There was also a sad thing that we borrowed one book and it got lost during our home renovation, thus we received a fine ticket from the library. However, we had no ideas on how to pay for that ticket. Until I could know the solution, that charge was topped up to a hundred dollars. It's a scary experience that we never dare to borrow books again.*

*Hằng: So sorry to hear about that. How about buying gently used storybooks from thrift stores? I could do that if you like.*

*Thanh: Oh, that's a great idea. Please help me buy some for Ryan and Brian.*

(research conversation, Jan. 22, 2020)

From Thanh's stories of borrowing books, I recognized how significantly their being learners of English was preventing Thanh and Việt from accessing support resources in the city library, and elsewhere (i.e., health services). I thought that had others come alongside them, they could have avoided the traumatic experience of being charged so much for a lost book.<sup>77</sup>

Thanh's lived, told, retold, and relived stories of her tensions of living as a person learning English and facing difficulties in navigating social and community contexts, as well as in helping her children with academic/school learning at home, drew me back in time and place in my life

---

<sup>77</sup> Following this conversation, I visited thrift stores in my area and bought as many children's books as I could. In July 2020 when I came to celebrate Ryan's seventh birthday, my gift for him was two new storybooks and three full bags of gently used books. At the end of summer, Ryan phoned me, and he happily shared that he "eats all the books from teacher", which means that he finished reading all the books I gave him at his birthday celebration.

as I remembered my daughter Joey's crying moments during our walks to home after school in her Grade Two year in school. As I lingered with Thanh's, Joey's, and my stories, I realized there were parallels between our experiences as learners of the English language as we were composing our lives in transition to Canada.

***“All We Care Is to Help Our Children.”***

Gradually, I saw that Thanh's fears, tensions, worries, frustration, deep sighs, silence, and tears were also her ways of speaking about the hardships of their lives as she and her family transitioned to Canada. In time, I grew more awake to how deeply Thanh and Việt cared for their children, especially their learning experiences in and outside of school. Thanh's words, “All we care is to help our children” names this third thread. In making this thread visible, I have woven together three story strands: Making Home a Loving and Learning Place; Naming as a Way of Showing Care and Attention; and Longing for Supportive Relationships and a Sense of Belonging.

**Making Home a Loving and Learning Place.** I remember my first visit to Ryan and Thanh's home in July 2019. When I arrived, Thanh was busy cooking in the kitchen, so she offered me some water and asked if I could wait for a few minutes. During that short wait, I looked around the living room and felt its warmth through the presence of many children's toys, colouring paper, and a little piano resting in the corner. Letting my eyes wander further, I saw a tidy table with a vase of green bonsai bamboo. From the phone on the top of their fridge, I heard someone singing a Vietnamese love song in a sweet and gentle voice. The song depicted the love of the homeland and the hometown's river. I came to realize that I was seeing the presence of a Vietnamese lifestyle in this home of this Vietnamese-Canadian family. As Thanh and I talked, I thanked her for the water and shared my happiness at seeing images of our home country. Thanh

dried her hands as she told me that her family had lived in Canada for six years, but they still maintained Vietnamese living styles. Thanh added that Việt only loved Vietnamese songs and he turned the music on every day. As I listened to Thanh's stories, I shared my sense that we, as a young generation of Vietnamese ancestry, always carry our homeland's lifestyles to the new lands.

I was also reminded of the garden in Thanh's front yard, which I commented on to Thanh: "You have a great garden with lots of Vietnamese herbs; how long have you planted them for?" Thanh smiled as she responded:

*I'm not the one who planted the vegetables. Ryan's paternal grandfather came for a short visit and he planted a lot for us. You could see the cilantro, green onion, Vietnamese basil, hot pepper, and a humongous bed of lettuce. I taught Ryan and Brian to water the veggies and remove the weeds as well. Now I have fresh and organic vegetables when eating Phở and many kinds of rice noodles.* (research conversation, Jul. 5, 2019)

While listening to Thanh and simultaneously enjoying the herb garden through the window, I noticed the harmonious combination of the garden outside and a cozy corner for the children in the living room. Thanh understood my feelings and offered me more understanding:

*Việt made this corner for Ryan and Brian to play after they come back from school. Some days Ryan was upset while we were walking home. I asked him but he did not say anything. Just when we arrived at home, Ryan dropped his backpack and quickly ran into this corner. The toys, books, and mini games very soon made him happy. I don't know much about Ryan's school experiences but one thing I am certain about is that he always feels happy when coming home.* (research conversation, Oct. 20, 2019)

Thanh's sharing about making their home a cozy place for her children and family, and a safe and happy place to ease their tensions and vulnerabilities, turned me back toward my experiences four years ago. I remembered the home walk after school during which Joey had cried a lot because she could not understand the teachers' words, nor could the teachers understand her words. I could see that Thanh and I both experienced several common experiences during our first years in Canada.

As I attended closely to Thanh's stories of making their home a loving place for their family, in which the future lives of the children were central, I came to understand the richness of their familial curriculum making. There were very few images of homework and lessons from school, of books from the library, of a mother teaching in English, but I did see and hear many layers of beauty in their familial curriculum making: the play corner, the kids' toys, the storybooks, the Vietnamese music, the lullaby Thanh sang for Willy, the Vietnamese herbs and vegetables, the traditional foods we shared together, the visits from grandparents, and the many playful moments, and laughter, that we enjoyed together.

**Naming as a Way of Showing Care and Attention.** I also came to know something of Thanh's love for her children from the ways she named her three sons. It was interesting that when I visited the family in October 2019, Willy was just a month old. When I saw Thanh holding him, I was excited to know his name, to which Thanh responded:

*My little angel is named Willy. That is his English first name, which connects with his family name in Vietnamese. He needs another Vietnamese name, but my husband and I haven't decided yet. Naming is an important job, so we still need more time. (research conversation, Oct. 8, 2019)*

Thinking over how much Thanh and her husband cared for naming the children, my mind travelled back to a conversation with my daughters in winter 2016 and the story I told of my name. Through my, and now Thanh's, retelling of our naming stories, I have grown in my valuing of this tradition of naming children in our home culture. It was in January 2020 that Thanh again told me that Willy officially had a Vietnamese name:

*We decided to give Willy a Vietnamese name, which means "prosperity." When combining his middle name with his first name, the meaning is "prosperity from Heaven." Ryan and Brian also have Vietnamese names that mean "kindness" and "cleverness" respectively. We hope our children will grow up as good people and have a better future than their parents.* (research conversation, Jan. 22, 2020)

As I heard these beautiful meanings that Thanh embedded in the names of her children, I thanked her and shared that I also chose names for my daughters that mean "a happy chime" and "a bright pearl." At the same time, my mind travelled to my memories of my Grandpa, who always reminded me that I was named after a blue hope, and that I would grow up with hope throughout my life. Thinking forward, I wondered if my children would name their children in English or Vietnamese and how my grandchildren's names would connect with meaning. Inwardly, I silently thanked my Grandpa and parents for giving me a name with care and love. Outwardly, I wondered if other Vietnamese families in Canada, and other countries in the world, still sustain this cultural tradition of naming their children.

Over time, I also noted care and attention extended to naming people who connected with the family. As I earlier shared, Brian, Ryan, Mệ, Việt, and Thanh named me "cô giáo." My sense is that Ryan and his family named me "teacher" not because they thought of me in the way



teacher is understood or constructed in the worlds of schooling. Rather, this was a culturally respectful way of naming they blessed me with.

I was also, in time, named “friend” as we grew to reciprocally support each other in the highs and lows in life we experienced during our inquiry. The recent flu shot-booking story reminded me of a night in April 2020 when Thanh called me, and in a disruptive voice said, “Teacher; I feel pain in my chest and it’s hard to breath; maybe I got the COVID.” In that critical moment I could sense her pain and worry as she had three young children and a senior mother at home. Despite feeling tension, I tried to calm her as I advised her to call 811 and to reconnect with me whenever she felt the need. Finally, Thanh recovered after ten days, but her fear lasted for a long time. During that intense time, we called, talked, and comforted each other as much as we could. I remember Thanh’s call when she was fully recovered:

*Both you and I are scared by COVID-19, not because we are scared of death, but we are scared that no one will take care of our children. Moreover, when we are sick, we will feel lonely and stressed if we can’t talk and share with others. I was lucky that apart from my family, I also have you as a friend; that made me stronger to overcome my sickness. (field notes, Jul. 15, 2020)*

While Ryan and Thanh and the family named me teacher and friend, in time they also named me “advocate” and “interpreter.” As I shared earlier, these latter two ways of naming me connected with Ryan’s school transfer. Thanh said she was not capable in English, so she needed my help to communicate with School A and School Z, whether via email or phone calls. Months earlier, I had been invited by Thanh to engage as both an advocate and an interpreter as I had done during the four online learning months because of school closures during the COVID-19

pandemic. Thanh did not receive any instructions for helping Ryan with the school curriculum at home, nor did she hear anything from Ryan’s teachers about the online lessons:

*Please help me send an email to Ryan’s teachers to ask if there are lessons sent to Ryan for home learning. I only see the notice that school will be closed until the end of semester, but there is no point mentioning how to learn at home, thus I feel very confused.* (field notes, Mar. 30, 2020)

Drawing on what Thanh wanted, I wrote an email on behalf of her and shared Việt’s email address with Ryan’s teacher, which was later followed by the teacher’s response with several math lessons and online educational games for Grade One. This eased Thanh’s tensions a bit and she thanked me for being “a messenger” when I helped with interpretation between English and Vietnamese:

*So good when I have you to help with interpretation with schools because I don’t speak English and I don’t know who else to ask. Previously I knew that social worker, who supported us at the parent meeting at School A, but later she was very busy so I couldn’t contact her. Luckily, we have you as an advocate in communicating with Ryan’s teachers.*

(research conversation, Jun. 17, 2020)

**Valuing Supportive Relationships and Desires for Belonging.** The more I saw Ryan and Thanh struggle with tensions and loneliness, the more I became awake to their respect for and valuing of supportive relationships alongside their desires for belonging. The first way I became awake to this resonance was through the reciprocal relationships I witnessed among the family members. Right from our first research conversation, Thanh proudly told me about Ryan and Brian and their becoming more responsible after Willy was born:

*I'm happy to see Ryan and Brian become more responsible older brothers. Brian knows how to hold Willy carefully and comfort him when he's crying. Ryan can help bring the milk from the fridge. Since we have Willy, Ryan and Brian have slept in their own room, which last year I had found hard to make as their habit. They even remind each other to walk quietly while Willy is sleeping.* (research conversation, Oct. 8, 2019)

While Thanh was sharing beautiful stories of Ryan and Brian, she turned on her phone and showed me some captured moments of the two boys playing and cuddling with their young brother. Thanh happily told me she felt warm in her heart when she saw Ryan and Brian become more independent and offering more help to her as they took care of Willy together.

In addition to stories of family relationships among the parents and children and among the children themselves, during our Christmas celebration at Thanh's home, and later, at Ryan's seventh birthday celebration, Thanh told me she had felt very lonely until then, but that she now knew she received supports from friends and the community:

*Previously, I always felt that I was a lonely mother, and I couldn't help my children. But now I feel privileged when receiving much help from others. I have you as a friend and a teacher of Ryan and Brian (smiling). Besides, although I find it hard to communicate with my neighbour, she is always willing to help and very patient in explaining about schools. The lady working with me at the shop is also very kind. She is living a hard life, but she shares with me a lot in my frustrated moments.* (field notes, Dec. 22, 2019)

As I thought about Thanh's treasuring of these multiple supportive relationships, I remembered the social worker, who was present in Thanh's lived, told, and retold stories of Ryan's changing schools. As I shared my thanks for her respect, Thanh seemed to read my mind:

*And the social worker; do you remember her? She had advised me not to transfer Ryan to that private school, from her experiences with her son in the past. Therefore, we left Ryan at School A and tried to help him more at home. However, things didn't go well as we did not receive any homework or learning documents from Ryan's teachers. (field notes, Jul. 20, 2020)*

Thanh's story reminded us of the long journey we travelled together, especially of the painful and hopeless moments we experienced as we lived with many stories of Ryan's learning in school. Thanh continued, not with a deep sigh as she used to, but with a smile:

*Luckily, we could change Ryan to School Z. Though I have not met the principal of school Z, I feel so grateful for his generous help. When you translated for me that the principal mentioned Ryan's slow learning progress as a normal feature in his development zone, I learned the principal's care and understanding. That's why I'm very hopeful that Ryan will be happy and learn well at the new school. (field notes, Jul. 20, 2020)*

By listening to and thinking with her stories of treasuring the supportive relationships in her life in transition to Canada, I came to see how much Thanh nurtured a sense of belonging when living in this new country: belonging to family, belonging to the neighbourhood, belonging to the community in the parenting group she participated in (this was where she met the social worker), as well as belonging to the connections between schools and families within the society where she and her family are now living. As I thought about these many layers across Thanh's stories, I was reminded of the poem Ryan read for me during our fifth meeting:

*I belong to Grade One.*

*I belong to my family.*

*I belong to my school.*

*I live in Alberta.*

*It is known for the Oilers.*

*I belong to my city.*

*I belong to my province.*

*I belong to my country.*

*I belong to the earth.*

(field notes, Jan. 22, 2020)

### **Circling Back to School, Circling Back to Hopes and Smiles**

As this narrative account of my coming alongside Ryan and Thanh comes to a close, for now, I realize how full I am of the stories Ryan, Thanh, and I lived, told, retold, and re-lived. There were many stories that came with tears, tensions, worries, loneliness, and disappointments and many stories that came with smiles and happiness. All of the stories have woven together and threaded our difficult but rewarding journey as co-researchers. Two years is not a very long time, but as we engaged in our co-inquiry deeply, attentively, and always by centring the relational ethics of narrative inquiry, our tireless efforts finally brought happier experiences to Ryan's new school year, as shown in Figure 5.4.

#### **Figure 5.4**

*Ryan's Happiness After School*



*Note.* Photo taken by Thanh, Oct. 2020.

I received this photo and a text message from Thanh in October 2020. She described how the photo was captured when Ryan came home from school—he was very happy and ran to the garden where he shared about his happy day and helped Việt carry the bricks for fixing the back yard. Thanh shared that Ryan had been very interested in learning at School Z with his teachers and classmates. Starting that fall, Ryan received a weekly spelling list of ten words, and he enjoyed practicing them at home after every dinner. Thanh also shared that Việt had a video meeting with Ryan’s teacher and they were happy to know that Ryan was doing well at school. I can’t express how happy I felt, then and now, knowing that Ryan enjoys his school days. Thanh sent me a video recording of Ryan’s talk with her after school:

*Thanh: How is your school day, Ryan?*

*Ryan: Good, Mommy. I got 10 out of 10 for my spelling test.*

*Thanh: You did very well, honey. Would you like some snacks?*

*Ryan: I don’t want snacks, Mommy. I want Brian to move to School Z with me.*

## Chapter Six: Narrative Account of Coming Alongside Alex and Hiên

### Beginnings: Ways Friends Became Co-Researchers

A snowy day in the Fall of 2019, I was sitting in front of my laptop by the window watching the snow fall and wondering about my research progress. It had been five months since my research ethics approval, but I could not find the third mother–child co-researcher pair. Having been to churches, pagodas, heritage language schools, and centres for newcomers, and having had many connections from colleagues, I was still in a circle of recruiting co-researchers. I thought of moving my search to another city about four hours by car from my place. I knew this would add more challenges to my inquiry, but I did not want to give up.

Suddenly my phone rang. On the other side of the call was the voice of my friend, Hiên.<sup>78</sup> After greeting each other, we checked in about our families' health and how we were doing. Hiên and I were happy to know that our loved ones were doing well. Hiên told me she and her husband Trung<sup>79</sup> were busy working full time and taking care of their two children. In her free time, Hiên kept following her passion of crocheting, not only for her children (as shown in Figure 6.1) but also for friends and customers in her online shop. I shared my happiness that she could combine her interest with a small business.

### Figure 6.1

*Hiên's Crocheted Witch for Her Children's Halloween*

---

<sup>78</sup> Hiên is the pseudonym of the mother co-researcher; she chose this name herself.

<sup>79</sup> Trung is the pseudonym of the mother co-researcher's spouse; the name was chosen by Hiên.



*Note.* Photograph taken by Hiên.

In the middle of our conversation, when Hiên asked how my program was going, I mentioned that I had stepped into conducting my doctoral research but that it was challenging to find the third set of co-researchers. I described my search for Vietnamese newcomer children and mothers and asked if she could help connect me with any mothers who might be interested in my work. I heard Hiên's crochet needle stop moving as she told me my research was interesting and important. Then, Hiên suggested she could become a mother co-researcher and join my research as soon as I wanted. Hiên also shared her worry that her busy schedule could lead to more waiting time until we could meet for research conversations.

I thanked Hiên for her thoughtful sharing. Hiên's sudden suggestion filled me with both surprise and happiness. I was surprised because I had never thought I might come alongside a co-researcher who was among my friends. I was also happy because I could see Hiên's deep care for me even though we had not met in person for two years. I shared my thanks to Hiên for her care and kindness and expressed that I would think carefully about her suggestion.

Following that fortuitous call, I kept puzzling with Hiên's offer. Inwardly, I hoped Hiên and one of her children could be the third mother-child co-researcher pair. However, I felt concerned about the time constraint she had mentioned. Alongside this time issue, was also the fact that we were living a far commute from each other, which added to my hesitation. While my



home is in the south side of the city, Hiên's home is in the far north end. Amidst both of our busy daily work and mothering, I wondered how we could arrange time for travelling and meeting each other.

## **Growing Seeds of Being in Relation in Narrative Inquiry**

### ***With Hiên as Both Co-Researcher and Friend***

Travelling backward to summer 2015 when my family and I arrived in this Western Canadian city, our first months were very challenging due to the English environment, the colder weather, new living conditions, and our not having relatives and friends nearby. After three months, my neighbour told me there was a Vietnamese family coming to the community garden. That was how our connection started. I still remember first meeting Hiên and her two children, Alex and Alana,<sup>80</sup> as they were picking fresh vegetables and watering the plants. Both Hiên and I were gardening enthusiasts, so we soon became good buddies through our common interests in plants and flowers, and cooking recipes from our fresh crops. After that summer, we sometimes met during the weekends and on holidays—especially on our *Tết* and Mid-Autumn festivals, when we cheerfully gathered, visited, ate, and celebrated with our families. In 2017, three years after their transition to Canada, Hiên and her family bought a house in the north side of our city. Due to the long commute and our busy lives, I only visited their new home twice during their first year. During the next two years, while we did not meet in person, we sometimes visited via video chat or audio calls.

As I more presently thought back to Hiên's and my call when she suggested she and her son, Alex, could become the third co-researcher pair, I remember that later that day, as she was

---

<sup>80</sup> Alex is the pseudonym of the child co-researcher. Alana is the pseudonym of Hiên's daughter/Alex's older sister. Both pseudonyms were chosen by Hiên.

taking Alex to his weekly chess club in the city, she texted me to say she thought it might work for us to meet at this club. Typically, Hiên went with Alex and then she waited for two to three hours. Meeting at this club could also save half of my drive, which Hiên thought would be convenient and comfortable for both of us. I shared my gratitude and Hiên, Alex, and I met at the club the following week. While I was thrilled for this first meeting, I also reminded myself of the importance of my being wakeful and attentive to our overlapping roles as both co-researchers and friends.<sup>81</sup>

The last Thursday of October 2019 was very cold and windy. When I arrived, Hiên was waiting at the entrance; she waved to me and showed me how to get in. When I entered the common room, several chess players were taking a recess after their competitions. The room was cozy with many pictures of club members and two shelves full of books about chess tournaments. In a special area close to the door of the competition room, I noticed a beautiful shelf where many gold, silver, and bronze cups were displayed.

Hiên showed me to a table in the corner where we sat down comfortably. I asked about her and her family as she showed me through the glass window looking into the large competition room where Alex was playing chess with a senior club member. Alex had grown a lot during the years when we had not seen one another. I could tell he was concentrating on the game. I then briefly introduced my research to Hiên. My introduction was similar to, but more detailed than in our earlier phone conversation especially as I described the relational ethics that shaped how I wanted to live with Hiên and Alex during and following our co-inquiry. I showed Hiên the letter

---

<sup>81</sup> In Saleh's (2017) narrative inquiry with Muslim girls and their mothers, she also experienced the overlapping roles of both co-researchers and friends. I learned from her work that as narrative inquirers we are very careful to ensure there are no institutional research ethics complexities in this overlapping relationship while at the same time, we respect and pay much attention to relationship sustainability. As Sean Lessard had earlier shared with me, our co-researchers do choose us.

of information as well as the consent forms, and after she had read everything, she looked up and said she wanted to sign. As she did this, Hiên emphasized a point that was important to her:

*Alex thường hay mắc cỡ và cháu thường rất ít thích nói chuyện với những người khác ngoài các thành viên trong gia đình như bố, mẹ, và chị gái. Tuy nhiên chị sẽ kể chuyện về Alex cho em nghe, và chị cũng sẽ chia sẻ lại với em những điều mà Alex muốn kể với em.*<sup>82</sup>

(research conversation, Nov. 7, 2019)

I thanked Hiên and responded that I would respect Alex's ways and would follow where they invited me, including with the stories they chose to share. Hiên then surprised me again when she suggested having our first audio-recorded conversation the following week.

In Hiên's and my earlier friendship, she was like a big sister to me. During my family's transition to Canada, I went to her whenever I needed advice because she came to Canada a year earlier than we did. As we came alongside each other as co-inquirers, I was honoured and privileged to attend in more sustained ways to Hiên's experience as a newcomer mother raising her two young children in transition. During our first conversation, Hiên shared one of her writings about her family's journey from Vietnam to Canada:

*Five years passed quickly*

*as if it were yesterday.*

*I remember that day*

*my two little ones*

*were just at the same height as my belly.*

---

<sup>82</sup> The meaning of this sharing in Vietnamese is kin with:

*Alex is very shy and he prefers talking very little to other people outside the family, but I will share with you about his stories and bring back to you what he wants to tell you.*

As I explained in Chapter Three, this quotation, and the first block quotation for each co-researcher in each chapter, is in Vietnamese because it is important for this work to present my co-researchers' words in their first language (the language in which they spoke with me) at least once. Please see Chapter Three for a detailed explanation.

*I worried if they could get lost at the airport*

*so I hung a whistle*

*on each one's neck*

*and told them to blow it loudly*

*from one place*

*when they couldn't find me.*

*Now they don't need whistles*

*but my worries never end.*

*Five years, I started again at the age of forty*

*facing many difficulties in life.*

*However, above all,*

*I believe no matter where I live with my children,*

*that place is my home,*

*my love,*

*and my strength.*      (word image created from Hiên's writing, shared on Nov. 7, 2019)

### ***With Alex With Respect for His Characteristics***

When I met Alex again in October 2019, I remembered—and Hiên also reminded me—that he did not like to talk to people outside of his family. When we lived in the same neighbourhood where we first met and Alex rode his bicycle past our door, he only said “hello.” When I asked, “how are you?” he spoke little: “I’m fine, thank you.” He then ran after his older sister Alana. During the two years we lived beside each other, our families celebrated *Tết* holiday, the Mid-Autumn festival, and my daughters’ birthdays. Alex enjoyed the foods and games, but he preferred not to talk with anyone except Hiên. At that time Hiên had told me that

Alex was similar at school as he mostly engaged in conversations with his teachers. He played with classmates but rarely talked with them. Already then, I knew Alex was a unique child whose ways I have always tried to respect.

### **Figure 6.2**

*Alex Going to Kindergarten With His Sister Beside Him*



*Note.* This photograph was taken during Alex’s first year of transition to Canada. Photo taken by Hiên.

During our meetings at the chess club, I always talked with Alex during his recess or at dismissal after the competitions. Our conversations were always short:

*Ngày 7 tháng 11 năm 2019,*

*Tôi chào Alex: “Con có khoẻ không?”*

*Alex trả lời: “Dạ, con khoẻ ạ. Con cảm ơn Cô.”*

*Tôi lại hỏi: “Trận đấu thế nào con?”*

*Alex trả lời: “Dạ khá tốt ạ.”*

*Tôi thêm vào: “Con thích đánh cờ lắm phải không?”*

*Alex nói: “Dạ con rất thích ạ.”<sup>83</sup>*

---

<sup>83</sup> The meaning of this conversation in English is kin with:

*On November 7, 2019,*

*Hằng greeted Alex: How are you?*

*Alex says: I’m fine; thank you Auntie.*

*On February 19, 2020,*

*I said hi to Alex and asked: “Are you tired?”*

*Alex answered: “Yes, pretty much”.*

*Then he thanked me and came back to his game room.*

*Hiên later told me this story*

*One time Hiên told Alex that she sat in one place and her back hurt.*

*Alex told Hiên: “Mom, how come you are tired?”*

*You just sit only, and you don’t have to do a thing.*

*I also sit in one place, plus I have to think a lot”.*

(word image created from numerous research conversations, Jan. 8, 2021)

Although Alex’s and my communication happened in short moments, I could feel the care and respect he gave me through his polite greetings and responses . Alex always talked to me and his mother in Vietnamese. I have often thought about this since in my experience, it is more common for Vietnamese children who are growing up in Canada to speak English more than Vietnamese with their parents and siblings.<sup>84</sup> Alex also called me *Cô*, which means a younger Auntie in Vietnamese family-ship. Hiên had taught him to greet me as *Cô* during our first years of knowing each other. Similarly, my children called Hiên *Bác*, which is kin with an older Auntie in English, as we all saw ourselves as members of a greater family.

