

Understanding Friendship Formation in a Community Center: Children of Immigrant

Background

Nataliya Kubishyn

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By: Nataliya Kubishyn

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Signed by the final examining committee:

Dr. Nina Howe.....Chair

Dr. Miranda D’Amico.....Examiner

Dr. Sandra Chang-Kredl.....Examiner

Dr. Harriet Petrakos.....Supervisor

Approved by \_\_\_\_\_  
Chair of Department or Graduate Program Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dean of Faculty

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Abstract

### Understanding Friendship Formation in a Community Center: Children of Immigrant Background

Nataliya Kubishyn

Previous research has shown that friendship during childhood and adolescence plays a significant role in shaping the course of a child's social, emotional, and cognitive development (Bukowski, Hoza & Boivic, 1994; Vandell & Hembree, 1994; Ladd, Kochenderfer & Coleman, 1996; Bukowski & Mesa, 2007). However, the vast majority of past research has focused on children and adolescents of nonimmigrant background (i.e., Western and White youth). In general, there is a limited focus on how children of immigrant background themselves view and perceive their friendship experiences (Rubin, Fredstrom & Bowker, 2008). Shedding light on how these children perceive their friendships may help to facilitate the development of effective prevention and intervention programs that seek to promote the psychosocial adjustment of children in immigrant families.

The present qualitative study used a photo-elicitation technique to capture the immigrant children's experiences of friendship formation in an urban community in Montreal, Canada. Four children (ages 10-12) of immigrant background took photographs of what was important to them about their friendships and were invited to share personal stories and experiences. Each child was interviewed between three to five times for a total of 30 to 45 minutes. The findings from this study revealed that most children experienced an easy time with establishing and maintaining friendships, particularly with those friendships that were immediately available in their family and community networks. The case summaries also highlight some of the strengths and challenges that some children encountered, as well as how each child engaged with photography as a tool to express their values around social support.

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## **Introduction**

It has been well documented that immigrant families and children have a strong presence in the Canadian society (Statistics Canada, 2010, 2011). Today, immigrants represent the most rapidly growing segment of Canada's total population (Morantz, Rousseau, & Heymann, 2011). Immigration is a transformative process that often impacts the families and children in a different way (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001).

Due to the high rise of first and second generation immigrant children, consequently, we can see that the Canadian schools and communities are changing and becoming more ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse. Children of immigration background are always in contact with their native and the dominant culture, simply because of the worlds that they are growing up in: their home and school. Although a lot of research has been conducted on the immigrant children's academic achievement and cognitive development, little is known about their psychosocial development (Yoshikawa & Way, 2008), particularly when it comes to establishing and maintaining friendships (Rubin, Fredstrom & Bowker, 2008). Friendship researchers have shown that friendship during childhood and adolescence plays a significant role in a child's school adjustment, academic achievement (Vandell & Hembree, 1994; Ladd, Kochenderfer & Coleman, 1996), self-esteem (Adams, Santo & Bukowski, 2011), and well being (Bukowski, Hoza & Boivic, 1994). Children of immigrant background may experience exceptional challenges with adjusting to the Canadian society due to the "cultural incongruities between home and school life" (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000, p. 492). In addition, there is a need for research to focus on children of different nationalities and different age groups, and the role of culture on children's social relationships. Thus, an important goal of this project is to fill in the

gap in previous research by giving immigrant children “the voice” to express their perspectives and feelings on friendship and gain a deeper understanding of their unique experiences.

## **Literature Review**

### **Statistics on Immigrants in Canada**

Over the recent years, there have been large increases in the proportion of immigrants that migrate to a new country. Canada is the second largest country in the world (after Australia) with the highest proportions of immigrant families (Statistics Canada, 2011). In 2011, it was estimated that approximately 22.0% of Canada’s population are foreign-born, and 17.4% are individuals who were born in Canada, but had parents who were immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2011). This shows that nearly 40% of Canada’s total population had in some way been directly or indirectly affected by the life transition of immigration.

Among the many individuals that migrate to Canada a large proportion of them are young adults, adolescents, and children (Statistics Canada, 2011). In 2011, it was reported that approximately 58.6% of young adults between the ages of 25 to 54; 14.5% of youth between the ages of 15 to 24 years; and approximately 19.2% of children under the age of 14 immigrated to Canada (Statistics Canada, 2011). By 2031, it is predicted that the proportion of children and youth who immigrate to Canada will nearly double (Statistics Canada, 2010). At a national level, children and youth of immigrant backgrounds are the mostly rapidly growing division of Canada’s child population. Evidently, many immigrant families migrate with their children in the hopes of a better future for their younger generations.

Over the decades there has also been a large shift in the types of individuals that choose to migrate to Canada. Previously, a large proportion of immigrants came from Eurocentric backgrounds, such as Italy, Scotland, Ireland, Greece or Poland (Statistics Canada, 2011).

Whereas, nowadays many of the individuals immigrate from Asia and the Middle East (58.3%), Europe (16.1%), the Caribbean, Central and South America (10.8%), and Africa (10.6%) (Statistics Canada, Census 2006: The evolving linguistic portrait, 2007). As a result of such ethnographic movement, there has been increasingly, a large proportion of visible minority individuals (i.e., non-Caucasian in race nor white in color) in Canada's growing population (Statistics Canada, 2011). Many of the foreign-born individuals settle in large metropolitan cities, such as Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal (Statistics Canada, 2011).

Montreal, a southern city of Quebec province has the third largest proportions of foreign-born individuals in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2011). Approximately 23% of Montreal's population are immigrants who were born in a foreign country (The Canadian Magazine of Immigration, 2016). Since, there is a shift in the ethnic composition of immigrants, a large proportion of Montreal's immigrants migrate from Haiti, Italy, France, followed by Morocco, Algeria, China, Lebanon, Viet Nam, United States, India, Columbia, Mexico, Sri Lanka, and many other countries (The Canadian Magazine of Immigration, 2016). Between the years of 2001 to 2011, Montreal's immigration rate grew by 36% from 621, 890 to 846, 645 people (The Canadian Magazine of Immigration, 2016). Indeed, large proportions of increases were from Algeria (187%), Morocco (133%), Romania (81%), China (75%) and the Philippines (65%); (The Canadian Magazine of Immigration, 2016). Given that there is a large increase in the number of visible minorities immigrate to Montreal, as a result Montreal is considered as one of the most multicultural, multiracial and multilingual societies in Canada. Given that there are increasingly more diverse children and families in Montreal, there is a need to understand more on how these children and families utilize social support post-immigration; using qualitative approaches of

their experiences allows for a better understanding of the individual experiences in these diverse families.

### **Immigrants in a New Country: Immigrant Children and Families**

The term 'immigration' refers to "the movement of nationals of one country into another for the purpose of resettlement" (The Canadian Encyclopedia, n.d.). In other words, this is when individuals choose to relocate from one country to another. The term 'immigrants' refers to the individuals that are involved in the immigration process. However, 'immigrants' is a general term and often allude to any foreign-born individual or individuals of immigrant parents. Before we further discuss about immigrants there is important distinction that needs to be made is between the terms, 'immigrants' and 'refugees'. According to the Canadian Council of Refugees (n.d.), the main difference between the two groups is that "immigrants choose to move, whereas refugees are forced to flee." Immigrants often choose to move to a new country voluntarily, while refugees move involuntarily (Berry, 1997). Another distinction between the two groups is that immigrants often migrate in the hopes of becoming citizens of the receiving country, whereas refugees often times settle for temporary purposes (Berry, 1997). These two groups are not only different in their reasons for moving, but they also in their social and emotional adaptation. Refugee children and adults often report experiences of fear and traumatic encounters during their relocation process. In comparison, immigrant children and parents might have an easier time migrating into their new culture, due to the fact that their move is more permanent and long lasting. Since, immigrant parents are more likely to move with their children for the long-term, it is therefore important to examine which factors could promote their adaptation experiences.

There are three sorts of immigrant groups that are often discussed in the literature, and these groups often differ in their adaptation experiences and future outcomes. The first group of immigrants is called, “the first-generation immigrants” and this refers to children or youth who are foreign-born and have immigrated to a new country with their foreign-born parents or family (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). In contrast, “the second-generation immigrants” refers to a group of immigrant children or youth who were born in the host country, but have foreign-born parents (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Overall, this group is more socially, linguistically, and culturally competent of the dominant culture, and in general, they tend to be more accepted by the dominant society (Asendorpf & Motti-Stefanidi, 2017). Another yet important, but less frequently studied population are “the immigrants of 1.5 generation.” Immigrants of 1.5 generation refer to children who are foreign-born, but have immigrated with their parents at a new country at an early age (Portes & Rivas, 2011). First-generation immigrants often encounter exceptional difficulties that may separate them from the other two groups. First generation immigrants are often more linguistically and educationally disadvantaged (Portes & Rivas, 2011). For example, children of first-generation often have more difficulties with adjustment to school, receive limited support from their parents, and experience more challenges with adapting a cultural identity. As a result, the process of adaptation to a new society is often harder for the first-generation than the second-generation or the 1.5 generation immigrants. In addition, the first generation immigrants are more likely to identify with their native culture, whereas, the second generation or the 1.5 generation are more likely to identify with the host culture (Portes and Rivas, 2011). Despite the differences in children’s outcomes between the three groups, nevertheless, they still all share one critical commonality: their immigrant parents. Immigrant parents play a central role in socialization their children and this in

turn will affect how children will fare in their social contexts (Yoshikawa & Way, 2008). Given the little research that focuses on children of immigrant background, for the rest of the literature review, I will use the term “children of immigrant background” to refer to any persons of first-generation and second-generation immigrant background.

### **Immigrant Parents vs. Immigrant Children**

In this section, I would like to discuss the important differences between how immigrant parents and children of immigrant parents might adapt and cope in their new country. Immigrant parents often have lived for a good portion of their lives in their country of origin. When immigrant parents move to a new country, they often adapt the same practices, rituals, and values around child rearing practices as the ones in their country of origin. Immigrant parents often expect their children, and even put pressure on them to be able to differentiate between their native culture and the dominant culture, and continuously be in contact with their parents’ cultural roots. In many cases, immigrant parents continue to teach their children about the traditions, beliefs, history, and even the language of the native culture. While in the new country, immigrant parents work hard to provide the appropriate economical, cultural, social, and educational resources in order to help their children successfully adapt to the new lives. Research shows that many children and youth of immigrant families are often send by their families to community centers, native language schools, and churches where these children can develop strong ties with the people of their own culture or nationality (Yoshikawa & Way, 2008).

For children of immigrant, the experiences of adjustment and settlement are often very different from those experiences of their parents. Children of immigrant parents are often divided between two realities: the culture at home and at the culture outside of home (e.g., peers and school; Montazer & Wheaton, 2011). For the culture at home, the immigrant child is often

expected to speak their native language, follow native cultural traditions, as well as maintain close ties with the people of their own culture. While in school, an immigrant child might feel the force to assimilate into the dominant culture, which may include: speaking the dominant language; adapting new traditions; and interacting with new peers. Consequently, first-generation immigrant children are prone to experience a “cultural shock” post their families’ migration (Igoa, 1995). First generation children might experience a more difficult time with adapting to the rules and the social norms of the new culture, especially if they receive little support or encouragement from their parents, teachers, or peers (Igoa, 1995). Many immigrant families and children, especially the newly arrived immigrants, encounter challenges with learning the new language, acculturation, poverty, identity crisis, as well as issues with racism, classism, discrimination, and prejudice (Ngo & Schleifer, 2005; Rossiter, Hatami, Ripley, & Rossiter, 2015). Although, there are many stories of immigrants not doing so well, nevertheless, there are still a significant proportion of immigrant children who are doing exceptionally well, despite their struggles and setbacks. For instance, studies show that first-generation children do equally well on academic achievements tests as their non-immigrant peers (Li et al., 2008). They also tend to report a good rating of their overall physical and psychological health (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). This may be linked to that fact that many first-generation immigrants are optimistic and hopeful about their future. Interestingly, research in the United States show that the longer immigrant adolescents remain in their second culture, their overall health and psychological well-being decreases over time (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Thus, more research is needed with first-generation and second-generation immigrant children to better understand their outcomes.



Furthermore, some research shows that children of immigrant background (between the ages 7 to 18 years) experienced more stress related to immigration than their parents (Levitt et al., 2005). More specifically, it was revealed that in a study of 429 diverse groups (104 born in Argentina, 91 in Colombia, 100 in Cuba, 89 in Haiti, and 45 in the West Indies) of immigrant children, children experienced more stress related to forming new friendships, experiences with prejudice and discrimination, and not feeling linguistically or culturally understood in their first year of migrating to the United States. In the same study, the authors also revealed that the availability of social support buffered against the negative effects of immigration stress. In particular, it was revealed that children who had more supportive social networks when stress level was high, showed better school adjustment and increases in life satisfaction in comparison to children who had low levels of social support (Levitt et al., 2005). Hence, this research shows that having supportive networks can protect children from the negative experiences of immigration stress, and help to facilitate positive adaptation.

### **Acculturation**

Acculturation is often seen as an ideal goal for many immigrant families and children. In simple terms, acculturation refers to a contact between two or more cultures as a result of migration (Berry, 1997). When immigrant children and families leave their native culture and adapt to the lives of the new culture, many of them encounter psychological, sociocultural and economical challenges (Berry, 1997). In addition, many individuals experience negative effects of acculturation in the early stages of their adaptation, however, in the long-term most individuals experience positive long-term outcomes (Berry, 1997). Acculturation is often a complex and long-lasting process, where the lives of many people are affected in different ways. In addition, Portes and Rivas (2011) highlights that “[acculturation] is not a process that happens

to a child alone. Rather, it entails constant interaction with others. Language and cultural learning, for example, involved not just the individual but the family, with parents and children commonly acculturating at different paces” (p. 221).

**Berry’s acculturation model.** Berry (1997) identified four different strategies of acculturation that immigrants may adapt when integrating into a second culture. The four strategies of acculturation are: assimilation, integration, segregation and marginalization. Each acculturation strategy focuses on its unique processes of acquiring knowledge of the second-culture and the outcomes that associated with each strategy.

Assimilated individuals fully integrate into the new culture (e.g., dominant culture) at the cost of losing their native cultural identity (Berry, 1997). Research shows that when immigrant children adapt this strategy of acculturation this often results in more negative psychological and social outcomes. For instance, studies show that immigrant adolescents who self-identified with the dominant culture lacked intimacy in their friendships (Alvarez et al., 2015) and experienced higher levels of stress (LaFromboise et al., 1993; Levitt et al., 2015). In general, individuals who adapt assimilation strategy often lose contact from people of their own culture, but at the same time these individuals may not be fully integrated into their new culture, which in turn causes them to experience more negative outcomes.

In comparison, integrated individuals (also known as acculturated) simultaneously adapt to the ways of the dominant and the native culture (LaFromboise et al., 1993; Berry, 1997). It is believed that individuals who adapt this strategy have more positive outcomes, and this is often seen as the most desired strategy of integrating into a second culture. Research shows that adolescents who identified with both the culture of origin and the host culture showed increases in academic performance, school belonging, decreases of school absenteeism (Tricket & Birman,

2005), and greater levels of social support from mainstream peers (Chan & Birman, 2009).

However, it is important to keep in mind that for some individuals acculturation does not happen right after migration, individuals might at first experience assimilation or segregation (e.g., Shin, 1998) before they reach acculturation.

Separated (also known as segregated) individuals mostly identify with their native culture (Berry, 1997). Children who adapt the segregated strategies are likely to develop more negative outcomes. For example, Shin (1998) found that separated youth who were unable to participate in the mainstream culture recalled more negative interactions with immigrant and non-immigrant peers.

Finally, marginalized individuals fail to identify with the dominant or the native culture (Berry, 1997). Children or youth who have been identified as marginalized tend to show the least adaptive outcomes (Alvarez et al., 2015).

When immigrant children or youth adapt to a new culture they are likely to adapt one or more of these strategies during the process of adaptation. Previous research suggests that the more adapted and the more knowledgeable a child is of both cultures, the better their social and psychological well-being will be (LaFromboise et al., 1993; Berry, 1997). Thus, the goal of this study is to explore immigrant children's understanding of social well-being, such as their friendships and to understand the strategies that they use to adapt to their new culture.

In general, the process of acculturation often affects children and adults differently. For immigrant children, the school is the major socializing agent where they learn about the mainstream culture (Igoa, 1995). Since children spend a significant proportion of their time in school and with peers, most of their adaptation will occur through these two social agents. For instance, in a study conducted in Montreal, Kanouté (2002) found that majority of immigrant

children in her study preferred to adapt “integrated profiles.” Since, Montreal is seen as one of the most diverse and multicultural societies in Canada, children may have an easier time integrating into the new culture. Although this may be true for some children, not all children will adapt in the same way or at the same pace (Igoa, 1995). In another study, conducted in the United States shows that some children preferred to adapt “assimilated strategies” in order to avoid discrimination or peer exclusion (Igoa, 1995). Hence, the types of acculturation strategies that an immigrant child adapts may depend on the types of experiences they encounter in their social contexts.

### **Immigrants and Social Contexts: Building and Using Social Networks**

The family clearly plays a central context for socializing children and youth of immigrant backgrounds (Yoshikawa & Way, 2008). Yoshikawa and Way (2008) described that “...families are the locus for decisions concerning whether to migrate, the primary source of support for navigating transitions, and the site for transmission of culturally based beliefs and practices to children” (p. 3). A majority of immigrant families often expose their children to some traditional or cultural practices from the parents’ native country, may speak their native language, and share certain values about child upbringing and education. For many first-generation and second-generation immigrant children their family circle provides an important context for reinforcing the parents’ cultural beliefs and values. For more newly arrived immigrants children and youth, the immediate family members (e.g., parents, siblings) and extended family networks (e.g., aunts/uncles, cousins, grandparents) provide an important assistance, support, and advice in helping them to successfully adapt to the new culture (Yoshikawa & Way, 2008). In one qualitative study conducted in the United States, Li, Holloway, Bempechat, and Loh (2008) examined how Chinese families from low-income immigrant backgrounds build social networks

and how these networks work to support the children's school learning. The findings revealed that immigrant parents used wide range of creative approaches (e.g., family role models, siblings as comparisons) to support their youths' learning at school. The parents also believed that enrolling their children in community programs (e.g., after-school programs) and weekend school provides additional support with their learning, and also provides an important opportunity to extend their social networks with peers and other adults (Li et al., 2008). Although much of the previous studies have focused on how immigrant families support their children's learning and school achievement, however, little attention has been paid to how immigrant parents support their children's social-emotional adjustment, like, their friendship experiences.

Other important socializing contexts for children of immigrant background are their schools and peers. Suarez-Orozco proposed that, "schools are typically the first setting of sustained contact with the new culture for newcomer children" (2001, p. 579). In other words, schools are typically the initial places where children learn that the new culture has different language, norms, values, and traditions that are different from their own culture. When children first immigrate to a new country, many for the first time may encounter students from diverse cultural backgrounds, races, and abilities (Igoa, 1995). When immigrant children transition into a new school, many of them might feel pressured to assimilate quickly and become like native-born peers. As a result of these experiences, many new immigrant children are prone to experience a "cultural shock" (Igoa, 1995). However, as children adapt to the new country, they have an easier time navigating through the school system and building relationships with teachers and peers.

Moreover, schools are often typical places for development of friendships for children of immigrant background. Schools provide immigrant children with opportunities to interact and

build relationships with other peers through group activities, recess, and play-based recreational activities. For first-generation immigrant, especially the newly arrived children, some children are prone to encounter difficulties with forming new friendships, due to their limited language barriers and cultural differences (Igoa, 1995). Because some immigrant children may encounter failure with making new friends, as a result many of them may be prone to experience isolation, depression, decreases in motivation, and academic failure (Igoa, 1995). Given that peers play an important role in shaping all children's social and emotional adjustment, but more importantly among immigrant youth, it would be critical for the future research how children of immigrant background perceive and experience their peer relationships (Yoshikawa & Way, 2008).

