

The Ideologies of Dyadic Friendships: A Text Analysis and Children's Reading of "Buzz" and
"Woody" From Disney-Pixar's *Toy Story* Films

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ABSTRACT

The Ideologies of Dyadic Friendships: A Text Analysis and Children's Reading of "Buzz" and "Woody" From Disney-Pixar's *Toy Story* Films

Anita Jandaly

Disney-Pixar's animated films are found to offer ideological lessons to audiences; however, limited research exists on the ideologies of friendships that the films promote. This qualitative study combines cultural studies with a critical media literacy (CML) framework to examine one film text, specifically how dyadic friendships are depicted through the characters of "Buzz" and "Woody" in Disney-Pixar's *Toy Story* films, and explores how *Toy Story* can be used as a CML tool to discuss friendships with children. Using a text analysis to examine the ideologies of Buzz and Woody's friendship, five themes emerged: friendship formation is influenced by (1) *internal*, (2) *external*, and (3) *interpersonal* factors; (4) maintained by *affective reciprocity*; and (5) face a *fate of friendship*. An audience reading included two girls and one boy (13 years of age) of ethnically diverse backgrounds, from Canada ($N = 2$) and the United States ($N = 1$). Participants were interviewed individually and asked about their perceptions of Disney and friendship. Participants then participated in a focus group interview and collectively watched five purposefully chosen excerpts of Buzz and Woody from the series; they were asked open-ended questions informed by elements of CML about their perceptions of friendship after each scene. Four findings emerged on children's conceptualizations of Buzz and Woody's friendship: (1) a *gradual progression from enemies to close friends*, (2) *comprised of reciprocal efforts*, (3) a *context to negotiate identity and ambitions*, and (4) an *unknown fate and future*. This study concludes with *Toy Story*'s potential as a pedagogy of friendship.

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The Ideologies of Dyadic Friendships: A Text Analysis and Children’s Reading of “Buzz” and
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Personal Statement

“You’re right, I can’t stop Andy from growing up... But I wouldn’t miss it for the world,”
—Woody (*Toy Story 2*; Lasseter et al., 1999). Woody is *Toy Story*’s main character protagonist
and the beloved cowboy doll of 6-year-old Andy (Lugo-Lugo & Bloodsworth-Lugo, 2009).
Woody voices the desires that many young children may long to hear from their favourite
childhood toy: the feeling of unconditional love, fortitude, and ultimately, friendship. As a young
child, I developed an affective attachment to my childhood toys, and envisioned their thoughts to
be analogous to that of Woody’s, in that our bond symbolized an unequivocal friendship. That
being so, my childhood fantasies came to life when Disney-Pixar Studios released its first full-
length computer-generated feature: *Toy Story* (Lasseter, 1995). The film’s storyline evoked both
nostalgic and surreal sentiments from my childhood play with toys, and I became captivated by
the stories behind the (toy) characters. John Lasseter’s (1995) creation of *Toy Story* immersed its
viewers into the lives and thoughts of Andy’s childhood toys, where audiences of all ages
watched the toys come to life, and partake in remarkable adventures. Albeit the toys’ heartfelt
devotion to Andy—who eventually leaves for college in the third sequel—leads them to discover
their novel sense-of-purpose as toys, the production may ultimately represent a story about
friendship (Booker, 2010; Giroux & Pollock, 2010; Rodriguez, 2010; Smith et al., 2018).
Therefore, with my affective association to the *Toy Story* series and my long-standing admiration
for The Walt Disney Company and Pixar Animation Studios, this adventure sparked a further
interest in the field of Disney studies, particularly of its role in children’s popular culture, during
my first year in graduate school, which is where my research inquiry began.