---

*Hằng asked: How was the game?*

*Alex answered: Pretty good.*

*Hằng then added: I know you love chess a lot, right?*

*Alex replied: Yes very much, Auntie.*

<sup>84</sup> I have observed that my children usually have conversations with me in both languages, and they talk together mostly in English. When being reminded, they will revert to Vietnamese but very soon English will come back to their conversations. They then say, “Mom, we want to speak Vietnamese, but our minds keep preferring English as it is faster and there are less ups and downs in intonation.”

It was also through those very-few-word conversations that I came to learn that Alex loved chess, drums, Legos, and dinosaurs. Attending more deeply to his lived, told, and retold stories, I discovered that Alex was a child with logical ways of thinking; he also had a remarkable ability for concentration. Later, as our co-inquiry progressed, Hiên supported me to understand more about Alex's experiences through the stories she told and retold. Through her stories, I learned more about Alex's thinking about his chess hobby:

*One time I told Alex that playing chess is good but it's only his hobby, so he should concentrate more on his studying to have a good profession in the future. "That profession will earn you a living and help finance your hobby," I spoke to him. But Alex responded, "why can't my hobby be my profession?"* (research conversation, Nov. 7, 2019)

Later, Hiên shared her pride that Alex won several awards in chess competitions, and he became more determined in making chess as both his interest and future profession.

Not only being passionate about chess, Alex was also very good at reading Vietnamese books. According to Hiên, Alex started learning reading Vietnamese at the age of two. At three years old, Alex was able to read several pages of children books, which was followed by his ability to read the full book as he turned four. As we had coffee outside the gymnastic class of Alex's sister, Hiên turned on her phone and opened a recording for me:

*Lắm khi em cũng nghĩ nỗi nhà cửa thế này là nguy hiểm, nhưng em nghèo sức quá, em đã lo ròn rã hàng mấy tháng nay cũng không biết làm thế nào. Hay bây giờ em định thế này... Song anh có cho phép nói em mới dám nói<sup>85</sup>...*

(field notes of Hiên's recording, Feb. 19, 2020)

---

<sup>85</sup> The meaning of the excerpt in English is kin with:

*Many times I have wondered if my home situation is in danger, but my health is in poor condition; I have been worried for many months but I had no idea how to deal with it. Oh, I have another plan like this ... But only when you permit, I will share it out...*

When Hiên shared this recording of Alex, I recognized that he was reading the Vietnamese children book, *Đế Mèn Phiêu Lưu Ký* (The Adventures of De Men) (Tô, 2007), which is a popular book with young children in Vietnam. I could hear Alex's fluency and found that his voice was exceptionally expressive.

### **Narrative Threads That Emerged Alongside Alex and Hiên**

Over 14 months, Alex, Hiên, and I co-inquired with one another as we engaged in eight research conversations (in person and over the phone), many short phone calls, video chats, and text message conversations. In my slow living with all of these field texts, I gradually awakened to three narrative threads resonating across our lived, told, retold, and relived stories: "Early Childhood Education Is Not to Create a Genius but to Help Children Develop"; Bumping Stories Between Broader Social, Cultural, and Institutional Narratives and Familial Narratives; and, Sustaining the Relational Ontology in the Everyday Practices of Children and Family.

#### ***"Early Childhood Education Is Not to Create a Genius, but to Help Children Develop."***

I named this narrative thread with Hiên's often spoken thought. In time, I realized the thread was shaped by her living, telling, retelling, and reliving of four story strands: Teaching children Vietnamese from a very young age; Rooting a reading habit for children's development; Playing sports as essential for children as eating and drinking; and Significant meanings of free play in children.

**Early Childhood Education Starts From a Very Young Age.** During our co-inquiry, I learned much from Hiên's ways of educating Alex and Alana, especially her practices alongside them in their early years. As I was struck by Hiên's stories of Alex being able to read storybooks at the age of three, I inquired into these experiences with Hiên, through which I gradually learned some of Hiên's perspectives on early education:



*Some parents think that early education is to make the child become a genius. No, I believe that they misunderstood. In fact, every human's brain system has two parts: the left brain and the right brain. For some people, their left brain works better than their right brain, while the others are vice versa. However, the right brain is best activated for children at the age from zero to six. And the best way to activate the right brain is through the photographic memory method. I have used flashcards in teaching Alex to read Vietnamese using photographic memory. I didn't aim to teach him to know letters or numbers; rather, my purpose was to stimulate his right brain. I learnt that after six years old, the left brain, which is in charge of logical thinking, is still developing but the right brain is not able to be stimulated. Therefore, I started showing the flashcards to Alex since he was six months old, in order to facilitate his memory's capability. (research conversation, Nov. 7, 2019)*

Later, when I shared the first draft of this co-composed narrative account with her, Hiên continued to expand my understanding on her perspectives about early childhood education:

*What I meant is early childhood education, not only teaching Vietnamese. My children learnt many things from flash cards: words, images, numbers, and so on. The ability to read is just a result from early childhood education, not the goal. (field notes, Mar. 12, 2021)*

As I listened to Hiên share this story about early education, I found her knowledge as a mother raising two young children to be filled with wisdom. I resonated with Hiên's understanding that the intent of early education is not to take away the childhood of the child but to stimulate the brain development of children. In time, Hiên's stories of Alex developing a good memory for photos during his learning of Vietnamese, reminded me of our coffee time when we

sat together at a recreation centre lounge. Hiên was smiling happily when she shared the news that Alex won a prize at the area's chess competition:

*Alex won the third prize at the Robert's Chess Competition last week. He was very happy and so was I. I believe it's thanks to the photographic memory that helps him when playing chess. Alex has played chess excellently because he can remember many chess positions very well and quickly. For instance, after a quick glance at the chess board, Alex can remember tens of chess openings and how the variations occurred during the competition.*

(research conversation, Nov. 7, 2019)

As I attended to Hiên's story of Alex's chess prize, I felt happy for him, Hiên, and the whole family, and I admired Hiên for her farsighted knowledge and view in raising Alex. When I wondered with her if other mothers acknowledge the value of sharing time with their young children amidst their busy life making as a way to better see the child's strengths and weaknesses and to make it feasible to construct their bright future, Hiên turned my attention, as she did numerous times as our inquiry continued, to the photographic memory method. Over time, I learned from Hiên that such a method was helpful in her children's reading capability, but I still wanted to know more, including connections between this method and children's writing in Vietnamese:

*Hằng: Photographic memory is great, but is there any difficulty in learning with this method?*

*Hiên: Yes, it's very helpful. However, some words were hard for Alex to remember or to photograph into his brain.*

*Hằng: Then how did you solve the problem?*

*Hiên: We faced this problem when we transitioned to Canada. My way was teaching Vietnamese to Alex and Alana with the second method, spelling. Spelling helped them read those complex words. Interestingly, I recognized Alana was better with spelling rather than photographic memory, and her learning progress was so amazing that she caught up with Alex after a short time. Alex also learned spelling though he was better with flashcards. In general, both of them learned Vietnamese in two ways.*

*Hằng: Wonderful. I could see that their Vietnamese reading is perfect now. What about writing?*

*Hiên: Another reason why I let them learn spelling is to teach them how to write the words, phrases, and sentence structures.*

*Hằng: I'm curious to know how you taught Vietnamese writing to Alex and Alana because I have struggled with teaching my daughters to write. Writing is more challenging than reading.*

*Hiên: Yes, I agree that it's tough at first but practicing step by step eventually helped them write Vietnamese well.*

(research conversation, Nov. 7, 2019)

During this conversation, Hiên took me from one surprise to another. I witnessed her pedagogical knowledge not only in different approaches to teaching Vietnamese to Alex and Alana but also through her understanding of the age and psychological features of her children. Later, when we met again at Alana's gymnastics club and I showed my interest in knowing more about how her children's Vietnamese learning progressed during their transition to Canada, Hiên smiled and told me:

*When we moved to this country, Alana and Alex only had half-day school and I did not go to work. Therefore we had time for everyday Vietnamese lessons. However, at present, they*

*go to school for full days and I am busier with my work; we only do Vietnamese lessons on the weekend. Amidst the busy weekends with chess competitions and gymnastics, we still try to arrange Vietnamese learning at least once a week. By maintaining this routine, I'm hopeful that they will keep reading and writing for many more years.* (research conversation, Jan. 15, 2020)

Listening to Hiên's story let me understand how she connected the past, the present, and the upcoming future of her children, who are now composing their lives in a bilingual environment. I remember telling Hiên, "your long-term plans of learning Vietnamese did help Alex and Alana understand and use the language fluently." Nodding, Hiên had emphasized:

*I'm thankful for the knowledge about early education, especially the photographic memory approach. From what I learned, the left brain is in charge of logical thinking and it could be activated at any age; meanwhile the right brain activates our imagination capability only under the age of six. Therefore, some people say either early education is to make the child become a genius or early education means taking childhood away from the children. But I think differently. They are not right about taking childhood away as we don't force the child to sit in one place. They are not right about turning the child to be a genius as we don't mean to teach our kids about letters and numbers; sooner or later every child will know reading and counting. The thing is, I give my children early education in order to help them develop their right brain, their imagination capability.* (research conversation, Jan. 15, 2020)

**Rooting a Reading Habit for Children's Development.** Since our earlier conversations when I was privileged to learn Hiên's stories of early childhood education for Alex and Alana, I told her that her experiences as a newcomer mother had taught me much more practical

knowledge than from any books I had read. Having noticed Hiên carefully attending to sustaining Vietnamese for Alex and Alana, I asked her if she could share more stories of this process. In a subsequent conversation, Hiên showed me two Vietnamese books she had brought from Vietnam: Quốc Văn Giáo Khoa Thư (National Literature Textbook); and, Luân Lý Giáo Khoa Thư (Morality Textbook):

*With me, the most important thing is building a reading habit for my children. I believe reading will facilitate their writing as well. Currently, Alex and Alana are reading these two Vietnamese books written by Trần Trọng Kim, a past Minister of Education in Vietnam before 1975. The author wrote these books for young children so the language is very simple and easy to understand. Quốc Văn Giáo Khoa Thư is similar to Language Arts in Canada, and Luân Lý Giáo Khoa Thư is about the ethical lessons for children. I really like these books because of not only their language but also their exceptionally beautiful content.* (research conversation, Nov. 7, 2019)

As Hiên shared her interest in the two books, she took Quốc Văn Giáo Khoa Thư, opened the first unit and read for me:

*Tôi đi học.*

*Năm nay tôi lên bảy tuổi. Tôi không chơi đùa lêu lổng như mấy năm còn bé. Tôi đi học.*

*Tôi học đọc, học viết, học tính, học vẽ và nhiều khoa học khác nữa.*

*Tôi cố tôi học. Tôi chăm tôi học, học sao cho mau tấn tới cho “văn hay chữ tốt” cho cha mẹ và thầy giáo được vui lòng.<sup>86</sup>*

---

<sup>86</sup> The meaning of this excerpt in English is kin with: *I go to school.*

*This year I am seven years old. I am not wandering and playing as in the previous years. I go to school. I learn reading, writing, drawing, and many other science subjects. I try to learn well. I am hard working to make good progress, to have “good essays and nice handwriting” so that my parents and teachers will feel happy and content.*

After Hiên read, we both agreed that the excerpt had simple and understandable vocabulary, and it expressed significant meaning for young children. Together we turned to the following lessons and I recognized that after “*Tôi đi học*” (I go to school) was “*Tập đọc*” (Learning to read), “*Tập viết*” (Learning to write), “*Yêu mến cha mẹ*” (Loving our parents), “*Giúp đỡ cha mẹ*” (Helping our parents), and many more. It became obvious that these readings were succinctly presented in an order of how a child going to school might progress. Hiên and I smiled as we found ourselves in love with this book. Hiên then put it down and surprised me with another story:

*This is Luân Lý Giáo Khoa Thư, which covers basic ethical lessons for children in a pure and legible language, such as respecting parents, a family reunion, gratefulness for the teacher, and so on. This book has more than a hundred short lessons and my children are in the middle of it. Combining it with Quốc Văn Giáo Khoa Thư, which includes about eighty lessons in more than three hundred pages, my kids will read these two books in some years.* (research conversation, Feb. 19, 2020)

In addition to reading Vietnamese books, Hiên shared that Alex and Alana also loved reading English books:

*They are very passionate about reading English books for children. When we were in Vietnam and they were small, we always had bedtime stories. Now that they are growing up and live in an English-speaking country, their reading hobby has become enormous. They read books at any time and in any place. I’m happy to see their passion for reading but sometimes I have to stop them for dinner time (laughing).* (research conversation, Feb. 19, 2020)

As I thought with Hiên’s stories, I imagined Alex and Alana with books in their hands, so drowned in the stories that they almost forgot it was time for dinner. Hiên was nurturing a love

of reading for her children, which was a story she retold during a subsequent phone conversation when I wondered how Alex and Alana were doing with the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic:

*Alex and Alana still attend in-person classes, but their sport activities cease as the recreation centres are closed. On one side I feel sad about that but on the other side, I comfort myself as they could still pursue their reading hobby. We visit the city library on a weekly basis and always come back with two big bags full of books. I usually help them search on the library database and put holds for their favourite books. It is more convenient as we only need to pick up the books after a very short waiting time. (research conversation, Apr. 12, 2020)*

When Hiên shared these stories of Alex and Alana's love of reading and visiting the library, I recalled memories of my daughters who were also keen on books and the library. As Hiên and I were discovering this common interest of reading among our children, we expressed our shared belief that books were good teachers and that reading books helped enrich our children's souls at present and possibly into the future.

**Playing Sports as Essential for Children as Eating and Drinking.** Each time Hiên and I met, we were either at the chess club or in the lounge of the gymnastic classes. I often told her that our meeting at these sports venues helped increase my 'sports mood.' It was during our first research conversation that Hiên shared with me her perspectives on the role of sports in her children's lives:

*I think in a child's life, sports are very essential as they help shape and develop their physical health. Alex is a shy boy who just likes to sit in one place, but I have encouraged him to play sports since he was very little. I told him many times, "doing sports will bring*

*you good health to do the things you like. You like chess, for example, then you should be good at physical health in order to sit in your chair for three hours. If you are not feeling strong, you will lose the games due to the lack of thinking capability. I don't need you to be excellent but I really need you to maintain regular sports activities.”* (research conversation, Nov. 7, 2019)

Hiên further narrated who Alex was as a young boy in his life history with sports:

*Seeing that Alex doesn't like sports, I let him try all kinds of sports available at the city recreation centre so that he could know which sport he likes the most. Eventually Alex discovers that he doesn't like team sports. For example, he likes soccer and he could play it individually; meanwhile, he could not do well in the team due to the inability to collaborate with teammates. As a result, he chooses individual sports and follows badminton. I seriously require him to play sports to have better health.* (research conversation, Nov. 7, 2019)

Through Hiên's stories of Alex's 'try and pick' experiences in the world of sports, and his finally choosing to take up individual sports, I came to see that perseverance was a thread in Hiên and Alex's familial curriculum making. Hiên and I laughed with each other when we discussed our shared belief that sports are essential for our children, as much as their food eating and water drinking:

*Hằng: I wonder if you could share how Alex came to chess as his favourite sport.*

*Hiên (smiling): Alex came to chess very accidentally. Last year I took Alana to her gymnastics class, Alex stayed at home and felt upset about not having his sister to play with. Thus, he asked his father to drive him to the chess club at school. After*



*three months playing chess at the school club, he found no more competitors. Then he told me that he wanted to enter the competitions outside his school.*

*Hằng: It's very interesting. I am impressed by Alex's passion and courage.*

*Hiên: The first competition was not the one for 'try and have fun' but it was the City Youth Chess Championship. I had no idea what it was at that time; the only thing I did was to Google it and register Alex. Later, when we arrived at the championship venue, my husband and I got quite shocked when seeing other chess players' ratings were mostly above 1,000 points while Alex was at a starting point of zero.*

*Hằng: I would feel nervous too. So what happened after that?*

*Hiên: We told ourselves this was an opportunity for Alex to get familiar with a championship, a learning experience. But at the end he did surprise us with the ninth prize, just one more level to be qualified as a candidate for the national round.*

(research conversation, Nov. 7, 2019)

As Hiên shared this story she smiled a lot, from which I again sensed her happiness with Alex's love for chess. In fact, Hiên had continued her story when she noticed my curiosity about how Alex had progressed with chess:

*Since that incident, I have let Alex follow all the competitions he liked. At another championship, I learn from other child players' parents that their children have their own ratings after four or five years learning with private instructors and competing. Thinking that Alex only has several months experience, I feel content when Alex stands at seventh place out of 15 candidates. Later I registered Alex at the city chess club where we come every Thursday evening and the whole weekend. Though Alex is the youngest and newest*

*member of the club, he has brought 15 cups and medals for the club within a year.*

(research conversation, Nov. 7, 2019)

Thinking with this story, I was reminded of our most recent phone conversation in which Hiên updated me on how her children's lives were progressing in the context of the impacts of the social restrictions of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic:

*Previously, I drove Alex to the club and waited in the common room until his competitions were over. Even when it was rainy or snowy, I always accompanied Alex in his 'chess journey.' However, since the COVID-19 pandemic occurred, parents are not allowed to stay and wait due to social restrictions. I have to drop Alex at the club, and after three hours I come back to pick him up.* (research conversation, Nov. 30, 2020)

Through this story, Hiên again showed me that as a mother she has been persistent in encouraging Alex's interest in playing chess. This ongoing support showed me Hiên's love and care for her child to develop sport passions.

**Significant Meanings in Children's Free Play.** Across our conversations, Hiên and I told and retold stories about free play as significant in Alex and Hiên's familial curriculum making. In one conversation Hiên narrated the following:

*In my eyes, one important thing in my kids' childhood is free play. By saying free play, I mean they could play freely with whatever they want. Going out to play with soil and sand, rolling over and crawling back and forth on the grass are some examples. Alex and Alana are allowed to play in their own favourite ways, without any navigations or formats.*

(research conversation, Jan. 15, 2019)

As Hiên shared this story, I learned more about her valuing free play in Alex and Alana's growth and her support and respect for each child to discover their freedom and creativity.

In another conversation, when I wondered how Alex and Alana were doing with their online learning and the inability to play as freely as before, Hiên had responded:

*They do online lessons by themselves. Once completing all the work, they report to me for my approval of free play time. However, in our family, free play doesn't mean the kids could play games on phones or the iPad. I don't allow Alex and Alana to use the iPad except for their online learning activities, and they never touch their iPads unless Trung and I agree. Instead, they take the recycled carton boxes and the foam containers, cut them out to make houses and play with each other. Sometimes they don't do anything, just sit and talk together about their ideas.* (research conversation, Apr. 12, 2020)

While I was following Hiên's retelling of this story, I created mental images of Alex and his sister's fun and laughter in their own worlds of free play. I thanked Hiên for supporting me to better understand her children's plentiful and diverse ways of making their indoor time fun under the restrictions of social interactions and severe winter weather.

On a summer day when our city's pandemic situation was under better control, Hiên and I met again over the phone. As we updated one another about our lows and highs during the social restrictions, Hiên described that the most enjoyable time for the family was jogging around the pond in her neighbourhood:

*Everyday we run alongside the pond for four or five rounds. The weather is really nice and warm. Alex and Alana enjoy watching the geese swimming so much. I think both humans and animals need fresh air and outdoor time.* (research conversation, Jul. 10, 2020)

I remember how I felt happy when I heard these happy stories about Alex and Hiên's wellness.

As friends and co-researchers, we often laughed with each other whenever we recognized our

common thoughts. I love outdoor activities, and so does Hiên. Hiên had continued her story by adding:

*I think if the children can play freely outdoors, they will become more intelligent. The more they interact with nature, the more they learn about multispecies, and the more they grow love for plants and animals. I have observed that reading books is good, but it's better when we bring the children outdoors for practical lessons. For instance, Alex's reading on protecting the trees is not as good as giving him the opportunity to touch the trees, play with them, and learn how they have grown up.* (research conversation, Jul. 10, 2020)

From this story of Alex's experiences communicating with nature, Hiên told me about her strong belief that free play created important experiential learning opportunities for her children.

Therefore, she encouraged them to play outdoors as much as possible in ways similar to how her parents had let her play when she was a child. Through these stories I saw another layer of the intergenerational knowledge reverberating between Alex's grandparents and Hiên across their curriculum making worlds.

During a more recent phone meeting (Nov. 15, 2020), Hiên shared that even when there was snow, she continued to encourage her family members to fulfill their goal of hiking (as shown in Figure 6.3). Being outdoors in freezing temperatures, according to Hiên, is also a healthy experience for Alex and his sister to see how natural life progresses, as well as for growing their health.

### **Figure 6.3**

*Alex and Alana in a Snow Walk on the Mountains*



*Note.* Photo taken by Hiên.

### ***Bumping Stories Between Broader Social, Cultural, and Institutional Narratives and Familial Narratives***

Attending to the many stories Hiên and I told of the bumping we experienced between social, cultural, and institutional narratives and our familial narratives slowly helped me to awaken to these experiences as another narrative thread resonating within, between, and across our lived, told, and retold stories. To present this thread, I pulled forward two stories: Attending to the holistic development of the child rather than solely focusing on academics; and The interconnectedness of sports, body, and mind.

**Attending to the Holistic Development of the Child Rather Than Solely Focusing on Academics.** Even before our becoming co-researchers, I had noticed Hiên’s careful attention in educating Alex and Alana from their very early years. Earlier, I showed some of these resonating stories. However, in our co-inquiry I slowly became more awake to more than only these smooth and beautiful stories. Together, we gradually began to also inquire into the bumping we experienced in relation with the schooling worlds that our children were experiencing.

Early in the 2020–2021 school year, as Hiên and I met over the phone, I was astonished when she shared that Alex would join Grade Five in Fall 2020 since he had been in Grade Three in Fall 2019. Hiên shared:

*When Alex was at Kindergarten, he was so quiet that his teachers thought he had autism. At the end of that school year, my husband and I asked Alex to see if he wanted to move up to Grade One or remain at Kindergarten. To our question, Alex mentioned he wanted to repeat Kindergarten class for one more year to have time for making friends and playing with them. During that year, I observed that Alex built his social skills stronger, integrated better with school environment, had more friends, and talked with teachers and friends much more than before. After that, Alex was happy to move up to Grade One. Two years ago when Alex was at the end of Grade Three, his teachers strongly request to transfer Alex to Grade Five. I spent time talking with Alex about the pros and cons of skipping Grade Four and let him decide. Finally, Alex was happy to make his decision of entering Grade Five. Again, I see that it is important to respect my child's readiness in both psychological aspect and academic capacity. We should base on our children's pace, rather than seriously sticking to a normal progress of moving each class per year.*

(research conversation, Oct. 12, 2020)

Even as I continue to think with this story now, I have not forgotten my complicated feelings and emotions when I first heard this “repeating or skipping class” story of Alex. In part, I was deeply curious about Hiên’s initial response to Alex’s desire to stay in the same class for a year alongside the stereotype we each knew well, that Vietnamese families and children seriously focus on academic achievements. As my mind travelled back in place to our home country where standardized assessment is still dominant, I remembered witnessing Vietnamese parents’ concerns about their children’s scores and rankings. When a child could not progress to the following class and they had to repeat a grade, it was considered both a failure and a shame, not only for the child but the entire family, including the family’s relatives.

Over weeks and months as I lingered with these memories of the social bias toward academic failure of children in Vietnam, I treasured Hiên's decision of giving Alex the opportunity to repeat his Kindergarten class. I did not see any shame of academic failure in Hiên and Alex's experience; rather, I learned that Hiên respected her son's choice more than anything else. Hiên cared for Alex's holistic development rather than only his academic achievements.

Feeling humble as I thought with this powerful knowledge of who Hiên was and was becoming as a mother in transition to Canada, I wondered what my response would be to my daughters if I were in Hiên's situation. My feeling is that I would find it challenging to agree with Joey or Sherry staying in their classes for another year. This phenomenon has also been observed in other immigrant family dynamics. For example, Kwon's (2020) study of Korean mothers living in Canada also showed that parents' focus on their children's high level of academic excellence when they enrolled their children in the Cogito program.<sup>87</sup>

As I continued to think with this Alex 'repeating or skipping class' story, a strong shift occurred in my understanding about Vietnamese families' perspectives towards their children's academics. My shift was supported by Hiên's sharing of another story about her children's math learning:

*When Alana was in Grade One, she wasn't good at math. She didn't wear socks in wintertime as she wanted to count her toes for counting lessons in addition to counting her fingers. She still needed her toes during Grade Two. The teachers suggested that I teach her more math at home. My friends even told me to teach her to memorize counting such as 'one plus four equals five.' In response, I felt like I didn't need to care too much about that.*

---

<sup>87</sup> According to Edmonton Public Schools (n.d.), Cogito programming is designed for students who are willing to work to achieve a high level of academic excellence in an environment that emphasizes structure and order. (<https://www.epsb.ca/programs/teaching>)

*Honestly, I didn't feel worried at all. I had a strong belief that there's no need to force her in learning, because children will know about addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division when they grow up.* (research conversation, Feb. 19, 2020)

Learning about Hiên's emphasis on letting Alana develop in her natural ways, I expressed my resonance; I also wanted children to experience schooling that was attentive to who they are and what they like, rather than becoming 'studying machines' by completely focusing on assignments and marks.