### **The Ecological Framework**

Since the primary goal of the study is to examine how children of immigrant background form friendship relationships at the social level, while at the same time considering how these children adjust at the individual level, as well as the context in which they live in (e.g., home and school), therefore, it is considered appropriate for this study to adapt the Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Levitt et al., 2005; Chan & Birman, 2009). Bronfenbrenner's ecological model takes into account the individual, the social, and the contextual characteristics that play a role in the child's adjustment during the transition process (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Levitt et al., 2005). At the individual level, factors that may influence the child's adaptation may depend on the child's developmental life stage, the age of arrival or the child's knowledge of the dominant language or culture. For instance, children who arrive to a new country before the age of 8 years have an easier time adapting into their mainstream culture than children who arrive after the age of 8 years (Beck, Corok & Tienda, 2012). In addition, children who have some knowledge of the dominant language may experience quicker

adaptation in making of new friendships than children who have no knowledge. At the social level, children who lack social support show more difficulties with adjusting into the second culture (Levitt et al., 2005). Since, friendship formation does not take place in isolation, but instead takes place in a school context and is often influenced by the child's familial factors (e.g., parents' levels of second-culture adjustment, parents' acceptance of dominant-culture friends), it is therefore important to understand these factors while considering the child's experiences. Immigrant adolescents of less acculturated parents experience more difficulty with forming friendships of the mainstream culture and also encounter more difficulty having close and intimate relationships with peers of their own culture (Shin, 1998). Whereas, adolescents of more acculturated parents showed easier time forming friendships with the mainstream peers (Shin, 1998). In addition, research shows that immigrant parents who fear of losing their children to the new culture may be less accepting of the dominant-culture friends (Akinsulure-Smith et al., 2016). Therefore, this study will examine the role of friendship among immigrant children while also taking into account their parents' level of acculturation and adjustment into the second culture. In terms of the contextual factors, schools that are more pluralistic in nature and accepting of immigrant students may provide immigrant students with more opportunities to foster healthy relationships and get involved in the larger society (Quebec Ministries of Education, 1998). Also, research shows schools that are less racially diverse, students receive lower levels of social support from other-race peers than same-race peers (Chan & Birman, 2009). Thus, it is important to take into consideration the diversity of the school when exploring an immigrant child's formation of friendship. In sum, the proposed study will employ Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework while understanding how children of immigrant develop and maintain friendships.

## Friendship

“Friendship is an intimate state of mind that is co-constructed by two friends” (Alvarez, et al., 2015, p. 4). Especially in childhood, a child is “...often assumed to be [friends with] peers with whom a child frequently interacts...” (Bagwell & Schmidt, 2011, p.8). Researchers typically measure friendship through nomination techniques (Bukowski & Hoza, 1989; Hundley et al., 1999). Children are considered to be “friends” when they both voluntarily nominate each another as friends (this is called mutual nomination), in contrast, when a child gives or receives nomination without giving or receiving nomination from their peer than they would be considered as “not friends” (this is called unreciprocated nomination; Bukowski & Hoza, 1989; Hundley et al., 1999). Based on previous studies, researchers typically assign a friend to a child based on their pre-defined labeling. However, they do not give much consideration to how the child would define friendship according to their own means and terms.

Many studies over the years have demonstrated that friendship has many benefits to child’s development, adjustment and well-being. Earlier scholars revealed that friendship offers both children and youth companionship, security, intimacy, support, protects from peer hostility, and promotes conflict resolution (Bukowski, Hoza & Boivic, 1994; Alvarez et al., 2015). Over the years, numerous studies have demonstrated that friendship is linked with several positive psychological outcomes. These studies highlight that children and youth who have close friends tend to show increases in academic performance, self-esteem, social-emotional adjustment (Vandell & Hembree, 1994; Ladd et al., 1996), well-being (Bukowski et al., 1994), and global self-worth (Adams et al., 2011). In addition, having at least one good friend protects children from negative outcomes, such as peer victimization (Hodges et al., 1999), loneliness, depression (Bukowski et al., 2010), and decreases their stress response levels (Adams et al., 2011). In



contrast, studies show that children who lack friends or perceive themselves as having conflictual friendships, showed wide range of negative outcomes, among them include increases in loneliness, decreases in school involvement (Ladd et al., 1996), and increases in depression (Adams et al., 2011). In sum, friendship is linked with fostering resilience, and positive social and emotional well-being (Bukowski et al., 1994).

Before discussing the empirical findings on friendship among immigrant children and youth, I will first compare and contrast important distinctions between friendships and other peer relationships, as well as, discuss key the distinctions between how friendship functions in childhood versus in adolescence.

**Differences between friendships versus other relationships.** There are important differences between friendships and other form of relationships that children are likely to form. Friendships versus peer groups, crowds, or cliques tend to be different in its form and function (Bagwell & Schmidt, 2011). Friendship is often based on “mutual affection or reciprocity of liking” (Bagwell & Schmidt, 2011, p. 5). Friendship often takes place in small groups while peer groups or crowds tend to take place in larger groups (Bagwell & Schmidt, 2011). Both friendship and other forms of relationships are formed based on similar interests, however, friendships tend to carry more value to the relationship because they are likely to be based on mutual understanding, assistance, security and intimacy (Bagwell & Schmidt, 2011). In a friendship, children often share more meaningful and intimate information about each other than in other relationships. In addition, friendship tends to facilitate interaction with other classmates or peer groups (Ladd & Emerson, 1984; Bagwell & Schmidt, 2011), or increase in child’s popularity (Bukowski et al., 1996). In sum, children who have a relationship with at least one good friend

will likely have an easier time adjustment to school and forming other relationships (Igoa, 1995; Shin, 1998).

**Friendship in childhood versus in adolescence.** There are developmental differences in how friendships are formed and maintained across different age groups. In childhood, friendship is often characterized by abstract similarities, whereas in adolescence friendship is more likely to be characterized by social intimacy (Ladd & Emerson, 1984; Hartup, 2001). When young children are asked to identify why they are friends with a particular peer they often describe their relationship to be based on similar interests, preferences or abilities, whereas when adolescents are asked to characterize their relationship they often discuss not only their common interests but also their unique qualities and differences (Ladd & Emerson, 1984). In comparison to children, adolescents are more psychologically advanced in their mental processing, which implies that they may have greater knowledge of their friends. For instance, young children show greater knowledge of their friends on more concrete and observable characteristics, such as their hobbies or appearances, while older children or adolescents have greater knowledge on unobservable characteristics such as their fears or preferences (Ladd & Emerson, 1984). When children are young they seek friends of the same age and gender, but as children get older they increasingly began to form more friends of the opposite gender and different age groups (Belsky, 2012). In addition, friendships tend to be more stable as children get older (Hartup, 2001). In comparison to children, youth spend more time with their peers because these relationships are of high value to their social and emotional well-being.

### **Culture and Friendship**

The majority of previous studies on friendship have predominantly focused on children and youth of middle-class, White-American, Canadian or European backgrounds. With the

exception of few authors, in general little attention has been paid to culture and the role it plays on children's or youths' friendship development. As discussed above, children and adolescents tend to choose friends who share similar interests and characteristics (e.g., gender, age, etc.). In order to better understand the role that immigrant and culture plays on children's or adolescents' friendship formation, I will first review the existing literature on how immigrant adolescents develop and maintain their friendships.

### **Friendship Formation among Adolescents of Immigrant Background**

Throughout the literature review, it was evident that “nationality of friends” and “friendship quality” seemed to be the overarching themes on friendship formation among immigrant youth. These two areas of research will be further discussed in the next two sections.

**Nationality of friends.** Previous research revealed mixed results on the ethnic composition of friendship among immigrant youth. Some studies show that upon the arrival to a new country some immigrant youth prefer to make friends with peers of similar nationality (e.g., Titzmann & Silbereisen, 2009), while other studies show that there was a preference for friendship of both the same-nationality and other-nationality peers (e.g., Shin, 1998; Chan and Birman, 2009; Morantz et al., 2011). In a longitudinal study in Germany, Titzmann and Silbereisen (2009) compared whether recent status immigrants (218 newcomers who lived in Germany under 7 years) or more experienced immigrants (272 adolescents who lived in Germany for over 7 years) showed greater preference in forming friendships with peers of the same nationality (those who migrated from the Soviet Union countries). According to the results it was revealed that both newcomers and experienced adolescents showed greater preference in forming friendships with adolescents of their own ethnic groups: a phenomena called “friendship homophily effect” (Titzmann & Silbereisen, 2009). In addition, the results revealed that over the

seven-year period, recent immigrants showed an increased preference in forming friendships with cross-ethnic peers. Developing friendships from one's own ethnicity may have important implications to youth's adjustment and well being to a new society. Having friends from one's country can help youth to cope with stress, racism or discrimination, in addition to keeping strong familial ties to their own culture and language. In their initial stage of adaptation, forming friendship with same-nationality peers might facilitate social confidence and a sense of belonging in the adaptation process. However, once immigrant youth feel more comfortable in their new society, forming friendships with other-ethnicity peers shows signs of adaptation and "groundedness."

In contrast, Shin (1998) found somewhat incongruent results with Titzmann and Silbereisen's (2009) findings. In a case study, Shin (1998) compared two immigrant adolescent (age 16) females of Chinese descent and examined their development of friendship four-years after their migration to the United States. In this qualitative study, it was revealed that one of the participants preferred to form friendships with peers of her own ethnicity (e.g., Chinese), because she felt a sense of familiarity and support from this group, while the other participant preferred to form friendships with the dominant group (e.g., American) because she had more shared interests and similar attitudes about school (Shin, 1998). The author further elaborated that the main difference between these two participants lies in their early experiences with the mainstream peers. Thus, adolescent who encountered negative interactions with their peers, for instance those that have been ridiculed or isolated tend to seek friends from their own ethnicity as a way to protect their self-esteem and cultural identity. While in contrast, immigrant youth who had more positive early experiences seek friends that will validate their self-worth. In short, the study shows that the more difficulty one had with making friends from the dominant group the less

acculturated they may feel. More recently, Morantz et al. (2011) and Akinsulure-Smith et al. (2016) found similar findings, where children and youth of refugee families preferred to form friendships with both the foreign-born and the native-born peers. In some cases it was revealed that newly arrived immigrants preferred to form friendships with the dominant group in order to improve their second-language skills (e.g., Morantz et al., 2011).

**Friendship quality.** Some research shows that immigrant youth have better friendship quality with peers of their own ethnicities than with other ethnicities (Chan & Birman, 2009; Alvarez et al., 2015). For instance, in a quantitative study, Chan and Birman (2009) examined friendship quantity and quality of cross-race and same-race immigrant adolescents of Vietnamese backgrounds who on average resided 8 years in the East Coast of the United States. According to the findings, adolescents between the ages 12 to 19 years reported having similar number of friends of the same-race and across-races, however, they perceived higher friendship quality with the same-race friends than with the other-race friends. Similar findings were also found among first and second-generation immigrant adolescents who were acculturating to schools in Spain (Alvarez et al., 2015). In this study, the authors examined the relationship between school adjustment, friendship quality and culture identification. According to student self-reports, adolescents who identified with the dominant culture (i.e., assimilated) experienced better school adjustment, while identification with the ethnic culture (i.e., segregated or separated) was associated with better friendship quality. In comparison, teachers' self-reports revealed that immigrant youth who were classified as acculturated showed better school adjustment, however these results were not significantly different from youth who were assimilated (Alvarez et al., 2015). Regardless of cultural-identification many youth expressed concerns for resolving conflicts in their relationship in order to protect and maintain their

relationship (Alvarez et al., 2015). This theme of resolving conflict and preserving one's friendship is not a complete surprise among this age group. Adolescents in general are more concerned about what their friends may say and think of them, and as a result they are more likely to work harder to preserve these relationships.

In sum, these studies show that adolescents of immigrant background tend to choose friends who are culturally and ethnically/racially similar to themselves. However, they are also open to develop multi-racial and multi-national friendships, however, they tend to have more intimate and closer relationships with peers of their own nationality and ethnicity. In general, the research shows that the homophily effect is highly evident among youth of immigrant background. A possible explanation for the pattern in the findings might be linked to the homogenization of schools and communities in the United States (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2002; Rubin, Fredstrom & Bowker, 2008) this in turn might explain the small number of cross-national friendships. It is also possible that the choice of youth's friendships might be influenced by parental preferences of friends (Rubin, Fredstrom & Bowker, 2008).

The majority of the research covered above mainly focused on friendship formation among adolescent youth (ages 12-19 years), with little attention had been given to children's friendship experiences under the age of 12. In the next section, I will briefly review the two research studies that captured friendship experiences in young immigrant children.

### **Friendship Formation among Children of Immigrant Background**

Past researchers who examined friendship among immigrant children primarily focused on youths' retrospective experiences in a new country or the preference of friendship based on nationality. In an earlier retrospective study through the process called "dual dialogic retrospection," Igoa (1995) examined immigrant youths' personal experiences of their adaptation

to a new school when they arrived to the U.S as children. According to immigrant youths' retrospective recollections from childhood, many of them recalled having difficult time with forming friendships due to their limited language skills and cultural differences (Igoa, 1995). This study demonstrates that immigrant children have the capacity of understanding of what it feels like to lack friendship and demonstrate "a need" for such relationship. Therefore, it is worthwhile to delve into the unique and personal experiences as described by individual youth who are going through the process of forming new friendships in a new country.

In a recent study conducted in Montreal, Canada, Morantz et al. (2011) compared differences in social network building among refugee children, adolescents and parents who arrived five years before the interview. The qualitative results revealed that most of the children and adolescents (age range between 7 to 18 years) expressed an easier time making new friendships in comparison to their parents. More specifically, the authors revealed that in the first year following migration, most children and youth choose to construct friendships with other immigrant students, however, after their first year they were also able to form friendships with native French or English speaking students. The results of the study could be explained in terms of the age of arrival. For instance, Beck, Corok and Tienda (2012) found that children who arrive to a new country before the age of 8 years had an easier time learning the second language and adapting to the mainstream culture than children who arrived after the age of 8 years. Therefore, the age of arrival is an important predictor in capturing the friendship process to allow a more fluid understanding of their experiences and the changes that the children would be experiencing as they navigate their social world.

### **Conducting Research with Children of Immigrant Background**

In general, research on immigrant children's views of friendship formation is very minimal due to the common belief that the information children provide is inaccurate or "less than" (Due et al., 2014). Some studies show that children in general have different point of views from their parents. For instance, in a recent study, Akinsulure-Smith et al. (2016) compared refugee parents' and children's perspectives on parental monitoring of peer relationships. Parents in this study often expressed fears and concerns of losing their children to the new culture, in turn promoted them to use more controlling parenting practices. In comparison, children expressed no instances of fear, but instead expressed an interest in forming relationships with peers of the dominant group. According to this study we can see that children tend to have different perceptions from their parents. It is therefore, important to capture the similarities and differences in children and parents of immigrant families as they adapt to the new country. Parents' perceptions may be blocked by fear and concern for their children, while children may see friendship formation as an exciting experience that could facilitate their adjustment and well-being.

There is limited research done with children of immigrant background and therefore, special considerations and precautions should be taken into account when conducting research with this particular child population. The first and the major difficulty when conducting research with children of immigrant background it is important to keep in mind of the cultural differences, biases, and common misunderstandings based on language and cultural meanings (Fontes, 2010). When interpreting children's speech, behaviors, or emotions it is important to keep in mind that children from different cultures may express their emotions differently. For example, "emotions such as pride, shame and sadness have differing meanings in Chinese, Japanese and North



American cultures” (Kirova & Emme, 2007, p. 90). Thus, the interviewer has to be sensitive and take precautions when interpreting or assigning meaning to children’s behaviors or emotions. In addition, it is also critical for the interviewer to always maintain a personal and nonjudgmental relationship when interviewing children of different backgrounds.

Another difficulty when conducting research with children of immigrant background is that some of them (particularly newly arrived immigrants) may have limited language skills to express their experiences, perceptions, or emotions (Due et al., 2014). Previous research has documented that some children of immigrant background initially speak in silence because of their limited language skills or the sense of feeling powerless (Igoa, 1995). Some immigrant children might have experienced chaos during the migration process where they might have been exposed to traumatic experiences, fear or the loss of their family members (Igoa, 1995). As a way of protecting oneself from these painful memories and coping with the negative effects of immigration, some children might be less reluctant to communicate in the dominant language or in any language at all. To restore children’s sense of power and self-confidence, and at the same time gain access to their unique friendship experiences in the second-culture, the investigators have to carefully choose research methods that are developmentally appropriate for the child’s language comprehension and personal interest. For children of immigrant background it may especially beneficial to use non verbal-language methods during the data collection (Due et al., 2014). Using photography as a research instrument has been seen as a very useful method when conducting research with children and any young individuals who have language barriers (Due et al., 2014). Using photography as a research tool allows the children to describe their stories and realities more in depth. This method gives insight into children’s experiences that may not otherwise be obtained through more traditional research methods (e.g., surveys). For example, in

one study, Berman, Ford-Gilboe, Moutrey, and Cekic (2001) used photography to capture Bosnian youth's everyday challenges and struggles of transiting to Canada. Through this method, the researchers gained a rich and personal data of children's every day fears, pain, and hopes for the future. In addition, the investigators revealed that children in general enjoyed being in the role of a photographer and discussing their stories through visual means.

Moreover, in the event that immigrant children have limited language skills or simply feel uncomfortable speaking, the investigators should arrange the interviews to be conducted in child's language of preference (Fontes, 2010). The goal of the present study is to understand immigrant children's experiences of friendship, and thus it is important to provide the child with the opportunity to express their point of views in the language that they feel most comfortable communicating.

Finally, the research process takes time with immigrant children and families, and thus building a rapport and a trusting relationship is very important (Due et al., 2014). It is crucial to ensure that the investigator takes time to develop a trusting relationship with the child, so he or she feels comfortable expressing information that might be of value to the study. Some children of immigrant background might have experienced instances of bullying or recalled painful memories from the past, in cases such as these, having a relationship where a child feels trust towards the researcher is very essential. In addition, some immigrant children "may be apt to say what adults want to hear, or they may say, "I don't know" when they are afraid or do not wish to reveal their feelings and thoughts" (Igoa, 1995, p. 73). In such event, it may be beneficial for the interviewer to conduct additional interviews so relevant information can be accessed. Also, building rapport ensures that the data is valid and reliable (Due et al., 2014).

### **Photo-Elicitation: Using Photography to Uncover Children's Experiences**

Research by Berman et al. (2001), Einarsdottir (2005), Gifford, Bakopanos, Kaplan, and Correa-Velez (2007), and Due et al. (2014) has demonstrated that photography methods or also known as “photo elicitation” or “photo novellas” methods, are believed to be developmentally appropriate and effective way of gaining insight to children’s unique perspectives and experiences. The use of photography will provide children of immigrant background the opportunity to actively express and share about their world that may not otherwise be obtained through more conventional methods. The researcher can use photographs as a way of uncovering everyday patterns of children’s realities on friendship. Past research has demonstrated that this method has been useful for both young children (see Einarsdottir, 2005; Pyle, 2012; Due et al., 2014) and youth of refugee background (see Berman et al., 2001; Gifford et al., 2007). In addition, photography methods are considered child-centered and child-friendly methods because they are viewed as more fun and collaborative way of conducting research (Einarsdottir, 2005; Due et al., 2014). Thus, the proposed study will use photographs as an instrument of uncovering children’s experiences and views on their friendships.

### **The Present Study**

Overall, most of the previous studies on friendship among immigrants, examined links between friendship preferences and nationality of friends and friendship quality (Shin, 1998; Chan & Birman, 2009; Titzmann & Silbereisen, 2009; Alvarez et al., 2015), differences of friendship formation between immigrant youth and immigrant parents (Morantz et al., 2011), as well as, the psychological (Levitt et al., 2005), and cognitive outcomes of having friendships (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2009). Although some research has demonstrated that children of immigrant background experienced challenges in establishing friendships or developing

friendships with peers of the dominant group, however, many of these children, particularly, the younger ones, had an easier time with adjustment and (re)building social networks (Morantz et al., 2011).