Introduction

In the summer of 2019, Disney-Pixar released its fourth and highly anticipated theatrical sequel to the *Toy Story* series: *Toy Story 4* (Cooley, 2019). The fourth feature was released twenty-four years after the debut of Disney-Pixar's first *Toy Story* (Lasseter, 1995) film, which meant there was an especially sentimental appeal to both adults and children who "grew up" with the phenomenon (Smith et al., 2018). Over recent decades, *Toy Story* not only became a critically celebrated film in North American and international film culture, it became a "hugely lucrative multimedia franchise" (Smith et al., 2018, p. 10) with stakes in media, merchandise, and the development of its own meticulously themed lands in global Walt Disney World theme parks. In fact, in 2018, Disneyland's California Adventure Park in Anaheim, California "reimagined" (MacDonald, 2012) its iconic boardwalk from its long-time celebrated Paradise Pier to the novel Pixar Pier, with the notion that families can now "discover a whimsical boardwalk where Pixar stories and characters come to life" (Disneyland Resort, n.d.). Given the creation of *Toy Story*'s themed lands, its franchise's unprecedented success in multiple stakes, and the fourth film's immense universal celebration, I questioned why *Toy Story* strongly resonated with child *and* adult audiences. Thus, on the dusk of *Toy Story 4*'s (Cooley, 2019) world premiere, Woody and Buzz Lightyear stood amid the core of its theatrical billboard that towered alongside a local Montreal theatre, and it became evident: Woody and Buzz Lightyear were more than "just toys" in this *Toy Story* journey. Rather, they were fictional characters whose "lively and imperfect hearts" (Price, 2008, p. 17) were richly connected with adult and child audiences.

Moreover, during the same summer, my supervisor and I began a focused reading tutorial which explored the Disney conglomerate from two perspectives: (1) as a pedagogical tool (Aronstein & Finke, 2013; Sandlin & Garlen, 2017), and (2) as a powerful force in children's

popular culture (Giroux, 2004). It was through our research over the course of several weeks that I was particularly inspired by a qualitative research study by Garofalo (2014) that was informed by her Master's thesis fieldwork (see also Garofalo, 2013), titled "The good, the bad, and the ugly: Teaching critical media literacy with Disney." Garofalo's (2014) main objective was to use critical media literacy as a tool to provide a space for young girls to voice their ideas, perceptions, and questions of female characters based on several short excerpts in two Disney animated films: *Cinderella* (Geronimi et al., 1950) and *The Little Mermaid* (Clements & Musker, 1989). Ultimately, Garofalo's (2013, 2014) research inquiry and methodology were both a potent and exemplary model that inspired the vision behind my project: using techniques in critical media literacy to explore how children understand friendships as they are depicted in Disney-Pixar's *Toy Story* films. Specifically, the *Toy Story* series focuses heavily on the "unstoppable duo of Woody and Buzz Lightyear" (Andy, *Toy Story 2*; Lasseter et al. 1999; Price, 2008) which discerns their position as the two lead protagonists whose friendship becomes "[even] more central as the series develops" (Smith, 2018, p. 36). Thus, for the purpose of this research project, I explored the dyadic friendship of "Woody" and "Buzz Lightyear" (Buzz) as archetypal models to examine children's ideas of friendship.

My focal interest on friendships is twofold. Primarily, close friendships in childhood promote innumerable positive features in their social, emotional, and cognitive development and well-being (e.g., Berndt, 2004). The pertinence of friendships in children's lives merits the support of knowledgeable stakeholders who work with children, so they may provide strategies that facilitate the quality and quantity of friendship interactions (Carter & Nutbrown, 2016; Chadsey & Gun Han, 2005). Secondly, close friendships are found to be especially significant during the middle childhood years (Chadsey & Gun Han, 2005) as children "begin to develop a

real sensitivity to what matters to another person” (Berndt, 2004, p. 208) which, in turn, endorses the exploration of one’s personal worth. Scholars of friendship studies (e.g., Berndt, 2004; Bukowski, 2001; Hartup, 1996) have discovered that children possess expectations of close friendships during middle childhood, and findings illustrate that these expectations predominately entail those that are positive (i.e., self-disclosure, sharing, and helping others). However, there has not yet been a study that explores children’s ideas of close friendships using a critical media literacy lens in popular media texts. Giroux (2004) is among a myriad of scholars who argues how The Disney Company inscribes itself as a form of public pedagogy (Sandlin & Garlen, 2017), where its animated films both construct and reproduce particular ideologies within its realm of entertainment.