Having thought deeply about Hiên's perspectives on giving her children "a sky of freedom" (Feb. 19, 2020) to develop in their own ways, my mind again travelled across place to my home country. I have seen many parents in Vietnam highly value the scores and rankings of their children's academics. Apart from attending regular school hours, children between the ages of five and 11 often join extra classes for math and Vietnamese writing, while youth of junior and senior high age spend enormous hours focusing on the main subjects—math, physics, and chemistry. In addition to these classes are the evening and weekend classes that many children and youth participate in at private English centers. I wonder about these decisions that the children's and youth's parents are making. Why do these parents seem to want to deposit as much knowledge as possible into their children's brains? I sense these parents forget that what they want for the child is not always what the child or youth wants for themselves. I sense that it is the dominance of this social narrative that accounts for why Vietnamese children usually have good academic performance, while they are much less well-prepared for their future life-making and vocations.

**The Interconnectedness of Sports, Body, and Mind.** As I already showed earlier, I came to know sports as a priority in Alex and Hiên's familial curriculum making. In their everyday life



making with sports, Hiên's story living, telling and retelling also drew my attention to additional bumping experiences between their familial narratives and broader social and cultural narratives.

One story Hiên shared that caused me to initially awaken to this bumping was the following:

*At elementary age, I had a small body and my health was very weak. The villagers usually said about me, "that girl is weak but she studies very well." Now I think back to such old days, I feel awkward in the way people connected a weak body with a good academic performance. Meanwhile, when seeing a big strong boy with low school achievements, people would say, "a stupid mind comes with a greatly developed body." They meant that only children with learning deficits would come to play sports; I recognized they could not think more than that. Differently, my family acknowledged that a strong body would facilitate a sound learning capability. Again, my sense is that Vietnamese people mostly underestimate the importance of practicing sports. (research conversation, Nov. 7, 2019)*

In time, as I thought with this story of Hiên named as a weak child and growing up in a community where people looked down on the significance of sports, I slowly began to understand why she did not want her children to have similar childhood experiences. As I became awake to this intergenerational reverberation, I wondered with Hiên if her family's transition to Canada shaped the stories she now lives with Alex about the important connection between sports and the mind. Hiên explained:

*With me, a first priority is to nurture Alex and Alana in sports playing, and I had thought about this for long before we transitioned to Canada. Nobody can deny that sports help enhance our physical health. But to me, it's more than that: sports also make our brain discerning, ground straightforward thinking, and dissolve the negative emotional feelings. Especially with children, we need to prepare in advance because when they are young,*

*parents may not see sports as important but during our children's teenage years, sports will help ease their tensions and stressfulness.* (research conversation, Nov. 7, 2019)

As I thought with Hiên's bumping narratives in her social and cultural contexts, I sensed that her perseverance to sustain sports in Alex's and Alana's everyday life making had been influenced and was traveling with her across time, place, situations, and relationships. In particular, Hiên planted seeds of a love for exercise in her children before transitioning to Canada, and she has maintained for years sports as a key thread in their familial curriculum with the long-term hope to better prepare the children for their futures. Hiên's stories travelled back and forth between Vietnam and Canada, between her childhood village and her current home in our city. The cultural and social narratives lived, told, and retold by the adults in Hiên's childhood villages had not turned her away from doing sports; instead, Hiên became stronger in building a sports foundation for and with her children.

### ***Sustaining the Relational Ontology in the Everyday Practices of Children and Family***

Having been friends for four years and co-researchers for 14 months, I slowly became awake to a strong story resonating across Hiên's and my lived, told, retold, and relived stories as Vietnamese newcomer mothers raising children in Canada: we both love and respect people and the multispecies who surround and contribute to our life making, and we also understand that all beings have spirit. As I began to awaken to the relational ontology that lived in Hiên's, Alex's, and their family's everyday practices, I grew to recognize how this narrative thread resonated within and between four stories lived, told, retold, and relived across our inquiry: Music as a friend; Making kin with Nature; Cultivating the spiritual life of children in relation to ancestral practices; and World travelling with intergenerational knowledge.

**Music as a Friend.** In addition to Alex and Alana's worlds of sports, Hiên's story telling and retelling also brought me into their worlds of music. On November 7, 2019, I met Hiên at the city chess club while Alex was playing chess with a senior club member. After our check-in about each other's health and work, when I asked Hiên about her daughter and husband she smiled and then added:

*Today I take Alex to this club and Trung's responsibility is driving Alana to her clarinet class. My hope is that both Alex and Alana can play at least one musical instrument fluently. I think that through music, children can feel many different things. When they are good at a certain musical instrument, it will become their best friend. When feeling happy, they play music. When they are sad and tired, they play music too. Following, the musical instrument will be the child's best companion during their life, especially when their life doesn't come in the way we want.* (research conversation, Nov. 7, 2019)

Hiên's emphasis on the meaningful relationship between music and the children's lives reverberated with my memories of my first meeting Hiên and her family when my family had newly arrived in Canada. I remembered weekends when I stopped by Hiên's home for an hour; we had tea and listened to Trung, Alex, and Alana take turns playing the guitar, drum, and flute. As the melodies spread around us, I sensed that the music spirit connected us with each other. In this present time, I have been attending to my older daughter's love of piano. Joey has come to piano without any lessons, but she is keen on self-learning and finds companionship in her piano as a friend, including when she feels tension. Hiên's stories that when our children are curious about music, they will experience their musical instruments as a life-long friend, have deeply resonated with me.

Later, when showing me a picture of Alex playing drums at a school performance, Hiên told me more about how she understands music as a friend in his life:

*Alex says drums are his best friends; he plays at home after school and on the weekend.*

*Alana used to play the guitar but currently she has moved to clarinet. When coming home, my children also enjoy composing some music by themselves and play for parents. Music has enriched our family time.*

(research conversation, Nov. 7, 2019)

**Making Kin With Nature.** Having known Hiên and her children throughout the time we lived in the same neighbourhood and planted vegetables in the nearby community garden, I slowly came to know of their strong kinship with nature. As we met again as co-inquirers, Hiên's lived and told stories once again showed me her and her family's strong living in relation with the natural world:

*Similar to me, Alex and Alana love to hang out to observe the trees throughout four seasons. Apart from our home walks from school, I have encouraged them to be outdoors as much as possible. When they enjoy watching those pictures of nature, they are in love with nature's beauty. From that love, I hope, they will be aware of protecting nature.*

(research conversation, Jan. 15, 2019)

Hearing Hiên's story of Alex and Alana's love of nature once again drew me toward her ways of educating children. I deeply resonated with her sense that we do not only educate our children with books but also grow their knowledge of the world around them by spending time with them and nature. My images of Alex and Alana's curiosity about trees drew me back to my childhood experience under the oldest areca palm tree at my grandfather's house. I came to her whenever I felt sad and told her many stories. I also recalled my grandfather's teaching: "Live like the trees; their roots stick to the earth; their tops direct to the sun; and their branches bend against storms".

Lingering with Hiên's, Alex's, Alana's, and my close relationships with trees, and our naming trees as friends—and even as soulmates—I wondered with Hiên “about the animals, I mean the wildlife and if Alex and Alana also loved them,” to which Hiên had responded:

*Sometimes when playing outdoors, they just sit under bushes, quietly witnessing the rabbits running and bet each other which rabbit will run faster. Some years ago, they caught an ant and put it into a vase for raising. I let them raise the ant but I also took advantage of that opportunity to teach them about wildlife: which animal group it belonged to, how it lived in nature, and it needed the air to survive. Alex and Alana understood that when raising the ant, they couldn't make 'the ant friend' upset; and that they could not leave the ant in the vase for long because doing so would make him die. After playing with 'the ant friend' for a couple of days, Alex agreed with Alana to free him back to his natural habitat.*

(research conversation, Jan. 15, 2019)

Through this and other lived and told stories, Hiên grew my understanding of Alex's and Alana's desires for making kin with multiple living species, which included trying to understand from another species' perspective and not only their own perspectives:

*One day my kids suggested having a fish tank or a parrot. To their words, I answered, “Why do we have to make a pet of a fish or a bird? Do you want to be locked up in a tank or a cage?” After a while, they both confirmed that they wouldn't like to be locked up, so they shouldn't do that with the animals. Since then, they have never asked for a fish tank or a parrot.*

(research conversation, Jan. 15, 2020)

As we told and retold these stories, Hiên and I were often reminded of our homeland. I think this happened because each of our childhoods were shaped by experiences with the rice and corn farms and with cattle and all of the other natural life that surrounded us and shaped our

identities; these relationships still live in us no matter where we live in the world. Often, as Hiên and I told and retold stories of our living kinship with nature, we remembered a story of Thích Nhất Hạnh, a Zen master whom Hiên and I both admire and respect:

*I asked the leaf whether it was frightened because it was autumn and the other leaves were falling. The leaf told me “No. During the whole spring and summer I was completely alive. I worked hard to help nourish the tree, and now much of me is in the tree. I am not limited by this form. I am also the whole tree, and when I go back to the soil, I will continue to nourish the tree. So I don’t worry at all. As I leave this branch and float to the ground, I will wave to the tree and tell her, ‘I will see you again very soon.’” That day there was a wind blowing and, after a while, I saw the leaf leave the branch and float down to the soil, dancing joyfully, because as it floated it saw itself already there in the tree. It was so happy. I bowed my head, knowing that I have a lot to learn from the leaf.*

As Hiên and I retold this story I thought often about what I was coming to learn about the connections between my Vietnamese culture and the knowledge of Indigenous peoples of Treaty Six Territory<sup>88</sup>, the land Hiên, Alex, and their family and my family and I are living with. Hiên’s, Alex’s, and Alana’s stories caused me to slow down and to once again appreciate that all beings have spirit.

**Cultivating the Spiritual Life of Children in Relation to Ancestral Practices.** Both during our time of our coming to know each other as friends and as we lived as co-researchers, I felt gratitude that Hiên also lived, told, and retold stories with me not just of their family’s

---

<sup>88</sup> Our co-composed narrative inquiry was conducted in the province of Alberta, part of which belongs to Treaty Six territory, the traditional lands of First Nations and Métis people. We acknowledge and respect the histories, languages, and cultures of these Indigenous Peoples. For more understanding on Treaty Six Territory, please visit: Filice (2016), the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations at <https://treatysix.org>, and the Métis Nation of Alberta at <https://albertametis.com/>.

everyday practices, but also deeply layered stories of how ancestral knowledge and practices shape their everyday practices. I began to awaken to this thread in their lives during our second research conversation when Hiên shared stories about Alex's and Alana's spiritual lives:

*One more important thing I want to mention in our living in Canada is the spiritual life of my children. I usually bring the kids to a small pagoda of the Vietnamese monks. For now, I don't need Alex and Alana to follow Buddhism beliefs; rather, I want to help them find their peacefulness when visiting pagodas. In addition, I believe that religions will help people to live in righteous ways. If we have no beliefs, we will be easily attracted to materialistic things such as money, and we will walk in wrong directions. It's important to find beliefs and righteousness for our life. And that's what I hope to foreground for my children.*

(research conversation, Jan. 15, 2020)

As I thought with Hiên's valuing of the children's spiritual lives, I shared with her that spiritual and ancestral beliefs played a key role in navigating our living, especially with people like us who are mothers living alongside young children in transition to a new country, new cultural paradigms, and new languages. However, Hiên's story stayed me, drawing me to want to know more about her family's pagoda visits, about which she shared some stories during one of our subsequent meetings:

*When we were in Vietnam, our family visited pagodas every full moon, but after transitioning to Canada, we just go whenever we have free time. Visiting pagodas, at first, is an opportunity for Alex and Alana to understand Vietnamese culture. Second, they find a refuge in terms of spirit.*

(research conversation, Jan. 15, 2020)

Later, Hiên's description of their pagoda visits deepened my understanding of some of the family's sacred Buddhist practices, and I yearned to know more, especially about how her

spiritual life had been shaped since childhood. Hiên paused her crocheting of a bunny while she retold this story:

*In my childhood, people living in Central and Southern Vietnam mostly have their own religions, but in the North, my parents followed the reality of having no religion because of the time's social situation. As you may know, having no religion was due to historical reasons, not because of our lack of religious beliefs. People had no religions because their parents hadn't had one, and also political issues led to people's decision of not following a certain religion. Travelling back to Vietnamese history after 1954, Catholics moved to the South. Soon after, many pagodas were destroyed and Buddhists had to give up their Buddhism paradigm. Even if our grandparents were Buddhist, our generation has to claim in our judicial records "no-religion."* (research conversation, Feb. 19, 2020)

This story in Hiên's life opened possibility for me to discover more about her understanding of not only her and her parents' religious and spiritual lives and practices but also the historical and political incidents that may have shaped their decisions, and their unfolding lives. As I humbly listened, following her stories across different regions and across our country's history before and after 1954, I saw connections between her and her family's spiritual lives and the cultural, historical, and political contexts that had shaped their lives.

I found myself reminded of my father's story about churches and pagodas being destroyed during the 'land reform,'<sup>89</sup> and, I remembered his words: "not only the exceptionally beautiful architectures were destroyed, villagers also lost their sacred worship places." As Hiên's

---

<sup>89</sup> The land reform happened from 1953 to 1956 in Northern Vietnam. Land was taken away from wealthy landlords and retained by the government but most was distributed to Viet Minh fighters. In this historical context, my great grandfather and grandfather were mistakenly assumed to be landlords due to their vast land area and were hung on the bamboo ranges. My father heard the bad news. He came back to the village but could only save my grandfather. Sadly, my great grandfather died under the sun.



sharing of the above story happened during our Lunar New Year, that is, *Tết*, Hiên and I noted our feeling more connected to our ancestors, connections that we each felt had grown stronger through our living far from the lands, places, and ways we knew first.

In addition to Hiên's stories of visiting pagodas, she also told and retold stories of her family's *Tết* celebration traditions:

*Similar to your family, we always wrap and cook Bánh Chưng every Tết (as shown in Figure 6.4). Using fresh banana leaves helps create a good smell and a very nice green for the cakes. Every time when I boil the cakes, Alex keeps walking around the kitchen to smell the great flavor. He doesn't like eating Vietnamese foods but Bánh Chưng and Nem are an exception. When the cakes are done, I choose the best ones and put on the altar to invite our ancestors. On the Lunar New Year's Eve, combining Bánh Chưng with a box of dried ginger slices, a plate of sticky rice, and a tray of five different types of fruits, I burn the incense and pray with our ancestors.* (research conversation, Feb. 19, 2020)

As I reflected out loud as I thought with Hiên's story, by saying that *Tết* is our most sacred time of the year, we together, as mothers living far from our homeland, reflected on the practices we learned from our mothers and grandmothers and now carry as we engage in these traditional activities of preparing and celebrating *Tết*. We laughed with each other as we recalled our past years of living close to each other and many family gatherings to celebrate *Tết* with our Vietnamese traditional foods. We also shared proud moments with each other about how we have each kept practicing our *Tết* celebrations in Canada in the same ways our grandmothers and mothers had done in the past in our home country.

#### **Figure 6.4**

*Making Bánh Chưng for Tết in Hiên's Family*



*Note.* Photo taken by Hiên.

**World Travelling With Intergenerational Knowledge.** Having travelled with Hiên over time, place, situations, and relationships in relation to Alex’s and Alana’s education, I slowly grew able to recognize the intergenerational knowledge reverberating in her experiences. As I was beginning to grow into this realization, I asked Hiên, “did your parents bring you to music classes as you are doing with Alex and Alana?” She added to my understanding as she retold this childhood story:

*I remember when I was a young child, there was the Children’s House in the centre of our province. My mother rode her bicycle to drop me at the piano class on Saturday and Sunday. At break time in the second class, I went downstairs and discovered a drawing class to which I was too attracted and forgot my piano class. That night when arriving home, I shared with my father my wish to stop the piano class because I didn’t like it any more. To my surprise, he didn’t yell at me; instead, he agreed immediately. The following day, I was happy joining the drawing class.* (research conversation, Jul. 10, 2020)

Both when I first listened to this story and since, I have felt deep admiration for Alex’s grandparents and the way they respected Hiên’s decision, even though at that time she was only six years old. As I have travelled backward in time and place with Hiên’s, Alex’s, and my lived, told, and retold stories, I grew to recognize that these grandparents’ respectfulness reverberated

in Hiên's valuing of Alex's repeating his grade in school. Travelling forward with this story supported my deeper understanding of why Hiên was so artistic in her making of beautiful crochet bears and bunnies. I sensed that Alex and Alana inherited the gift of arts in both music and drawing from Hiên and today, she continues to retell this story as she works to cultivate their many gifts.

Hiên shared these beautiful and intergenerational experiences in her and Alex's familial curriculum at the same time as she often also expressed many moments of tension in her journey of educating the children during their and her transition to this land. In a recent conversation over the phone, Hiên again drew my attention to this story:

*During this pandemic, our family spends more time with each other. I have told Trung that he needs to talk and play more with Alex and Alana after coming home from work. At first, it's hard as he usually prefers spending his free time on himself. Later I told him, "look back to your father in Vietnam; he is not close in relationship with his children but you and other siblings are respectful and caring for and about him. The reason is that we are bound to ethical relationships with our parents; even if our parents say wrong things or beat us, we still obey their words."*

(research conversation, Nov. 30, 2020)

As I listened attentively and continued to think with this story, I found myself moving deeper into Hiên's telling and retelling of this challenging experience. Having noticed her silence for a bit, I asked, "so what happened after that?" to which Hiên had responded by continuing to think with her story:

*Then I told him that children living in Canada are different from our generation back home in the past; they don't have similar experiences in the relationship with parents. The only*

*thing that could connect them with us in the future is affection and love between parents and children. If they love us, they will come back for a visit and take good care when we are sick, but they will not be living under the same roof; they will have their independent life. They won't have the duty to live close to us, which is not the same as the ways we and our parents related to each other. Therefore, we can't treat them in the same way that our parents used to treat us. If we don't play with our children and get close to them, they will never be close to us.* (research conversation, Jul. 10, 2020)

As I deeply listened to Hiên's voice from the other side of the phone, I shared with her that my husband and I experienced similar things in our relationships with our children. I expressed that we learned that only attentive love and care bring parents and children together when the children are small. With this now loving affection growing across the generations in each of our small families, both Hiên and I hoped that as our children grow and become mature, they will still keep close affection with us. We also hoped they will live forward our stories of trying to live loving affection stories alongside them when/if they become parents.

### **For Now—Rethinking Education for Children's Flourishing**

Across my attending to Alex's, Hiên's, Alana's, and Trung's experiences in their transition to this country and to this particular land, I felt grateful for their allowing me to come alongside them. As I revisited the many stories we told, retold, and relived across the time, place, and relationships, which are visible in this narrative account, I am very much reminded of their familial curriculum-making worlds, which I have grown to see as beautifully connected with the concept of *educación* that Montero-Sieburth (2011) described as long-life learning in the Latino culture:

To be educated means that you acquire not only formal knowledge of the school but also the social norms and behaviors of the society you live in and such learning is acquired from the combination of family, schooling, and community contexts. (p. 182)

From this concept, alongside Alex's, Hiên's, Alana's, Trung's, and my lived, told, retold, and relived stories, I am again reminded that "education" is not only shaped in schooling places by school knowledge but also from the knowledge that grows and circulates in home and community places and our (inter) relationships. Lingering with the above concept of education as I come to a close, for now, of my research journey alongside Alex and Hiên, I became curious to go back to my Vietnamese language to deepen my understanding. We have the word "*giáo dục*" for "education," in which "*giáo*" means "teaching and training" and "*dục*" means "caring and loving." I find it profound that our cultural concept of education conveys meanings of teaching children at the same time as we give them love and care during their ongoing acquisition of knowledge. Honouring all of these important practices as I linger, just a bit longer, with Hiên's stories of educating her children in all areas of academic, physical, mental, and spiritual life, I know I saw her heart for building a sustainable house for her children's holistic and life-long development—she was hopeful for the children's flourishing in who they were/are and who they were/are becoming.

## **Chapter Seven: Resonant Threads of Living Alongside Vietnamese Children and Mothers Composing Lives in Transition to Canada**

In composing this chapter, I revisited and continued to attend deeply to the three narrative accounts that Lisa, Hồng, Ryan, Thanh, Alex, Hiên and I co-composed alongside each other. In my revisiting and attending, I slowly awakened to resonant threads that “echoed and reverberated across” (Clandinin et al., 2019) their lives. Within the complexity and layeredness of this process, I paid attention to the important knowledge Clandinin (2013) shares of her experiences of coming to resonant threads:

While we knew that narrative inquiries begin and end in the storied lives of the people (both researchers and participants) involved, we had begun to see that we needed to find ways to look across those accounts, to see the resonances across stories. We were beginning to sense that looking across the narrative accounts co-composed between researcher and participant would require a new conceptualization and a new set of processes if we wanted to continue to hold onto storied lives and not to reduce them to themes or categories. (p. 137)

This knowledge slowed me down to carefully read and reread and to continue to think with the narrative accounts because I did not want to generalize the experiences of the co-researchers.

Slowly, as I lived with the narrative accounts, the home walking of the children and mothers came more into focus in my thinking. Early in the inquiry it had been interesting to me that each child and mother home walked. The terms *home walks* and *home walking* were spoken again and again in both Vietnamese and English as the mothers’ described their daily movements with their children as they journeyed into and across the physical spaces between the schools their children attended and their home places and neighbourhoods. As I continued to think with

and across each of the narrative accounts, I gradually saw that while *home walks* and *home walking* described actual experiences in the children's and mother's lives, they also offered a metaphorical way of understanding their experiences within, between, and across places, times, languages, families, knowledge, and the unceasing liminality continuously experienced in their daily making of their lives in transition.

Learning from Farquahar and Fitzsimons (2018) that “a metaphor is not always a way of communicating meaning but frequently a way of producing new meanings and shifts in discourse”, I longed to embrace the metaphor of *home walks* and *home walking* in this chapter. As I shared this idea with my friend Hiroko who is a narrative inquirer in the nursing field, she told me that in her research, she has chosen to use metaphors “not only to show/imagine feelings through images, but also to invite readers to perceive these moments through more sensible and collaborative ways” (Kubota, 2017, p. 56). Lingering more deeply in this direction, I was guided by Caine et al.'s (2018) teaching on employing interwoven metaphors in narrative inquiry. In their research, their interwoven metaphors helped them “understand the functions of response communities as places and people” with whom they linger and with, and to, whom, they owe response, a giving back of what they “have been given but reshaped with new possibilities” (Caine et al., 2018, p. 280). I eventually came to seeing the interwoven metaphors of *home walks* and *home walking* as offering ‘new possibilities’ for readers to not just think with, but to feel, the lives of Lisa, Hồng, Ryan, Thanh, Alex, and Hiên. With this spirit, I identified four threads resonating across their experiences of composing lives in transition to Canada: Home Walks Between Lands; Home Walks Between Languages; Home Walks With Temporality; and Home Walks Within, Between, and Across Families.

### **Thread One: Home Walks Between Lands**

*Five years, we sometimes visited our home town,  
passed by some old quarters, and hurriedly said goodbye to it.  
Sometimes home walking in mind and looking back,  
I wonder if the sky in my homeland  
is still full of the white clouds.* (poetic fragment created from Hiên's memoir)

In this poetic fragment, which I created from Hiên's Vietnamese writing, she recalled images of her *home walks* between her new land, Canada, and her homeland, Vietnam. Through her stories, I recognized her love for her homeland as well as her nostalgic feelings when remembering it. Hiên showed me that while home walks happen in physical spaces, home walks can also happen in a person's mind and body when they travel and remember across different places and lands. Throughout our inquiry, Hiên, Alex, Hồng, Lisa, Thanh, and Ryan experienced *home walks* both physically and metaphorically between different lands as they made their lives in transition to Canada, as is shown through the following three story strands: Home Walks as a Bridging Space Between School and Home; Home Walks Between the Home Country and the New Country; and, Home Walks in Living in and With Liminality.

### ***Home Walks as a Bridging Space Between School and Home***

Lisa and Hồng's home walks between school and home were a significant space for Lisa to share stories of her school days with her mother and grandmother. During their home walks, Hồng learned more about how Lisa's school days progressed. Lisa did not only share about what she learned in subjects like English, math, music, gym, and art but she also told stories about how she experienced her days with teachers and friends. To a newcomer mother like Hồng, Lisa's knowledge that school was not just subject matter but also broader relational interactions between teachers, children, and her was very important. This knowledge was largely the only



window for Hồng to understand the richness of Lisa's experiences in her academic learning, and too, in her life composing in relation.