Past research revealed that little attention has been given to immigrant parents' culture and the role it plays on the types of friendships children may choose to construct (Yoshikawa & Way, 2008). In a nonimmigrant sample, it has been extensively documented that children and youth construct their friendships based on the following twelve characteristics: mutuality, reciprocity, voluntariness, intimacy, affection, similarity, proximity, transcendence of context, companionship, support, trust/loyalty, conflict management and stability (Bukowski, Newcomp, & Hartup, 1996). It may be however, that some of these characteristics may be less important or evident in children of immigrant families, where choice for friends may be more influenced by parents rather than the child. In immigrant families, children may have little choice about their decision for friends, and thus, may view characteristics such as voluntariness, intimacy, or proximity as less important. This is a fruitful area of research for a number of reasons. As we have seen above, friendship plays an important role in children's social and emotional development, and if a child does not have the opportunity to develop a friendship on their choice, this in turn may have consequences on their social development. Research has shown that children of immigrant background who lack friendships or have more difficulty with developing friendships tend to perform poorly in school and show increases in loneliness, anxiety, and depression (Igoa, 1995; Ngo & Schleifer, 2005).

Furthermore, most of previous studies relied on self-reported data where they focused on immigrant youths' and parental perspectives of friendship. To my knowledge, there are no studies that focused on children of immigrant background under the age of 12 and their

perceptions of their friendship experiences; in addition, the use of participatory photography as a research tool may be useful in gaining insight into children's social relationships. Participatory photography may provide children the opportunity to express their "voices", and provide opportunities to discuss their perspectives on their relationships with friends, the contextual issues surrounding their relationships, and how they make meaning or utilize their social networks. These findings may be useful to professionals who are interested in supporting minority children's adjustment and social development. For example, in schools, teachers can serve as guides and provide them with opportunities to foster relationships according to their needs. Furthermore, exploring the types of factors that hinder or support these children's friendships may yield another important understanding. Gaining a better understanding to how children of first-generation and second-generation build and maintain their friendships may provide insight for adults who are working with children of diverse backgrounds. Lastly, exploring how parents' view their children's friendships and how these children actually experience or perceive their relationships may help to reveal the issues around their cultural beliefs and practices.

Overall, exploring the lived experiences of friendship in children of immigrant background will address the following two gaps in the literature: (1) the limited research of immigrant children's perspectives and experiences with developing and maintaining friendships, and (2) the role that culture may play on children's decision of friends. Thus, an important aim of this project is to fill in the gap in previous research by giving children of immigrant background an opportunity to express their perspectives and feelings on friendship and gain a deeper understanding of their friendships (or the lack of) in Montreal's society. First-generation immigrant children and second-generation immigrant children between the ages 10 to 12, along

with their parents were recruited from an ethnic minority community center in Montreal, Canada. A phenomenological approach was considered as the most suitable method of examining these children's lived experiences and views of their friendship. Employing a phenomenological approach with open-ended interviews, field observations, and children's stories about their photographs allowed children of immigrant background to express their voices around the topic of friendship. The following research questions will guide this study:

1. What are immigrant children's experiences and perceptions of forming and maintaining friendships?
2. What types of contextual facilitators and/or barriers do these children encounter with their friendship development?
3. How do children's experiences and their parents' perceptions of children's friendship experiences compare?
4. How does photo-elicitation help children of immigrant background to communicate about their friendships?

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This qualitative study will employ a phenomenological approach that is designed to discover immigrant children's and their parents' perceptions of friendship (Hays and Singh, 2012). This approach enables the researcher to take on the role of a naïve investigator who wishes to gain deeper knowledge of participants' unique voices and lived experiences (Hays and Singh, 2012). Since there is limited research examining the role of friendship with young children and adolescents who immigrate, this approach will allow the researcher to remain close to the data and understand the essence of participants' stories, perceptions, and lived experiences

(Hays & Singh, 2012). When using phenomenological approach the sample size is fairly small since the purpose of this method is to gain rich and detailed data (Hays & Singh, 2012) of friendship experiences in children of immigrant background in Montreal.

Hence, in order capture children's experiences and perspectives of friendship, the present study used participatory photography and in-depth qualitative interviews to conduct research with the participants. The use of photography as a research tool has proven to be effective when conducting research with children of wide range of backgrounds and abilities. Therefore, this method appeared to me as the most appropriate and relevant tool to gain access to children's and parents' experiences and perceptions.

### **Research Setting and Researcher's Stance**

Since the purpose of the study is to gain children of immigrant background's views of friendship, it was therefore important to conduct the proposed study in a culturally sensitive environment, where the children would feel comfortable sharing about their experiences and perspectives. Although, the school setting may have been seen as the most suitable place to conduct this research, there are several important reasons why we decided to carry out the project in a non-school-based setting. Firstly, school is a place where many children may form their friendships, and as a result some of the children may feel less comfortable speaking about their friends because of the fear that the researcher may share their personal information with others in their school. Secondly, schools are largely controlled by adult authority figures, such as, teachers, principals, and school staff, and as a result, "children may feel pressured to give 'correct' answers" (Punch, 2002, p. 328). Finally, conducting a study in a non-school based environment will help the researcher to remain free of judgments and biases, and instead rely on children's experiences and understanding of friendship formation at this present time in their life

and according to their own points of view. Consequently, we decided that it would be best to situate the present study in an after-school community program with a high representation of children and families of immigrant backgrounds. In this community center there were also a lot of child-friendly facilities (e.g., community room, gym, art room, and playground) that could help to facilitate the children's engagement in the study.

The Community Center T is a non-for profit organization that offers a wide range of empowering and educational services in English and French for children and families that reside in the community. The center is located in a diverse community that faces “challenges related to poverty, racism, and a negative impression of the community by others” (Center T's Program Director). The vast majority of families that attend the Center T are of Caribbean and Bangali backgrounds (Center T's Program Director). A majority of the Caribbean families are second-generation immigrants, while the majority of Bangali families are first-generation immigrants (Center T's Program Director). This community is considered as one of the “highest concentrated low-income households in Quebec, where two out of three children live below the poverty line, and 40% of the children are raised by a single-parent” (Retrieved from Center T's website). In addition, between 25% to 30% of children who attend the community programs study below their grade level, and approximately 32% of the community's students' drop out before completing high school (Center T's Program Director). It is clear that some of the children who attend the community after-school program may be at risk of a variety of negative outcomes (e.g., social, emotional, academic) because of the adversities in their every day lives.

The Center T offers a variety of programs for children and youth, aged 6 to 17, such as, the after school program, the high school perseverance program, youth co-op, early literary and high school preparation, as well as a summer day camp program. For the present study, we have



recruited participants through the after-school program. The after-school program mainly focuses on improving children's academic, social, and physical development. Approximately 67 children are registered in the after school program. The staff team comprises of a program director, the family resource coordinator, educators, coordinators, and a team of specialized tutors, recreational animators and volunteers. Most of the staff are either college or university graduates. In the after-school program, the adult to student ratio ranges from 1:3 to 1:5. Typically, there tends to be a higher ratio of adults with the younger children than the older ones. The program's main goal is to assist children with their academic and social skills by providing a variety of services so they could reach their fullest potential in school and elsewhere.

Since it was important to develop a community partnership with the children, families, and the key stakeholders in their lives, it was important to develop a relationship before the study commenced. The graduate student started as a volunteer in January of 2017, where she volunteered two to three times per week for three hours each visit in order to build a relationship with children, educators, and the staff. During her visits, she provided assistance during the homework program, the recreational period, and monthly assemblies or events. She has been volunteering for Center T for approximately four months before the study started. Making these visits allowed the graduate student to gain a deeper understanding of program, the daily routines, the culture, and also provided insight into children's relationship with peers and adults. In addition, it also allowed her to establish a rapport with the staff of the Center T and learn about their approaches in facilitating children's development. Also, developing relationships with the director and the staff of the center was key in having their guidance with recruitment of potential participants.

**Participant Recruitment.** This study used purposeful sampling method to recruit participants (Hays & Singh, 2012). This method was considered as the most suitable because allowed the researcher to gain detailed and rich data of participants' perceptions and experiences. A total of four children of immigrant background were recruited from an ethnic, urban community center in Montreal. To be eligible to participate in the study the following criteria were met:

1. A child under the age of 12 years of age
2. A child of immigrant background:
  - a. A child who was born outside of Canada (first-generation immigrant)
  - Or
  - b. A child who was born in Canada, and who has at least one parent who was born outside of Canada (second-generation immigrant)
3. A child who is participating in the Center T's after-school community program

The present study was fully approved by the Concordia University's Human Research Ethics Committee on March 29<sup>th</sup> of 2017 (Certification Number 30007577). Upon starting the study, the graduate student experienced a number of challenges with recruiting children and families under the initial recruitment guidelines. During the recruitment process it was evident that many newly arrived immigrant families and children were less consistently involved in the after-school program, experienced major language barriers, or seemed to have difficulties with trusting the research process and/or sharing their personal stories. As a result the graduate student had to make some adjustments to her recruitment criteria. Hence, the above criteria were established by the graduate student and her thesis supervisor and approved by her thesis committee.

Through the support of the Center's T program director and the staff in the community center, the graduate student recruited three families. The first family was a mother and two daughters who met the criteria. The second family was one father and one daughter. Although, the daughter was born in Canada and had a mother who was born outside of Canada (in Poland to be exact), her father on the other side was a second-generation immigrant of Jamaican descent. Since the two parents were divorced, and the mother was unable to participate in the study (she lived in Ontario), the father agreed to participate in the study with his daughter. Although the father did not meet the second criteria, he still lived in the Caribbean community in Montreal and was very familiar with his ex-wife's culture. Finally, the third family consisted of a father and her daughter. Although, the father consented to having his daughter in the study, however, after signing the consent form, he reported that he had no time to be interviewed for the study. He allowed his daughter to participate in the study, and thus, much of the information gathered about the family and immigration was based on the child's accounts. After consulting with the thesis committee regarding the participants' background and new criteria for recruitment, all of the three families were approved for the present study.

### **Participants**

Table 1 provides a detailed demographics information of all the participants in the present study. A total of four immigrant children (ages 10-12), and their parents were recruited from an urban community center in Montreal. Only one parent was unable to be interviewed. The reason for his decline was related to the time commitment. All of the child participants were females. Two of the sample was born in Canada to foreign-born parents, while the other two were born outside of Canada to foreign-born parents. The families were considered immigrants if at least one parent lived in Canada for less than 15 years. Out of the two parents that participated,

one was a mother and one was a father. In the section below, I will provide a detailed description of each family.

Table 1. *Participants Demographic Information*

Families' Pseudonym	Country of Origin	Child's Pseudonym	Age (Y)	Gender	Immigrant Status
Family 1	Nigeria	Child H	12	Female	1st-generation
	Nigeria	Child AZ	10	Female	2nd-generation
Family 2	Jamaica/Poland	Child D	11	Female	2nd-generation
Family 3	Bangladesh	Child AN	11	Female	1st-generation

**Family 1.** Family 1 included Mother 1, Child H, and Child AZ. Family 1 is originally from Nigeria. However, after the parents got married, they first moved to Kenya for three years, before moving to Montreal in 2006. Accordingly, Nigeria was considered as the country of origin for this family. In Montreal, the family mainly speaks English or Yoruba (a language spoken in Nigeria) at home. Child H was born in Kenya and immigrated with her parents to Montreal when she was 18 months, while Child AZ was born in Montreal. The family mostly kept in contact with their family back in Nigeria through the internet or phone. The children had never been to Nigeria.

**Family 2.** Family 2 included Father 1 and Child D. Father 1 is a second-generation immigrant, and has immigrant parents from Jamaica who migrated to Montreal in the late 1970s. He was born in Montreal and lives in a neighborhood surrounded by his family, friends, and extended relatives. In his later teens, Father 1 moved to Niagara Falls, Ontario and got married to a first-generation immigrant woman from Poland. The father expressed that he is familiar with the Polish culture and speaks some Polish. Two years after the birth of their daughter (Child D), the couple divorced. His ex-wife moved to Toronto, and Father 1 and his daughter also moved to Toronto, but they lived separately. After living in Toronto for three years, Father 1 and Child D

moved to Montreal. The father and Child D are both Canadian citizens, who mostly speak English, and understand and speak some Polish.

**Family 3.** Family 3 included Child AN. Child AN was born in Bangladesh and moved with her parents at 1. Accordingly, Bangladesh was considered as the primary country for Child AN. In the context of home, Child AN and her family mainly spoke Bangla. The family is Muslim and follows the Muslim transitions and practices. Child AN mentioned that she had numerous extended family members from Bangladesh in Canada, and she and her immediate family often visited their family back in Bangladesh.

### **Data Collection**

This qualitative study used in-depth interviews and photo-elicitation techniques as the primary method of collecting data (Hays & Singh, 2012). Individual interviews were conducted because it is an ideal method of getting rich and detailed information of children's experiences with forming friendships. In addition, individual interviews were considered as the most appropriate because oftentimes children of immigrant background and their parents may reveal private or sensitive information related to immigration that could not otherwise be obtained through group interviews (see Appendices A, B, & C for interview protocols).

The data collection process for each child participant lasted for maximum of 5 weeks period. The graduate student met each child between three to five times for approximately 30 to 45 minutes. The data collection process has been divided into three separate phases for simplicity purposes: phase one consisted of the orientation session with the child and the parent; phase two consisted of taking photographs with each child at the community center; and lastly, phase three consisted of photo-elicited interviews. Also, parental interviews were conducted through out the

data collection as well. To get a more visual representation of how each session were divided and the types of activities that took place, please refer Table 2 below.

Table 2. *Meeting Agenda*

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Activities</b>
Time 1	Orientation Session ➤ Parent and child consent
Time 2 & 3	Photography Sessions ➤ Theme 1: “People that are important to you” ➤ Theme 2: “Places that are important to you” ➤ Theme 3: “Activities/Things that are important to you”
Time 4 & 5	Scrapbooking and Interviews ➤ Discussion of photos

During phase one of the project, the graduate student arranged an orientation session with each parent to learn about the family’s circumstances, daily schedules, child’s interests, in addition to having the parent complete the demographic surveys (see Appendix B) and sign the consent form (see Appendix E). Also, the orientation session was used as an opportunity for the researcher to build rapport with the family, and determine whether or not a translator was needed. Following the orientation session, each child engaged in a photography project (Einarsdottir, 2005; Due et al., 2014), where they were required to take photographs that were related to the study’s themes and the research questions. During the second phase of the project, the graduate student met with each child twice for approximately 20 to 30 minutes to take the photographs and engage in a brief discussion of the taken photos. During the last phase of the data collection, each child met with the graduate student again to create a scrapbook and discuss about the photos or any themes that emerges around the photos (see Appendix B for Photo-Elicitation Procedure). This phase lasted between 30 minutes to 1 and 30 minutes. A brief description of each data collection method and its purpose is described below.

**Photography.** During data collection, children were given a camera where they had the opportunity to take pictures that were relevant to the themes on friendship and their adjustments. The children were only limited to take pictures at the community center, during the after-school period. After the photographs were developed, these pictures were then used as a medium to engage in an in-depth dialogue between the child and the researcher. The graduate student gave each student themes that they would take their pictures of: “People that are important to you”; “Places that are important to you”; “Activities or events that are important to you”; and “Things that you found challenging/easy when you moved to Canada”. In general, children were prompted to take pictures of people, places, activities, and things that were important or anything that made them feel good or bad. When children wanted to take pictures of people (e.g., their friends or family), they were reminded to ask for the person’s approval to take the picture. These themes were created for the purpose of the study and were used as probes to facilitate a discussion and exploration of the research questions. These probed themes were not in any way compulsory. However, to maintain a close relationship with the child and keep them interested in the study, these themes were further discussed and adjusted according to the child’s interests, abilities, and needs. For instance, one of the participant’s in the study really enjoyed drawing, at one point she drew a portrait of girl with blonde hair and included the drawing in her scrapbook. After some probing about her drawing, she explained she simply always wanted to draw a girl with blonde hair, but never had the chance. After the graduate student developed the pictures, additional interviews were followed where the graduate student engaged in a discussion with each child about the photographs and made a scrapbook with the photos of the child’s choice. To initiate a discussion about the photographs, the graduate student started with broad questions: “What/Who is in the picture?”, “Where was the picture taken?” and “Why is this

picture important to you?” (see Appendix C for photo-probing questions). These questions allowed the graduate student to gain an understanding of why the child took the photo or what was important to her. After these basic questions, the graduate student posed semi-structured questions that pertained to the general aim of the study. Here are some examples of the probes that were asked: “Tell me about your experiences with making friends at school?” or “Tell me about a time when you had a negative experience at school?” (see Appendix A for the list of possible interview questions).

**Picture Scrapbook.** After the pictures were taken and developed, the graduate student used the pictures to create a personalized scrapbook with each child. During this period, children had the opportunity to draw or write any additional comments or short descriptions about the photo, or any relevant experiences or plans that they have with their friends. Children did not have the opportunity to take pictures of their friends, the scrapbook was used as an opportunity for them to draw some sketches of their friend(s) or write short descriptions. Children had the option to write either in English or French. Overall, the scrapbook sessions were used as an opportunity for graduate student to re-visit the research questions and ask any additional follow-up questions to ensure that the data was consistent and valid.

### **Procedure**

In the present study, children were recruited from an immigrant-based community center in Montreal. This center was located in diverse part of town where many families of immigrant background choose to settle. Consequently, the sample was diverse and representative. During the recruitment, the program director or staff of the center approached potential families and handed them out invitation letters (see Appendix D). After this, the program director approached the parents in person and introduced them to the graduate student. At this point, the graduate



explained about the study in plain language and addressed any questions that arose. After parents gave demonstrated their interest in the study, the mothers were given a consent form with the specific details of the study (see Appendix E for parent consent form). Throughout this process, the graduate student at all cost avoided coercion of the participants by informing them that if they did not feel comfortable or they had no time to commit, they were not obligated to participate in the study. In addition, parents and children were also informed that they have the option to withdraw from the study at any time. After each parent and child freely agreed to participate in the study, an orientation session was scheduled upon the families' availability. During the orientation, written parental consent and a verbal assent was sought for all children under the age of 18 years.

After the consent process, each child engaged in participatory photography at the community center. During this process, the graduate student used picture themes and probes to uncover aspects of children's friendship and social support in general. Following the picture-taking sessions, the graduate student used the pictures as a medium to facilitate discussions, and assist each child with making a personal scrapbook. The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was for the children to talk freely of their experiences, struggles, or needs. Each child was interviewed individually at the community center, there were only two instances where children two children were interviewed at the same time.

During the parent interviews, the parents were encouraged to discuss their family's experiences with forming and maintaining friendships as they were adapting to the Canadian culture. More specifically, the parents will be encouraged to discuss the three following areas: (a) parent's perception of their child's school; (b) parent's understanding of their child's friendship; and (c) parent's personal experiences acculturation and social support in Montreal. During the

interview, the graduate student used the following probes to guide the conversation and the exploration of the research questions (see Appendix C for the list of probes). The parents were interviewed at the community center, and without the presence of their children.

During all of the interviews, the researcher took additional notes of observable behaviour, speech or emotions, and also audio-recorded the child's and the parent's speech. The interviews were recorded using a SONY audio-recorder and a Samsung Galaxy s4 audio-recording application. Each interview lasted between 30 to 90 minutes. After the interviews were finished, the participants' names were changed to pseudonyms to preserve their identity and ensure confidentiality.

### **Data Analysis**

The data for this study consisted of several sources, such as, twenty-one interview transcripts with children and parents, field notes/observations, journal reflections, as well as children's photographs and scrapbooks. All of these sources were for the final analysis. A phenomenological approach was used as the primary method of organizing and analyzing the present data. Given the small sample size, it was therefore appropriate to use a method that would allow an in depth exploration of the present topic. "The purpose of a phenomenology is to discover and describe the meaning or essence of participants' lived experiences, or knowledge as it applies to consciousness" (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 50). Specifically, the present study used a wide range of child-friendly approaches to study about each child's friendship experiences in an after-school program and elsewhere. Overall, the graduate student used child's description of photos, stories, drawings, and written work as the primary way of organizing and developing the major themes of the study, the picture themes alone will not be used as the primary way of organizing the data. After data has been collected, all of the interviews were transcribed with the

HyperTRANSCRIBE software, and then transferred to Microsoft Word for the first cycle coding. The codes used the track changes on Microsoft Word to highlight and assigned a meaning or a summary to the code.