This research project explores the messages of dyadic friendships depicted through *Toy Story*’s “Buzz” and “Woody” friendship dyad through a textual analysis and a reading by children. Firstly, this study examines the ideologies of dyadic friendships connoted in the *Toy Story* text. Secondly, this study investigates how Disney-Pixar’s *Toy Story* films can be used as a critical media literacy tool to examine how dyadic friendships are understood by children in middle- to late childhood/early adolescence (i.e., 13-year-olds)—particularly, examining *what* messages children perceive in the series about dyadic friendships, and how they explain these ideas in relation to their own friendship experiences. Previous scholars have closely examined film media’s role as not only a cultural product (Greeley, 2018), but as a powerful medium to reinforce particular social norms and values (Artz, 2004; Birthisel, 2014; Garofalo, 2013, 2014; Giroux, 2004; Giroux & Pollock, 2010). Disney remains a dominant figure in North American popular culture, and manifests in its prominence as a wholesome family entertainment enterprise (Artz, 2004; O’Brien, 1996) with equal unparalleled success as a global hegemony in children’s

culture (Buckingham, 1997). Its global recognition notwithstanding, this research project focuses on The Disney Company's "primary production art form" (Artz, 2004, p. 117), which is the feature-animated film. Scholars of media and cultural studies (e.g., Artz, 2004; Giroux, 2004) argue that animated films produced by Disney-Pixar Studios ultimately select themes in its commodities that promote ideologies that align with Disney's corporate society. Thus, I deem it critical to incorporate elements of critical media literacy in children's learning to help them become active agents in their media consumption. I argue that the influence of Disney-Pixar's feature-animated films on society's perspectives of friendships is an unexplored area, particularly of the portrayal of friendships exclusively in the *Toy Story* films.

Literature Review

This literature review begins with an introduction to The Walt Disney Company as a prominent form of entertainment and education in children's culture (Giroux & Pollock, 2010), and then transitions into the realm of friendship studies and children's dyadic friendships.

Given the scope and research goals of this project, I examined Disney-Pixar's digital storytelling through its animated films, exploring how these texts orchestrate a powerful narrative force in shaping children's culture and understanding (Artz, 2004; Giroux & Pollock, 2010). I explore how Disney's proliferation of popular animated films spurred the creation of a novel storytelling medium using computer-generated imagery (CGI)/three-dimensional (3-D) films developed by Disney's subsidiary company: Pixar Animation Studios. Thus, *Toy Story* (Lasseter, 1995) was the first CGI film produced by Disney-Pixar that introduced audiences of all ages to "one of the most sophisticated storytelling mediums in all of cinema" (M. Kaling, personal communication, February 9, 2020). Next, I discuss the profound impact of the *Toy Story* films on children's popular culture (Smith et al., 2018), as well as its relevance as the chosen text

for the purpose of this research project. Certainly, *Toy Story* produced a narrative in its films based on the theme of friendship (Booker, 2010; Rodriguez, 2010; Smith et al., 2018), which, as I explored the pedagogical effects of Disney-Pixar films on children's understandings, is a significant relationship that contributes to children's social and emotional lives. Lastly, I explore how friendship has been researched in prior popular media texts.

In the final section of this literature review, I discuss theories on children's friendships and the features of children's dyadic friendships in middle to late childhood. I will also elaborate on shifts in approaches to studying children's friendship relations, including previous research on children's conceptualizations of friendship. The latter section will lead into my research questions which are: to explore the ideologies of Buzz and Woody's dyadic friendship across the quadrilogy, and to hear what children think about friendships after watching selected film clips from Disney-Pixar's *Toy Story* series.

The Walt Disney Company and Children's Popular Culture

Relevance of Disney

The Walt Disney Company transformed the realm of entertainment experiences in the public space (Giroux & Pollock, 2010) over the past four generations¹ (Brockus, 2004). From its unprecedented enterprises in eleven enormously dispersed theme parks² (Artz, 2004; Reyers & Matusitz, 2012), the production of classic animated fairy tale and live action films, various consumer goods, and unique vacation experiences, The Walt Disney Company strives in its recognition as an integral component in leisure and entertainment culture for families worldwide

¹ Brockus (2004) illustrated how Disney's cultural legacy has spanned through approximately four generations: "the parents of the Baby Boomers, the Baby Boomers themselves, their children, and their grandchildren" (p. 207).

² The Walt Disney Company has licensed theme parks and resorts transnationally—namely, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Paris, and in recent years, Shanghai (Reyers & Matusitz, 2012).