Importantly, I found similar resonances in Lisa and Hồng's experiences and Alex and Hiên's home walks. Through their stories, it became obvious that home walks were an important bridging space in the children's transitions between school and home. Alex told Hiên he enjoyed playing at school but that he did not talk to his classmates and communicated verbally only with his teachers. It was meaningful that home walks helped unfold Alex's experiences at school with teachers and friends so that Hiên could better understand his school days.

Additionally, home walks were a place where the children's and mothers' hopes of flourishing for themselves and for more-than-human beings were planted. In Thanh's lived stories, Ryan's home walks during Grade One were full of silence and unhappiness; this later made Thanh determined to make him feel happy at home. Ryan's father curated a play corner with books and toys and "Ryan always ran to this corner, played, and felt happy again" (research conversation, Oct. 20, 2019). Ryan's home walking during Grade Two shifted as he told stories of being excited to join his teachers and friends at the new school. In my understanding, Ryan's smiles and his desire for Thanh to transfer his younger brother to School Z were how he showed his hopes and his happiness. These stories showed me Ryan's hopes for his flourishing and for his brother's flourishing, as well as Thanh's hopes for Ryan's flourishing.

Furthermore, flourishing stories were evident in the children's attentiveness to more-than-human beings. In Lisa and Hồng's home walks, Lisa enjoyed seeing the rabbits, and she told and retold stories about loving and protecting wildlife from what she learned from teachers and the books she read. Alex loved to observe the trees and asked Hiên many questions. Hiên told me that home walks also facilitated learning moments for her children and developed their love for

nature. Weaving these lived, told, retold, and relived stories together, I could see that the children's attention to more-than-human beings seemed important as they were in this "between" space and in these "between" places.

As I continued to think narratively across the narrative accounts, I understood that the home walks of the children and their mothers were not simply a walk across the field or the park; they were also a bridge connecting school stories, home stories, and more-than-human stories. They could be interpreted as experiences of hopes for flourishing—of the children and mothers or other adults who were alongside the child in these walks.

While home walks were usually short, their reverberations were timeless given how they connected the school curriculum-making and familial curriculum-making worlds in the children's lives. In the context of my understanding of stories and lives as endlessly lived, told, retold, and relived, I now wonder if home walks could become more than "one way traffic" (Marsh, 2003) in which children bring stories from school to home and too, stories from home to their teachers and friends at school. I wonder what sense teachers and schools make of home walks? Do they understand the significance of this in-between space in children's life making? Do they understand this space as significant in supporting who a child is and who a child is becoming?

### ***Home Walks Between the Home Country and the New Country***

*First year in Canada,*

*I came alone as I did not know how was the weather.*

*How was the living and learning in this new place?*

*I struggled with my first winter and snow until things became more familiar.*

*I brought my children from Vietnam in my second year.*

(poetic fragment created from Hồng's annal)

As I have shown in this poetic fragment, which I created from the annal Hồng and I made together of her life, Hồng experienced much loneliness and stress during her first year in Canada. She did not dare to bring Lisa and Misa to this, as yet unknown place, although she missed them very much. Only after Hồng felt she understood the new weather, language, and culture in Canada well, did she feel she could navigate and support her children's life making here.

Additionally, within many lived, told, retold, and relived stories, Hồng practiced many metaphorical *home walks* to revisit her home country. As became visible in her and Lisa's narrative account, Hồng's practice of *home walks* through memory supported her to understand Lisa's challenges in learning Vietnamese and to nourish Lisa's relationship with her grandparents and relatives back home. Attending more deeply, amidst tensions of transitioning from Vietnam to Canada, Hồng, Thanh, and Hiên found themselves practicing *home walks* as both memory and whole body travelling metaphorically between the two countries.

With Thanh, I experienced countless tears, deep sighs, and silence in her retelling and reliving her tension of her first years in transition, raising Ryan as a newborn baby, and later, his younger brother Brian. As Thanh lived far from her parents and relatives, she always felt a lack of intimate support in their family's everyday life making, especially with child rearing and bearing. In our conversations and in my presence, Thanh often practiced *home walks* to her first home in central Vietnam to seek mental, emotional, and spiritual support from the love and care she remembered from her parents and siblings. When Thanh showed me photos and videos of her great family members that she took during a past visit, I saw her upset face slowly begin to

smile. Thanh once told me that listening to her parents' Vietnamese voices was a blessing because Vietnamese was her mother language, which she heard less when living in Canada.

As Hiên *home walked* to Vietnam in her memoir of the family's first departure flight, she told and retold stories laced with many disruptions, silences, and pondering eyes. Hiên was worried and nervous that four-year-old Alex and his sister could get lost at the airport, so she put a whistle on each of their necks and reminded them to blow loudly if they lost sight of their parents. For Hiên, this departure flight not only carried their hopes for better living and learning conditions but also her worries for her children's life making in the present and in the future. I deeply sensed that the airport was also a transitioning space in Hiên and Alex's embodied knowing, where within a couple of minutes they would depart from their familiar landscapes and begin to transition to a never-having-landed-before destination.

Even now, after all these months of coming alongside these mothers and children, I wonder how Canadian schools and centres/agencies for newcomers care about their past experiences in their homelands. I wonder if in addition to questions about "who are you?" and "why you are coming here?" support centres might ask about newcomers' life making experiences, both in the present and in the past, as a way to better understand and support their transition to this place that is new and often feels foreign to them.

### ***Home Walks in Living in and With Liminality***

As I came alongside Lisa, Hồng, Ryan, Thanh, Alex, and Hiên in their home and community places, and as we co-composed each of their narrative accounts, I strongly recognized their living in and with liminality. Heilbrun (1999) described liminality as an "in-between" state created in transition, "a liminal one, an indeterminate stage where we are neither here nor there" (p. 221). Heilbrun's knowledge supported my emerging understanding that the

children and mothers' experiences were not binary, that is, they did not compose their lives *either* in Vietnam *or* in Canada, or *before* their departure or *after* their landing. Instead, their experiences included and were continuously shaped by, and shaped, transitional spaces and states of being in between the two lands. In this way, I found that their experiences with liminality reverberated with Maxine Greene's (2011) knowledge of herself as "I am what I am not yet" (p. 61).

In part, Thanh drew my attention to this when she told and retold stories of having lived in Canada for six years but that she did not feel grounded in this new land. Thanh found it challenging to adapt to the Western living environment and English that dominates in the city where we live; she was full of insecure feelings amidst her feeling a lack of support in the children's schooling and in her managing of the family. I began to see that Thanh's experience of liminality thickened her tensions and difficulties in her life making as she no longer lived in her homeland and had begun to feel familiar with the new land.

Many of Hồng's told and retold stories were about her and her children's experiences of travelling back and forth between the two countries of Vietnam and Canada. Having seen that Lisa and her younger sister were growing up differently from their peers in Vietnam while at the same time they were not yet living in "Canadian" ways, Hồng was very open to the possibility of either going back to Vietnam or settling down in Canada. Hồng, Lisa, and their whole family's living in Canada was always in the making and always shifting, which became visible in their *home walking* across their experiences in Vietnam and Canada.

Having experienced the liminality of this kind of *home walking* experienced by the mothers and children, I wonder if teachers and other stakeholders who support newcomer children and mothers recognize their living in and with liminality and its impacts on their life-composing in

transition. As I linger more deeply with this wonder, I continue to wonder about the impact of this space of liminality to the newcomer children and mothers on two points: Their living in-between spaces was not only full of tension-filled moments and hardships, but too, at the same time, this space opened potential for possibilities to come, such as they could have freedom to choose their curriculum and familial curriculum-making ways, their agencies, and their communities. These new wonders together with my learning from Cardinal's (2014) co-researcher's unlimited possibilities when living in liminality, entail my wish for the newcomer children and mothers that their lived stories in/with liminality are as hopeful and playful as they may be stressful and tension-filled. Additionally, taking the example of Thanh's six years living in Canada while yet still seeing herself as a newcomer, I wonder if schools and Canadian society understand that duration of stay does not always reflect the adaptability experienced by newcomer families?

### **Thread Two: Home Walks Between Languages**

*I wonder with your languages.*

*You talked with your mother in Vietnamese.*

*You talked with your younger sister in English.*

*With me, you spoke Vietnamese when we were at home,*

*and used English when we played in the park.*

*You also taught me how to slowly listen to other languages*

*of the animals and other species.* (poetic fragment created from field notes with Lisa)

In my coming alongside Lisa, Hồng, Ryan, Thanh, Alex, and Hiên, I was often drawn to their storied experiences of living within and by multiple languages. As is shown in my above field notes of experiencing Lisa's shifting in her language multiplicity, I gradually awakened to

the children's and mothers' *home walking* between Vietnamese and English, and with the languages of the multispecies in their environments. I created this thread of home walks between languages by bringing together three story strands: Languages in Connection With Places; Languages in Connection With Playing; and, Languages in Connection with Social and Community Contexts.

### ***Languages in Connection With Places***

While all three mothers spoke Vietnamese during the entire time of co-composing our narrative inquiry, their children's language preferences differed across places. With Lisa, our conversations at her home were always in Vietnamese, which was how she communicated with her mother and grandmother. However, during playtime at parks and campsites, Lisa shared her stories, questions, and responses to my wonders mostly in English. Additionally, many times Lisa told Bà that the stray cat, the rabbit, and the earth worm have their own languages and that we should protect, love, and care for the animals.

During our camping trips, Lisa and I enjoyed listening to the birds singing and the trees wiggling and seeing the haethbell flowers blooming. Hông also shared that whenever they went grocery shopping or visited the library, Lisa only spoke in English. Thinking with these stories of Lisa reminded me that Alex communicated with me in Vietnamese when we met at his home, my home, and the chess club. For some time, however, when we saw each other at our community garden, Alex greeted me in English.

Thinking with Lisa and Alex's shifting between English and Vietnamese drew me to hook's (1997) sense of homeplaces as sites of resistance. Inspired by hooks, I came to understand Lisa's and Alex's homes as homeplaces that provided them with senses of safety, acceptance, and freedom. I wonder if Lisa was engaging in this language shifting because she

felt less safe away from home and whether in more public spaces she felt uncomfortable to speak in Vietnamese. Had she learned—maybe through schooling and in other social contexts in Canada—that when she was away from home, she *needed* to speak in English? This raised additional wonders for me about the importance of all children hearing multiple languages in spaces away from their homes, including in schools, grocery stores, the library, playgrounds, chess clubs, community gardens, and more.

### ***Languages in Connection With Playing***

As Lisa, Alex, and Ryan invited me more deeply into their life-making with languages, I came to see more movements in their experiences with Vietnamese and English. Lisa was six and Alex was four when they each first began to transition to Canada with their families. At these ages they were each speaking Vietnamese fluently with their parents and grandparents. Ryan came to Canada as a newborn, and his Vietnamese was good enough for basic communication at home.

In time, I recognized that the children used Vietnamese to talk with their parents and grandparents, who were either physically or virtually present in Canada. Meanwhile, they reverted to English when playing with their sisters and brothers. What fascinated me was that even while they were speaking with siblings in English, their mothers would gently remind them to use Vietnamese. Immediately, their sibling conversations would revert to Vietnamese. However, as they continued playing, after a short while their language shifted back to English. I now wonder if the children spoke with their siblings in English because it was the language they chose for playing, in the same ways they speak English when playing with friends at schools and in their community activities and places. I wonder how the children's capacities with shifting across languages enriched their multilingual experiences. When I lingered with this



thought, I wondered how teachers and schools could see newcomer children's experiences with many languages as an asset in their transition.

Here I am connected to Lugones (1987) and wonder if the children's language shifting was a part of their "world"-travelling. More thoughtfully, this wonder of different "worlds" that children travel back and forth between reminded me of my childhood when I spoke the Southern accent with friends and teachers at school and switched to Northern accent when going to and being at home. I also remember Young's (2005) stories of speaking the Anishinaabemowin language with her father when coming home from the residential school where she was only allowed to speak English. I wonder if there may be a possible connection between the children's language shifting and their "world"-travelling across multiple contexts and relationships.

### *Languages in Connection With Social and Community Contexts*

As I was alongside the children and mothers, I often experienced tensions when seeing their struggles of living with English, the new language, and sustaining Vietnamese as their mother tongue. Hồng felt challenged by Canadian English in her first year because of differences in accent and Western cultural practices. Thanh did not have an English education before her transition. Thanh's additional tension was experienced after landing in Canada because she was too busy with child-bearing and child-rearing to attend the English classes offered for new immigrants.

As earlier shared in Chapter Five, Ryan and Thanh named me their "advocate" as they asked me to help with any matters related to using English, such as contacting Ryan's teachers, facilitating Ryan's transfer to a new school, booking flu shots, and interpreting situations with Ryan's new principal. I respected Thanh's difficulties with English acquisition and her feelings of loss in helping Ryan's English learning and navigating their family life in social contexts. On

the other hand, I admired Thanh's profound determination in pursuing English as a life-long learner:

*I know that without English, living here is very difficult. But I have never learned English before and I work with Vietnamese people, which means less opportunity for English communication. However, when Willy turns two, I plan to go back to English classes for newcomers. I want to learn and help my children.* (research conversation, Jun. 15, 2020)

Here Thanh's experience of struggling with English reverberated with my wonders in relation with social and community contexts that shaped her opportunities to attend English classes.

Learning of Thanh's choice to wait until Willy turned two, I wondered if there were any rules about no children in the classes. I knew Thanh did not drive; so, I wondered if her waiting was maybe shaped by needing to travel by public transportation, in which case taking a baby who is not yet walking would require much work. Furthermore, my sense is that these language classes are often located in the downtown areas of cities. Therefore, I wonder whether teachers and program facilitators may need to shift these venues to better support newcomer mothers, especially mothers who are raising young children.

In addition to English, the children and mothers' challenges in sustaining Vietnamese became evident in their lived, told, retold, and relived stories. In Hồng and Hiên's tireless efforts to teach Vietnamese to Lisa and Alex respectively, they both struggled to access Vietnamese books for their children in Canada. Hồng had bought many Vietnamese books during a visit to Vietnam, but later, she realized that few were of good quality. Similarly, Hiên had brought many foreign fairy tales translated to Vietnamese from English, but she discovered that the translators used abstract words, which confused her children.

Moreover, both Hiên and Hồng had packed *Tiếng Việt 1/2/3*, the current series of Vietnamese textbooks in Vietnam, in their luggage, as they expected to use these texts in teaching their children Vietnamese in Canada. Hiên soon recognized that “these books [were] not usable because of so many complicated words that Alex and Alana wanted to give up.” Hồng experienced tensions “because the sentences [were] long and hard for Lisa to understand, plus she [was] not familiar with many regional and cultural contexts in the books.” It was apparent that these Vietnamese textbooks could not be used to support Alex and Lisa to flourish with learning Vietnamese while composing their lives in Canada. I know there are several Vietnamese language schools in our area. I wonder how these schools experience teaching Vietnamese to Vietnamese-Canadian children. Which Vietnamese textbooks or teaching materials are being used in their curriculum? Are there any texts that represent Vietnamese children’s lives in transition?

Within this thread of living lives in transition with languages, there was an evolving story of the mothers’ choosing Vietnamese books for their children’s reading. As Hiên shared her tension in picking Vietnamese books to help Alex maintain his Vietnamese reading, I was curious to know which books she finally decided to use as a long-term resource. Hiên shared with me *Quốc Văn Giáo Khoa Thư* (National Literature Textbook) and *Luân Lý Giáo Khoa Thư* (Morality Textbook), which she found in Hanoi during their summer 2018 visit. Later, when I had these two books, I introduced them to Hồng as she was still searching for good Vietnamese books for Lisa. As Hồng looked at the books’ tables of contents and a couple of stories in each, she said, “these are truly the books I sought for long” and she asked Lisa’s grandparents back home to ship the books to Canada. From Hồng and Hiên, I travelled back to Thanh’s hopes to teach Vietnamese to Ryan later when his English was stronger.

I felt privileged to learn from these three mothers' stories of their tireless determination of sustaining Vietnamese for their children. At the same time, I wondered if schools and centres/agencies for newcomers facilitate sharing circles about sustainable heritage languages for newcomer children and families. Apart from workshops/seminars/discussions about newcomers learning English, could we have similar events that focus on newcomers' mother languages as important threads in their identities and to in shaping spaces where they can experience pride in sustaining their languages when living in a new country?

### **Thread Three: Home Walks With Temporality**

*Hồng told me about her childhood in North Vietnam.*

*Her mother was busy, so she made friends with books and her piano.*

*Thanh shared about her childhood in a poor village.*

*She grew up helping parents in the field and never learned English before going abroad.*

(poetic fragment created from combined field notes with Hồng and Thanh)

Hồng and Thanh began to draw their annals at our first research conversations; I too created an annal at this time alongside each of them. When we each shared our annals, I noted how they were filled with our experiences before our transition to Canada. Over time, Hiên too told and retold stories of her life before transitioning to Canada. As I read and re-read the narrative accounts, I gradually awakened to how their *home walks* with temporality was a resonating thread across their lives. Two story strands awakened me to this thread: Living the Present While Remembering the Past and Imagining the Future; and, Intergenerational Narrative Reverberations.

***Living the Present While Remembering the Past and Imagining the Future***

Amid conversations with Hồng, Thanh, and Hiên were their narratives about childhood. They would remember by saying “when I was a child” or “in my childhood.” Profoundly, these childhood memories grounded the mothers’ autobiographical narratives, which unpacked their past living and learning experiences. By “bringing memory forward” (Strong-Wilson, 2006) through connecting with their experiences in childhood, the mothers drew on their landscapes of learning in co-making familial curriculum with their children. Often Hồng repeated “as I was at the same age with Lisa;” Thanh told and retold a story of “when I was at Ryan’s age;” and Hiên expressed again and again “at Alex’s age, I was a little girl who ....” This “world”-travelling that the mothers engaged in, backward to their childhood experiences and forward to their and their children’s present worlds, was ongoing.

As the mothers moved back and forth between their past and present experiences and their imagined futures, creating their narrative accounts with them helped me understand that their ‘world’-travelling with loving perception (Lugones, 1987) was a gift. However, this was not always/often/only that easy. Often, I learned of the mothers’ transcending their tension-filled and painful transition with limitless energy and awareness. When the mothers retold and relived their stories of their first days in this new country, these stories were shared not only through words but too through tears, silence, thinking eyes, and many deep sighs. Thinking with these past days’ hardships made these experiences strongly present for Hồng and Hiên. As Kerby (1991) wrote, “the past is tributary to the very meaning of the present” (p. 19). While their present reality of challenges did not end, the mothers’ past experiences helped them to navigate these realities, particularly as they focused on supporting their children’s flourishing at school, at home, and in community places in the present and as they imagined the future.

In composing lives alongside her children in Canada, Hiên wanted Alex to learn Vietnamese so he could read Vietnamese books, not only for his current life making but also for his future. I remember Hiên's story:

*In future, Alex will have a need to know about his homeland. At that time, I think he will already have something in his mind from learning Vietnamese since young, and he will discover things by himself. I imagine when Alex turns 18, he will become mature and he will want more understanding of his ancestry and the historical, cultural, and traditional narratives of Vietnamese people. He will tell himself to pick some Vietnamese books to read and discover anything he is curious about.* (research conversation, Jan. 15, 2020)

This is how Hiên expressed her thinking that Alex and Alana might not have her by their side when they grow up, but that their Vietnamese knowledge will help them re-search on their own. Hiên strongly believed that the books would be their best teachers in supporting their passions of knowing their Vietnamese origins.

Collectively, I was drawn to seeing Hồng, Thanh, and Hiên's metaphorical *home walks* forwards and backwards from future, past, and present in their experiences of composing lives alongside Lisa, Ryan, and Alex respectively. The mothers' loving attitudes toward temporality did not solely unfold from where they came from, but encompassed who they were at present and who and how they imagined becoming in the future. This contributed to their children's understanding of who they were and who they were becoming in their constantly changing and growing worlds. Significantly, from these *home walks* with temporality, I came to learn about the mothers' "walking in a good way" to "making a good life" (Young, 2005a, p. 153)<sup>90</sup> alongside their children.

---

<sup>90</sup> Earlier in Chapter Two, I shared about Young's (2005a) teaching of Pimatisiwin, walking in a good way, as a significant thread in my theoretical framework. Please see page 42 for more deeper understanding.

### *Intergenerational Narrative Reverberations*

As I lingered with the children's and mothers' narrative accounts, I was grateful for how Young's (2005a) knowledge kept working on me, influencing my learning. In this story strand, Young helped me better understand the intergenerational narrative reverberations<sup>91</sup> which were woven throughout the mothers' lived, told, retold, and relived stories. Initially, when I first met Hông and her family members, I sensed a beautiful reverberation in their names. Hông carried Bà's first name in her middle name and Lisa and Misa's names were derived from Bà's first name. Bà said that by replicating her first name in Hông, Lisa, and Misa's full names, she wanted their life composing to carry her hopes. Hông added that Lisa and Misa had rhyming names, which made the girls feel more bonded with each other. Indeed, it was the children's, mother's, and grandmother's names that opened up my attending to their intergenerational knowledge across their present three-generation family. Additionally, love of music was an intergenerational practice that Hông wanted Lisa to continue as their lives were in transition.

Hông shared many times that she and her father loved music and that since Lisa was born, she had longed to pass this love on to her. Although at first, Lisa was not keen on practicing piano, Hông's perseverance eventually helped Lisa turn piano practice into Lisa's habit and later, a true hobby or passion. One beautiful story was that while Lisa's grandfather had never come to Canada, his knowledge and wisdom appeared in many of Hông's stories, like this one from her memories of learning piano:

*When I was three years old, Dad bought me a piano toy.*

*He taught me the basic notes: Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti.*

*In my eyes, Dad was the most inspiring teacher*

---

<sup>91</sup> Please see page 42 in Chapter Two for more sharing on the intergenerational narrative reverberations.

*who really slowed down and showed me the beauty of music.*

*When I was in elementary, Dad bought me a bigger piano toy.*

*I felt more passionate and practiced well for school performances.*

*Now, I became a Mom and Lisa has her real piano.*

*I will slow down and teach her lessons from my Dad.*

(poetic fragment created from Hông's story)

Additionally, as I followed the storylines of intergenerational ways of knowing reverberating in Hông's family, I became awake to the perspectives about education for children that lived within and between Hông and her mother. At the farewell party for Bà, she told me about her pride of Hông's undergraduate scholarship in Singapore, and that she loved to see Lisa flourish in a progressive education system like her mother. Bà also unpacked her stories of how Canadian schools were good for Lisa; for example, Lisa learned a lot about being honest, respecting the differences of everyone, and giving love to others.

Understandably, Bà's stories and many of Hông's and Lisa's lived and told stories showed intergenerational narratives and knowledge reverberating from Hông's childhood and knowledge from her grandparents to the present life-making of Lisa and Hông within family, community, and society in Canada. As I now linger with these stories, I wonder how much the grandparents' wisdom are already a part of the school curriculum making as well as in newcomer centres' support resources and programs. Or has their wisdom, their knowledge, not yet been recognized?

With Thanh and Ryan, intergenerational narrative reverberations between Thanh's childhood stories were told and retold in connection with Ryan's childhood. In these stories, Thanh feared that Ryan's failure in learning would become his complete life-making failure. Thanh wished that Ryan could be transferred to a better school and that in the future he could



attend a vocational program to have a good job, which would be better than his parents' experiences of tough childhoods and present experiences. As I thought with these stories across Thanh's and Ryan's life making, I recalled LeMay's (2014) saying that every walk is a hope. I understand Thanh's transition to Canada with Ryan as a newborn baby as truly an enormous hope in their life composing. At the same time, I wonder how deep the newcomer centers/agencies care about newcomer children's and mothers' wishes for their futures, in addition to attending to their current needs.

Hiên too *home walked* in imagination back to the image of Alex's grandparents when talking about educating children at home:

*What I learned from my parents is their way of educating children. The most important is to curate opportunities for our children to pursue their wants, not to follow what the parents want. I remember my parents brought me to piano class but I didn't like it. Instead, I preferred drawing and painting. The thing is, my parents didn't oppose my wish to withdraw from piano and move to drawing.* (research conversation, Jul. 10, 2020)

Hiên often reflected on what she learned from her parents as she now educated Alex. Hiên respected Alex's decision to switch from hockey to chess so that he was able to follow his own passion. Similar to Hiên obtaining prizes in drawing contests, Alex brought back many medals for the chess club, and he was thriving in his chess journey.