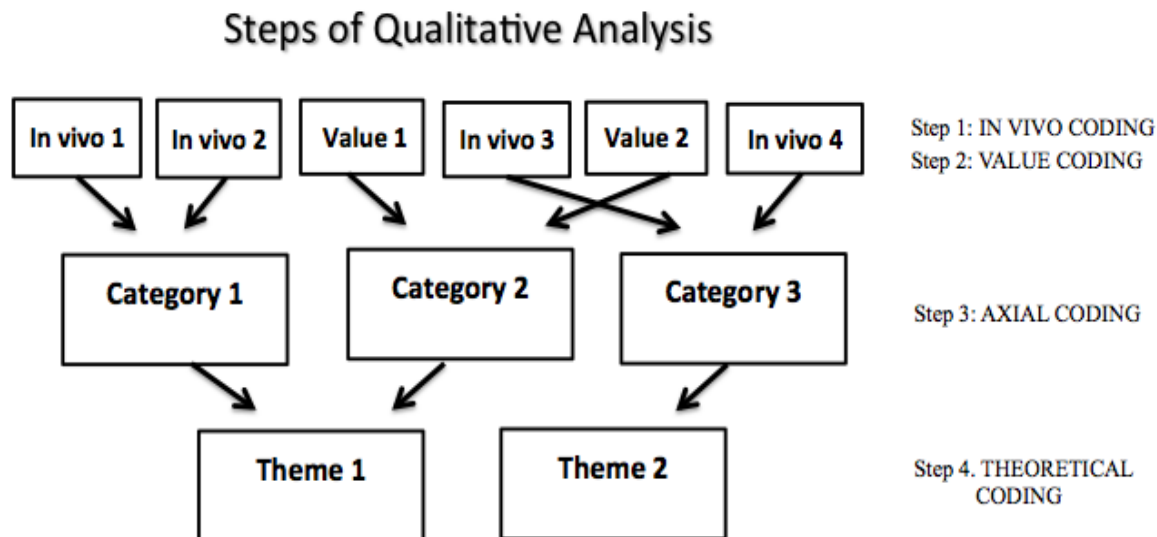
The study used Saldaña's (2016) qualitative method approaches to transcribe and code the data. More specifically, I used the following approaches to help to code, analyze, and interpret the present data: in-vivo coding, value coding, axial coding, and theoretical coding (Saldaña, 2016).

**In-vivo coding.** After the data has been transcribed, the data was first coded with in-vivo coding (Saldaña, 2016). In-vivo coding is considered as the best method of initial coding because it allows to capture participants' voices. In this study, every time a child spoke and expressed her opinions, feelings, emotions, or experiences a code was assigned. More specifically, the data was coded with a "splitter" – this means that the graduate student assigned a single word or a short phrase to every three to five lines of the child's or the parent's speech (Saldaña, 2016). In-vivo coding helped to "keep track of codes that are participant-inspired rather than researcher-inspired" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 107), and helped reveal participants values for the value coding.

**Value coding.** Next value codes were applied. Saldaña (2016) described, value coding as the application of codes that reflect the participant's values, attitudes, and beliefs, representing his or her perspectives or worldviews" (p. 131). Every time a child and a parent expressed a value, an attitude, or a belief about themselves, others, or their culture, a value code was assigned. Value coding helped to capture any cultural beliefs and values about any personal and interpersonal experiences (Saldaña, 2016). Following this, value coding and in-vivo coding were used for development of possible categories for axial coding.

**Axial coding.** Saldaña (2016) described, “axial coding [as] the transitional cycle between the initial [or in-vivo] and theoretical coding...” (p. 245). Axial coding further separated which codes could be used for a category and which ones should be eliminated (Saldaña, 2016). This process helped to identify the subcategories as well as the relationship between them, and allowed for a more in depth analysis (Saldaña, 2016). Axial coding narrowed down the codes into more specific categories, and also facilitated for the development of more central themes (Saldaña, 2016).

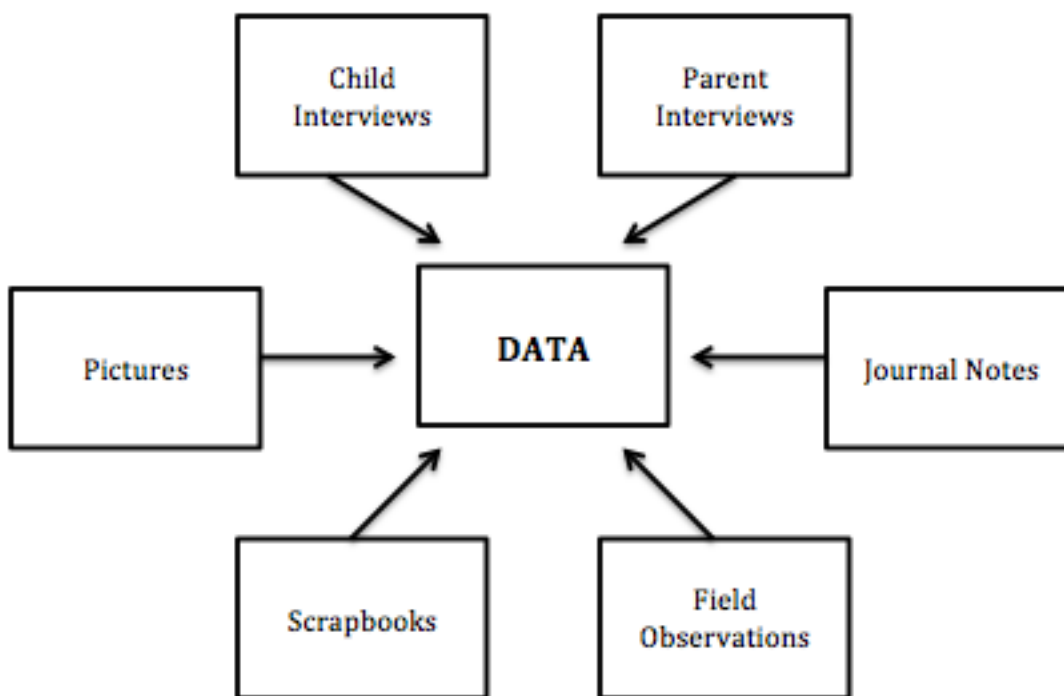
**Theoretical coding.** Finally, the last stage of analysis consisted of theoretical coding (Saldaña, 2016). In this qualitative study, theoretical coding (also known as focused coding or selective coding) functioned, “like an umbrella that covers and account[s] for all other codes and categories formulated thus far...” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 250). Theoretical coding consisted of all codes and subcategories that corresponded to the results and the research questions, which in turn, assisted in development of major themes for the study (Saldaña, 2016). See Figure 1 below for a visual representation of all the steps that were involved in the coding analysis. Moreover, once the data has been coded for the child and the parent comparisons were made to determine whether similar themes and subthemes emerged (see Appendix F for a coding sample).



*Figure 1: Flowchart of the steps for analysis*

### **Data Authenticity**

In this qualitative study, the graduate student employed a multiple of strategies to ensure that the data met an appropriate level of research rigor. Member checking was implemented into the data collection process through repeatedly asking each child about the photos and double-checking about the messages that the children were trying to get across. To ensure that the data was authentic, consistent, and plausible, the graduate student triangulated of data sources (photographs, scrapbooks, reflexive journals, field notes, observations, and transcribed audio recordings of the child's and parent's interviews; see Table 2). Additionally, the use of In Vivo Coding and participants' photographs ensured that the study captured the authentic experience and the voice of each child. Additionally, undergraduate volunteers assisted with transcribing and coding the data to eliminate any bias. Finally, regular meetings with the graduate student's supervisor and the research team were carried out to discuss the coding, findings and emerging themes.



*Figure 2. Data Triangulation.*

### **Findings**

The aim of the study is to explore how children of immigrant background develop and maintain their friendships. This study took place in a diverse community center where children had the opportunity to express their experiences and perspectives about their friendships in a child-friendly environment.

In order to make this project a success, a strong collaboration between families, educators/animators, coordinators, program directors, and the researchers was essential. This collaboration constituted of multiple perspectives and methods that reveal a rich body of information on how children of immigrant background perceive their relationships with friends or other individuals in their lives. In the findings section, I will use multiple forms of analysis, such as photo-elicited storytelling, field observations, and perceptions of children, and parents to discuss and summarize the main findings of children's experiences with their friendship

relationships. More specifically, the analysis will start with the main findings of how these children are perceived within their social environments in order to provide context and background understanding of children's social life histories and current social events, followed by how these children themselves perceive and view their social relationships. Each case study will be reported one at a time for each participant.

### **Participant Backgrounds and Current Context**

In the following section, I will describe contextual information of each child and how they are perceived by their parents, educators/animators, or by the researcher. The goal of this section is to provide background information of how these children are being perceived within their social environments. I will discuss the details about each child's immigration or other transitions; home and family life; and school and after-school program life.

**Child H.** Child H was born in Kenya to Nigerian parents. Her parents first migrated to Kenya for three years, before moving to Montreal in 2006. Child H has not been to Kenya or Nigeria since she immigrated as a young child. Child H is currently in grade 6. She has two younger siblings, a sister and a brother, both of whom were born in Montreal. In terms of Child H's personality type, her mom describes Child H as someone who is "outgoing".

A year before Child H, her younger sister (also a participant in the study under the pseudonym of Child AZ), and her mom participated in the current study, the family had moved from what is considered a reputable neighbourhood in Montreal to the central part of town (i.e., near downtown). As a result, Child H and her younger siblings were also forced to transition between schools. The reason for the move was because Child H's mother received a new job and she wanted her children to live and go to school that was near their new apartment. When Child H's mom was asked to talk about Child H's current school, she explained:

It's not the best of schools...but it works for me and [my children]...it's not far from the house...I cannot compare the schools [the old vs. new school]. But, [Child H] is one of the best student here. They have really good teacher here, and she got better in her marks than in the old school...

Child H's mom also shared her thoughts of the types of challenges Child H encountered during her transition to school:

The challenge was that [Child H] left her old friends. She missed them a lot. All the beautiful notes that she had from her friends, she put them up on her wall by the bed. When she was sleeping she cried so much. She didn't want to leave, because they were her friends since they were in kindergarten. So they all knew each other very well. So it was a big challenge... leaving the friends and the teachers.

According to both Child H and her mom, Child H still occasionally keeps in touch with her old friends through a call or text.

In the context of home, Child H's mom described Child H as "caring" and "helpful." Child H's mom often discussed about Child H's assistance with household chores and her relationship with her siblings as well as her willingness to help them with their homework completion:

She is very helpful in the house...and she also has good relationship with [her siblings]. She loves the siblings. She take care of them. She give them her things. She help them with homework. If they don't understand something, she is always there to help them.

Although, Child H often helps her young siblings with homework, interestingly, when she herself needs extra help with her own homework, her mom recalls that she often seeks help from her friends from school. Mom explained:



...Sometimes if [Child H] doesn't know...if she doesn't understand her homework, she send[s] it to her friends that understand. They would do the corrections and send it back to her...I don't speak French really well, so there is no one to help her.

Further, an interesting conversation with the mother revealed that it might have been Child H's idea of joining the programs that are offered through Center T. The mother explained:

...When [Child H] found this place [referring to Center T] they first went to the [Summer] Day Camp and then they were going to the library [Center T's library]...and in March they started go to the afterschool program [homework club].

This seems to show that Child H may be an active agent in seeking resources that could benefit her academic learning or social wellbeing. In all, Child H's mom seems to believe that joining the community center has had a very positive effect on Child H's wellbeing. Mom: "...She loves everything about this place...and it's made [her] happy."

Finally, when talk about Child H's selection of friends, Child H's mother explained that Child H seems to choose friends that are similar to her, she explained: "[Child H] will not really go with people...who are not like her." It was also clear from the observations that Child H appears to interact with peers that showed similar interests as her, this seems to include strong interests in academics and sports.

Below, Table 3 shows a brief summary of all of the relevant events that took place in Child H's life.

Table 3. Child H's Life Event Timeline

<i>Age</i>	<i>Event</i>
0	Child H was born in Kenya to immigrant parents from Nigeria
1.8	Child H immigrated with her parents to Montreal
6	Child H started Elementary School A in a residential neighbourhood of Montreal

11 Mrs. Williams found a new job in an urban neighbourhood of Montreal, and moved with her family to a new apartment near Center T

Child H started a new Elementary School B in an urban neighbourhood of Montreal

Child H attends a Summer Day Camp program at Center T and then after that Child H attended Center T's library once a week for about six months

12 Child H starts attending the daily afterschool program at Center T on regular basis

[Photography Project with Ms Nataliya]

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**Child AZ.** Child AZ was born in Montreal in 2007 to immigrant parents from Nigeria.

Child AZ is currently in grade 5. Child AZ has two siblings, a younger brother and an older sister who is also a participant in the study, under the pseudonym of Child H (above). In terms of Child AZ's personality character, Child AZ's mother describes her as someone who is "quiet" and "shy," in comparison to her older sister, Child H, who was described as someone that is more "outgoing."

In the context of home and family life, the mother described Child AZ as the type person who is always available and willing to help with any work around the home: "...[Child AZ] is the first person to tell you that she is not tired and ready to work!" In addition, the mother added that Child AZ appears to be the type of individual to show concern when one of the family members is ill or distressed. Mom mentioned:

...If there is somebody that is sick or something, she will be the first one to help...she would ask, 'Are you okay? Are you alright?' [mimicking voice] She will keep on asking...until you say you are 'Fine!

It seems that Child AZ is empathetic and shows concern for others.

The mother explained that at home Child AZ often enjoys "reading", "painting", "drawing", "journaling", "cooking" or "playing games on her tablet." She often chooses to

engage in these activities in solitary, but from time to time she may choose to engage with her siblings.

According to the mother's perspective, she believes that Child AZ has a good relationship with her older sister, Child H. Mother explained:

[At home], they play together a lot...they laugh together a lot and forget about worrying, about school and homework, and things like that...I think they are very good friends. I always tell them it's better...it's better to be good friends because they are girls and later in life they will realize it.

It is interesting to note the mother's point of view because according to my observations of Child AZ and her older sister (Child H), the two rarely interacted in the context of the afterschool program. They were both in the same classroom, but they often sat at separate desks and interacted with peers of their own age group. Perhaps both Child AZ and Child H view their sibling relationship as something more appropriate for home, while the after-school context as a time to engage in interactions with their friends or peers.

In the March of 2016, Child AZ transitioned between schools. Child AZ's mother seems to acknowledge the loss of Child AZ's friendships and their lack of contact, however, she seems to also believe that Child AZ has more a larger quantity of friends at her current school:

She experienced a similar thing with her sister...she lost her friends also...[But] she's a bit quite, so which maybe she doesn't have their phone number, she doesn't have their email...so they don't communicate so much...But in the new school, now, she has so many friends...

Interestingly though, when speaking to Child AZ about her quantity of friends in her old school versus her new school, Child AZ often mentioned that she had more friends at her old school. It

is interesting to note this because Child AZ seemed to view the understanding of friendship very differently than her mom. It might be because Child AZ knew who her true friends are, and she also knew her friends at a more personal level where she might be better to evaluate whether the friend is her *true* friend or not, while her mom who views the relationship from an outsider perspective may lack a deeper knowledge of the relationships.

When speaking of Child AZ's after school life, there was quite a bit of discussion around her involved in a variety of extracurricular activities. At school, Child AZ was involved in the school choir and occasionally performs at the school concerns. "She makes friends here..." The mother mentioned that Child AZ also attends a science program every Thursday that is specifically designed for children to work on different types of science projects. The mother mentioned how this context not only seems to improve her learning skills, but also with development of new friendships:

"In the scientific [program], she has improved skills in the school... and with making new friends."

Overall, it seems that Child AZ's mother was quite aware of Child AZ's interests and extracurricular involvements. The mother seems to recognize that some of the activities that Child AZ is involved in provide important contexts for her to develop friendships with other children.

Below, Table 4 shows a brief summary of all of the relevant events that took place in Child AZ's life.

Table 4. Child AZ's Life Events Timeline

<i>Age</i>	<i>Event</i>
0	Child AZ was born in Montreal, Canada to immigrant parents from Nigeria-Kenya
6	Child AZ started elementary school in a residential neighbourhood of Montreal

- 9 Mrs. Williams found a new job in an urban part of Montreal, and moved with her family to a new apartment near Center T
- Child AZ starts a new elementary school
- Child AZ attends a summer day camp program that was offered through Center T  
Child AZ attends Center T's library occasionally
- 10 Child H starts attending the daily afterschool program at Center T on regular basis
- [Photography Project with Ms Nataliya]
- 

**Child AN.** Child AN is in grade 5 and has a younger brother who is attending the same day school and the same afterschool community program. Child AN and her family moved from Bangladesh to Montreal in 2008. According to Child AN, she and her family tend to make occasionally visits to Bangladesh once in every two to three years. When speaking of Bangladesh, Child AN often spoke of wanting to go visit her country: "...I have most of my family there...I do like wanna go there because I have lots of cousins there and it's fun!"

When speaking of home, Child AN often made reference to playing with her cousins, her cousins' friends, her brother and his friends, or other children from her neighbourhood.

Child AN joined the afterschool program in 2011, when she was six years old. Interestingly, when she spoke of Center T, Child AN said, "I don't really know people here." Which seems be very ironic for her to make such a statement because she has been attending the afterschool program for nearly five years now. However, according to my observations, it has become increasingly clear that Child AN appears to attend the afterschool irregularly. On average she may attend two to three days per week, whereas as most of the other children participate in the program daily (i.e., 5 days per week). This may possibly be a reason why Child AN felt that she did not know many people in the center. Perhaps being involved in the

afterschool program daily would give Child AN the opportunity to get to know the children in the program.

Additionally, according to the program director, Child AN and her brother often get picked and dropped by their parents both from school and the Center T because there are no direct school busses that go by Child AN's home that could take her school or the Center T. Child AN's father often goes to pick up Child AN and her brother from school and drive them to the community center for afterschool program. This may possibly be another explanation why Child AN feels that she does not know many people in the afterschool program. Perhaps taking a school bus provides children an important context to familiarize themselves with the children and engage in social interactions.

Academically, Child AN performs well, according to interactions with educators and animators Child AN is described as "very sweet" and "very smart" (Center T Educators). There were no interviews conducted with Child AN's parents. Below is a table (Table 5) of the major events that took place in Child AN's life.

Table 5. Child AN's Life Events Timeline

<i>Age</i>	<i>Event</i>
0	Child AN was born in Bangladesh
2	Child AN and her parents immigrated to Montreal
6	Child AN started elementary school Child AN started the afterschool community program at Center T Child AN made a visit with her family to Bangladesh
9	Child AN made a visit with her family to Bangladesh
10	Child AN's parents' moved to a new house within the same neighbourhood, and Child D continued to attend the same school and the same afterschool program
11	[Photography Project with Ms Nataliya]

**Child D.** Child D is in grade 5. The father described Child D as “very friendly”, “outgoing”, “sensitive” and “down to earth”. The father seemed to think that, “she’s like the perfect little girl, if you ask me”. From the Center T’s staffs’ point of view, she has been described her as a “sweet girl” and “a good girl.”

Her parents are divorced and she lives with her father in Montreal. Child D’s mom lives in Toronto and sometimes Child D visits her mom during her school breaks (i.e., March break and summer break). Child D has two older siblings, a half-sister and a half-brother in high school. Child D’s half-siblings live with their biological mother in a separate home in Montreal. Whenever Child D’s father works late or goes out in the evenings, Child D is often watched by her half-siblings. When Child D spoke of her half-siblings, she recalled both positive and negative experiences. Child D recalled an example:

...One time it was me, my brother, my sister, and [my cousin]...we just watched a movie and that was really fun...but then me and my sister [got] in a fight! ... it was about something really stupid...we just talked about it in the kitchen and we watched the movie after...