In other contexts, intergenerational narrative reverberations appeared in Hiên's tension-filled stories when she thought with her husband's relationship with Alex and Alana:

*I know Trung might do similar things as his parents did in the past. For example, our parents used to beat us as in Vietnamese culture we have a popular saying, "spare the rod and spoil the child." We even did not hate our parents' beating because we thought doing*

*so was good for us. However, being parents in Canada, we acknowledge that beating children is not acceptable. We need to break that cycle. In addition, our parents were so busy with working that they let us grow up naturally. But now we are able to read books, learn from schools, and know how Westerners raise their children, we need to break the cycle. I know it is easier said than done, but once we know it, we need to do it. (research conversation, Nov. 30, 2020)*

When I attended to Hiên's story, especially her emphasis on breaking the cycle if newcomer parents' cultural ways of educating children were no longer appropriate in the Canadian context, I saw the tensions and uncertainties of parents reverberating from one culture to another regarding their ways of treating children. I grew up in a strict family where rod beating was a disciplinary strategy, so I have empathetic feelings for Hiên and Trung. I now wonder about other newcomer parents if their knowledge before arriving in Canada includes the understanding that beating children is illegal. What if they don't know these differences between their home cultures and Canadian culture? I have grown in understanding that not only is these parents' knowing important but so too is their not knowing as they are composing lives in transition.

#### **Thread Four: Home Walks Within, Between, and Across Families**

*Lisa doesn't like learning Vietnamese very much.*

*She tells me that reading and writing are difficult.*

*But when Grandma tells her Vietnamese stories,*

*she enjoys listening and speaking with Grandma.*

*During summertime Lisa reads a lot,*

*and likes to play "drawing the words" in Vietnamese.*

(poetic fragment created from Hồng's words)

The above poetic fragment was composed from Hông's stories of Lisa's learning Vietnamese. Both in Lisa's difficult and thriving moments of learning her mother language, there was the presence of the intergenerational family members: grandmother, mother, and children. As I thought narratively with the three children's and mothers' stories, I became drawn to seeing many metaphorical *home walks* within, between, and across their families. This resonant thread emerged from my thinking with two story strands: Multiple Cultural and Playful Co-Composers in Familial Curriculum Making; and, Braiding Homeland's Culture With Identity Making in the New Land.

### ***Multiple Cultural and Playful Co-Composers in Familial Curriculum Making***

Amidst her transition, Hông was keen on teaching Lisa Vietnamese and supporting her learning English as the new language. At home, Lisa found learning Vietnamese difficult and Hông struggled in persuading her. Hông eventually found no better method than forcing Lisa. Hông was also persistent in encouraging Lisa to experience reading in Vietnamese as a way to learn the language. She hoped that when Lisa grew up, she would find that knowing Vietnamese was an asset of her life making. With English learning, Hông shared that Bà accompanied Lisa to overcome her challenges:

*When hearing about Lisa's tough time with English during her first months, my friends told me that Lisa needed to take extra private classes. But I didn't think so. I asked Bà to help Lisa with English homework. I sat with her when doing maths as well. It turned out that she progressed remarkably after the first semester. Lisa read English books more fluently and she showed much critical thinking in English. (research conversation, Nov. 11, 2019)*

In these stories, the co-curriculum making came as an account of not only Lisa and Hồng but also the grandmother. Culturally in Vietnam, people have lived with multiple generations under the same roof, and knowledge is naturally passed from grandparents to parents and from grandparents and parents to children. Across our inquiry, Lisa and Hồng's intergenerational co-curriculum making became visible in language learning, cooking lessons, and playful moments with the Earth, wildlife, and trees.

Their cultural and intergenerational ways of learning drew my attention as I wondered about the shifts children experience in schools and community programs, which are likely less multiply co-composed. For example, when teachers and community facilitators are the sole curriculum makers, what might be if grandmothers' knowledge became part of co-composing curriculum in schools and in communities? And how might a shift inclusive of more-than-human beings support children's and multispecies' flourishing given that more-than-human beings are rarely part of curriculum making in Western and colonial grounded schools?

Ryan and Thanh's co-curriculum making progressed differently since Thanh was not fluent in English to help Ryan with school lessons at home. Her tensions thickened during the COVID-19 pandemic as she did not know anything about online learning, and she felt hopeless in supporting Ryan's remote learning during four months of social restrictions. In Thanh's teary stories of these aspects, she showed me her feelings of incapability as well as her tireless efforts in searching for help.

When I shared with Thanh my unhappy stories of Sherry being seen as the lowest reader by the teacher, Thanh asked if I still had Sherry's Grade One agenda. As she wished, I brought Sherry's Grade One agenda and Thanh was happy to see many spelling lists, which she thought might be helpful for Ryan's practice at home. Obviously, when mothers cannot do things for

their children themselves, they seek help from the others in their communities. This understanding from Thanh's life grew my wonders about dominant narratives in newcomer agencies. Learning from Thanh's lived stories and my earlier experiences as a newcomer mother, I now wonder if people who work in these agencies are awake to these happenings but their constraints are in place: time, number of people to help, available resources, and so on. My awareness comes to imagine that many agency workers would like to be advocates for a number of different reasons; however, they may be held back by employment contract regulations, time, number of causes, and many other possible facets.

Alongside Alex and Hiên, I witnessed Hiên's intention of teaching Vietnamese to her children since they were six months old. She deliberately applied her knowledge of photographic memory to scaffold Alex and Alana's capacities, and they were able to read books at the age of three. However, it is not always the mother monitoring the children's learning, as Hiên showed me:

*I usually let Alex and Alana pick a Vietnamese unit based on their interests and take turns reading it. Once they finish, I help them correct their pronunciation. Then they close the book and retell the story. Their retelling is sometimes in English, sometimes in Vietnamese with several English words; therefore, I require them to do more retellings in Vietnamese completely. When the retelling is done, they need to write a brief summary or reflection about the story. Overall, it's a combination of my requirements and their options to do the tasks in their own ways.* (research conversation, Feb. 19, 2020)

Here, I saw how the familial curriculum making between Alex, Hiên, and their family members nurtured co-composing possibilities for children and parents. This space of possibility had been thriving over time with flexibility, respectfulness, patience, love, and care for every

curriculum maker in the family. This space existed not only in language-learning moments but in learning about sports, music, foods, and many other matters of their everyday life-making.

Within this thread of multiple co-curriculum makers, I awakened to the children's and mothers' reciprocity since their familial curriculum involved two-way learning. Often in Vietnamese dominant traditional and cultural narratives, children learn from parents, and young people learn from the elders. This one way and top-down learning culture has been embedded in Vietnamese ways of living and educating for a long time. However, as seen in Lisa and Hồng's home walks in Canada, Lisa shared with her mother and grandmother knowledge she was carrying as a result of school curriculum making.

Hiên also learned about Alex's school days from his stories. Each of these ways supported the mothers to grow their knowledge about school culture in Canadian contexts. Thinking with these stories supported my growing recognition of the importance of two-way learning: inside-out from mothers to children, and outside-in from children to mothers. This reciprocal relationship and two little dashes of "inside-out" and "outside-in" significantly strengthens the meaning of 'transitional space' in their co-composing experiences. In time, these gradual awakenings invited me to wonder if all newcomer families know that parents and grandparents also learn from children? How do teachers and schools support children (and maybe their families) in their reciprocal, two-ways learning relationships? With parents new to English and Canada, how do schools support young learners' language and cultural brokering between school and home?

### ***Living Homeland Culture as Identity Making in the New Land***

*Ryan's Grandpa planted this small garden during his summer visit. We have Vietnamese cilantro, green onion, shiso, and lettuce to eat with Phở and Bánh Xèo. With the maples on*

*the left and the cedars on the right, our front yard looks nicer when having this garden in the middle. Similar to the co-living of the plants, we want to combine Vietnamese culture with Canadian culture for our children. (research conversation, Jun. 15, 2020)*

Many times, Thanh told and retold stories in which her family blended the beauties of their homeland's culture with the new land's culture, as seen in her above story. This understanding reminded me of Ryan's birthday party when Mệ thanked our Vietnamese ancestors for bringing us together on the land of what is now known as Canada. That was a sacred practice through which we could connect with our ancestry when living on this new land. This cultural way of thanking together, and Thanh's stories, awakened my learning that even our smallest action of everyday life making could carry cultural greatness in familial curriculum making. Mệ, Thanh, Việt, and Ryan's experiences showed me that when we do small things with a great heart, those small things can become great bridges for our *home walks* to metaphorically revisit, and more so, continue to live some of the traditional cultural knowledge of our homeland.

Hồng celebrated our *Tết* with *Bánh Chung*, our iconic dish served to ancestors, family, and friends in this most significant time of the year. As Hồng and Lisa put out a plate for ancestors who are now in the spirit world, they worshipped together about a new year with good health and happiness for their family and friends and for other people and multispecies in the world. Hồng sustained this practice for Lisa, in the same way they celebrated *Tết* during their previous years living in Vietnam. During our co-inquiry journey, cooking and sharing Vietnamese traditional foods was one of our shared everlasting stories we lived by. I remember spending great times at her home and enjoying Bà's Vietnamese dishes of vermicelli, rolls, *Phở*, and *nem*. Similar to our Vietnamese relatives and friends, traditional foods became a bridge connecting Hồng and me,

her family and my family, our ancestors, and our former lands and our knowledge that we are composing across cultures.

Lisa and Hồng dressed in *Áo Dài*, the traditional ceremonial clothing worn by Vietnamese females for important festivals and cultural traditions. Seeing Lisa, Misa, Joey, and Sherry also wearing silky *Áo Dài* like Hồng and me during our *Tết* celebrations, despite the cold weather, I agreed with Hồng that wearing *Áo Dài* could help engrain the love for our traditional dress in our children. Whenever we wore *Áo Dài*, we remembered our grandmothers and great grandmothers, who had also worn this traditional dress with pride and love.

With Alex and Hiên, their stories deepened my understanding of how their cultural, traditional living was practiced. For instance, Hiên unfolded their practices during pagoda visits:

*Usually once per month we visit the pagoda in our area and attend the Buddhism teaching sessions of Zen masters, then we worship with other Buddhists. Alex and Alana like sweeping the fallen leaves in the pagoda's backyard. Sometimes I join cooking vegetarian foods with other volunteers, and we have lunch with the monks and Zen masters. (research conversation, Jan. 15, 2020)*

Hiên's sharing about these spiritual practices recalled her and Alex's stories of their ancestral practices during every *Tết* festival. Hiên reminded Alex and Alana about cleaning the home and having a bath before the Lunar New Year's Eve; they made *Bánh Chung*, sticky rice, and the plate of five types of fruits to best prepare for Vietnamese most important and sacred moments.

All of these, together with their tradition of “pen-opening”<sup>92</sup> at the beginning of the new year, for

---

<sup>92</sup> Pen-opening is a tradition of Vietnamese people on the first day of the Lunar New Year, when everyone takes their best pen or pencil to write some words, sentences, or a poem conveying the best wishes for the new year. Some others also draw pictures which carry nice messages for themselves, families, and friends. In recent years, this tradition has been expanded to “needle-opening”, “plough-opening” and so on; people enjoy starting the new year with their favourite tools with hopes for fruitful a new year for their work/passion.



me, embodied the beauty and richness of cultural, spiritual, and traditional living in their familial curriculum making. “We carry our homeland alongside our journey,” Hiên had said.

Collectively, many metaphorical *home walks* within, between, and across the children, mothers, and their great families were interwoven with their multiple cultural and playful co-composing of familial curriculum making, and from combining their homeland’s culture with their identity making in Canada. Becoming awake to this intergenerational cultural knowledge supported me to understand their experiences in their familial curriculum-making worlds. I now wonder if all newcomer families are aware of the importance of their familial curriculum and that these curriculum-making worlds are as important for their children as the children’s school curriculum-making worlds. I wonder if some newcomer parents maintain their familial curriculum making amidst transition without disruption from their prior landscapes. I wonder if teachers and schools see the importance of familial curriculum in the newcomer children’ life making, and if so, how are they bringing together these two curriculum-making worlds to best support the children? Do schools and newcomer agencies acknowledge newcomer children’s knowledge shaped via their cultural, traditional, and linguistic experiences as supporting them to excel in their language, culture, and tradition? Do schools and newcomer agencies see that newcomer children and their families’ richness in language, culture, and tradition as knowledge resources for other children in the schools and for other families in the community?

### **Learning From These Resonant Threads**

Over the course of two years living alongside Lisa, Hồng, Ryan, Thanh, Alex, and Hiên, I was gradually awakened to the many physical and metaphorical *home walks* in their storied experiences of composing lives in transition to Canada. In time I became drawn to attend to their *home walks* between lands, *home walks* between languages, *home walks* with temporality, and

*home walks* within, between, and across families. These awakenings invited me to many wonders of *Pimatisiwin*, “walking in a good way” (Young, 2005a, p. 153), as these home walks overlap and are richly complex and layered. These wonders continue to draw me toward *Pimosayta*, “learning to walk together” (Young, 2005a, p. 154). I wonder what walking with *Pimosayta* could open for newcomer children and mothers as they compose lives in transition in Canada and in other places.

**Chapter Eight: “So What?” and “Who Cares?”: Returning Holistically to Personal,  
Practical, and Social/Theoretical Justifications**

**A Looking Back**

*Winter 2021,*

*I came back to my children’s first school*

*Seeing the school field*

*(Our first home walk in Canada)*

*My mind recalls Joey and Sherry’s first moment of seeing this school without a fence*

*Cheerfully, they shouted in Vietnamese: “Trường học không biên giới”*

*(“The school of no borders”)*

*Later, during their school days*

*More and more “borders” became visible*

*Through their stories with tensions, tears, and loneliness,*

*Which brought me to this narrative inquiry journey.* (personal notes, Feb. 2021)

After I completed the first drafts of the narrative accounts with Lisa, Hồng, Ryan, Thanh, Alex, and Hiên, I got off the bus and walked to the playground of my children’s first school in Canada where the seeds of my narrative beginnings for our inquiry were planted. In my mind and body at that time, travelling back to summer 2015 when my family had just arrived in Canada, it felt as though it had been much longer than six years because of many ups and downs, and many complex and layered experiences in my children’s and my making of our lives. Meaningfully, my visit back to the school where Joey and Sherry’s Canadian school stories started, which brought me onto this narrative inquiry journey alongside Lisa and Hồng, Ryan and

Thanh, and Alex and Hiên, now shapes a close appreciation for (for now) the circularity of my narrative inquiry.

I grew up seeing the world holistically, in part, due to the deeply intergenerational context of my upbringing. I have carried this way of knowing and being in who I am and how I live. As a result, and as my dissertation comes to close (for now), I want to stay with wholeness. My passion for embracing holism is also nurtured by what I learned from Collister (2001) in White's (2015) chapter on Indigenous education:

*Wholistic* refers to the whole person, mind, body, and spirit including the idea that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Inferring human behavior cannot be broken down into its constituent parts of skills, attitudes, behavior, emotions, etc. *Holistic* includes the wholistic but it is much more. It refers to the idea that the *whole of reality* is an interconnected whole—holism. Holism means to me that *everything* is connected. No action occurs in isolation. Each movement, each change, each response to stimulus of everything on Earth affects everything else not only on the Earth but in the universe. (emphasis in original, pp. 78-79)

This important learning on the similarities and differences between 'holism' and 'wholism' very much resonates with my ontological and epistemological hopes/commitments for this narrative inquiry. I see my embodied ways of knowing and living holistically as a strength in what I can offer in this final chapter in which I show some of my responses to "the questions of 'So What?' and 'Who Cares?'" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 35).

As I show in the remainder of this introduction, and in the upcoming sections, due to the holistic ways I was raised and now live in the world, when I turn inward, reflecting deeply and carefully on the many experiences in my life that are called forward, it is ethical relationality that

lives at the heart of my responses to ‘So What?’ and ‘Who Cares?’ I often find myself thinking back to the early years of my PhD program, which is when I began to learn about the ethics of the relational ontology that shapes the responsibilities of narrative inquirers:

A relational ontology requires that we undertake research with an understanding of relational ethics that call us to larger questions of who we are in relation with participants but also who we are in relation with the larger world or worlds that people, including us as researchers, inhabit. This relational ontology interwoven necessarily with a relational ethics calls us to consider mutuality, respect, and reciprocity. But it also calls us to questions of responsibility to the person and to the worlds in which we are nested, to questions of complicity in the worlds within which we currently exist as well as to future worlds that our work leads into. (Clandinin et al., 2018, p. 20)

This attentiveness to the relational ontology of narrative inquiry has kept me awake to my crucial responsibilities as a narrative inquirer. In time, particularly as I grew to understand more about the history of Canada, especially in relation with the Aboriginal people who have lived here since time immemorial (Truth, & Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), I began to recognize that a relational ontology needs to include the more-than-human beings with whom I am also in relation and to whom I have responsibilities. As my growth with the ethical relationality of the relational ontology of narrative inquiry took on additional meaning and offered me new complexities to consider as my narrative inquiry unfolded, I was drawn toward Huber et al.’s (accepted) attentiveness to the ethical relationality among narrative inquirers and more-than-human beings and realms. Drawing on Cardinal’s (2011) earlier narrative inquiry, Huber et al. (accepted) wrote about this ethical relationality:

Too, given the deeply autobiographical and relational aspects of our inquiry with the pre- and in-service teachers in the *Assessment as Pimosayta* course we collectively experienced, as Trudy (Cardinal, 2011) described, a “space for inquiry into our stories” (p. 80) where “more than merely living out research is at work... ‘this more’ is the grounding of ourselves in living in relationally ethical ways to all our relations” (Cardinal et al., 2019, p. 126). Trudy’s bringing her and Shawn Wilson’s (2008) understanding of ‘all our relations’ to narrative inquiry, not unlike Mary’s encouraging us to live Pimatisiwin [walking in a good way] and Pimosayta [learning to walk together], has continued to widen the dimensionality of experience we now attend to as well as how we understand the relational ontological and ethical commitments of narrative inquiry. (Huber et al. accepted, p. 9)

Meaningfully, Cardinal’s (2011) teaching narrative inquirers to attend to more-than-human beings and realms, not unlike what Huber et al. (2021) express, has deepened my understanding of my responsibilities as a narrative inquirer to not only human beings or human experience. As I continued to think deeply with my hopes for my research alongside Cardinal’s teachings, in its present and future wholeness, I was drawn back to the knowledge of multispecies’ flourishing (Khan, 2020) that I was privileged to learn during my graduate teaching assistantship alongside Dr. Steven Khan. Multispecies’ flourishing as “the right of other species to flourish” (Tran et al., 2020) feels deeply connected with how I was raised. Reflecting on these connections between the relational ontological and ethical commitments of narrative inquirers to more than human beings and realms so that all species might flourish through my research lets me create a final chapter for my dissertation that grows the ethical relationality of narrative inquiry as both a research methodology and as pedagogy.

As a result, the upcoming sections of this chapter stay holistically focused as I reflect on three interconnecting and interlapping aspects that were foregrounded in my narrative inquiry and that offered me new potentials personally, practically, socially, and theoretically. These sections are: Living in Culturally Ethically Relational Ways; Newcomer Children and Mothers; and Flourishing. My goal in this chapter is to revisit the initial justifications alongside the threads from Chapter Seven and to think with these together as I imagine possibilities. In searching for ways to format this chapter, I chose to focus on these three big sections to showcase not only the justifications, the resonant threads, and my imaginings with each justification but also a sense of their connecting.

### **Living in Culturally Ethically Relational Ways**

It is in the living and telling of experience that we locate what represents our sense of our experience as narrative inquirers. Although we discussed several issues, on reflection, we understand that relationship is at the heart of thinking narratively. Relationship is key to what it is that narrative inquirers do. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 189)

My narrative inquiry journey into the experiences of Lisa, Hông, Ryan, Thanh, Alex, and Hiên took the above teaching from Clandinin and Connelly of the importance of relationships as an anchor. Carrying this knowledge that “relationship is key,” I am grateful that this learning contributes to shaping my experiences and transforming my learning in two important ways: my understanding of living in culturally ethically relational ways with co-researchers, and my new understandings of living relationships also shaped by the desires of co-researchers.

### ***Living in Culturally Ethically Relational Ways With Co-Researchers***

My co-inquiry with the Vietnamese newcomer children and their mothers has strengthened my awareness of our culturally ethically relational living alongside each other. Prior to my

coming alongside the children and mothers, my understanding of living in relation with co-researchers was shaped by my learning from other narrative inquirers' knowledge of ethical relationality (Cardinal, 2014; Lessard, 2014; Kubota, 2017; Reid, 2019). As these earlier narrative inquirers taught me, I needed to slow down and show my deep respect for the relationship between the co-researchers and me, from the time of our rooting our relationships to our being engaged in our co-inquiry, and even after our narrative inquiry was complete. My knowledge of living ethical relationality came from my experiential knowing and practices of caring for people in my life and the multispecies in my surroundings, but I had never thought about the cultural roots of this knowledge and practices before my engagement with the co-researchers.

**The Significance of Grandmothers.** Recalling the moments when I met Lisa and Hồng at their home place to share about my research and ask for their consents, I remember meeting Bà and asking for her permission so that I could have a private conversation with Lisa and Hồng. Travelling backward to the time of writing my research proposal, I had not imagined that I might come alongside grandmothers like Bà in my research. My asking for Bà's permission at the first home visit and, later, at other visits and family gatherings with Lisa's family, was not accidental; instead, this practice is rooted in my cultural living with my grandparents and my teaching my children practices for interacting with older family members.

For many generations across Vietnamese families, seeking permission from older people when we want to do something is central to our showing respect to them and their wisdom. This is also a familial practice in my great family; it is visible in our everyday life making. For example, when we invite family members for meals, we invite the oldest people to eat first and make plates for them. Significantly, my asking for Bà's permission paved the way for my



relationship with her as Lisa's grandmother and Hồng's mother. My blessing to have Bà in this narrative inquiry has enriched my experiences of intergenerational knowledge and familial curriculum making.

Not only was I privileged to have Bà, but I was also grateful to have met Mệ (Ryan's grandmother) during the co-inquiry with Ryan and Thanh. As a cultural familial practice in their family, Mệ always thanked back to the ancestors whenever we started having meals together. Although I had not previously seen this practice as popular, I joined those spiritual moments with Ryan's family with my deepest respect. Later, during teatime with Mệ, I shared my interest in learning more about this cultural spiritual living in her family. This passion contributed to broadening my knowledge of Vietnamese people from Huế city, the capital city of the final emperors in Vietnamese history. For example, my learning of their use of "Mệ" rather than "Bà" or Grandma, and Mệ's teaching that sticky rice on the altar helps connect us with our ancestors enriched my understanding of their sustaining of familial, cultural, spiritual, and traditional practices. I now see that if I had come alongside Ryan and Thanh without paying deep attention to their cultural, familial, spiritual, and traditional practices, I would not have been able to see that they carried to Canada their sacred, complex, and multi-layered life composing shaped through generations who were born and who grew up on the heritage land of the Vietnamese final kingdom.

**Learning From How Co-Researchers Named Me.** Keeping in mind that narrative inquiry "is people in relation studying with people in relation" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 189), I had imagined that my research would nurture a close and reciprocal relationship between the co-researchers and me. However, until I stepped into the co-inquiry and slowly and carefully learned how to walk in good ways (Young, 2005a) alongside each child-mother pair of co-

researchers as I attended to their lives in the midst, my early attentiveness to the responsibilities shaped by ethical relationality told me to attend to whatever relational opportunities the co-researchers invited me into. While living alongside Lisa and Hồng's family, Hồng called me *chị* (sister); Lisa called me *bác* (auntie), and Bà called me *con gái* (daughter). Their relational ways of naming me gradually drew me to understand that they understood my positioning alongside them not just as a researcher but also as a family member; this paved the way for my participation and learning through more family gatherings, traditional food exchanges, and deeply personal sharing based on trust, love, and care for each other. Though our co-inquiry is over, our relationships are ongoing and have continued to become stronger with time. As I think more deeply with these relationships in Hồng's family, and connect with my seeing Hiên as a big sister, I come to imagine that in community there is a sense of intergenerational reverberations and relationships too. This imagining calls on my new learning toward potentials of different responsibilities and ways of being alongside each other in relationships across research in particular, and people's lives in general.

As I began this study, I understood that “[n]arrative inquiry is the study of experience, and experience, as John Dewey taught, is a matter of people in relation contextually and temporally” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 189). I valued this teaching because it showed me the contextuality and temporality of my relationships with the co-researchers. However, as our inquiry began, I had not recognized how deeply important these temporal and contextual aspects are. I awakened to their importance as I took up Ryan and Thanh's invitations to accompany them in some of their cultural contexts.

These experiences gradually showed me how Ryan, Thanh, and their family connected my presence with that of a traditional teacher in Vietnam because they understood the nature of my

visits and our conversations, which mostly focused on their experiences of living alongside and helping the children's learning, as well as many reading and playing moments with Ryan and Brian. They all called me *cô giáo* (teacher) throughout our inquiry journey and even now, when our narrative inquiry is over. Initially, their naming me *cô giáo* created feelings in me of both tension and honour. While this relationship called forth my sharing of my knowledge toward familial curriculum making with Thanh and having many teachable moments with Ryan with the hope that they experienced reciprocity in my presence alongside them as a researcher, I slowly learned that Thanh, Ryan, and their family's cultural knowledge and practices were a crucial part of our relationship. I had not been attending to these deep cultural aspects when our research journey began.