When Child D was asked to talk about her home life, interestingly, she often talked about her pets, particularly about her cat and two dogs. At one point, Child D opened up about one of her favourite cats that had passed away over a year ago. She said: “...he was one of my first pets... I really love him and respected him...he was born like a year before I was born... he was like a brother to me!” During the interviews, Child D was also very keen on showing the interviewer all of the pictures of her cat and dogs on her cell-phone.

During the interviews with Child D's father, there was quite a bit of discussion around Child D's transition from Ontario to Quebec, especially since the father perceived the transition in a positive light. Child D's father explained:

It wasn't really a big transition. It was more of...we're done daycare in Niagara, we start elementary school in Toronto...so it was like 3 years straight [in daycare], 4 years straight in elementary school, and then okay, now we're going to Quebec. So it wasn't a big transition...it was normal.

When the father was asked to describe any challenges that Child D might have encountered during the transition, he recognized that most of Child D's struggles were attributed to her French language barriers:

She was having difficulties with some of the French...When she first started [learning French] it was like night and day! Because all we spoke was Polish and English at home...and French was like WOW! ...She caught on to it very quickly though...but they [school staff] done everything they can on their power, like the school is great! They [school staff] got her help with tutoring...and now she has been having a great time in there [at school].

Despite Child D's initial challenges with learning French, the father still took the time to acknowledge the support of teachers who facilitated Child D's learning of French and positive adjustment to school.

The father also talked about the positive impact that the Center T had on Child D's transition to Montreal, he explained:

I've been coming to here [Center T] since I was a kid so I know everybody in the staff. I know all the parents, I know all their kids...so it was like super easy, I know everybody



in here...She's been coming here when she was a baby, before she even knew it ...so it was kind going to happen eventually...she's been coming here all the time since we moved here...for her [Child D] she was surprised that there is so much love and open arms for her...the transition was made very easy for her because there is so much support...it's very family oriented here, if you wanna say.

The Center T's director also confirmed Child D's father involved in the community center:

“Father 1 is here all the time. He comes to volunteer sometimes and also picks up the girls [Child D and her cousin] every single day.” It seemed that the father's involvement and familiarity with the community center, as well as the social support from Center T's staff might have played a positive influence on Child D's social adjustment to Montreal. Father comments on Child D's experiences with making friends at school and the Center T, “[Child D] is a very friendly person, so she's makes friends with everybody.”

Throughout the process of the project, it became increasingly clear that Child D had a very close relationship with one of her cousins, who also attends the same day school and the same after-school program. Out of school, Child D often spent her time with her cousins and friends from the neighbourhood while playing basketball or other recreational sports.

Additionally, from my discussion with Child D, it was clear that Child D and her father lived in a community surrounded by close family members (e.g., grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins) and people from similar nationally and ethnicity.

Overall, it seemed that having a supportive environment with family members and adults create a safe context for Child D exploration of the new environment and in building of new social relationships. Below is a table (Table 6) of the major events that took place in Child D's life.

Table 6. Child D's Life Events Timeline

<i>Age</i>	<i>Event</i>
0	Child D was born in Niagara Falls, ON to an immigrant mother from Poland and a father of Jamaican background
5-6	Child D's parents got a divorce
6	Child D moves with her father to Toronto, ON Child D starts her elementary school in Toronto
8	Child D moves with her father to Montreal, QC Child D starts a new elementary school in Montreal Child D joins the afterschool community program
11	[Photography Project with Ms Nataliya]

### **Individual Case Study: Child's Experiences and Perceptions of their Friendships**

During the individual case studies, I have summarized the main theoretical themes that were evident throughout the study with each child. An important part of the project was to spend time with each child in variety of contexts in order to gain a deeper perspective of their experiences, perceptions and values of their relationships with friends and peers. Each case study will be summarized by child interviews, picture data, observations, and field notes. In addition, I have also collected picture data of child's parents. These additional findings with parents will help to contextualize the child's main findings, as well as, it also allows to reveal how parent's own cultural values, beliefs and experiences are reflected in child's experiences with developing and maintaining her relationships with peers. Each of the following summaries below are informed by child photo-elicitation interviews, observations, and parental interviews.

**Child H.** Across the findings, there appeared to be three central themes that emerged to summarize child H's experiences with building and maintaining friendships, these themes are: (a) sense of belonging to community; (b) attachment to friends, family and adults; and (c) helping friends and siblings. A summary of these three themes is described below.

*Sense of belonging to community.* Overall, a major topic of what Child H discussed during the interviews seemed to have do with her participation and involvement in community-based programs and/or activities that take place in and/or are organized by Center T, which appeared to highlight that having a sense of belonging to community was important to her. From participating in the afterschool program, engaging in recreational sports, volunteering in the library, to taking part in the summer day camp or playing in the community park appeared reinforced her strong ties to community Center T's life. Child H even directly stated that out of all the pictures she took, her favourite one was of Center T, because of the "great people" that are in it.

More specifically, Center T, appeared to serve as an important context in allowing Child H to carry-over her current relationship with her one of her friend's from school beyond the initial setting in which it first started. For example:

Interviewer: So you typically meet with your friends at school, right?

Child H: Yep! ...ahh actually, except Center T.

Interviewer: Yah, so you meet with your friends at Center T as well? But it's only with a few friends, right?

Child H: Yes!

Interviewer: It's only Rita and people who go to Center T, right ...so how many of your friends go to Center T?

Child H: One. One from school.

Interviewer: So you are friends with her at school and also here at Center T, right?

Child H: Yes!

Child H's connection to Center T appeared to be so strong that she also wished more of her school friends attended the community center. Interviewer asked: "...do you wish there were other people [here], like more friends from your school? ... Child H replied: Yes! This way I would have more people to talk to!" In addition, the above script shows that Child H does not tend to elaborate a lot on her responses, she tends to responded to the prompts in a simple and to the point fashion. Her photographs appear to act as a form of communicating her ideas or highlight the things that are important to her.

The community center also seems to allow her to build and maintain new friendships with children that go to different schools. For instance, when she was asked about her friends that go to different schools, she mentioned that her friend, "Macy goes to a different school..." and added that she likes to play in the community park after the homework program with her "...because she goes to stream 2, so I don't get to see [her] a lot." In all, Child H seems to have friends both at stream 1 and stream 2 of the after-school program, and she seems to use the Center T's resources both during the program and after the program ends to maintain her relationship with her friends.

Furthermore, Child H also talked about liking to attend Center T because it allowed her to meet and build new relationships with adults:

Interviewer: [Center T] is important...and why is that?

Child H: Because there are people here umm...I met a lot of great people!

Interviewer: Yah?...What kind of people you met?

Child H: I met Scott!

Interviewer: Yah...and who is Scott?

Child H: He is one of animators! ...I met Elise who is the librarian of the library...I met other great people as well!

Interviewer: Okay, and how do these people make you feel?

Child H: They make me feel happy when I [am] sad...they make me laugh!

In sum, it appears that being involved in various community-based programs and activities allows Child H to develop and sustain her sense of belonging and connectedness with her school friends, as well as, it also seems allow her to develop new relationships with adults, who in turn serve as guides in her academic and social development.

*Attachment to friends, family and adults.* Given that Child H had strong ties of being part of the community culture and the people that are in it, this in turn translated to her ability to form close-knit attachments with her friends, family and other adults. Throughout my on-going observations of Child H in the Center T, I observed her with her friends together engaging in the following activities: sitting and interacting during homework club sessions; playing on the same team during recreational activities; and reading books side-by-side at the center's library. Interestingly, when taking a closer look at Child H's attachment with her friends, it appeared that she had a very closer relationship with her school friend, named Rita. In fact, her attachment to Rita appeared to be so strong that she even got upset at one point when the interviewer removed Child H out of her recreational period where Rita was at, in order for her to work on the photography project with the interviewer. In that scenario, after the interviewer noticed that Child H seemed unhappy about something, the interviewer asked her: "Is everything okay? ...Did you want to spent time with Scott [one of the animators]?" ...Child H: "No, I really wanted to spent time with Rita!" After noting, how important the recreational period was to Child H, the interviewer no longer used that time for working on the photography project, but instead re-

scheduled the project to take place during the homework period. More specifically, when asked about what she liked about her friend Rita, she described that, “she’s nice” and discussed how she enjoyed playing sports with her, which was also confirmed through my on-going observation of Child H. Perhaps why Child H’s relationship is so strong to Rita, may be simply due to their shared characteristics and interests that facilitate their friendship. Child H often listed that she likes to be friends with individuals based on their similar background, such as, gender, grade/age, and who also share similar activities and interests, like playing sports and talking, as well as, those who share similar academic orientation. Given that her friend, Rita is of the same age, gender, goes to the same school and the community center, and also seems to like to be involved in the same extracurricular activities (i.e., soccer, basketball and the homework club) as Child H, all of these characteristics in turn seem to facilitate Child H’s development of a stronger bond with this friend. It appeared that Child H viewed the recreational period as a social activity intended for simply having fun and playing with her friend(s), and since she was missing this social opportunity, she got very unhappy.

Furthermore, Child H seemed to highlight her attachment to her family and siblings quite often, and even sometimes directly stated: “Family is important to me!” Her values for family were highlighted during the picture taking process, when she took pictures of her younger brother and younger sister, and also when she asked the interviewer if she could take some candies for her friends and her sister:

Interviewer: ...and who did you wanted to give the candies to?

Child H: My friends.

Interviewer: To your friends? Which friends? ...the ones that are here at Center T?

Child H: Yes!

Interviewer: Yah...you said two friends, but I see you have four candies.

Child H: And also my sister!

Her attachment to family may related the fact that she places a great value on helping and caring for her younger siblings at home, as this was often described by Child H's mother. In addition, Child H appeared to also have a strong sense of connection with some of the adults at Center T. On numerous occasions, she was observed exchanging jokes, laughs and playful behaviour with her educators, recreational animators, and the center's librarian. She states: "they make me feel happy..." It was clear from the observations and the interviews that she seemed to especially like coming to the library because of her attachment to the librarian. Child H mentioned, "I get to see Elise. She makes me feel happy!" In general, Child H appeared to be tuning in to the idea that her relationships and interactions with adults at Center T are seen as something that brings her happiness.

*Helping friends, siblings and community.* Since, Child H has a strong sense of attachment and connection to her friends, family and adults in the community this seemed to translate to her ability to offer help and assistance to others. She discussed about helping her friends with homework at school quite often, and even directly stated: "My friends don't help me often. I'm mostly the type of person to help them...because I get very good grades!" This seems to suggest that she feels very proud and confident in her academic achievement, and may in turn feel obligated to offer them assistance due to her strong academic background. Interestingly, she also talked about helping her friends in situations when they do not directly ask her for help:

Interviewer: And do you also help them when they don't ask you?

Child H: Yes.

Interviewer: Yah... so how do you know if your friend needs help when they don't ask

you?

Child H: Well, I can see it on their face!

Interviewer: How do you see it on their face?

Child H: Well normally, let's say that they are lifting something... normal people you see like they have a normal face, but when it's hard, you see it in their face, "Aghhh!"

[mimicking voice]...if they are like frustrated that means that they need help!

This seems to show that Child H has a good awareness of her friends' emotions and needs, and uses that awareness of others by offering her assistance when ever she believes is needed, which in turn may benefit the relationship in the long run. When she was asked whether she likes helping her friends, she replied, "Yes, it makes me feel happy!" During the project, she was also observed helping friends and other peers with homework during the homework program, and even helps younger children with crossing the street by holding their hand and checking for cars. She also mentioned about volunteering in the Center T's library every Friday after school: "I volunteer in the library...I help to check out peoples' books. In general, it seems to show that she naturally enjoys helping others, whether it is a friend, a peer, the community, or a child in need.

In terms of helping her siblings, Child H was not observed nor did she directly stated that she liked helping her siblings. However, based on the conversations with her mother, it seems as though that she is very helpful around the house and also seems to help her younger siblings with their homework and school projects.

*Scrapbook.* Finally, Child H's pictures and her scrapbook were full of representations of her family, friends and adults from the center. She included, pictures of her two siblings, her friend from her day school and another friend from a different school, as well as, the Center T's librarian. Interestingly, she requested that the pictures of her siblings, friends and adults not be



used in any public presentations/papers or shown to anyone in public, this also includes for this research paper. She also prohibited me from taking any pictures of her scrapbook. This seems to suggest that Child H respects these individuals' right to privacy. This sense for privacy was also observed, when the interviewer asked her to name some topics that Child H likes to discuss with her friends, and she refused to share any of that information, she stated: "I don't want to talk about it!" Perhaps keeping certain things private may be her way of maintaining a sense of loyalty to her friends. This sense of privacy with friends might also be linked to the fact that she chooses to use her relationship with them as a way of disclosing private information about herself or others.

*Summary.* Overall, Child H demonstrated positive experiences with forming and developing friendships across a variety of contexts, such as school, community center, park, as well as through her involvement in extracurricular activities and summer programs. In her relationships, she seems to value having a sense of attachment/closeness, a sense of belonging, and a platform of where she's able to help people that are important to her.

*Parent's Perceptions.* Overall, the interviews with Child H's mother seemed to reflect similar themes and discussions as the findings with Child H. Child H's mom seems to emphasize that the people at the community Center T have brought Child H a sense of belonging and happiness:

[She] find almost all things that fitted [her] here...the friends, the school, the Center T, the teachers, the animators... they are all very friendly and nice to her" and added that the decision of coming to Center T was "a very good decision" because "[Child H] has more friends now" and that it has also "made [her] very happy.

The parent also seemed to emphasize that gaining help from more knowledgeable sources, such as, Child H's school friends or the afterschool program at Center T has been a valuable source of support in Child H's academic success and in her improvement of both English and French language skills. For example, Child H's mom explained that Child H's school friends have been very helpful with her academic learning in times when the mom was unable to provide any direct academic assistance:

...If she doesn't understand her homework she sends it to her friends that understand...they would do the corrections and send it back to her...so she can do exactly the way the friends does and then she's going to pass also... because she told me that she doesn't understand. It's not that they are trying to copy each other. The friend understand the question more than she does.... So from there she really learns...because I don't speak French really well... so there is no one to help her... (Parent Interview)

Since the mom may feel unable to assist Child H with her school work due to her language barriers, this in turn, may translate to her ability to perceive Child H's friends as a valuable resource in guiding Child H's school learning. This may also explain why she views Child H's experiences with making friends as "a positive experience [and] not negative." After discussing about the mom's own experiences with coming to Montreal and with her adjustment to the new culture, she often talked about how she turn for support to her children's daycare teachers' and local community centers to help her find available resources:

Most of the people were very helpful... especially the teachers... they were very nice and supportive. If I needed something they helped me...they tell me where to go...they tell me where to buy clothes in *this place* and also *that place is cheaper here* [mimicking voice]... also with food...I remember I went to community center C, they also give me

clothes. They said if I want food, they are ready to give me...I still need their help, like the community center C... we need vaccination for the flu shot, so I still go there.

Interestingly, it appeared that the mom valued seeking support from more knowledgeable people and/or resourceful community centers to provide her with extra help and knowledge about the Quebec's system, which in turn likely benefited her adjustment. It became apparent that the mom's value for seeking support from others may be transmitted to Child H's ability to view her friends as valuable guides in her school learning. Interestingly, during the interviews with Child H, she did not talk about consulting her friends for academic support, it may not be that the mother's perceptions are inaccurate, but possibly Child H feels a sense of pride in her academic accomplishments, she stated, "I get very good grades."

**Child AZ.** Across the findings, there appeared to be three central themes that have been highlighted in Child AZ's discussion of friendship: (a) school climate; (b) similar interests and characteristics; and (c) solitary engagement. A summary of these three themes will be described in the paragraphs below.

*School climate.* A major theme of what Child AZ discussed about was her reference to a positive and a negative school climate. During the interviews, she often compared her observations of peers at her old school to the peers at her current school in terms of their friendliness, communication style, as well as, the general sense of the school atmosphere. It became increasingly clear that Child AZ seems to favour her former school over her current school. Child AZ explained that in her old school: "...there [was] no fights and everything [was] calm...everybody they help each other [and] they are nice to everybody." Interestingly, when talking about her current school, Child AZ, appeared to mostly recall negative accounts of peer interactions:

“...the people they always say bad words, and they always insult other people...[they say] like ‘pig’ or something like that...the boys, it’s usually the boys and then after they start saying oh that you always do this and all. There is this kid in my class, [and] he always says ‘China Town’ to everybody...”

This in turn may also explain why Child AZ felt that she has fewer friends in her current school in comparison to her former school, she explained: “I have about 5 or 6 friends at my old school...[and] 4 in my new school.” Even when the interviewer directly asked Child AZ whether she had more friends at her old school, she promptly replied, “Yes!” In general, it appears that being in a school environment where peers are caring, respectful, and the general school atmosphere is positive this can be interpreted as an important factor for Child AZ to have a more positive perception of peers and perhaps even the sense that she has an increased number of friends.

Furthermore, Child AZ’s different perspectives of schools also seem influence how helpful or not helpful she perceives her friends to be. When the interviewer asked her whether there was ever a time that something negative had happened to her at school and whether or not her friends helped her. At first Child AZ replied, “No” but after some further probing she said, “...well, I think maybe at my old school.” This could recall a direct example, however, this can still be interpreted that she might perceive at her old school as nicer, or simply because she feels that she had a larger number of friends at that school. Interestingly, this discussion about friends helping during conflictual situations was brought up once again when she spontaneously once told the interviewer: “I want to have a lot of friends.” When the interviewer asked her why this was important to her, she explained, “Well, caz if you have a lot of friends, [and] if someone is being mean to you there is going to be a lot of people that are gonna say ‘STOP!’ [raised voice].”

Although, Child AZ never directly talked about any negative experiences with her friends or peers, however, after speaking to Child AZ's mother, it turned out that Child AZ had encountered a negative experience with one of her peers at her current (new) school. Child AZ's mother explained that a peer had burned Child AZ's hand with a hot glue gun during an art class, and in return, Child AZ also burned the peer back. At the time of this incidence, Child AZ was still fairly new to the school, and she probably did not have many friends to turn to for help or support. Child AZ's reasoning for wishing to have more friends may be linked to the fact that she feels that having more friends she would have more support or help in any similar conflicts were to happen in the future.

Additionally, Child AZ also talked about her experiences with teachers between the two schools. She mentioned that the teachers at her current school, "...are not that nice" and she also added that some of the teachers, "...they get mad easily...[I] have more mean teachers than I had before at my old school." Interestingly, when Child AZ was asked to provide an example of her experiences with her teachers, she provided an example of a teacher that seemed to generally provide a poor quality of language instruction, as she recalled, "like the English teacher...He doesn't look like he speaks really fluent English." In all, this can be interpreted as an awareness of the fact that teachers' behaviours, attitudes, and their overall quality of instruction can vary from school to school.

Child AZ did not take any photographs to capture her positive or negative experiences of the school that she is currently attending (or previously attended). This is not surprising given that she was only permitted to take photographs within the context of the community center. But she did however, took a few pictures of her educator's classroom and the librarian's desk (Figure 3) at Center T, and nicely decorated those pictures with paper hearts in her scrapbook. When

Child AZ was asked why she took those pictures, Child AZ mentioned that she likes those places, as well as the people are associated with them. After taking a few pictures of the library, she explains: “I like the library because I like to read and you can talk to people... [I can talk to] Animator E [librarian], Animator S [educator], Child H [sister]...and people that just come in the library that I know.” This seems to suggest that perhaps Child AZ feels a general sense of safety and comfort with the people, and this seems to translate to a generally positive sense of belonging/acceptance at the community center.



Figure 3. Child AZ's picture of the librarian's desk in the library at Center T

*Similar interests and characteristics.* Another emerging pattern that Child AZ seemed to highlight was that she seemed to choose friends based on similar interests and characteristics (i.e., gender, age). Playing (in the park or during recess), talking, and reading books, are all the activities that she enjoys doing with her friends. Child AZ spontaneously took a picture of some

candies (Figure 4) that the interviewer brought for her, and she talked about how sometimes she likes to exchange candies with her friends at school: "...They [friends] give me candies and after [a] few weeks I give them some." When Child AZ was asked to explain why she gave her friends some candies, she simply replied, "Because they give me some." This can be interpreted as an awareness of the fact that in order to develop a good friendship, friends should do or give similar things to each other. On a side note, Child AZ also mentioned that Figure 5 was one of her favourite pictures that she took for her scrapbook simply because she really likes candies.



*Figure 4.* Child AZ's picture of candies

Child AZ also seemed to hint at the fact that she chooses friends or considers children as her friends if they are the same gender or in the same class. On numerous accounts when she was talking about her friends, she often talked about friends that were girls and whom also appeared to be in the same class as her. An interesting observation that came through at Center T was

when on countless accounts Child AZ was observed playing Pokemon card games with a group of boys. During one of the interviews, the interviewer asked whether she enjoyed playing the game with the boys, and she replied, “Yes!”, and when she was further probed to identify if any of the boys were her friends, she replied, “No!” This shows that Child AZ seems to mostly choose or identify children as her friends based on similar physical characteristics (i.e., being a girl) or shared location (i.e., being in the same grade/class at school). Having friends that share similar interests is also important, but this seemed to depend on whether the child is a boy or a girl for her to consider her/him as her friend.

She also even mentioned that most of her friends are of French background and/or French speaking, when the interviewed probed her to talk about who her friends are, she explicitly mentioned: “Well they are French” and further added that she mostly communicates with her friends in the French language.

Lastly, Child AZ also hinted at the fact that she might have challenges with forming or maintaining her connections with friends through the after-school program given that some of her friends come to the program irregularly. This was evident when the interviewer asked Child AZ whether or not she had any friends at Center T, and her direct response was, “Yes, I see some friends from school... but sometimes they don’t come.” It seems that Child AZ might like the opportunity to carry-over her friendships from school to Center T, but there seems to be challenges with this vision given that some children do not participate in the after-school program regularly.

*Solitary engagements.* According to interviews and observations of Child AZ, Child AZ appeared to enjoy engaging in solitary activities. For instance, on a few encounters she mentioned that she liked reading books (Figure 5 is a picture of her favourite book),



drawing/painting, and playing on her tablet by herself. At Center T, she was often observed sitting alone during the homework club program and showed little interactions with her peers. A possible explanation may be linked to the fact that Child AZ was still fairly new to the homework club program; also there were not many children from the same gender, grade or school that are registered in the same section of the program. It may also simply be that Child AZ was also fairly quiet in nature, and she may have been a little bit shy to approach or initiate contact.



Figure 5. Child AZ's favourite book

*Scrapbook.* Finally, looking at Child AZ's scrapbook, it is full of photographs of the things, activities or places that she likes. Child AZ also took photographs of the things that she did not like (i.e., bugs), but in her scrapbook, she decided to only include photos of the things that she likes. For instance, she specified that she likes going or playing in the park, reading

books, going to the Center T's library, being in Center T's classroom, as well as drawing and playing games. Throughout the scrapbook she included titles and stickers of hearts, stars and puppies. Overall, it appears that the scrapbook was mostly about herself and her personal interests, she even wrote a cute message about herself on the title page, "Your cool" (Figure 6). When she was asked if she would show her scrapbook to anyone, she replied, "My friends and my family."



*Figure 6.* A front page of Child AZ's scrapbook (taken by the interviewer). Note. Child AZ's name was blocked in the black ink.

Given that Child AZ's has a strong interest for the creative arts, this project seemed also seemed to allow her to explore interests of her own. During the project Child AZ also drew a picture of girl with blonde hair, and when was asked about her drawing she replied, "Well, because I wanted to draw a girl that had blonde hair...and I like it!" (Figure 7). This may be linked to her awareness of the white girls in her schools or Montreal's society in general.



*Figure 7.* Child AZ's drawing of a girl with blonde hair (taken by the interviewer)

*Summary.* Overall, Child AZ seemed to demonstrate both positive and negative experiences when discussing about her perspectives of friends, teachers or other people in her life. She seems to generally form her friendships based on similar interests and characteristics (i.e., same grade/age, class, and language). In addition, she seems to value settings, where children and adults (i.e., teachers) model positive behaviours and interactions, as this seems to be an important avenue for Child AZ to build close ties with her friends and other people.

*Parent's Perceptions.* In general, the interviews with Child AZ's mother seemed to mostly reflect similar themes and discussions as the findings with Child AZ above. During the interviews, Child AZ's mother often talked about both positive and negative experiences that Child AZ had encountered at her current (new) school, which shows her awareness of Child AZ's life with peers at school. The parent recalled a negative experience that Child AZ faced with one her peers at school:

“There was a girl in her class that she told me, she complained about her...[Child AZ] said that she [the other girl] took a glue gun and accidentally put the glue on her [Child AZ] and she got burned...So the girl that she put the glue gun on, [Child AZ] put on her also. Now, [Child AZ] says it's also an accident...There was big burns on her skin ...her skin was burned for some time until it got healed.” (Parent Interview)

When the mother was further prompted to discuss the advice she was giving to Child AZ about her negative encounters with the peer, the mother said, “I told her that she has nothing to fear. If she doesn't feel comfortable working with her, she can just let the teacher know.” It seems that the parent seems to view Child AZ's teacher as a valuable mediator in assisting with any peer conflict.

Despite Child AZ's experiences, the mother also talked about her positive experiences with her friends at her current school, and the mother highlighted the fact that Child AZ's seems to value friends that are there for her. Mom explains,

“She likes to share with her friends at school... So she told me, the friends always give her things, they always make her happy. If she cuts [herself], they [friends] always say, ‘Oh Child AZ oh sorry! It's going to be fine!’ [mimicking voice]...They are always there for [her]. They really, really like her, and she likes them also.” (Parent Interview)

She also talked about the positive impact that she has noticed in Child AZ's academic performance: "[Child AZ's] grades has also gone up [in the current school]". But the parent seems to mostly attribute this success to Child AZ's participation in the community after-school program, mother explains, "It's because [she] has Center T...[she] reads more...she has the library here and it encourages them [Child AZ, Child H (sister)] to read." According to the mother, Child AZ's participation in the program not only has a positive impact on Child AZ's academics, but also on her behaviour at home: "[She] stay calm...doesn't jumping on the bed and running while in the house."

Overall, it seemed that the mother appeared to attribute most of Child AZ's academic success to Center T and all of the support that she has been receiving there. The parent discussions from above also shows that Child AZ seemed to have a very close relationship with her mother, and she seemed to be comfortable approaching her when she encounters both positive and negative experiences with friends or peers at school or elsewhere.

**Child AN.** Across the findings, there appeared to be two central themes that Child AN has summarized in experiences and perspectives about friendships, these themes are: (a) making plans for the future with friends, and (b) challenges and ambiguity with friends. A summary of these two themes will be described in the paragraphs below.

*Making plans for the future.* Overall, Child AN seemed to use the project as a way of planning of what she might like to do with her friends in the future. Child AN used that scrapbook as a form of documenting her ideas or plans through photography to capture of she might like to do with her friends in the near or distant future.

On numerous occasions, she talked about how she was getting together with her friends from school to discuss about a project that she and her friends would like to do. Child AN explains:

There were these three girls...they wanted to do a project where they help poor and countries that are poor, but they never really did it...They never really accomplish it, so me and my friends talk and we wanted to do it...Well we wanted to have some time when we're all together or like other times where can focus on that. So we usually try to go to the library...or cafeteria [and] we talk about it

This shows that she might be choosing friends or choosing to spend time with friends that have similar interests or goals as her.

She also mentioned the types of places that she would like to visit when she grows up. She said, "I like to travel when I grow up...[I want] travel to Paris...Brazil...Africa...Australia and Bangladesh." When Child AN was asked with whom she would like to travel to these places, she replied: "My friends ...and family." She even talked about wanting to have a job where it is revolved around travelling or being in the company of her friends. She told the interviewer about her plans of becoming a doctor (Figure 8) and engaged in a discussion about her plans:

Child AN: I want to be a like a doctor who actually travels to places to help other people...I heard that in Africa there is a lot of like sickness, so I want to do that

Interviewer: So you want to be a doctor?

Child AN: Yah! Because I really like travelling [...] I want to have a group like that all travel together

Interviewer: You want to have a group that all travels together. So, can you tell me more about that?

Child AN: I have a lot of friends that actually I started to ask if they like travelling ... so I want to have a group of friends to go travelling with me... caz I feel it's kinda boring by myself... So I want to have like my own plane [giggle]. But I don't wanna be the pilot. I just want to have a pilot to drive it.

Interviewer: Yah, and why do you wanna have a group? Why do you wanna do it with your friends?

Child AN: Well it more fun with a group. Caz when you are alone you have no one to have fun with, and that's not really fun [giggle].



*Figure 8.* Child AN's picture of a female doctor holding an infant

From this discussion, it seems as though that having friends as part of her future career is very important to Child AN, and she seems to want to spend time with them because she feels that it is more fun to be in a group than alone. In addition, she also made reference to wanting to create

a BFF (Best Friends Forever) scrapbook with her friends: “I want to make a scrapbook with my friends just like this one, but like a BFF one”.

Moreover, when Child AN was asked whether she ever went on any prior trips or engaged in any types of activities with her friends, most of the time she discussed about the types of trips or activities that she engaged with her cousins, friends of her cousins, or her younger brother, all of whom she knows from outside her school and the community center. For instance, she talked about a time when she went on trips with her cousins and her parents’ friends:

Well-l-l-l, I have some friends who doesn’t go to much school and we actually did go to Quebec together...and Toronto [...] They [these friends] are my cousins. And there was like another, like a friend of my parents who came with us too, and they had like cousins [...] we had a sleepover and it was nice.

Interestingly, when Child AN is making her plans for the future, she seems to mostly talk about making plans with her friends from school – where she seems to have friends that share similar characteristics as her (i.e., same class/grade, age, and gender). This shows that she may wish to carry-over her relationship with her school friends across a variety of settings or contexts. Although, there were no interviews conducted with Child AN’s parents, based on the conversations with Child AN, it seems as though that her parents may play a role in the types of children that Child AN befriends by organizing play dates or events where Child AN seems to only interact with children of her own family (i.e., cousins and siblings). Child AN mentioned that her parents or the parents of her cousins are often the ones who make arrangements with whom their children play or interact with. Child AN explained that her parents often invite her cousins, friends of her cousins or other children from the Bangladeshi origin, which shows that Child AN may have very little control in choosing her own friends or with whom she would like



to make plans. It appears that Child AN may want to gain a sense of control in her own plans, and in order for her to feel this sense of control, she seemed to use the photography project as a platform of including her school friends in her future plans. Perhaps making plans for the future with her school friends might also have been a way of sustaining the friendships that she already has with them. Making plans with her friends may also be her way of determining which friends share similar interests or goals as her. For instance, she mentioned that she stops talking about her plans with friends who lose interest in their shared plans, “Some of my friends [don’t] really wanna do [the project], so we kind of stop talking about it.”

*Challenges and ambiguity.* Although, Child AN recalled having several good friendships both at school and outside of school. Nevertheless, on several occasions, she hinted at the idea of having some challenges with maintaining her friendships and also expressed an air of ambiguity/uncertainty about her experiences.

There were few encounters where she expressed challenges with maintaining a friendship due to age differences or distant living circumstances. For instance, Child AN mentioned how she lost a contact with one of her friends from school because the friend was older. Child AN said, “...One of my friends is right now in high school...but I don’t see her anymore [because] she’s bigger than me.” It seems that having friends that are older or who are not in the same school or grade may create additional challenges for maintaining a relationship. Interestingly though, it became increasingly obvious that Child AN seemed to identify children who are her friends based on whether or not they are in the same classroom or the same age group as her. This was particularly evident when the researcher asked Child AN whether she had any friends at Center T.

Interviewer: ...Are any of your friends here at Center T?

Child AN: Well Michelle, she goes to Center T. We are in the same school, but not in the same class, but she is not really my friend because we are not really in the same class.

Although, Child AN was observed interacting with Michelle on numerous occasions, such as, participating in the same extracurricular activities and completing their homework assignments together. Child AN still did not consider Michelle as her friend simply because they are in different classes.

Later, Child AN also mentioned that she was not in relation with any of the children at Center T, and she even went as far as stating, "...I don't know people here, they are just like friends, but we're not close or anything". This was particularly striking to the interviewer, because she was often observed sitting and interacting with two girls from her day school – one who is of Bangladeshi origin and the other one is of French-Canadian origin. Given that Child AN seemed to develop friendships with children who share similar interests or goals as her (i.e., travelling and helping poor children), and also who are in the same grade or age group, this might explain why she does not consider children from Center T as her friends. Another possible explanation why there is this air of uncertainty in her relationship to children from Center T might be link to Child AN's infrequent participation in the after-school program, or in any summer or social events (i.e., girls group or sleepover nights) that take place at Center T for that matter of fact. Other observations of Child AN led to the understanding that she does not appear to participate in any Canadian cultural-related celebrations (e.g., dressing up for Halloween). In all, this can be interpreted that perhaps Child AN's lack of regular participation in the Center T's life might contribute to her feeling a sense of disconnection from the people.

Finally, Child AN talked about a negative experience that she encountered with one of her friends from school. She explained:

I did have one friend once she wasn't really encouraging me, she just was always in competition with me. She always wanted to be before me...so for like everything subject and everythings. But now she is a good friend of mine.

This can be interpreted as an awareness of the fact that friendships are not always all positive.

*Scrapbook.* When looking at Child AN's scrapbook, she displayed pictures of what she might like to do with her friends in the future. For instance, Child AN took a few photographs of the countries that she would like to visit (i.e., Australia and Bangladesh), and she even included a picture of a plane to demonstrate the fact that she likes travelling (Figure 9). In her scrapbook she also made additional notes to highlight what she might wish to do when she grows up. She included the following notes: "helping others" (Figure 10), "travelling", "have fun", "adventure", "outside" and "sky." Overall, Child AN's discussions, photos, and scrapbook seem to be support her discussion from above.



Figure 9. A picture of Child AN's scrapbook page (taken by the interviewer)



Figure 10. A picture of Child AN's scrapbook page (taken by the interviewer)

*Summary.* Overall, Child AN seemed to demonstrate both positive and negative experiences when discussing about her experiences with friends. On the positive note, she seems to form friendships based on similar interests or goals, and characteristics as her (i.e., same grade/age and class). However, it appears that when parents choose different settings, this in turn might create some ambiguity or challenges with maintaining friendships.

**Child D.** Across the findings, there appeared to be three central themes that have been evident throughout the data collection process with Child D, these themes are: (a) having sense of belonging and group identity; (b) a close and an intimate relationship with friends and adults; and (c) having a sense of freedom to express yourself and to choose for yourself. A summary of these three themes is described below.

*Sense of belonging and group identity.* So much of what Child D discusses about seemed to have to do with having a sense of belonging or a group identity at Center T. When taking a closer look at her discussions and photographs, she consistently makes reference to the social groups and the people that are within the context of Center T. Participating in the homework club program, taking part in the Girls Group (Figure 9), the Fly Friday program, the summer day camp program, and even going out on social outings (i.e., coffee shop and sleepover) are all of things she likes doing because, as she explains: "...I get to spend time with my friends."

Interestingly, it appeared that being part of the Girls Group program may have been a central component of what defines her experience at Center T. It seemed that this after-school program not only gives her the opportunity to spend time with her friends, but it also allows her to form a group identity. For instance, Child D often made reference to how she and her three friends from school and Center T have created their own group within the Girls Group that they like to call, *The DMSS*. When I asked Child D to explain more about the meaning behind the

acronym, she explained, “It’s me, Sara [her cousin], Sadie [friend], Maya [friend] ...my name starts with a D, Maya’s name starts with an M, and Sara’s and Sadie’s name start with an S, so it spells DMSS...and we have our own group...” She talked about enjoying taking part in a lot of the activities that are offered through the Girls Group, like going on social outings and doing group work. She even took a picture of a Girls Group poster (Figure 11) that she had made during one of the sessions with her friends and other girls in the program. When reflecting back on her experiences, she mentioned that “it makes me feel happy” to spend to time with her group of friends (i.e., the DMSS). Overall, it seems that being part of social groups that allow for the possibility of identity development is what that is important to her, and this is what seems to define her experience with friends at Center T.



*Figure 11.* Child D's Girls Group poster: "We Heart (Love) Girls Group!"

*Close and intimate relationships to friends and adults.* The relationships that Child D had constructed with her friends and adults at Center T seemed to reflect her general need for intimacy and closeness. Through out the project, it became clear that Child D had a very close relationship with her cousin, Sara, whom she also often called as her, “best friend.” She talks about how she values her time with her cousin because of the familial and spatial proximity that binds them, Child D explains, “I knew her [Sara] since I was like 3...Sara is at Center T, my day school and she’s my cousin, and I see her almost everyday”. Child D also talked about how her cousin was also her first friend when she moved from Toronto to Montreal back in 2013, and how she was also the one who introduced Child D to some new friends when she was setting into the new city, Child D said, “Well first it was Sara...[then] Sara introduced me to her friends and I just found other friends on my own.” It appears that her cousin was there for Child D from the beginning through providing guidance and introducing her to potential friend mates. In addition, Child D also talked about how she values her relationship with her cousin because she feels that she [Sara] is always there for her in times of need/sadness, engages in play with her, makes her feel better, and also seems to keep her secrets or any private information that Child D chooses to disclose:

Sara...she’s just with me, she [plays] with me... she just makes me feel better when I am sad...and someone that I can tell a secret, [she] will keep it and won’t tell anybody.

Child D also appeared to be tuning into the idea that she has a close attachment with one of her female educators from the homework club program. At one point she opened up how she felt about the female educator that leads her homework club session: “I like Tanya...Tanya is like a cousin, kind of... she is really close with people and my family.” Child D mentioned that she often turns to Tanya whenever she “feels down” because she feels that she can trust her. In

addition, on countless accounts, both Child D and the educator were observed jokes and laughs. An interesting observation that came through during the project, was how much freedom the educator was giving to Child D. For instance, the educator, often allowed Child D to sit at the desk, take the class attendance on her behalf, and even allowed for Child D to use her cell-phone as a calculator to complete her math homework. From conversations with the educator, it showed that she had a lot of knowledge about Child D's family life, including her parental separation and living conditions. In all, it seemed that this close attachment between Child D and her educator might be mutual. Given that Child D's parents were divorced and she rarely saw her mother, this might have created a need for her to seek out close attachments in her relationship with her best friend/cousin and her educator. It also seemed that Child D might not always feel that she has a close and an intimate relationship with her father or her half-siblings at home, which may explain why she values her time with her cousin and her educator.

Finally, Child D also seemed to have close attachments to her pets at home, specifically her cat that she has known since birth and who was recently put down due to sickness. She took few pictures from her cell-phone of her cat and dogs, and when she was asked to identify her favourite pictures, she explained that it was the picture of her cat: "I like this one the best...my cat...I really love him cuz he was actually one of my first pets...he was like a brother to me." This shows that she not only has close attachments to people, but she also seems to have a deep bond to her cat.

*Sense of freedom to express yourself and to choose for yourself.* Throughout the interviews, Child D seemed to place a lot of emphasis on the concept of freedom, particularly having a sense of freedom to express herself and to choose for herself. She was bringing up how certain contexts, people and places allowed to experience a sense of freedom and self-expression.



At one point during the interview, Child D was comparing her experiences between school and Center T, and she seemed to allude to the idea that she feels a greater sense of freedom at Center T than at school. In the quotation below she talks about her perceptions of Center T:

It's [Center T] kinda like school, but I can be more free here...we have rec [recreation], we go outside, like we actually have more time to talk, we don't work. We do our homework and then we get to have our free time...