**Awakening to How Friendship May Be Understood Differently Across Culture.** It was in our living in culturally ethically relational ways that Alex and Hiên awakened me to how the connecting of our relationship as friends, which then extended to our living alongside one another as co-researchers, was not a limitation but a strength. Before our coming alongside one another as co-researchers, I was a friend of their family and I had never thought about inviting them into this narrative inquiry. However, as I shared about my challenge in recruiting co-researchers, Hiên did not hesitate when she offered for her and her family to come alongside as co-researchers.

I recognized that Hiên's openness was, at least in part, shaped by our Vietnamese culture and ways of caring for our friends' life and work as well as their personal struggles. I was honoured that Alex called me his auntie and Hiên called me her younger sister before, during, and after our journey. However, I was very careful in supporting them to thoroughly understand our ethical stance that we were also coming alongside one another as co-researchers. Key here

was our co-composing and negotiating of the narrative account as well as our negotiating of the final two chapters of my dissertation, which was a practice I lived with each child–mother pair.

As I grew more awake to the relational cultural ethics that Bà, Mệ, the mothers, and the children were practicing as we lived alongside one another, I saw that there are culturally ethical relational ways of knowing and being embodied in Vietnamese practices that have been crucial in our inquiry. My learning of the ethical relationality of narrative inquiry alongside my co-researchers has now expanded to include the deep cultural ethics that shaped our journey. I believe these cultural ethics need more visibility in narrative inquiry. I also dream that cultural brokers and social workers who do intervention work with newcomer families will be attentive to and seek to learn the particular cultural ethics shaping the children and families they come alongside.

### ***Living Relationships Shaped By the Desires of Co-Researchers***

The construction of a relational space is not an accidental result of mulling over the plans for a research proposal or an ethics submission. These relational considerations are, by contrast, the fundamentals of a narrative inquiry. Co-creating spaces that allow us to tell stories of self are one of the ways that we foster the development of identity for researchers and participants (Clandinin & Cave, 2008). This cannot be achieved by treating stories as reductionist artifacts of a research process. (Caine et al., 2013, p. 583)

Very often in our narrative inquiry, this knowledge of our co-making a relational space became visible. Prior to this narrative inquiry, I had been keen on the idea of being helpful to the children and mothers. However, in relation with Thanh, almost from the outset of our relationship and co-inquiry, she named me as an advocate. When she initially named me in this way, I felt tension, which I did not share with her. Inwardly, I quietly and slowly thought how I

could respond, which included my leaning back on Caine et al. (2013) who had earlier taught me that “our relational responsibilities are first to participants, but also our relationships with participants and to what is called forth in us” (p. 580).

As I reflected on what Thanh’s naming me as an advocate called forth in me, I thought about my long-time practicing of living mindfully and seeing the world and my place in it holistically. While I understood that it may not be typical for researchers to engage in work that Thanh described as “advocacy,” because of my awakening to the culturally ethically relational ways of coming alongside that the co-researchers were living, I felt I could not refuse her naming me as an advocate. As a result, I learned to respect the advocacy that Thanh hoped for in me and in our relationship.

I had imagined reciprocity would be part of the relational space we would co-make together, but when Thanh named me as an advocate, I experienced complicated feelings: I felt blessed because of Thanh’s trust in me while at the same time, I worried because I felt unsure if I could live up to the responsibilities and relationships that I sensed Thanh connected with my being an advocate. When I shared these complicated feelings with my supervisor and weekly writing response groups, they advised me that although their sense was that few researchers had written about the intersections of research and advocacy, and that many researchers may feel uncomfortable being named as an advocate by co-researchers, I should follow my heart. I did follow my heart to step into that space and to live out Thanh’s desire for me to live as an advocate alongside her. Because of this, I felt, and continue to feel, that my decision to follow her lead was a way for me to live reciprocity with her.

Central in my decision to live out Thanh’s desire for me to be an advocate alongside her was my desire to practice “world”-travelling (Lugones, 1987) into co-researchers’ “worlds.”

What Lugones taught me as I thought with her conceptualization of “world”-travelling when I wrote the narrative beginnings for this study gradually became my lived praxis in ways I had not initially imagined. At the beginning of this journey, I understood that “by travelling to their ‘world’ we [may] understand *what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes*. Only when we have travelled to each other’s ‘worlds’ are we fully subject to each other” (emphasis in original, Lugones, 1987, p. 17).

When Thanh named me as her advocate and I practiced travelling to her world, I understood her desire. In slowly making my decision, I drew on my learning from Behar (1996) that as researchers we can choose to stay in the distance, and we can also come alongside and live alongside co-researchers in the best way we know possible. If this narrative inquiry were about to start over again and I were to ask myself, “in my heart, would I do it again?” my answer would also be “yes.” As Minh-Ha (1990) said, “[the claim of identity] is a process which enables me to question my condition anew, and one by which I intimately come to understand how the personal is cultural, historical or political” (p. 72). I subsequently learned that my initial wonders about “who am I” in relation with Thanh grew to include “when, where, how am I” in relation to her, and by extension, to all newcomer children and mothers who are composing lives in transition to Canada.

### **Newcomer Children and Mothers<sup>93</sup>**

It is often said in Asia that what is miraculous is not to walk on water but to walk on earth. [...] With each step forward, the world comes to us. With each step forward, a flower blooms under our feet. The spirit of the walk has led me to the whole tradition of

---

<sup>93</sup> While my inquiry was specifically focused on the experiences of transition in the lives of Vietnamese children and mothers who are new to Canada I believe there are insights from my inquiry that open potential for all children and mothers. I came to this understanding as I read Saleh’s (2017) earlier narrative inquiry alongside Muslim mothers and children, and Swanson’s (2019) earlier narrative inquiry alongside Indigenous children and families.

independent walkers in ancient Asia, at the same time as it provides me with a link to struggle around the world. (Minh-Ha, 2011, 40:56-41:48)

It is this spirit of walking that I bring to my returning to and rethinking with the justifications that shaped my initial coming alongside Vietnamese newcomer mothers and children. As our inquiry grew forward and as I moved closer to the mothers' and children's experiences, worlds of knowledge emerged that I had not expected. As I now metaphorically and reflectively walk from the dawn to the twilight of our co-inquiry, two threads weaving within, between, and across the experiences of/with the mothers and children have transformed my knowledge. These two threads are: Home Walking; and, Familial Curriculum Making.

### *Home Walking*

**Learning to Value the Meanings of 'Home Walk': For Myself as a Vietnamese Newcomer Mother and for Other Newcomer Parents.** Before coming to this narrative inquiry, my children and I always walked home after school, and our walks carried so many stories of my children's experiences with teachers and friends. I valued our time together during these walks, but we had never given it a name until I learned that the co-researchers named their walking between school and home as their *home walk*. With this new knowledge alongside my experience of my family's transition, I gradually awakened to the deeper meanings of our home walks in our everyday life-making. I recognize, for example, the deep shift that has happened inside myself during this inquiry—a shift from seeing myself as a failed mother in Sherry's unhappy story of the Learning Celebration Night to now seeing myself as a strong mother.

Through our physical home walks and much more metaphorical *home walking* in which I accompany my children to ease their difficulties with the new education system, language, culture, and social contexts, I am grateful that they are now very happy with every moment at

school, at home, and in the community. Meaningfully, this narrative inquiry has shaped and reshaped myself as a *home walker* with my young children. Within, between and across our home walks, we also became each other's *home walkers*, which has shifted our co-composing of our familial curriculum making (I say more about this in the upcoming section).

Thinking about the meaning of home walks in newcomer children's lives, I have reflected on the co-researchers' experiences of/with home walks, which I grew to understand as important in supporting the children's resilience and flourishing. From Thanh's silent walks alongside Ryan when he was upset after school, I learned that home walks could be filled with a mother's love and care for her young child, which could ease the child's tension and support them regaining happiness after hard school days.

This learning is strengthened when I remember Peltier's (2016) assertion that "walking is medicine" (p. 48). Growing to see the importance of home walks, I now dream that newcomer parents will be supported to practice home walking so they and their children may experience its beauties, strengths, and potentials in their life making amidst transition to a new country. I believe that as the children grow up, the practice of home walks may support them to attend to their own questions of identity such as "Who am I? What do I want? and Where do I want to go in my journey?" These practices may contribute to children and youth walking to themselves, which has been an important understanding for me, as a parent.

**Learning of Home Walking Alongside Newcomer Children and Mothers: For Teachers and Educators.** Reflecting on Lisa and Hồng's stories of the earth and wildlife on their home walks and Alex and Hiên's teachings and learning of the trees showed me that home walking is also an integral and significant part of the milieu (Schwab, 1962) in their life curriculums. This new learning deepened when I recalled that Lisa's home walk connected what



she learned from teachers to her sharing with Bà that we should love and protect the natural habitats.

Additional to these stories is Ryan's reading of the poem "I belong to" when he told me about his love for the butterfly. All of these stories together show me that as a part of the children's and mothers' familial curriculum, home walks have enriched the children's knowledge of what they have learned from teachers and friends at school and have been a nourishing space for intergenerational ways of knowing. I often wonder about spaces where children, parents, and teachers might sit together and share stories of the children's home walks so that teachers and parents may better understand the children's learning and their ongoing making of their lives.

In addition, as my children and I practiced home walks where I felt much pain as they expressed their unhappiness and frustration about their experiences at school, I was not brave enough to connect with their teachers to ask for conversation and/or help. My eventual solution was to move my children to a new school where they felt happier. Later in this inquiry, I learned from Bà's visits to Lisa's class to understand her learning experiences, and from Thanh's attempts to contact Ryan's teachers regarding his homework support. Thinking with these experiences taught me that home walks hold open potential for more than a "one-way traffic" (p. 376) form of communication, which Marsh (2003) described as happening between children's schools and homes. I am hopeful that home walks may contribute to a two-way reciprocal back-and-forthness in which children bring not only stories from school to home but also stories from home to their teachers and friends.

**Learning of Home Walking With Newcomer Families: For Social Service and Community Workers.** Before this narrative inquiry, I had not seen the phrases *home walk* or *home walking* in any support resources for newcomers in my city, nor had I heard them spoken at

any seminars for newcomer families. It was the child and mother co-researchers who taught me the deep value of these practices both in physical and metaphorical ways. I wish that social and community services may consider learning these two conceptualizations as part of their future support resources that they would share in seminars, workshops, and conversation circles of/with/for newcomer children, mothers, and families.

Furthering my insights into the meanings of home walking with newcomer children and mothers were Thanh's tireless efforts in supporting her children's learning and navigating their family's everyday life-making. As I reflected on the journey of rooting relationships with Thanh, Ryan, and their whole family, I more clearly saw that without attentiveness to cultural, ethical, reciprocal relationship building, there would not have been a ground from which our trust and care for one another could grow; without this grounding we would have experienced hardship in understanding and supporting each other.

I continue to connect this knowledge with the work of social service and community workers who are supporting and advocating for newcomers. I am hopeful that building relationships with newcomers will be prioritized so that trust is established to ground conversations and that the mothers and children feel safe to express and experience support with aspects of their lives in transition about which they feel sensitive, unsure, or vulnerable. I imagine that at the heart of these relationships will be the need to attend to the lived, told, retold, and relived stories of children and mothers who are new to Canada.

I am reminded of Hiên's storied experiences when she shared the necessity of "breaking the cycle" in response to some Vietnamese parents' way of teaching children with physical discipline. Living, telling, and retelling this culturally sensitive experience with Hiên, I was awakened to my need, and the need for social services and community support centres, to pay

attention to what newcomer parents know and may not yet know amidst their transition to Canada.

Hiên's and my lived, told, and retold stories of how some Vietnamese parents physically discipline their children awakened me to how these parents may not know that in Canada these practices would be considered illegal. My awakening deepened when thinking about the possibility that newcomer parents do not yet know the legal procedures in Canada for protecting children. Moreover, Thanh's decision to defer learning English so that she could support her family has left me with many wonders about potential supports for newcomer families that are "not yet" (Greene, 2011, p. 61) in their composing lives in transition to Canada.

### *Familial Curriculum Making*

**Valuing the Importance of Newcomer Children and Mothers' Familial Curriculum Making.** Initially, when this narrative inquiry began alongside my own young children, I showed how I was not yet aware of our "familial curriculum making" (Huber et al., 2011). Alongside the child and mother co-researchers, my learning of familial curriculum making became sharpened and enriched. For example, Hồng and Hiên experienced their familial curriculum making with Lisa and Alex, and with their entire family members not only in an organized and routine manner but also with beautiful complexities and layeredness. Thanh's familial curriculum making with Ryan was both full of worries and hopes to support Ryan's learning and growth. While I became awake to how each child–mother pair experienced their co-composing of this important curriculum differently, that is, in their own diverse and unique ways, I became drawn toward the tensioned threads of this curriculum making.

For example, Thanh's told and retold stories of not questioning Ryan's teachers' and principal's suggestion that she move Ryan to another school spoke to me because each of us, as

Vietnamese parents new to Canada, lived within this cultural structural hierarchy in relation with schools. Similar to Thanh, I too did not request changes when Sherry's teacher labelled her as a low-level language learner. As a result, both Thanh and I bore our tears, worries, and loneliness. We began to tell ourselves stories of being deficient mothers, even as we each quietly searched for ways to support our children outside of school. Thanh's and my stories have led me to wonder if all newcomer parents carry knowledge of ways of working with schools. Although later the principal of School Z shared about his access to Ryan's online profile and obtaining School A's agreement to move Ryan, I keep wondering if all newcomer families know about this possibility.

Another learning that emerged in relation with familial curriculum making and systemic issues was in relation with the policies and practices of public libraries. In my family's first year of transition, I did not know the public libraries; this was due to our earlier experience in Vietnam where I, like many people there, did not have habits of visiting public libraries given their limited resources and complicated protocols for book borrowing. I was appalled by Thanh's experience of losing a library book and not knowing how to pay the fine until it was at one hundred dollars.

My continuing to think with this story has awakened me to some of the systemic invisibilities that shaped and reshaped Thanh's attempts to navigate alongside Ryan. I wonder about the potential for community centres to host regular events to connect librarians with newcomer families because I see the resources in libraries as potentially important in the newcomers' familial curriculum making. Furthermore, I wonder about more possibilities for making community gatherings like "Family Game Nights" (Huber, 2020) in community libraries

that may bring together newcomer and local families, community members, teachers, teacher educators, librarians, social workers, and so on.

**Sustaining the Cultural Wealth of Newcomer Families.** At the beginning of this narrative inquiry, I was just starting to understand how the practices in my family were shaping our familial curriculum making. Alongside Hồng, Thanh, and Hiên, my knowledge of this important curriculum grew to include their traditional, cultural, ethical, historical, and intergenerational knowledge and practices in their everyday life making. The richness in these Vietnamese newcomer families' traditions of cuisine, costumes, etiquettes, cultural, spiritual, ethical, and religious beliefs, heritage language, music, and familial wisdom informed their ways of knowing and being as did their ways of making this curriculum such as through storytelling, reading, cooking, painting, walking, and free play between the children and other family members of different generations. Becoming awakened by the opulent potentials in their familial curriculum making, I was drawn to Yosso\*'s (2005) conceptualization of "cultural wealth" as "the talents, strengths and experiences that students of color bring with them to their college environment" (p. 70). I wonder how post-secondary educators and K-12 teachers recognize and value the cultural wealth of newcomer and racially diverse post-secondary students and young children. How do they see this cultural wealth as enriching the cultures in post-secondary and school places?

As I continue to think with the cultural wealth that children, youth, and adult learners of colour could contribute to post-secondary and K-12 schools alongside the lived, told, and retold stories of the children and mothers in relation with our mother language of Vietnamese, I have slowly awakened to how I have not seen any translanguaging programs (Lewis et al., 2012) for Vietnamese children in schools. Given that in Alberta, where this inquiry took place, there are

roughly 40,000 Vietnamese Canadians (Statistic Canada, 2016), I wonder when multilingual learning will grow stronger in public schools, and in post-secondary education.

Furthermore, I learned from the significant teachings from both the physically present and non-present grandparents whose experiences became woven into this inquiry, such as Lisa's Bà, Ryan's Mệ and Ôn, and Alex's grandparents. Each grandparent's lived and told stories were key in guiding the mothers in their parenting and educating and in their sustaining of the Vietnamese language and culture. In my memories of my grandfather's teachings alongside the lived, told, retold, and relived stories of Lisa, Ryan, and Alex with grandparents, I saw how having present/non-present grandparents alongside could educatively contribute to children's and families' making of their lives both in their familial and school curriculum-making worlds.

Here, too, I am recalling what I have learned, as a newcomer to this land, about the important roles of Aboriginal Elders and their sacred teachings in the lives of Aboriginal children and families in Canada, and, too, in school curriculum-making worlds (Truth, & Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). I wonder if, in time, post-secondary and K-12 schools may open space for Aboriginal and Vietnamese grandparents, Elders, Knowledge and Language Holders, and other grandparents of multiethnicities in Canada to collaborate in sharing teachings of their diverse intergenerational cultural ways of knowing, being, and doing<sup>94</sup>. I wonder for future projects in school curriculum, with the possibilities of caring for not solely what these knowledge keepers share but also for *how* they share.

## **Flourishing**

### ***Flourishing for Newcomer Children, Mothers, and Families***

---

<sup>94</sup> I note here that the Alberta Education Teaching Quality Standard makes central the need for teachers to provide “culturally appropriate and meaningful opportunities for students and for parents/guardians, as partners in education, to support student learning” (Alberta government, 2018, p. 4).

So far, some of the justifications I included in this narrative inquiry were related to the concepts of “walking in a good way” (Young, 2005a), intergenerational narrative reverberations, and familial curriculum making. I still think these justifications are important, but I now also believe that the concept of flourishing is important to include among these justifications; for, without this concept, they are not as deep as what the children and mothers have taught me. I now see flourishing as an extension of these justifications, and I long to include flourishing to again justify my ways of living and seeing in holistic ways.

My growing attendance to the flourishing of newcomer children, mothers, and families was initiated by Hiên as she storied, “I don’t stress over my children’s academic achievement, because the most important thing for their childhood is flourishing.” Hồng centred flourishing when telling stories about the fluidity of her family: “no matter how much transition comes to us, in the end we just want to flourish with family members.” These lived and told stories later brought me to Seligman’s (2011) PERMA model of flourishing, which includes attentiveness to positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. As I thought with these stories that Thanh, Hồng, and Hiên told, I slowly awakened to an understanding of their desires for these elements of flourishing for their children, families, and themselves.

As I continued thinking with flourishing alongside Lisa’s, Hồng’s, Ryan’s, Thanh’s, Alex’s, and Hiên’s lives, I understood in additional ways Hồng’s, Thanh’s, and Hiên’s attentiveness to the wholeness of their children as they taught them. Learning from the power of a mother’s knowledge in Hiên’s wishes for Alex to develop physically, mentally, and spiritually, I saw that their familial curriculum making strongly focused on Alex’s wholeness, in the present and in the future, in ways that are kin with EAUDE’s (2019) description of “the whole child” (p. 63). I wondered how in schools I noted less emphasis on the wholeness of children and youth

and more on categorizing them such as in offering a language program for ‘low language learners’ in one school and a ready-for-work program in another. While each program may be understood as essential for a child’s or youth’s life making, I wondered about a more holistic approach since, for many children or youth, their capacities developed through these programs may be connected.

This wonder drew me back to Huber et al.’s (2011) understanding that “curriculum making was also contextual as it was continuously shaped by shifting places, people, situations, and interactions” (p. 37). From this I understand the need to pay attention to the wholeness of each child and to not separate a child into fragments, such as “this child is a student at school” because in the wholeness of the child’s life making that is not all they are. I wonder if attending more closely to the multiple landscapes in a child’s life could strengthen their flourishing at school and in their additional curriculum making contexts.

Bumping stories of Hiên’s storytelling about Alex’s wishes to repeat class and Hồng’s view of the unnecessary for Lisa’s extra English classes awakened my learning that their familial curriculum making was not directed by academic achievements such as scores and rankings. Rather, the children, mothers, and the entire families’ focuses were on care, love, respect, trust, and support. Lingering with these thoughts, I relate to images of schools “where individual success and competition with others are paramount (Eaude, 2019, p. 66). I hope that this gap between these families’ focuses and Western oriented schools’ focus on competition will become shortened as I seek to see a flourishing space where all children—newcomer and local—are welcomed, listened to, and nurtured regardless of who they are and what they bring to the school landscape, even when their strengths may not be part of the dominant narratives at school.



Given the long-term aspirations of the Vietnamese newcomer families' curriculum, I grew in understanding how they could support children to “flourish over time, rather than simply seeking enjoyment through instant gratification” (Eaude, 2019, p. 63). Here, I hope to highlight a radical change of priorities in relation to formal school settings: instead of making students happy due to high marks, I wonder how teachers may instead plant seeds for students to find happiness and meaning in their learning. In the future, I am hopeful that this extension of familial curriculum making to include the concept of flourishing will receive greater attention; it is my dream to come alongside children, youth, and post-secondary students to co-inquire into their flourishing at school and in the many other places where they are making their lives.

Additionally, my new knowledge recognizes newcomer parents and families' flourishing as closely connected to their children's flourishing. During our two years alongside each other, I experienced not only Hồng, Thanh, and Hiên's smiles but also their tears, deep sighs, and silences. These non-verbal languages spoke to me about how their composing a life in transition to Canada was full of hardships, tensions, and loneliness. The question of “am I a failed mother in supporting my children?” was repeated so many times in Hồng's and Thanh's stories, which was similar to my early experience here. It was not until the close of our journey that Thanh's happy telling after Ryan's successful school transfer and Hồng's cheerful stories of Lisa's fluency in both Vietnamese and English gave me the blessing that each mother was now saying “we are indeed the proud mothers of our children, and ourselves.” Significantly, these newcomer mothers were strong and full of pride in being alongside their children, and their children's flourishing made them flourish.

I grew from other knowledge having come alongside these mothers; this gave me courage to disrupt the dominant social narratives about newcomer families from that of deficit to

flourishing. Ngo's (2016) research with the Vietnamese community in Ontario shows that many Vietnamese newcomers are busy working extra hours to secure their finances. However, Hồng, Thanh, and Hiên taught me the importance of their disruption, which means their decision to balance working and saving time for their children. Their experiences told me that approaching life making as non-linear changes—and has an impact on—the families' flourishing. Therefore, this narrative inquiry longs to forward a message to newcomer parents that apart from working hard with extra hours, the happiness and holistic and long-term development of their children is also very important. Again, I wonder how newcomer parents could slow down to be with their children, to talk with them, to walk with them, and to co-compose a holistically focused familial curriculum with/for them. I believe these practices could nurture love in families and prevent unexpected trauma in the long run.

Additionally, the mothers' stories grew my understanding of how important self-care is in helping newcomer mothers flourish, especially as I looked more deeply at my years prior to engaging in this co-inquiry when I was not good about caring for myself. In Hồng's told and retold stories of maintaining playfulness and practicing yoga in her everyday life making, especially during the cold winter, I learned the crucial role of self-care in mothers' well-being. Similarly, Thanh's words to me, "I was always worried and fearful about Ryan's failure but when telling them to you, I feel them less," paved the way for my evolving understanding that storytelling could create possibilities for sharing with others, easing our tensions, and facilitating self-care.

Another learning came from Hồng's experiences: "I didn't care much about why I keep Tết rituals for Lisa, but now that we retell it, I could see its meaning and I will sustain it for her future." Here, I recognize that narrative inquiry as a research methodology was beneficial in

supporting the mothers to revisit their own experiences and better understand themselves. This knowledge connects with Lugones' (1987) concept of loving perception and my desires to see that as mothers *home walk* to their feelings, their own languages, and their own economic circumstances with loving perception, they start practicing self-care. This is important for their flourishing.

Extending my learnings of self-care, I am aware of the mothers and families' flourishing in relation to community because I sensed this so much from Thanh's asking for advocacy and Hồng's wanting to talk with people in her surroundings. I see in their composing a life in Canada their desires for living in community, which Vietnamese people call *cộng đồng* and which they were familiar with when living in Vietnam. While it is a popular belief that in the United States "cooperation and mutual aid have been a part of the Asian American experience ever since the earliest documented examples of immigration" (Liu, 2018), I connect with Thanh's painful experiences with her children's schooling and language barriers despite her being in Canada for six years.

This struck me to wish for greater support from family associations and benevolent societies for Vietnamese newcomer families and other multiethnic newcomer families. I wonder how young children growing up in Canada, such as Lisa, Ryan, and Alex, could sense the importance of community to give help and to be helped. Nguyen, a Vietnamese descendant of "boat people" refugees in America said, "cooperatives weren't a part of my language growing up, but it was what we did to survive. *Cộng đồng* means community, what ties you together" (Liu, 2018). It is my hope that my children and the child co-researchers in this study will grow up in a similar spirit of community like Nguyen, and that cooperatives will one day flourish in

broader communities across Canada to best support newcomer families who may be immigrants, refugees, or international students' and their families.