It seems that Center T gave her the freedom and flexibility to choose how she might like to spend her time. She might also liked spending time at Center T because she felt that she received more social opportunities to engage in shared activities (e.g., recreation) and interests (e.g., talk) with her friends.

Moreover, Child D talked about how she enjoyed being part of the Girls Group at Center T because it gave her the chance to talk about her feelings with her friends. Child D explained, "...Girls Group is important to me because it gives me a chance to talk about like my feelings with all my friends and stuff" and she further added, "...caz it's Girls Group and Animator T actually had to talk about this with us...[so] we talk about things like...when we get older we get changes in our body and like we get out period and stuff." It seemed as through that Child D enjoyed the chance to talk with her friends and the educator during Girls Group because it not only provided a safe context for her to express her feelings/emotions, but it may have also provide a safe space for her to ask questions and receive support from friends who are experiencing similar developmental changes.

Finally, it appears that being part of this photography project might have allowed her to gain a sense of control over her self-expression. This is was particularly evident when the

interviewer was offering Child D her assistance with taking photographs or decorating the scrapbook, and Child D often declined of any assistance, by simply replying, “No!”

*Scrapbook.* When looking at Child D’s scrapbook, her scrapbook seemed to mostly reflect the discussions above. It was full of pictures of her best friend (her cousin) from Center T, her pets from home, and the things or places that she liked at Center T, including photographs of the Girls Group poster, the educator’s classroom, the computer room, and she even included pictures of the Center T’s emblem. Her scrapbook was mostly full of decorated photographs like the one in Figure 12, with nothing written on any of the pages. Overall, Child D’s scrapbook seemed to mostly reflect the people and pets that are important to her, and the things that represent Center T. Interestingly, when Child D was asked whom she would show her scrapbook to, she quickly replied, “Sara [cousin/best-friend] and my dad”. This shows that sharing information about the after-school program/ the photography project was very important for her to share with her close family members.



*Figure 12.* A picture of Child D's scrapbook page (taken by the interviewer)

*Summary.* Overall, It seems that having positive relationships with friends and adults whom she can trust, turn to, and experience a sense of freedom with, is what seems to be important to her. It also seems that the community center plays an important context of where she builds and maintains her close ties to friends and adults.

*Parent's Perceptions.* In general, the interviews with Child D's father seemed to generally reflect similar patterns of discussions as with Child D. When the parent was asked to talk about Child D experiences with forming friendships at school or at the community center, he seemed to mostly emphasize on his involved with Center T and on his knowledge of the Center T's staff, as well as the parents and their children, the father explains: "I've been coming here since I was a kid so I know everybody in the staff. I know all the parents, I know all their kids." When the father was further prompted to explain whether he is familiar with all of Child D's friends, he explains:

All of her friends from school and from here [Center T] I know their parents, I know their kids...Me and the parents grew up together... So when I would come to the community I would see them and their kids, and we would talk and in the park playing.

What seems to be important to Child D's father is having knowledge of the parents that Child D is friends with, and maintaining a form of contact with them. Perhaps this gave the parent a sense of conform or trust towards Child D's friends is by maintaining a friendly relationship with her friends' parents.

The parent also seemed to emphasize how the small size of the community/neighbourhood appears to provide Child D with the opportunity to develop friendships more easily:

“It's very small, everybody knows each other, everyone lives next towards each other...it's very easy to make friends and keep in touch with everyone, you know...[all the kids] come over when we have Birthday parties or Thanksgiving” (Parent Interview)

The father also talked about how easy it has been for Child D to maintain her contact with friends:

“Its very easy for her to keep in touch...most of the friends are at school, most of them come to [Center T] and he also added that now with social media it has make communicating with friends easier “... right now it's easy for them...they go outside they text each other “Meet me at the park!” [mimicking voice]. Another text another, Next thing you know there is 6 of them at the park... so they're all in the neighbourhood. They're all immediate.” (Parent Interview)

It seems that perhaps living in a neighbourhood where Child D attends both the same school and community center as her friends, this seems to allow for Child D to maintain a regular form of

contact with the people around her. Living in a community where everyone knows each other or is familiar with each other might also allow for the single father to have some control over monitoring Child D's friendship experiences.

Lastly, the parent also talked about his strategy of not interfering in Child's friendship experiences, and giving her the opportunity to make her own decisions about choosing her friendships. The parent explained:

“She's going to figure out certain things for herself... she has to learn by herself. So I can't say, “Don't hang out with this person!” you know... I can't do that. I have to let her learn right now...She's exploring her self, she's experimenting, some friends she likes some friends she doesn't like.” (Parent Interview)

Although, the parent verbally stated that he is giving Child D the control to make decisions about choosing her own friendships, nevertheless, from his discussion above, he still seemed to hind at the fact that Child D's friendships are often formed in the context of the community.

### **Discussion**

The overall purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how children of immigrant background experience, develop and maintain friendships in a community in Montreal. Through the use of photography, scrapbooking, as well as, through child and parent interviews, each child shared their unique accounts about their relationship with friends and other individuals at an after-school community program, school, and other settings in their communities. Through the use of these methods, this project captured each child's unique experience and perspective about their daily friendships, as well as what they liked and disliked and what was important to them about their friendships. In all, this project allowed for a detailed understanding of these children friendships and their social environments.

The use of the acculturation model (Berry, 1997) and the ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1994) was used as a theoretical framework to understand and analyze qualitative data on children's experiences in with their friends and other important people in their lives (e.g., parents, siblings, etc.). These interviews and interactive experiences with the children provided an opportunity for a rich understanding of how the findings were embedded in the cultural contexts of these children and families. Although each child had their own individual experiences with friends, nevertheless, a few common themes emerged from the findings that will be discussed in the sections below.

### **Children's Views on Friendship**

The major goal of the present study was to understand children's friendship experiences: particularly, how they made friendships, kept them, and what was important to them in their relationships. Based on children's interviews the following themes emerged: (a) the nature of friendships, (b) experiences with friends, and (c) the importance of friendships.

**Nature of friendships.** Most of the participants mentioned that they had friends from different multicultural backgrounds. Although most of the children directly stated that they had no preference for the race or the nationality of their friends, nevertheless, a vast majority of them still tended to be friends with children who were either of the same race/ethnicity and/or of immigrant orientations (i.e., first-generation or second-generation immigrants). Prior research has document that the incidence of 'friendship homophily' tends to decline among second-generation immigrant children or among children who have acculturated into the second culture (Titzmann & Silbereinsen, 2009). A possible reason why the children in the present sample show stability in their friendship homophily may be linked to the homogeneous composition of the children's schools and communities. Three out of the four children attend elementary schools

that were highly populated with children of minority background (i.e., immigrants and racial/ethnic groups). In addition, the after-school community center that these participants' attended was also mainly composed of children and adults of first-generation and second-generation immigrant backgrounds (mainly of Caribbean and Bangali background). Given the ethnic composition of the participants' social settings, this might explain why most of the children had more ethnically exclusive friendships. Interestingly, the children's narratives revealed that not only did most of the children formed friendships from the same cultural background, but that some of these children had friendships with members of their family; some considered their cousins and siblings as friends. One of the participants often talked about how she was best-friends with her cousin, and that she often maintained contact with her on a day-to-day basis across a variety of contexts (e.g., school, community program, and home). Another child also talked about how she regularly played games and went on trips with her cousin-friends. Perhaps having friends from the same culture or family helps these children to maintain identities that are closely linked to their parents' native culture (Suarez-Orozco & Carhill, 2008). Also, these relationships might also act as a valuable bridge for between their culture at home and the dominant Canadian culture.

While most of the children reported meeting their friends through school, some of the children also talked about other venues for friendships: community center, neighbourhood, park, or home. For a vast majority of the children, the school and community center were the typically settings where the children met with their friends. More on the role of the community center will be discussed below.

Furthermore, the case summaries also reveal that most of the children in the present study seemed to choose friends based on similar characteristics. Participants discussed or alluded to the

fact that most of their friends were of the same gender, age, grade, and even spoke the same languages. This group of children tended to be more gender exclusive with their friends, but even more so, with children who they chose to be as their best friend(s). One of the children (Child D), explained why she preferred to have a girl as her best friend:

...Personally, I like to have a girl as my best friend... Child S, she's my best friend. I always go on outing with her and sleepovers and stuff. But like, if I were to have a boy as a best friend... I wouldn't...! Caz if he's my best friend it would be awkward...and people would think we like each other or something... and if we want to have a sleepover, we wouldn't!

Given that there is this awareness of social/cultural assumptions about mixed-sex friendships, these children seem to show a greater preference to have a close relationship with a friend that is of the same gender/sex. Although, most of the children indicated that their friends were of the same age group, however, for some of them (particularly those who had familial friends), they tended to have friends of different age groups. It might be because of the close family-ties or the limited number of same-age peers that came from the same culture as the participants.

**Experiences with friends.** Overall, most of the information that the children reported in regards to their friendship experiences, in general, was mostly positive in nature. Many of the children discussed about engaging in collaborative play with their friends, helping them with homework, or having other types of reciprocal exchanges (i.e., sharing secrets or exchanging candies). For example, one child recalled instances of helping her friend with homework at school. Another child talked about how she liked to play basketball with her friends, cousins, or other children from the neighbourhood. They often talked about how they enjoyed participating in different types of activities with their friends or simply being in the company of their friends



because it was “fun” and it made them feel “happy.” This is not uncommon for children to associate friendship with a positive affect, given the fact that past research supports the notion that children with at least one close friend in their life tend show many positive outcomes when compared to children with no friends (Bukowski et al., 1994; Vandell & Hembree, 1994; Ladd et al., 1996; Adams et al., 2011).

Additionally, the stories from the participants revealed some interesting findings with regard to their experiences with ‘familial friends’ and ‘non-familial friends’. The stories from some children seem to suggest that their experiences with their familial friends might have been more intimate and fulfilling than with non-familial friends. For instance, one child often talked about how she often shared and exchanged secrets with her cousin-friend, and she further added that this type of intimate relationship was only with her cousin. When she was asked what she liked about her relationship with her cousin, she replied: “She’s just with me...I can always have her when I’m sad!” When she was questioned about her relationship with her other friends, the focus of her experiences was more on simply “being together” and “playing games/sports”. Hence, we can see from this example that a friendship with a close cousin may be more secure and emotionally fulfilling. It might be because of their pre-existed family relationship or due to the fact that it may be a lot easier to get together and maintain frequent contacts with their cousins.

Although there were some discussions around the topic of negative experiences with peers, these negative accounts were mostly reported by parents and not the children. For example, one of the parents recalled an account of a time that her daughter had a negative interaction with a peer at school, and it was clear from the discussion that the peer was not her friend, but simply a peer in her class. None of the children directly discussed having any conflicts or negative experiences per se, however, a few of the children expressed some

challenges in regards to maintaining a frequent contact with their friendships. Interestingly, this pattern was observed in one particular child (Child AN) who seemed to mostly maintain a regular contact with her familial friends (i.e., her cousins), and who also appeared to have friends that were either younger or older than her. In this case, one might theorize that in immigrant families where children's choice of friends is constrained by adult influence (such as parents or aunts/uncles), and they may have no choice but to spend most of their out-of-school time in the company of their familial friends, this, in turn, might limit the amount of time that these children could spend with friends of their choice. It might also be that some immigrant parents may prohibit or discourage their children to develop or maintain friendships with the children of the dominant culture, simply because of their fears that these 'dominant group friends' may sway their children from their native cultural traditions or have some negative impact on them (see (Shin, 1998; Betancourt et al., 2015; Akinsulure-Smith et al., 2016).

**The importance of friendship.** Overall, it was clear from the study that friendships were of great value and importance to the children in the present study. Some children even mentioned that it was important for them to have "a lot of friends". Most of the children mentioned that they had somewhere between six to twelve friends. In general, it was evident that the quantity of friends was more important to them than the quality. For instance, one child said that she had six friends, and often emphasised in her interviews that she wants to make more friends. When she was asked to elaborate why this was important to her, she felt that having an increased number of friends would protect her against peers who might be "mean". We can see that some children view their friendships as source of protect against peer victimization. Additionally, it was interesting to note that the participants who desired more friends were those who were either shy in nature, or experienced school transitions. Frequent school transitions have been increasingly

noted in immigrant-based samples (Suarez-Orosco & Suarez-Orosco, 2001). As a result, these children may perceive their friendships as a valuable source of support and comfort, and thus believe that having many friends may help them to ‘fit in’ with their peers and feel a sense of belonging.

Furthermore, the participants in the present study also discussed about the types of qualities that were important to them in a friend. Overall, all children mentioned that they liked having a friend that they can “trust” and “have fun with”. They also mentioned that they liked having a friend that also “helps”, “protects”, and “encourages”. Some participants mentioned that they valued having friends who share similar attitudes towards school and academic learning. One participant mentioned that she liked having friends that were “smart and not stupid”. Given that immigrant families and children place a high value on academic achievement and school engagement (Qin, Way, & Rana, 2008), this might explain why having that were “smart” was of great value to some children. These views of choosing friends that were smart were also supported by the parental data.

### **Children’s vs. Parents’ Perspectives**

The present study highlights some interesting similarities between the children’s views and parent’s views in regards to children’s friendships. In it interesting to note that both parents in the study felt that they supported their children’s choice of friends, and felt that they were open and accepting of all their children’s friends. None of the parents expressed any concerns or worries in regards to the children’s choice of friends. In general, it was evident that having friends there were ‘academically-oriented’ was of great importance to some of the families. In one family (Child H and mom), both the child and the parent felt that it was important for the child to be-friend children that were smart and serious about school. Interestingly, it should also

be noted that this parent often encouraged her children to seek help from friends or more knowledgeable individuals (e.g., Center T's staff) with their academics because she felt that her language barriers impeded her ability to assist them with their school learning. Many immigrant families choose to migrate to Canada (or the United States) in order to provide their children better educational and economical opportunities (Shin, 1998), and consequently, the value of doing well in school might have translated to the types of friends that these children selected. Furthermore, both the parents and children in the present sample seemed to emphasise that the community center played a major part in facilitating the children's interactions with friends.

Despite the similarities between immigrant parents' awareness of their children's friendships and children's actual experiences, overall, it seemed that most of the parents were not aware of how many friends their children actually had, and who were the children's 'close' friends. In the present study, parents often overestimated the number of friends that their children had. This may be linked to the fact that parents are often not always present in all of the social settings that their children are part of (e.g., school, community program), and therefore, they may not always have accurate accounts of their children's interactions with friends.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the parents in the present study overwhelmingly viewed children's engaged with friends in a positive light. These findings are very different from a recent qualitative study that was conducted in the United States (see Akinsulure-Smith et al., 2016). The difference may be due to the immigrant families' levels of acculturation (i.e., greater length of stay in Montreal), or due to the fact that most of the children in the present sample developed/maintained friendships with children of a similar ethnic background and/or country of origin. As it been noted in the literature that parents prefer their children to be friends with from

the same culture in order to preserve their culture and language (see Akinsulure-Smith et al., 2016).

### **The Critical Role of Community Centers**

The interviews with the all participants demonstrated the essential role that the community center (Center T) played in the adjustment of all the children and families. All the stories from the children echoed that participating in the community's after-school program gave them a sense of belonging, support, comfort, and increased their overall happiness. These participants have highlighted the value of their interpersonal relationships with friends, relatives, and adults. They seemed to view the community center as an important environment that facilitated their social interaction and have a sense of belonging. Whether it be one-on-one interact with their friends (or adults) or participating in social activities, in general, children seemed to enjoy being in contact with numerous individuals. In the present study, most of the children expressed positive feelings about participating in the Center T's programs. One child explain how she liked coming to Center T because she felt "more free" than she did at school. She felt that there was more free time to talk with her friends at the center than at school. Another child said that she had more opportunities to play with her friends during the recreation period. No one expressed any trouble or felt rejected in this setting. Additionally, both parents agreed that the community program played an important role both in children's academic learning and in building and keeping of relationships with friends. Given that some of the children experienced multiple transitions in their lives (immigration and/or school transition), having received a well-functioning social network of friends, relatives, and adults might have played an important role in facilitating their resiliency (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001).

Interestingly, this great importance of being involved in the community life may have functioned as a substitute for the limited number of relatives and extended family that some of the participants had in Canada. Some children (particularly first-generations) mentioned that most of their family was back in their country of origin or in different provinces of Canada. In this context, adults, friends, and community members provided them a certain sense of belonging, attachment, and stability to the Canadian environment (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001).

Furthermore, the fact that many of the participants in the present study expressed a number of positive experiences with building and keeping their friends, this may be linked to the general goals and values of the after-school community program that these participants' attended. In addition to having the homework program, Center T also offers a wide range of social activities (e.g., girls group/ boys group) during the recreational period that strived to improve children's self-esteem and social skills. It might be the fact that children who participated in this program may have learned specific social skills, which in turn might have either facilitated their friendship development (at school, center T, and elsewhere), or increased their general sense of social competence. Past research has shown that children's community engagement is considered a resiliency factor, one that protects immigrant youth against negative outcomes, and contributes to academic success and social/emotional wellbeing (Riggs & Greenberg, 2004; Riggs, 2006; Fredricks & Simpkins, 2012). For instance, Riggs (2006) showed in his study that immigrant Latino youth who frequently attended a specialized after-school program (called Generation Diez) had greater gains in their social-emotional development than those who participated in the program only a few days a week. In general, it appears that the after-school program might have played an important role in teaching the participants the necessary social skills required in forming healthy interactions with peers. It should also be noted

that most of the children (except one) in the present study participated in the after-school program at least four to five times a week, and many had positive social experiences with all of the members of the community.

It should also be noted that the majority of participants that the Center T served were children and families of immigrant and ethnic minority backgrounds. Being in a community setting where these children felt like they were part of the majority culture may have prompted them to be active participants in social activities, as well as, increase their sense of belonging and connection to their own culture. For instance, some of the activities that were organized during the after-school program included learning about the 'Black History' (or also known as the African-American History). All of the children had the opportunity to work in groups or individually and create a project that captured their learning of Black History. This type of activity may have been particularly helpful to children of Black origin where they had the opportunity to connect with other children of the same race, as well as the build a strong bond, and a sense of pride for their race and/or cultural background.

### **The Use of Photo-Elicitation with Children**

A major component of this project was the use of photography and scrapbooks to elicit and capture children's their perspectives on friendship. The use of photography was particularly powerful because it provided a unique medium for the communication about friendship experiences that were important to them. With this method, the children were supplied with a camera and were instructed to take photographs that captured the aspects of their lives that they valued. Participants in the present study took photographs took photographs of friends, adults community building, classrooms, playgrounds, posters, maps, books, and food. They mostly photographed places, things and people at Center T that they were most familiar with. For

example, one child took pictures of her best-friend, while another child took pictures of the activities that she likes to engage with her friends. In the present study, most of the children took photographs that seemed to capture their past and current experiences or the types of experiences that they hope to engage in the future. For instance, one child took a photo of some candies and talked about a time when she and her friends were exchanging candies at school. Another child was taking photographs of the types of things that she would do with her friends in the future, like making a scrapbook or the countries that she hopes to visit some day. In these cases, the photos were used to jog participants' memories and empower them to bring own voices to the interview (Hatten, Forin, & Adams, 2013). Additionally, most of the children appeared excited about taking, showing, and sharing the photographs, which revealed a certain sense of attachment to the content in the photo. Finally, the use of photography proven to be a useful method for all children, especially for those who were not very talkative or did not have a sophisticated use of English. For instance, one of the participants who was not very talkative or elaborative in her communication often directed the interviewer to her photographs to highlight the discussions that were important to her, sometimes she stated: "It's in the picture" or "I took a picture of that."

Overall, I found that it was very natural and comforting for the children in the present study to take photographs of their friends or to share memories of their friends. Most children wanted (but sometimes were unable) to take pictures of their friends. This might be because friendship plays a critical role in the lives of all children (Bukowski & Meza, 2007), but these relationships seem to be even more important in the lives of children in immigrant families who experienced migration (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Interestingly, when the children



were asked whether they wanted to show their photo-scrapbooks to any, most of the children replied that they would show them to their “friends” and “families”.