### ***Flourishing for Multispecies***

In my earlier living alongside my children, I was not deeply aware of the meaning of other species in our experiences. However, the co-researchers' ethical and respectful living with the more-than-human beings grew my learning to attend to making kin with multispecies' flourishing. As Khan (2020) states, "there is not and has never been human flourishing at community and population levels without—or independent of—multispecies' flourishing" (p. 239). My knowledge is broadened when revisiting Lisa's love for the earth and Alex's patience in watching how tiny ants were growing. I see that these newcomer children do not only love and care for their mothers and other family members but also for the earth, plants, animals, and many other species in their new living landscapes. What is crucial to me is that this new perspective paves potential for a push back to the single story (Adichie, 2009) that newcomer children are vulnerable and need to be 'fixed up' or 'readied' for life in Canada. My response is "yes, the children may, at times, be vulnerable but they are also strongly living with great care for not only people but multispecies." Indeed, there is a reciprocal relationship in which the newcomer children value their kinship with multispecies' flourishing, and multispecies' flourishing enriches the children's learning and growing.

In addition, Hồng, Bà, Thanh, and Hiên's *home walking* alongside their children in their familial curriculum making drew me to see how newcomer mothers and grandmothers value and support their children's making kin with multispecies through "collaborating and co-labouring to make-with—become-with, compose-with—the earth-bound" (Harraway, 2015, p. 161). In Bà's teachings to Lisa about living in harmony with wildlife and Hiên's believing that all things have

spirit, I see that Vietnamese culture, traditions, and intergenerational knowledge have been nurtured in the children and families' making kin and co-inhabiting with multispecies' flourishing in this land now known as Canada, which potentially becomes their new homeplace.

I am drawn to the Vietnamese newcomer families' wisdoms and resonances with Indigenous peoples' ways of knowing in Canada. Here, I was reminded of Peltier's (2016) teaching. She writes that the oral tradition of her people "brings me to connection with Indigenous knowledge and the true-to-being way of walking as an *Anishinaabe-kwe*. In my cultural tradition, I introduce myself by re-membering my parents and relatives and acknowledging my homeland" (p. 130). I wonder how this resonance between Vietnamese and Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and living may continue to grow and support Vietnamese newcomer children and Indigenous children as they grow up in intercultural and multilingual environments.

Extending my knowledge to see the blending of familial curriculum making and multispecies' flourishing, my thoughts bump against the dominant institutional narratives of subject-matter-oriented school curriculum. I wonder about the emergent needs of teachers' bringing children's lives, familial curriculum making, and multispecies' flourishing into inquiry alongside the colonial Western subject-matter-oriented school curriculum. Pulling from Khan's (2020) words, "I have taken up the challenge of not referring to myself, other teachers, textbooks, and the other elements of classroom learning ecosystem as 'resources,' but as 'partners,'" (p. 240) I am hopeful for a greater partnership between teachers, teacher educators, parents, and community members to cultivate flourishing for/with newcomer children and families and too multispecies. This evolving understanding reminds me of Edward Doolittle

reclaiming his Mohawk language after he was robbed of it in a residential school on CBC Radio (2015):

When I learned Mohawk, an elder came to visit my class and said to us, “The birds thank you. The trees thank you. The animals thank you for learning the language.” ... At the time, it seemed an odd thing to say, but now I understand.

In important ways, Doolittle inspires me to seek for the reverberations of his words in my children and in the child co-researchers’ experiences when they compose their lives as a young flourishing generation in Canada.

### **Closing (for Now) and My Forward Looking**

It has been almost six years since Sherry’s tearful experiences at the Learning Celebration night of her first school year in Canada, which raised in me so many questions and wonders in relation to our life making as newcomer children and mothers. Humbly, I understand my research journey in the same spirit as the Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh’s teaching of “no mud, no lotus” (Hanh, 2014). Similar to the Vietnamese lotus growing from the mud and blooming with beauty and fragrance, this narrative inquiry that I co-composed with Lisa, Hồng, Ryan, Thanh, Alex, and Hiên was a journey that opened up many complexities and difficult layers within our experiences; it was also a journey through which I awakened to my need to attend to my living in ethical relationality and culturally ethically relational ways, to the physical and metaphorical *home walking* of/with newcomer children and mothers, and the flourishing of, and kinship among, children, mothers, families, and multispecies.

Looking back to the whole long journey of our narrative inquiry, I can feel how my knowledge is transformed through my learning of *pimatisiwin*, “walking in a good way”

(Young, 2005a, p. 153) to *pimosayta*, “learning to walk together” (Young, 2005a, p. 154), and later to *ni’wahkomakanak*, “all my relations” (King, 1990, p. ix). Looking forward, I wonder what it may mean not just for newcomer children and mothers *to walk each other home* but also for the other people with whom they share landscapes, such as teachers, teacher educators, librarians, newcomer agents, cultural brokers, and community coordinators *to walk to newcomer families’ homes*, physically and metaphorically. As I linger here with wonders about the future, I recall Thich Nhat Hanh’s teaching:

we walk for ourselves,  
we walk for everyone,  
always hands in hands. (Hanh, 2001, p. 174)

I know in new ways how *I have travelled afar to come back home*; it is a homecoming that has lived in my body since birth and that I can now, thanks to this research, feel more closely, deeply, and sacredly. I wish for this spirit of “coming back home” for newcomer children, their mothers, and their entire families because as this journey has shown me, for Lisa, Hồng, Ryan, Thanh, Alex, Hiên, Joey, Sherry, and me, our biggest dream has always been flourishing. I will remember this.

## References

- Alberta Education (2018). *Teaching quality standard*. Alberta Government.  
<https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/4596e0e5-bcad-4e93-a1fb-dad8e2b800d6/resource/75e96af5-8fad-4807-b99a-f12e26d15d9f/download/edc-alberta-education-teaching-quality-standard-2018-01-17.pdf>
- Adams, L., Kirova, A., & Adams, L. D. (2006). *Global migration and education: Schools, children, and families*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203824894>
- Adichie, C. N. (2009). *The danger of a single story* [Annotated Video Transcript].  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_ngozi\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en)
- Banister, J. (1992). *Vietnam: Population dynamics and prospects*.  
<https://www.popline.org/node/321915>
- Basso, K. H. (1996). *Wisdom sits in places: Landscape and language among the Western Apache*. University of New Mexico Press.
- Bateson, M. C. (1994). *Peripheral visions: Learning along the way*. HarperCollins Publishers.
- Battiste, M. (2004). *Animating sites of postcolonial education: Indigenous knowledge and humanities*. Paper presented at the Canadian Society for the Study of Education conference, Winnipeg, MB.
- Behar, R. (1996). *The vulnerable observer: Anthropology that breaks your heart*. Beacon Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1997.99.4.862>
- Caine, V., Estefan, A., & Clandinin, D. J. (2013). A return to methodological commitment: Reflections on narrative inquiry. *Scandinavian journal of educational research*, 57(6), 574-586.



- Caine, V., Lessard, S., & Clandinin, D. J., (2018). Lingerings departures: Reverberations through, and in, narrative inquiry response communities. In M. Hanne & A. A. Kaal (Eds.), *Narrative and metaphor in education: Look both ways* (pp. 278–290). Routledge.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429459191>
- Cardinal, T. (2011). Stepping-Stone or Saving Story? *LEARNing Landscapes*, 4(2), 79-91.
- Cardinal, T. (2014). *Composing lives: A narrative inquiry into Aboriginal youth and families' stories to live by* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta]. ProQuest Dissertation and Theses Global.
- Cardinal, T., Murphy, M. S., & Huber, J. (2019). Movements toward living relationally ethical assessment making: Bringing Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and doing alongside narrative inquiry as pedagogy. *Revista Interuniversitaria de Formación del Profesorado. Continuación de la antigua Revista de Escuelas Normales*, 33(3).
- Carr, D. (1986). *Time, narrative, and history*. Indiana University Press.
- CBC Radio. (2015, June 04). *Residential schools robbed Edward Doolittle of the Mohawk language. Then he reclaimed it*. As It Happens. <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/as-it-happens-thursday-edition-1.3100783/residential-schools-robbed-edward-doolittle-of-the-mohawk-language-then-he-reclaimed-it-1.3101027>
- Chamoiseau, P. (1997). *School days*. University of Nebraska Press.
- Clandinin, D. J. (2013). *Engaging in narrative inquiry*. Left Coast Press, Inc.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Caine, V. (2013). Narrative inquiry. In *Reviewing qualitative research in the social sciences* (pp. 178-191). Routledge.
- Clandinin, D. J., Caine, V., & Lessard, S. (2018). *The relational ethics of narrative inquiry*. Routledge.

- Clandinin, D. J., & Cave, M. T. (2008). Creating pedagogical spaces for developing doctor professional identity. *Medical education*, 42(8), 765-770.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (1992). Teacher as curriculum maker. In P. Jackson (Ed.), *Handbook of research on curriculum* (pp. 363–401). Macmillan.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (1994). Personal experience methods. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 413–427). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative inquiry*. Jossey Bass.
- Clandinin, D. J., Huber, J., Huber, M., Murphy, M. S., Orr, A. M., Pearce, M., & Steeves, P. (2006). *Composing diverse identities: Narrative inquiries into the interwoven lives of children and teachers*. Routledge.
- Clandinin, D. J., Lessard, S., & Caine, V. (2019). Reverberations of narrative inquiry: How resonant echoes of an inquiry with early school leavers shaped further inquiries. In *Journeys in Narrative Inquiry* (pp. 278-291). Routledge.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Murphy, M. S. (2009). Relational ontological commitments in narrative research. *Educational Researcher*, 38(8), 598–602.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Rosiek, J. (2007). Mapping a landscape of narrative inquiry: Borderland spaces and tensions. In D. J. Clandinin (Ed.), *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology* (pp. 35–75). Sage Publications.
- Clandinin, D. J., Steeves, P., & Caine, V. (Eds.). (2013). *Composing lives in transition: A narrative inquiry into the experiences of early school leavers*. Emerald Group Publishing.
- Collister, R. (2001). Revitalising marginalised communities by increasing social capital through holistic education and the lifelong learning strategies of indigenous peoples. Paper

presented at *the 10th National Biennial Conference of the Australian Curriculum Studies Association*.

Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations. (n.d.). *About us*. <https://www.treatysix.org/>

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1994). Telling teaching stories. *Teacher education quarterly*, pp. 145-158.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1999). *Shaping a professional identity: Stories of educational practice*. Teachers College Press.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (2006). Narrative inquiry. In J. Green, G. Camili, & P. Elmore (Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in education research* (pp. 477–487). Lawrence Erlbaum.

Delpit, L. (1995). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the curriculum*. The New Press.

Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. The Macmillan Co.

Dewey, J. (1981b). *The Later Works, 1925-1953: 1939-1941* (Vol. 14). SIU Press.

Dickens, C. (1837). *Oliver Twist*. Richard Bentley.

Downey, C. A., & Clandinin, D. J. (2010). Narrative inquiry as reflective practice: Tensions and possibilities. In N. Lyons (Ed.), *Handbook of reflection and reflective inquiry: Mapping a way of knowing for professional reflective inquiry* (pp. 383–397). Springer Science & Business Media.

Eaude, T. (2019). 16 differing views of professionalism: Implications for primary teachers. *A broad and balanced curriculum in primary schools: Educating the whole child*. Sage Publishing.

Edmonton Public Schools. (n.d.). *Cogito program description*.  
<https://epsb.ca/programs/teachingphilosophy/cogito/>

- Farquhar, S., & Fitzsimons, P. (2018). Uneducation: Narrative and metaphor in subjugated knowledge. In M. Hanne & A. A. Kaal (Eds.), *Narrative and metaphor in education: Look both ways* (pp. 122–134). Routledge.
- Filice, M. (2016). *Treaty 6*. <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/treaty-6>
- Garland, S. (1993). *The lotus seed*. Harcourt, Inc.
- Goodman, J., Schlossberg, N. K., & Anderson, M. (2006). *Counselling adults in transition: Linking theory to practice*. Springer Publishing Company.
- Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts, and social change*. Jossey-Bass.
- Greene, M. (2011). Releasing the imagination. *NJ*, 34(1), 61-70.
- Gunderson, L. (2009). *ESL (ELL) literacy instruction: A guidebook to theory and practice*. Routledge.
- Hanh, T. N. (2001). *Call me by my true names: The collected poems*. Parallax Press.
- Hanh, T. N. (2014). *No mud, no lotus: The art of transforming suffering*. Parallax Press.
- Haraway, D. (2015). Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making kin. *Environmental Humanities*, 6(1), 159–165.
- Heilbrun, C. G. (1999). Contemporary memoirs: Or, who cares who did what to whom? *The American Scholar*, 68(3), 35–42.
- Hoang, C. H., & Nguyen, D. C. (2021). Multilingual sources used for research dissemination: positioning of Vietnamese researchers. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 1-16. <https://doi-org.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/10.1080/14790718.2021.1879811>
- hooks, b. (1997). *Wounds of passion: A writing life*. Henry Holt and Company.

- Huber, J. (2000). *Stories within and between selves: Identities in relation on the professional knowledge landscape* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta]. ProQuest Dissertation and Theses Global.
- Huber, J. (2020). Letting children know we are listening to them: Attending to children's everyday ways of knowing, being, doing, and relating as key in the relational ethical responsibilities of coming alongside young child co-researchers in narrative inquiry. In *Narratives and Reflections in Music Education* (pp. 33-49). Springer.
- Huber, J., Cardinal, T., & Murphy, M. S. (accepted). Relational narrative inquiry alongside a young Métis child and her family: Everyday assessment making, pimatisiwin, pimosayta, and teacher education and development. *Frontiers In Education, Special Issue 2021/2022: Assessment Practices with Indigenous Children, Youth, Families, and Communities*.
- Huber, J., Murphy, M. S., & Clandinin, D. J. (2011). *Places of curriculum making: Narrative inquiries into children's lives in motion*. Emerald Group Publishing.
- Huber, M., Clandinin, D. J., & Huber, J. (2006). Relational responsibilities of narrative inquirers. *Curriculum & Teaching Dialogue*, 8(1/2), 209–223.
- Kennedy, K. (2017, Nov). *International students entering Canada up 22% to 270,000*. The PIE News. <https://thepienews.com/news/canada-new-international-students-270000/>
- Kerby, A. P. (1991). *Narrative and the self*. Indiana University Press.
- Khan, S. (2020). After the M in STEM: Towards multispecies' flourishing. *Canadian Journal of Science, Mathematics and Technology Education*, 20, 230–245.
- King, T. (1990). *All my relations*. McClelland & Stewart.
- Kubota, H. (2017). *A narrative inquiry into the experiences of people who are homeless in Japan* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta].

[https://era.library.ualberta.ca/items/62def59f-fe48-43bb-bda7-84e992c6dbfa/view/70dad354-e2f2-4365-b4fc-9b6d8b635ef8/Kubota\\_Hiroko\\_201709\\_PhD.pdf](https://era.library.ualberta.ca/items/62def59f-fe48-43bb-bda7-84e992c6dbfa/view/70dad354-e2f2-4365-b4fc-9b6d8b635ef8/Kubota_Hiroko_201709_PhD.pdf)

Kwon, J. M. (2020). *A narrative inquiry into the experiences of Korean immigrant mothers' familial curriculum making in Canada* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta].

[https://era.library.ualberta.ca/items/b4706c6a-a932-497a-a8a8-fecd74c4428a/view/09965312-4cfc-46be-934e-ce43b899f89d/Kwon\\_Jin\\_Mi\\_202008\\_PhD.pdf](https://era.library.ualberta.ca/items/b4706c6a-a932-497a-a8a8-fecd74c4428a/view/09965312-4cfc-46be-934e-ce43b899f89d/Kwon_Jin_Mi_202008_PhD.pdf)

LeMay, L. M. (2014). *A narrative inquiry into teachers' experiences of working with hope* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta]. ProQuest Dissertation and Theses Global.

Lessard, S. (2014). *“Red worn runners” - A narrative inquiry into the stories of Aboriginal youth and families in an urban school setting* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta]. ProQuest Dissertation and Theses Global.

Lessard, S., Caine, V., & Clandinin, D. J. (2015). A narrative inquiry into familial and school curriculum making: Attending to multiple worlds of Aboriginal youth and families. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 18(2), 197–214.

Lewis, G., Jones, B., & Baker, C. (2012). Translanguaging: Developing its conceptualisation and contextualisation. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 18(7), 655-670.

Liu, Y. Y. (2018). *For Asian immigrants, cooperatives came from the home country.*

Yesmagazine. <https://www.yesmagazine.org/authors/yvonne-yen-liu>

Lugones, M. (1987). Playfulness, “world”-travelling, and loving perception. *Hypatia*, 2(2), 3–19.

MacNevin, J. (2012). Learning the way: Teaching and learning with and for youth from refugee backgrounds on Prince Edward Island. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 35(3), 48–63.

- Malot, H. (1878). *Sans famille*. Édouard Dentu.
- Marsh, J. (2003). One-way traffic? Connections between literacy practices at home and in the nursery. *British educational research journal*, 29(3), 369-382.
- Mello, D., Murphy, S., & Clandinin, J. (2016). Coming to narrative inquiry in the contexts of our lives: A conversation about our work as narrative inquirers. *Revista Brasileira de Pesquisa (Auto) Biográfica*, 1(3), 565-583.
- Métis Nation of Alberta. (n.d.). *The voice for Métis Albertans*. <https://albertametis.com/>
- Minh-Ha, T. T. (1989). *Woman, native, other: Writing postcoloniality and feminism*. Indiana University Press.
- Minh-Ha, T. T. (1990). Woman, native, other. *Feminist Review*, 36(1), 65–74.
- Minh-Ha, T. T. (2011, October 14). *Keynote panel – gender & women’s studies 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference*. Gender & Women’s Studies Department, UC Berkeley.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZv9WHaB1QI&t=2364s>
- Montero-Sieburth, M. (2011). Bicultural parents as transformative change agents through action research in the schools and in the community. In E. M. Olivos, O. Jimenez-Castellanos, & A. M. Ochoa (Eds.), *Bicultural parent engagement: Advocacy and empowerment* (pp. 159-185). Teachers College Press.
- Murphy, M. S., Huber, J., & Clandinin, D. J. (2012). Narrative inquiry into two worlds of curriculum making. *LEARNing Landscapes*, 5(2), 219–235.
- Ngo, A. (2016). A case study of the Vietnamese in Toronto: Contesting representations of the Vietnamese in Canadian social work literature. *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees*, 32(2), 20-29.

- Nguyễn, D. (2015). *Truyện Kiều*. Nhà xuất bản Văn Học.
- Noddings, N. (2013). *Caring: A relational approach to ethics and moral education*. University of California Press.
- Okri, B. (1997). *A way of being free*. Phoenix House.
- Peltier, S. (2016). *Demonstrating Anishinaabe storywork circle pedagogy: Creating conceptual space for ecological relational knowledge in the classroom* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Laurentian].  
<https://zone.biblio.laurentian.ca/bitstream/10219/2643/4/SPeltier2016%20Final.pdf>
- Ramey, S. L., & Ramey, C. T. (1994). The transition to school. *Phi delta kappan*, 76(3), 194-198.
- Reid, N. (2020). *Teachers' experiences of/with trauma and trauma-sensitivity: A narrative inquiry into trauma stories and stories of trauma* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta]. [https://era.library.ualberta.ca/items/99344f81-1b76-43dd-a6f5-2b93341054a2/view/3ae2542c-0ca2-4697-9ca7-bd54249162e4/Reid\\_Nathalie\\_202003\\_PhD.pdf](https://era.library.ualberta.ca/items/99344f81-1b76-43dd-a6f5-2b93341054a2/view/3ae2542c-0ca2-4697-9ca7-bd54249162e4/Reid_Nathalie_202003_PhD.pdf)
- Rury, J. L. (1997). Experience, learning and knowledge. In Sapientiae, V. (Ed.), *Foundations of new learning handbook* (pp. 2–11). School for New Learning, DePaul University.  
<https://via.library.depaul.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1006&context=snl-cbe>
- Saleh, M. H. (2017). *Stories we live by, with, and in: A narrative inquiry into the experiences of Canadian Muslim girls and their mothers* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta]. ProQuest Dissertation and Theses Global.
- Schwab, J. J. (1962). *The teaching of science as enquiry*. Harvard University Press.



- Seligman, M. E. (2011). Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being. *Policy*, 27(3), 60–81.
- Soanes, C., & Stevenson, A. (1976). *Concise Oxford English dictionary*. Oxford University Press.
- Statistics Canada. (2016). *Data tables, 2016 census*. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/dt-td/Index-eng.cfm>
- Statistics Canada. (2016). *Immigration and ethnocultural diversity*. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-can-eng.cfm?Lang=Eng&GK=CAN&GC=01&TOPIC=7>
- Strong-Wilson, T. (2006). Bringing memory forward: A method for engaging teachers in reflective practice on narrative and memory. *Reflective Practice*, 7(1), 101-113.
- Swanson, C. (2019). *A narrative inquiry alongside the familial curriculum making experiences of urban indigenous children and families* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta]. ProQuest Dissertation and Theses Global.
- Thúy, K. (2012). *Ru*. Random House Canada.
- Thúy, K. (2017). *Le secret de Vietnamiennes*. Les Éditions du Trécarré.
- Tô, H. (2007). *Dé mèn phiêu lưu kí*. Nhà xuất bản Văn Học.
- Tran, T. T. H., Khan, S., & La France, S. (2020). Mathematics for multispecies' flourishing: Make kin with Vietnamese Bánh Chung. *Philosophy of Mathematics Education Journal*, 36. <http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/education/research/centres/stem/publications/pmej/pome36/index.html>

- Truth, & Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Canada's Residential Schools: The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Vol. 1). McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP.
- Twain, M. (1876). *The adventures of Tom Sawyer*. American Publishing Company.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Watt, D., & Roessingh, H. (2001). The dynamics of ESL drop-out: Plus ça change... *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 58, 203–223.  
<http://www.utpjournals.press/doi/pdf/10.3138/cmlr.58.2.203>
- White, L. (2015). *Free to be Mohawk: Indigenous education at the Akwesasne freedom school* (Vol. 12). University of Oklahoma Press.
- Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods*. Fernwood Publishing.
- Yosso\*, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69–91.
- Young, M. I. (2005a). *Pimatisiwin: Walking in a good way. A narrative inquiry into language as identity*. Pemmican.
- Young, M. I. (2005b). Is the legacy of residential schools relevant today? *Manitoba Association of School Superintendents*, 33, 36–38.
- Young, M. I., Paynter, F., Paul, K., Parisian, B. M., Orr, J. L., Moore, D., ... & Huber, J. (Eds.). (2012). *Warrior women: Remaking post-secondary places through relational narrative inquiry*. Emerald Group Publishing.

## Appendices

### Appendix A – Information Letter and Consent Form

#### *Information Letter for Mother Participants (English)*

Dear Mrs. /Ms. \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is Hang Thi Thuy Tran. I am a Doctoral Candidate at the Center for Research for Teacher Education and Development, University of Alberta. The focus of this study is on the experiences of Vietnamese newcomer children and mothers who are in transition to Canada. I would like to work with your child and with you. This involves meeting with you and your child, independently or together, approximately 6-8 times over the period of 12-18 months to hear about and reflect upon your experiences, and your child's experiences, as your family is in transition from Vietnam to Canada. I would like to mention that there may be no direct benefits from this study to its participants.

The title of this study is "Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of Vietnamese Children and Mothers Composing Lives in Transition to Canada." In this study, I employ Narrative Inquiry as a research methodology, which involves telling and inquiring into stories of your experiences and may involve the sharing of artifacts, memory box items, photography, drawing of your life timelines, and other creative work such as reading, painting, cooking, and singing. One-on-one conversations will be held in locations you and your child choose. These one-hour conversations will be audio-recorded and transcribed. Writing based on this inquiry will be submitted for publication of my PhD dissertation and several journals, and presentations will be made at local, national, and international conferences. Your privacy and confidentiality are extremely important to me and I will protect them all times throughout the research. All material collected will be stored safely to ensure confidentiality. Study data will be securely stored on either a password protected computer or in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office on the University of Alberta campus for 5 years after the study is over, at which time it will be destroyed.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You and your child have the right to withdraw at any time during the study. The plan for this study has been reviewed by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. If you have questions about your rights or how research should be conducted, you can call (780) 492-2615. This office is independent of the researchers.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Your and your child's experiences are important in this research project. I would appreciate your signing the attached consent form. For questions or clarifications, I can be reached at the contact information listed below.

Sincerely,

Hang Thi Thuy Tran

PhD Candidate - CRTED, University of Alberta  
Phone: 780 680 9179 Email: [hangthit@ualberta.ca](mailto:hangthit@ualberta.ca)

## **Thư Giới thiệu với Đối tượng Nghiên cứu là Người mẹ (Vietnamese)**

Kính thưa Bà/ Cô \_\_\_\_\_

Tôi tên là Trần Thị Thúy Hằng. Tôi hiện là Nghiên cứu sinh tại Trung tâm Nghiên cứu về Phát triển và Đào tạo Giáo viên, Đại học Alberta. Nghiên cứu của tôi hướng đến những trải nghiệm của trẻ em Việt Nam và những người mẹ vừa chuyển đến Canada. Tôi rất mong được làm việc với Cô và con của Cô. Nghiên cứu này sẽ thực hiện các buổi gặp và nói chuyện với Cô và con Cô, riêng rẽ hoặc cùng lúc, khoảng 6 đến 8 lần trong khoảng thời gian 12 đến 18 tháng, để được nghe kể và suy luận về các trải nghiệm của Cô, và của con Cô, khi gia đình Cô chuyển từ Việt Nam sang Ca-na-đa.