Despite these positive findings, there were also a number of challenges with using this methodology. Some of the main difficulties that emerged from this form of data collection were the following: some children did not feel like taking photos, worried that they might drop the camera, or the fact that they sometimes took a picture but then decided to delete it. These types of issues have also been reported in prior studies (see Hatten, Forin, & Adams, 2013). A possible explanation why some children were reluctant to engage in this process might be linked to that fact that some of the participants’ friends were at the center, and therefore, they might have felt embarrassed or uncomfortable to take random pictures around the community.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The role of the researcher and the impact she had in the present qualitative study is worth noting. Given the use of the methodology and the goals of the study, I felt that there were a number of strengths and challenges with conducting the interviews with children. In terms of the strengths, I felt that my involvement as a volunteer in the after-school program prior to beginning the project, played a very important role in establishing rapport with the children, parents, and staff. Having had establish this rapport with the children was open the possibility of engaging in more rich discussions. Another strength of the study is that the researcher comes from an immigrant background, and thus, the researcher was able to understand which themes might have been important to the immigrant families.

The following will outline a few challenges and how they were managed. The main challenge that I’ve encountered with conducting photo-elicitation interviews was trying to figure out which photos were really meaningful to the participants. Some of the children took a lot of

photos while other did not. To deal with this challenge, I often had to ask the participants: “Why this photo was important?” Conducting photo interviews made me realize that a lot of the actual analysis was taking place at the interviews, and this was challenging at times. Because it required a lot of patience and attention both on the participant and the researcher. However, engaging in high degree of self-reflection both on the site and outside of it helped me to reflect on what themes were important to the participants. Additionally, conducting field observations and having informal conversations with the Center T’s staff, as well as, having regular meetings with my supervisor ensured the overall quality of the project.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

This study explored how some children in an immigrant community of Montreal formed their friendships with the support of their school, after-school program, and extended family. Although this qualitative study contributed to the lack of empirical research on the friendship experiences of children in immigrant families, it is important to highlight that the study has several limitations.

Firstly, the sample size was very small, and therefore, the findings are only transferable to these children and families in this particular community in Montreal who have similar experiences and cultural backgrounds. Future research could use methodologies that capture the experiences of a larger sample in different communities; a mixed-method methodology may allow for a more systematic analysis to obtain a broader understanding of the diverse experiences of immigrant families in Montreal. Additionally, conducting research with children and families from one particular nationality/culture may also allow for a deeper understanding of the topic, specifically, the unique perspectives, values, and beliefs that a particular group may hold about

friendship, and the comparison of how they make the transition from the home country to this new country.

Secondly, the present sample consisted of female participants only, and therefore, the findings may only be transferable to these specific girls and their families. Future studies should consider using boys in their sample order to delve deeper into the unique and shared experiences between girls and boys.

Thirdly, the present study was conducted in an after-school community program where the children were mostly in daily contact with members of an immigrant background, and for a majority of the children, this contact was also with individuals of their own ethnic/cultural group. Although a rich description was provided of the after-school community setting, a more descriptive explanation of children's elementary school and home setting may have shed more light on their friendship experiences. Therefore, future studies should consider investigating immigrant children's friendship formation in a variety of settings in a more systematic way (e.g., community program, school, and neighbourhood). Investigating the composition of immigrants in these contexts, and how this might impact children's choice of friends, and how they may make meaning of these relationships may reveal a more complex understanding of the phenomenon. It would also be interesting to consider the role that adults (e.g., parents and teachers) play on immigrant children's establishment of friendships. For instance, it may be that in some cultures/nationalities, immigrant parents may lean towards their children developing friendships with children from their own culture of origin (or their familial context) rather than with the dominant culture; this, in turn, may affect the types of opportunities these children are exposed to. Given that not all of the parents were able to be interviewed based on their hectic schedules it was, therefore, not possible to explore and compare the attitudes and values of

parents and their perspectives of their children's friendships. In the future, it will be important to gather a richer description of parents' perspectives. With all of these considerations in mind, it would be critical in future studies with a similar purpose to use an integrative multi-level framework for a more holistic understanding of this phenomenon (Motti-Stefanidi, Berry, Chrysochoou, Sam, & Phinney, 2012a; Motti-Stefanidi & Masten, 2017).

Finally, in the present study the children were using a camera to take photographs that captured the people, places, and things/activities that were important to them. There were a few challenges with using this methodology. The children were only given permission to take photographs within the premises of the community center. In reality, many of the children wanted to take pictures of the friends from school and their family members from home. Also, some of the children wanted to take pictures of their cultural food or certain games/props. To address these issues, future studies could give each child a disposable camera so they could have the option of taking the camera to different settings (school, home, and community).

### **Practical Implications**

This qualitative case study on children's perceptions of friendship experiences has several important implications for practice with children and families of immigrant background. Overall, the findings from this study suggest that immigrant families, in general tend to live in communities and attend community programs that are mostly composed of members of immigrant backgrounds. It seems that living in communities where there is easy access to extended family or individuals from the same cultural background allows these children to develop many social relationships, as well as a sense of belonging and acceptance, which in turn may play an important role in facilitating their resiliency.

Lastly, the present study makes an important contribution to research as it shows a shift from researching about children to researching with children (Pyle & Danniels, 2016). This research shows how children themselves can be first-hand contributors in providing their own personal experiences and perspectives about friendship. In this project, children of immigrant background showed competence by not only sharing valuable information about their friendships but also providing valuable usefulness of the photography and scrapbooks as a self-expressive research tool. Being part of this project provided an opportunity for these children to explore their own interests and abilities, and engage with research in a creative way. This project allowed the children to work through their past challenges and make plans for the future.

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## Appendix A

**CHILD PROTOCOL INTERVIEW**

After the pictures have been developed, the graduate student will print all the pictures that each child/teen took and first use try to gain a sense of each picture through asking simple open-ended questions, and then later use those photos to facilitate a discussion on children's perspectives of friendship.

Broad open-ended questions will be used to understand each photo.

**STEP 1: UNDERSTANDING THE PHOTOS**

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Possible Probes:

1. What/Who is in the picture?
2. Where was the picture taken?
3. Why is this picture important to you?
4. Why was it important for you to take the picture?
5. How do you feel about this picture? Do you like it or don't like it?
6. Would you like to show this picture to any one?

**STEP 2: USING PHOTOS TO UNDERSTAND CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES WITH ACCULTURATION AND FRIENDSHIP**

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***For Young Children*****Theme 1: Children's Experiences with Friends**

1. Tell me about your experience in your school.  
*Probe: Did you like going to school in Canada? Were the teachers' nice/ not nice to you? Were the students in the class nice/ not nice to you?*
2. Tell me about your experience with making friends (when you first arrived to Montreal).  
*Probe: Was it easy/difficult for you to make friends? Did you have many friends/ few friends/ no friends?*
3. Where do you meet your friends? Do you always meet them there (location)? How do you keep in touch with your friends? How often do you see your friends?  
*Probe: Do you meet your friends in school/community center/ after school programs? Do you have your parents set up a "play-time with your friends from your own country/culture? Do you talk with this friend in person, on the phone, etc.? Do you spend time with this person 1 time a week? 2 times a week, etc.?*
4. How do you feel when you are with your (friend's name)? Is there a specific feeling that you get when you are with your friend(s)?  
*Probe: Do you feel happy, excited, sad, normal?*
5. Why are you friends with (peer's name)? Why do you continue seeing (peer's name)?

*Probe: Is this friend from the same country as you? Does this friend speak the same language as you? Does your friend go to the same school/center as you? Or do you both like similar activity (e.g., playing soccer, watching movies)? Are your friends the same age? Are you friends with boys or girls?*

6. Why is this friend important you?

*Probe: Friend is from the same country as you? Friend speaks the same language as you? You both like a similar activity (e.g., playing soccer, watching movies, reading books)?*

## **Theme 2: Positive and Negative Scenarios at School**

1. When you moved to Canada, tell me about a time when you found something challenging as school?

*Probe: Tell me about a time when you had difficult time at school? For example, writing your name on paper; speaking in English/French with other kids, doing math, participating in class etc.*

*Follow up: Did you tell of this difficulty to anyone? Did you tell you friend or any classmates in class? Did you ask a peer/friend for help? Did they help you? If you did, what did your friend do? Did you find your friend to be helpful to you? How did you react to your friend's help? Did you feel happy, sad or normal?*

2. Tell me about a situation when you found something easy as school.

*Probe: Tell me about a time when you found something easy at school? For example, writing your name on paper; speaking in English/French with other kids, doing math, participating in class, etc.*

*Follow up: Who did you tell of this good thing that happened to you to anyone? Did you tell you a peer/friend? If so, how did it make you feel having your friend by your side? Did you feel happy, sad or normal?*

## Appendix B

**PHOTO-ELICITATION PROCEDURE**

The following information will be explained and/or discussed with each child at some point during data collection.

Step 1: Introduction/ Child's Assent for Photography Project

Step 2: Meetings

Step 3: The Pictures

**STEP 1: INTRODUCTION/CHILD'S ASSENT FOR PHOTOGRAPHY PROJECT\_\_\_\_\_*****For Young Children (7-12 years)***

Hello my name is Miss Nataliya! We are going to be doing a photography project together! Have you ever taken photos?/ Do you like taking photos? Your mom/dad said that if was okay for us to meet together and take photos. I am here to explain why we are meeting.

You will be meeting with me in the center after school and at home after school to take pictures of what it is like for kids like you who have moved to Canada on their experiences with making friends. I am interested to see whether you had an easy or not easy time with finding/meeting friends, and whether having friends or not having any friends made the time more difficult for you in Canada. I will be taking some notes [show the notebook and pen] and audio-recording [show the recorder] the things we talk about so I don't forget anything. Is that okay with you? [For demonstration purposes: I will ask the child to say their 'name' or their 'favorite color', I will record their speech on the recorder, and then play it back to them].

We are also going to work together on a making a photo-booklet of all of your experiences [show them show examples of scrapbooks]. This means you will get to choose some pictures and include them in a photo-booklet. Do you like that idea? When we work on the photo-booklet, I will ask you some other questions about the photos or other things that you might have/ might have not experienced when you moved to Canada. It is important that talk about what you are thinking and feeling. You can talk about any bad and good examples you have experienced with your classmates or friends. You are free to use any words or stories to describe your experiences. Any information that you share with me will be kept private.

At any time that you feel tired we can take a break and then try again. You may stop at any time. And when I ask you a question and you don't know the answer, you don't have to answer.

Do you have any questions?

Do you want to meet with me and take some pictures?

## STEP 2: MEETINGS

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### *Center*

For the first few times that we meet, I will come to the center [name the center] and we will take pictures. I will give some ideas on which you can focus on. For example, I may ask you to take pictures of people that are important to you, or some bad things you experiences when you first moved to Canada or what you are feeling or experiencing right now. We will go around the center and take pictures of anything that may remind you of how you feel or continue to feel.

## STEP 3: THE PICTURES

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You can take as many pictures as you like during our photo meetings. After I have printed the pictures, we can choose some pictures that you like, and talk about them. You can also choose some pictures and show them to your mom or dad if you like.

Have you ever seem photo-albums or art-booklets with pictures and written description of the side? Well for this project, we can create booklets of the pictures and anything else that you would like to include in them. Maybe some drawings of your friends, or write something down. This is personal, so you may say whatever you like. Only you and I will see this. Would you like to make a booklet with the photos? (I will bring some examples of picture-scrapbooks and elaborate more on this if needed).

There are few rules that I would like you to remember when taking pictures:

1. You can't take pictures of friends or other people who don't like to or don't want to take a picture.
2. When you want to take a picture of a friend, you always have to ask the friend if you can take a picture of him or her. For example, you may ask "[Ann], may I take a picture of you?" When you're friend says "yes" it's nice to thank you friend, and then you may take a picture of them. When you friend, says "no" than you cannot take a picture of them.
3. After you finish taking pictures at the center and at home, you have to return the camera back to me. Because I will take the camera and go print the pictures, so we can use the photos in the picture-booklet.



## Appendix C

**PARENT PROTOCOL INTERVIEW**

Interviewee(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Date &amp; Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewer script:**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the study on immigrant families' experiences with forming and maintaining relationships. More specifically, I'm interested in understanding your understanding of your child's experiences, reactions, and expectations with forming new relationships with peers and family members in the first years upon arriving to Canada. It is important that you express your perceptions, feelings, and emotions that you experienced or still experiencing I am interested to see how your child's new support system or the lack of it helped him or her in adapting to the Canadian school and society. You are free to talk about any experiences that you like. Your identity will be kept private and all the information that you share with be kept confidential and will only be used for research purposes. Do you have any questions before we start?

**Theme 1: Parent's Perceptions of Child's School**

## Prompts

1. *Tell me about your child's school.*
2. *How diverse is your child's school? Are there children of different nationalities?*
3. *Tell me about your child's experiences in a classroom. How does your child describe [his/her] experiences in the new school?*
4. *What are some of the challenges or barriers that you child encountered or continues to encounter in that school?*
5. *How does your child's school experiences compare with their experience back in your country of origin [name the country]? Were the experiences mostly positive, negative or neutral?*

**Theme 2: Parents' Understanding of Child's Friendships**

## Prompts

1. *Tell me about your child's experiences with making new friends in Montreal.*
2. *Does your child describe mostly positive or negative experiences when it comes to making friends? Could you give me an example of when your child experienced something positive with his or her friend(s)? Could you give me an example of when your child experienced something negative with his or her friend(s)?*
3. *Do you know your child's friends? Do you know their names? Do you know if your child's friends are Canadian or of immigrant status, or do they come from the same county? Do you know what language you child speaks with his or her friends?*
4. *Could you tell me how you feel about your child being friends with [friend's name]? Do you feel like you know a lot of information about your child's friends?*
5. *How did your child befriend those children? How does your child maintain [her/his] relationship with his or her friends (e.g., they see each other at school, text-message or talk of Facebook/Skype)? How often do they see each other (e.g., once, twice a week)?*

6. *What do you are your child's reasons for being friends with that child [friend's name]? Is it because they come from the same country? They speak the same language? Other reasons?*
7. *What types of friends would you prefer for you child to have? Do you prefer them to be friends with Canadian peers or other immigrants, or children from your country [name of the country]?*

### **Theme 3: Parents' Experiences with Acculturation and Friendship**

#### **Prompts**

1. *Tell me about your experiences when you first moved to Montreal.*
2. *How would you describe your adaptation to Montreal? Do you feel that you are more adapted now than when you first moved to Montreal?*
3. *Tell me about your experiences with making friends in Montreal. Do you feel your experiences were mostly positive, negative, or normal given the circumstances? Could you provide some examples of each. How did you react to those experiences? Did you feel happy, disappointed, or normal?*
4. *How did you became friends with those people? What was the location of where you meet those people? How do you maintain your contact with them (e.g., face-to-face, calling, texting)? How regularly do you see them (E.g., once, twice a week)?*
5. *What are your reasons for being friends with [friend's name]? Is I mainly they come from the same/similar country/culture as you? They speak the same language? Other reasons?*

## Appendix D

**INFORMATION LETTER TO PARENTS**

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

I am a graduate student in Department of Education at Concordia University and I am interested in exploring immigrant children's perceptions of forming relationships when they first arrive to Canada. The goal of the study is to explore immigrant children's point of views, experiences, expectations and reactions of relationships with friends and family members in a Canadian society.

When you consent to participate in this study, I will have one orientation session and approximately 6 interviews with your child, and approximately 3 interviews with you. Interviews with your child will take approximately 30 to 45 minutes, and interviews with you will take also take about 30 to 45 minutes. During this time, I will ask you questions about your and your child's experiences with forming new relationships when you and your child first arrived to Canada. The interview will be carried out in English, however, if you prefer to speak in French, please let me know as soon as possible and a translator will be provided. A short follow-up interview, either in person or by telephone, may be requested to obtain clarifications or elaboration on your responses.

All of the information in this study will remain confidential and your child's real name will not be included in any of the results reported in the study.

A benefit of participating in this study is that it could allow you and your child to explore your views and beliefs about the immigration process, as well as reflect on the changes that took place inside your family when new relationships were formed.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me, Nataliya Kubishyn at 514-402-4351, or my supervisor Dr. Harriet Petrakos at 514-848-2424 ext. 2013.

## Appendix E

### CONSENT FORM - PARENTS

I understand that I have been asked to participate in a research project being conducted by Nataliya Kubishyn under the supervision of Dr. Hariclia (Harriet) Petrakos in Department of Education at Concordia University (telephone: 514-848-2424, ext. 2013; email: hpetrakos@education.concordia.ca).

#### A. PURPOSE

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is to learn about immigrant children's and their families experiences of transitioning to a new country, especially how this process impacts and changes the child's formation of relationships with peers and family members. The general goal of the study is to better understand immigrant children's experiences, expectations and reactions of the early adaptation process from the child's point of view.

#### B. PROCEDURES

I understand that my child will participate in one orientation session and seven one-on-one interviews for this study, and I will participate in one orientation session and two one-on-one interviews. These interviews will take place in a quiet location of my choice (e.g., home, park, coffee shop). The orientation session will last approximately 20-30 minutes and the interviews will last about 30-45 minutes each and will be audio-recorded.

The interview will be carried out in English, however, if my child or I have difficulties with understanding or communicating in English a translator in will be available to translate in French. I understand that I may be contacted for another short interview (no longer than 30 minutes) by telephone or email to clarify some answers or to provide some additional information that would be required for the study.

I understand that my child will engage in photography, drawing or writing personal diaries, which will be used to better understand their experiences of adaption.

I understand that I will be asked permission to use any quotes from my interview in the reporting of the results. I understand that all information that I share during the study will be kept confidential by not including names or identifying information in the reporting of the results.

#### C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

I understand that the risks associated with participating in this study may include intense emotional feelings regarding topics related to your child and immigration journey's memories. Should you experience distress during your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Harriet Petrakos (514-848-2424ext. 2013), a licensed psychologist and she will provide you with the appropriate resources. I understand that participation in this study could allow for an opportunity to explore my views and experiences regarding my immigration process.

#### D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences. Should you choose to withdraw your consent the information you provided will be deleted.

I understand that my participation in this study is CONFIDENTIAL (i.e., the researcher will know, but will not disclose my identity). All information I share will be kept confidential and private, unless we think that the children are unsafe in any way. In that case, we will report our concerns to the appropriate authorities.

I understand that the data from this study may be published, however, no names or identifying information will be associated with the findings. We will ask your permission if we decide to use quotes in the final report of the study.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT.  
I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

PARENT'S NAME (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

PARENT'S SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

If at any time you have questions about the proposed research, please contact the study's Principal Investigator Nataliya Kubishyn (telephone: 514-402-4351; email: [natalia.kubishyn@gmail.com](mailto:natalia.kubishyn@gmail.com)) or Dr. Hariclia Harriet Petrakos of the Department of Education of Concordia University (telephone: 514-848-2424, ext. 2013; email: [hpetrakos@education.concordia.ca](mailto:hpetrakos@education.concordia.ca)).

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics and Compliance Advisor, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481, [ethics@alcor.concordia.ca](mailto:ethics@alcor.concordia.ca).

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix F

**CODING SAMPLE**

	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Level</b>		<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Level</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Level</b>
<b>Quotes</b>	<b>In vivo</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Axial</b>	<b>Theoretical</b>
Child H: I met Animator S! Nataliya: Yah.. and Steve is? Who is Steve? Child H: He is one of the animators? Nataliya: Animators, right! Child H: I met Librarian E who is the Librarian of the Library. Nataliya: Yes! Child H: I met.. I met other people as well. Nataliya: Yah..okay! And how do these people make you feel? Child H: They made me happy when I was sad.....they make me laugh!	"I met Animator S!" "I met Librarian E" "I met other people as well" "They made me feel happy when I was sad" "They make	V; Center T and the people in it  A: They make me feel happy A: Make me laugh	Sense of belonging to center T  Attachment to adults	Sense of belonging  Attachment