Tiêu đề của nghiên cứu này là “Nghiên cứu tường thuật về trải nghiệm của trẻ em Việt Nam và những người mẹ trong thời gian chuyển đến Ca-na-đa.” Tôi sử dụng phương pháp Nghiên cứu Tường thuật cho đề tài này, nên nó liên quan đến việc kể chuyện về những trải nghiệm và có thể có những lúc chia sẻ về các vật kỷ niệm, hộp lưu niệm, tranh ảnh, phác họa các mốc quan trọng trong cuộc đời, và những công việc sáng tạo khác như là đọc sách, vẽ tranh, nấu ăn, và ca hát. Các buổi nói chuyện giữa chúng ta sẽ diễn ra tại những địa điểm do Cô và con Cô chọn. Những buổi nói chuyện trong vòng 1 giờ sẽ được ghi âm và phiên âm. Các bài viết dựa trên nghiên cứu này sẽ được nộp và xuất bản cho Luận văn Tiến sĩ của tôi cũng như một số tạp chí và báo cáo khoa học tại các hội thảo địa phương, trong nước, và quốc tế. Tính chất riêng tư và bảo mật thông tin của Cô và con Cô là cực kỳ quan trọng đối với tôi và tôi sẽ bảo vệ chúng trong suốt quá trình nghiên cứu. Tất cả các tư liệu nghiên cứu đã thu thập sẽ được cất giữ ở những nơi an toàn để đảm bảo tính bảo mật thông tin. Dữ liệu nghiên cứu sẽ được lưu trữ trong một máy tính có cài mật khẩu bảo vệ hoặc trong một tủ hồ sơ được khóa chặt tại văn phòng có khóa ở trường Đại học Alberta trong vòng 5 năm; sau đó tất cả sẽ được hủy bỏ.

Việc tham gia vào nghiên cứu này là hoàn toàn tự nguyện. Cô và con Cô có quyền rút lui bất kỳ lúc nào trong suốt thời gian nghiên cứu. Quá trình và phương pháp nghiên cứu của tôi đã được Ban Xét duyệt Đạo đức Nghiên cứu của Đại học Alberta phê duyệt. Nếu Cô có thắc mắc gì về nghiên cứu này, xin vui lòng liên hệ Research Ethics Office tại số điện thoại 780-492-0459. Văn phòng này không liên quan trực tiếp đến dự án nghiên cứu này.

Chân thành cảm ơn sự quan tâm của Cô đến nghiên cứu này. Những trải nghiệm của Cô và con cô sẽ rất quan trọng cho dự án. Tôi vô cùng trân trọng việc Cô ký xác nhận vào mẫu Thông báo

chấp thuận đính kèm. Nếu Cô có thêm câu hỏi hay bất cứ thắc mắc nào cần làm rõ, xin vui lòng liên hệ với tôi theo thông tin dưới đây.

Trân trọng.

Trần Thị Thúy Hằng  
Nghiên cứu sinh  
CRTED, University of Alberta  
Điện thoại: 780 680 9179  
Email: [hangthit@ualberta.ca](mailto:hangthit@ualberta.ca)

## **Information Letter for Child Participants (English)**

### **\*Letter to be read to the child and discussed\***

My name is Hang (Thi Thuy Tran). I am studying at the University of Alberta. I am doing research for my Doctoral dissertation. I want to learn more about Vietnamese children who are in transition to Canada. I would like to invite you to tell me more about what it is like to experience this time of change. I also want to know what it is like for your mother and I will be talking to her too. Everything you share with me will not be shared with anyone else unless you give me permission to share.

I will be visiting with you and your mother so we can talk. I will sometimes be writing notes so I don't forget what I see and hear in our conversations. I will record our talking and will use our talking for part of my research. I will sometimes take pictures with my camera and I will always show you the pictures. I may also ask you to take pictures as well. I may ask you to do some creative works such as drawing and/ or sharing about your memory box artifacts. I will talk with your mother separately and I will record this talking too. I will always show you what I write and make sure you give me permission to share my writing with others. Your real name will never appear in any of my writings, as you can choose your favorite pseudonym instead. As an important participant in this research, you will be able to help decide what stories you think should be included in my dissertation and presentations I will write.

You do not have to talk to me if you don't want to, or if you don't feel like it. If you have any questions, please ask me. I will be happy to answer them for you. I am looking forward to spending time with you and listening to your stories.

Sincerely,

Hang Thi Thuy Tran  
PhD Candidate  
CRTED, University of Alberta  
Phone: 780 680 9179  
Email: [hangthit@ualberta.ca](mailto:hangthit@ualberta.ca)

## Thư Giới thiệu với Đối tượng Nghiên cứu là Trẻ em (Vietnamese)

### \* Thư được đọc và thảo luận với trẻ em \*

Tên tôi là Trần Thị Thúy Hằng. Tôi đang theo học tại Đại học Alberta. Hiện nay tôi đang thực hiện đề tài nghiên cứu cho luận án Tiến sĩ của mình. Tôi mong muốn được hiểu biết nhiều về các trẻ em Việt Nam vừa mới chuyển sang sinh sống tại Ca-na-đa. Tôi muốn mời cháu kể cho tôi nghe về những trải nghiệm của cháu trong suốt quá trình chuyển đổi này. Tất cả mọi điều cháu chia sẻ với tôi sẽ không được phép chia sẻ với bất kỳ ai nếu chưa được sự đồng ý của cháu.

Tôi sẽ đến thăm cháu và mẹ cháu rồi sau đó chúng ta sẽ nói chuyện. Đôi khi tôi sẽ ghi chú một số thứ để không quên mất những điều mà tôi nhìn thấy và nghe thấy tại các buổi nói chuyện của chúng ta. Đôi khi tôi cũng chụp ảnh bằng máy của mình và sẽ cho cháu xem những bức ảnh đó. Tôi cũng sẽ yêu cầu cháu tự chụp ảnh nữa. Tôi cũng có thể cùng cháu làm những tác phẩm sáng tạo như là vẽ tranh hay chia sẻ về hộp đựng đồ lưu niệm của mình. Tôi sẽ nói chuyện riêng với mẹ cháu và cũng sẽ ghi âm. Tôi sẽ luôn luôn cho cháu xem những gì tôi viết và chắc chắn cần sự đồng ý của cháu trước khi chia sẻ với người khác. Tên thật của cháu sẽ không bao giờ xuất hiện trong các bài viết của tôi, bởi vì cháu sẽ chọn một cái tên giả mà cháu thích để dùng thay thế. Cháu là một đối tượng nghiên cứu quan trọng trong dự án này, cho nên cháu sẽ quyết định những câu chuyện nào nên được đưa vào luận án của tôi và các báo cáo mà chúng ta sẽ viết cùng nhau.

Cháu không cần phải nói chuyện với tôi nếu cháu không muốn, hoặc là nếu cháu thấy không thoải mái. Nếu cháu có bất kỳ câu hỏi nào thì cứ vui lòng hỏi tôi. Tôi sẽ rất vui được trả lời những thắc mắc của cháu. Tôi rất mong được ở bên cháu và lắng nghe các câu chuyện của cháu.

Trân trọng,

Trần Thị Thúy Hằng  
Nghiên cứu sinh  
CRTED, University of Alberta  
Điện thoại: 780 680 9179  
Email: [hangthit@ualberta.ca](mailto:hangthit@ualberta.ca)

## **Informed Consent Form for Mother Participants (English)**

My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I agree to participate in the research study entitled, “Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of Vietnamese Children and Mothers Composing Lives in Transition to Canada.” I understand that this research will be carried out by Ms. Hang Thi Thuy Tran, who is a PhD candidate at the University of Alberta.

I have been informed that Ms. Hang will write field notes of her participation with me. I have been informed that on 6-8 occasions Hang and I will engage in one-on-one audio-recorded and transcribed research conversations, where together, we will share observations, reflections, and understandings of my and my child’s experiences of our transition to Canada. I understand that some of my and my child’s photographic and creative work may become part of the inquiry. Ms. Hang will comply with the University of Alberta Standards for Protection of Human Research Participants (<https://www.registrar.ualberta.ca/calendar-archive/calendar-2015-2016/Regulations-and-Information/General-U-Policies/20.7.html#20.7>). I also understand there may be no direct benefits from this study to its participants.

I am aware that writing based on this inquiry will be submitted for publication in Ms. Hang’s PhD dissertation, several journals, and presentations that will be made at local, national, and international conferences. I have been informed that my anonymity, as well as the anonymity of my child and our family, will be respected. All material collected will be stored in secure places to ensure confidentiality.

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and to clarify concerns about this inquiry. I know that my participation is completely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the research at any time without consequences. In the event that I withdraw from participating in the study, any data relating to me and my child that has been collected to that point will be completely deleted. I understand that I have the option to withdraw all data related to my and my child’s participation any time before September 30, 2021, or upon completion of the narrative accounts, whichever occurs first. I feel comfortable talking with Ms. Hang about this possibility if it should arise.

---

Name (Please Print)

---

Signature

---

Date



## Mẫu Thông báo Chấp thuận dành cho Đối tượng Nghiên cứu là người Mẹ (Vietnamese)

Tên tôi là \_\_\_\_\_ . Tôi đồng ý tham gia vào nghiên cứu có tên là “Nghiên cứu tường thuật về trải nghiệm của trẻ em Việt Nam và những người mẹ trong thời gian chuyển đến Ca-na-đa.” Tôi hiểu rằng nghiên cứu này được thực hiện bởi cô Trần Thị Thúy Hằng hiện là Nghiên cứu sinh tại Đại học Alberta.

Tôi được cô Hằng cho biết sẽ rằng cô ấy sẽ viết các ghi chú tại các buổi tiếp xúc với tôi. Cô Hằng và tôi sẽ gặp nhau khoảng 8 đến 10 lần và các buổi nói chuyện giữa hai chúng tôi sẽ được ghi âm và phiên âm. Chúng tôi sẽ chia sẻ cùng nhau những điều mình quan sát, những suy luận, và hiểu biết về trải nghiệm của tôi và của con tôi trong quá trình chúng tôi chuyển đến Ca-na-đa. Tôi hiểu rằng một số hình ảnh về các tác phẩm và sáng tạo của tôi và con tôi có thể trở thành một phần của quá trình nghiên cứu. Cô Hằng sẽ tuân thủ các Chuẩn mực về Bảo vệ Đối tượng Nghiên cứu là Con người của trường Đại học Alberta (<https://www.registrar.ualberta.ca/calendar-archive/calendar-2015-2016/Regulations-and-Information/General-U-Policies/20.7.html#20.7>). Tôi cũng hiểu rằng đối tượng tham gia có thể không có lợi ích trực tiếp nào từ nghiên cứu này.

Tôi nhận thức được rằng những bài viết dựa trên nghiên cứu này sẽ được nộp và xuất bản cho Luận văn Tiến sĩ của cô Hằng cũng như một số tạp chí và báo cáo khoa học tại các hội thảo địa phương, trong nước, và quốc tế. Tôi được biết rằng tất cả tên thật của tôi, của con tôi và của gia đình tôi sẽ được ẩn đi. Tất cả các tư liệu nghiên cứu đã thu thập sẽ được cất giữ ở những nơi an toàn để đảm bảo tính bảo mật thông tin.

Tôi đã có cơ hội để hỏi và làm rõ các thắc mắc về nghiên cứu này. Tôi biết rằng việc tôi tham gia nghiên cứu là hoàn toàn tự nguyện và tôi có thể rút lui bất cứ khi nào mà không phải chịu trách nhiệm gì. Nếu tôi rút khỏi nghiên cứu này thì các dữ liệu đã được thu thập có liên quan đến tôi và con tôi sẽ được xóa bỏ hoàn toàn. Tôi hiểu rằng tôi có quyền rút bỏ các dữ liệu nghiên cứu liên quan đến tôi và con tôi bất cứ lúc nào trước thời điểm ngày 30 tháng 9 năm 2021, hoặc trước thời điểm hoàn tất các bản văn tường thuật, dựa theo thời điểm nào đến trước. Tôi rất thoải mái trao đổi với cô Hằng về việc xảy ra khả năng này.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Tên (Ghi rõ)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chữ ký

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ngày ký

**Pseudonym: Participant**

**Mẫu ấn danh dành cho Đối tượng nghiên cứu**

My signature below indicates my agreement to participate in this study. A signed copy of this form has been given to me and the researcher has also retained a copy.

*Chữ ký dưới đây của tôi thể hiện sự đồng ý tham gia vào nghiên cứu này. Một bản sao có chữ ký của tôi sẽ do tôi giữ và một bản do người nghiên cứu giữ.*

\_\_\_\_\_

**Name (Please Print)**

*Tên (Ghi rõ)*

**Chosen Pseudonym**

*Tên giả được chọn*

\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature**

*Chữ ký*

**Date**

*Ngày ký*

**My signature below indicates my consent for the researcher to contact me about my and my child's potential participation in future studies.**

*Chữ ký dưới đây của tôi thể hiện sự cho phép người nghiên cứu liên hệ với tôi về việc tôi và con tôi sẽ có thể tham gia vào những nghiên cứu trong tương lai.*

\_\_\_\_\_

**Name (Please Print)**

*Tên (Ghi rõ)*

**Signature**

*(Chữ ký)*

\_\_\_\_\_

**Date (Ngày ký)**

## Informed Consent Form for Child Participants (English)

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ . I give permission for my child

\_\_\_\_\_ to participate in the research study entitled, “Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of Vietnamese Children and Mothers Composing Lives in Transition to Canada.” I understand that this research will be carried out by Hang Thi Thuy Tran, who is a PhD candidate at the University of Alberta.

As a parent of a child participant in this study, I have been informed that Hang will write field notes of her participation. I have been informed that on 6-8 occasions Ms. Hang and my child will engage in one-on-one audio-recorded and transcribed research conversations, where together, they will share observations, reflections, and understandings of my child’s experiences of her/ his transition to Canada. I understand that some of my child’s photographic and creative work may become part of the inquiry. Ms. Hang will comply with the University of Alberta Standards for Protection of Human Research Participants

(<https://www.registrar.ualberta.ca/calendar-archive/calendar-2015-2016/Regulations-and-Information/General-U-Policies/20.7.html#20.7>).

I also understand there may be no direct benefits to my child as a participant of this study.

I am aware that writing based on this inquiry will be submitted for publication in Ms. Hang’s dissertation and several journals and presentations that will be made at local, national, and international conferences. I have been informed that my anonymity, as well as the anonymity of my child and our family, will be respected. All material collected will be stored in secure places to ensure confidentiality.

My child and I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and to clarify concerns about this inquiry. I know that my permission for my child’s participation is completely voluntary and that I can withdraw her/ him from the research at any time without consequences. In the event that my child withdraws from participating in the study, any data relating to my child that has been collected to that point will be completely deleted. I understand that I have the option to withdraw all data related to my child’s participation any time before September 30, 2021, or upon completion of the narrative accounts, whichever occurs first. I feel comfortable talking with Ms. Hang about this possibility if it should arise.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Please Print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Mẫu Thông báo Chấp thuận dành cho Đối tượng Nghiên cứu là Trẻ em (Vietnamese)

Tên tôi là \_\_\_\_\_ . Tôi đồng ý cho phép con tôi là

\_\_\_\_\_ tham gia vào nghiên cứu mang tên “Nghiên cứu tường thuật về trải nghiệm của trẻ em Việt Nam và những người mẹ trong quá trình chuyển đến Ca-na-đa.” Tôi biết rằng nghiên cứu này được thực hiện bởi cô Trần Thị Thúy Hằng hiện là Nghiên cứu sinh tại Đại học Alberta.

Với tư cách là mẹ của đối tượng nghiên cứu là trẻ em trong dự án này, tôi được cô Hằng cho biết sẽ rằng cô ấy sẽ viết các ghi chú cho các buổi tiếp xúc. Cô Hằng và con tôi sẽ gặp nhau khoảng 8 đến 10 lần và các buổi nói chuyện giữa hai bên sẽ được ghi âm và phiên âm. Hai bên sẽ cùng nhau chia sẻ những điều quan sát, suy luận, và hiểu biết về trải nghiệm của con tôi trong quá trình chúng tôi chuyển đến sống tại Ca-na-đa. Tôi hiểu rằng một số hình ảnh về các tác phẩm và sáng tạo của con tôi có thể trở thành một phần của quá trình nghiên cứu. Cô Hằng sẽ tuân thủ các Chuẩn mực về Bảo vệ Đối tượng Nghiên cứu là Con người của trường Đại học Alberta (<https://www.registrar.ualberta.ca/calendar-archive/calendar-2015-2016/Regulations-and-Information/General-U-Policies/20.7.html#20.7>). Tôi cũng hiểu rằng không có lợi ích trực tiếp nào từ nghiên cứu này đối với con tôi với tư cách là đối tượng tham gia.

Tôi nhận thức được rằng những bài viết dựa trên nghiên cứu này sẽ được nộp và xuất bản cho Luận văn Tiến sĩ của cô Hằng cũng như một số tạp chí và báo cáo khoa học tại các hội thảo địa phương, trong nước, và quốc tế. Tôi được biết rằng tất cả tên thật của tôi, của con tôi và của gia đình tôi sẽ được ẩn đi. Tất cả các tư liệu nghiên cứu đã thu thập sẽ được cất giữ ở những nơi an toàn để đảm bảo tính bảo mật thông tin.

Con tôi và tôi đã có cơ hội để hỏi và làm rõ các thắc mắc về nghiên cứu này. Tôi biết rằng việc tôi cho phép con mình tham gia nghiên cứu này là hoàn toàn tự nguyện và con tôi có thể rút lui bất cứ lúc nào mà không phải chịu trách nhiệm gì. Nếu tôi rút khỏi nghiên cứu này thì các dữ liệu đã được thu thập có liên quan đến con tôi sẽ được xóa bỏ hoàn toàn. Tôi hiểu rằng tôi có quyền rút bỏ các dữ liệu nghiên cứu liên quan đến con tôi bất cứ lúc nào trước thời điểm ngày 30 tháng 9 năm 2021, hoặc trước thời điểm hoàn tất các bản văn tường thuật, dựa theo thời điểm nào đến trước. Tôi rất thoải mái trao đổi với cô Hằng về việc xảy ra khả năng này.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Tên (Ghi rõ)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chữ ký

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ngày ký

**Pseudonym: Participant**

***Mẫu ấn danh dành cho Đối tượng nghiên cứu***

My signature below indicates my agreement for my child to participate in this study. A signed copy of this form has been given to me and the researcher has also retained a copy.

*Chữ ký dưới đây của tôi thể hiện sự đồng ý cho con tôi tham gia vào nghiên cứu này. Một bản sao có chữ ký của tôi sẽ do tôi giữ và một bản do người nghiên cứu giữ.*

\_\_\_\_\_

**Name (Please Print)  
Child**

*Tên (Ghi rõ)  
tôi*

**Chosen Pseudonym for my**

*Tên giả được chọn cho con*

\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature**

*Chữ ký*

**Date**

*Ngày ký*

## Oral Consent Form for Mother Participants

My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I agree to participate in the research study entitled, “Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of Vietnamese Children and Mothers Composing Lives in Transition to Canada.” I understand that this research will continue to be carried out by Ms. Hang Thi Thuy Tran, who is a PhD candidate at the University of Alberta.

With the onset of physical distancing requirements due to the Covid-19 pandemic, I have been informed that Ms. Hang will conduct remote data collection. This is a necessary change in her research procedure in order to ensure safety and wellness of my family, me, her, and her family. Ms. Hang and I will engage in one-on-one audio recorded research conversations, where together, we will share observations, reflections, and understandings of my and my child’s experiences of our transition to Canada. I agree and prefer to talk with Ms. Hang via either phone calls or video calls of FaceTime or Facebook Messenger. I understand that security settings have been carefully addressed for the platform choices for our research conversations. Ms. Hang will comply with the University of Alberta Standards for Protection of Human Research Participants (<https://www.registrar.ualberta.ca/calendar-archive/calendar-2015-2016/Regulations-and-Information/General-U-Policies/20.7.html#20.7>).

I know this remote data collection will only be obtained temporarily for Ms. Hang’s research during the COVID-19 pandemic. When the pandemic has passed, her originally approved research process will be resumed. If during the Covid-19 pandemic I do not feel comfortable talking via such platform choices, I will share this information with Ms. Hang.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Please Print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Oral Consent Form for Child Participants

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ . I give permission for my child

\_\_\_\_\_ to participate in the research study entitled, “Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of Vietnamese Children and Mothers Composing Lives in Transition to Canada.” I understand that this research will continue to be carried out by Hang Thi Thuy Tran, who is a PhD candidate at the University of Alberta.

With the onset of physical distancing requirements due to the Covid-19 pandemic, as a parent of a child participant in this study, I have been informed that Ms. Hang will conduct the remote data collection. This is a necessary change in her research procedure in order to ensure safety and wellness of my child, my family, me, her, and her family. Ms. Hang and my child will engage in one-on-one audio recorded research conversations, where together, they will share observations, reflections, and understandings of my child’s experiences of our transition to Canada. I agree and prefer for my child to talk with Ms. Hang via either phone calls or video calls of FaceTime or Facebook Messenger. I understand that security settings have been carefully addressed for the platform choices for our research conversations. Ms. Hang will comply with the University of Alberta Standards for Protection of Human Research Participants (<https://www.registrar.ualberta.ca/calendar-archive/calendar-2015-2016/Regulations-and-Information/General-U-Policies/20.7.html#20.7>).

I know that this remote data collection will only be obtained temporarily for Ms. Hang’s research during the COVID-19 pandemic. When the pandemic has passed, her originally approved research process will be resumed. If during the Covid-19 pandemic my child does not feel comfortable talking via such platform choices, I will share this information with Ms. Hang.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Please Print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix B – Ethics Approval Notification Letters

### *Notification of Approval*

Date: May 7, 2019

Study ID: Pro00086360

Principal Investigator: Hang Thi Thuy Tran

Study Supervisor: Janice Huber

Study Title: Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of Vietnamese Children and Mothers Composing Lives in Transition to Canada

Approval Expiry Date: Tuesday, May 5, 2020

	Approval Date	Approved Document
Approved Consent Form:	5/7/2019	<u>Informed consent - mother participants.docx</u>
	5/7/2019	<u>Informed consent - child participants .docx</u>

Thank you for submitting the above study to the Research Ethics Board 1. Your application has received a delegated review and been approved on behalf of the committee.

A renewal report must be submitted next year prior to the expiry of this approval if your study still requires ethics approval. If you do not renew on or before the renewal expiry date, you will have to re-submit an ethics application.

Approval by the Research Ethics Board does not encompass authorization to access the staff, students, facilities or resources of local institutions for the purposes of the research.

Sincerely,

Stanley Varnhagen, PhD.  
Chair, Research Ethics Board 1



## **Notification of Approval - Amendment**

Date: May 19, 2020  
Amendment ID: Pro00086360\_AME1  
Principal Investigator: Hang Thi Thuy Tran  
Study ID: MS2\_Pro00086360  
Study Title: Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of Vietnamese Children and Mothers Composing Lives in Transition to Canada  
Supervisor: Janice Huber

	Approval Date	Approved Document
Approved Consent Form:	5/19/2019	<u>Oral Consent for Child Participants .docx</u>
	5/7/2019	<u>Informed consent - child participants .docx</u>
	5/7/2019	<u>Informed consent - mother participants.docx</u>
	5/19/2019	<u>Oral Consent Form for Mother Participants.docx</u>
Approval Expiry Date:	Wednesday, April 7, 2021	

Thank you for submitting an amendment request to the Research Ethics Board 1. This amendment has been reviewed and approved on behalf of the committee. The following has been approved:

Sincerely,

Stanley Varnhagen, PhD  
Associate Chair, Research Ethics Board 1

## ***Notification of Approval (Renewal)***

Date:	March 19, 2021
Principal Investigator:	<u>Hang Thi Thuy Tran</u>
Study ID:	Pro00086360
Study Title:	Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of Vietnamese Children and Mothers Composing Lives in Transition to Canada
Supervisor:	<u>Janice Huber</u>
Approval Expiry Date:	March 18, 2022

Thank you for submitting this renewal application. Your application has been reviewed and approved.

This re-approval is valid for one year. If your study continues past the expiration date as noted above, you will be required to complete another renewal request. Beginning at 30 days prior to the expiration date, you will receive notices that the study is about to expire. If you do not renew on or before the renewal expiry date, you will have to re-submit an ethics application.

Approval by the Research Ethics Board does not encompass authorization to recruit and/or interact with human participants at this time. Researchers still require operational approval as applicable (e.g. AHS, Covenant Health, ECSD etc.) and where in-person interactions are proposed, institutional and operational requirements outlined in the Resumption of Human Participant Research - June 24, 2020 must be met.

Sincerely,

Anne Walley  
REB Specialist,  
*on behalf of* Anne Malena, PhD.  
Chair, Research Ethics Board 1