(Bartkowiak, 2012; Sandlin & Garlen, 2017). Disney's markets continue to expand within and beyond the United States (Sandlin & Garlen, 2017) through its vast media and entertainment platforms, which has made Disney notorious for its excellence in family-centered entertainment. In fact, on November 14, 2019, The Disney Company launched a new, online streaming service called *Disney Plus* (Pallotta, 2019) in North American households, where individuals can access copious numbers of Disney films and television series from a selection of enterprises, such as: Disney Collections, Pixar, Marvel, Star Wars, and National Geographic. According to Clark (2020) from *Business Insider*, three months after the release of *Disney Plus*, Disney reached approximately 28.6 million subscribers in its North American audiences. In fact, as of January 2020, its streaming service expanded beyond North America and included Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and the Netherlands. Thus, families transnationally may now experience the *magic* of Disney on demand remotely from their homes.

From the immaculate story-themed lands in Walt Disney theme parks—namely, *Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge* and *Toy Story Land* (Disney, 2019)—exhilarating attractions, and immersive entertainment experiences, Disney embodies a cultural landscape that orients the family into a “whole new world” (Carson, 2004, p. 228). The Disney Company continues to exist as a prominent entity in the family-media and entertainment industry, and flourishes as one of the “highest grossing entertainment corporations” (Forgacs, 1992, p. 362). Ultimately, Disney's commodities have become both a site of popular culture (Sandlin & Garlen, 2017) and a pedagogical landscape for families (Aronstein & Finke, 2013) as they create meanings through prolonged exposure, engagement, and interactions with various Disney texts (Carson, 2004).

Disney's Animated Films and Children's Culture

Disney's animated-feature films are at the forefront of its cultural and corporate

prominence (Artz, 2004; Giroux & Pollock, 2010). Indeed, Disney and its subsidiary company, Pixar Animation Studios, are recognized as one of the most successful brands in the film industry. Price (2008) credits Disney's success to "positive experiences associated with the brand's products" (p. 9), which has garnered the trust and loyalty of both adults (particularly, parents; Giroux & Pollock, 2010) and child audiences, on the basis of Disney's long-held reputation of favourable family entertainment through its feature-animated films. In fact, Disney's animated film characters appear central to consumer interest and appeal. In assessing characters in the *Toy Story* series, Smith and colleagues (2018) found the characters to evoke emotional affectivity and nostalgia for one's childhood toys. Similarly, Lawson and Fouts (2004) argued that child audiences resonate with animated-film characters based on their identifiability and humanistic traits (Price, 2008). Holliday (2018) highlights Disney's cross-promotional activities between the entertainment and fast food industries as an example of one of the lead gateways towards children's exposure to the film's characters outside of the cinematic experience; children may obtain toy collectibles of Disney's animated characters from allocated meals, insinuating the commercialization of children's culture into elements of their everyday experiences (Sun & Picker, 2002).

Giroux (1999, 2004; Giroux & Pollock, 2010) and other media scholars (e.g., Aronstein & Finke, 2013) have recognized the intertextual relationship between Disney's feature-animated films and its plethora of tangible commodities such as "spin-off products and merchandise" (Lacroix, 2004, p. 214) that are based on the animated-films. Children arguably as young as 4-years-old appear to recognize major characters in Disney films *before* films are released—not to mention, before they view the film indefinitely (Lacroix, 2004). In her study, Lacroix (2004) found that young children possess various paraphernalia associated to Disney's films before its

theatrical release; she ascribes their acute awareness of these characters to The Disney Company's omnipotent and pervasive marketing and advertising approaches, and goes further to express how "images and representations" (p. 214) are purposefully marketed to children through its animated films and its accompanied merchandise. In their documentary, *Mickey Mouse Monopoly: Disney, Childhood and Corporate Power*, Sun and Picker (2002) showed young children's overt excitement over Disney's film-related products as they were advertised in a multitude of markets (e.g., popularized food brands, television shows), whereby Giroux (1999, 2004) alleged that children perceive these advertised products as indistinguishable from the actual feature film or program. This notion, simplified, denotes that Disney exercises omnipotent potential over multiple levels of children's culture (Giroux & Pollock, 2010), such that tangible commodities are entwined with children's engagement with feature-animated films.

Disney-Pixar's Animated Films as Cultural Pedagogy

Recent scholarship has examined the influence of Disney's animated films as a powerful narrative force to cultivate young children's ideas, values, and beliefs (e.g., Garofalo, 2013, 2014; Giroux, 2004; Lugo-Lugo & Bloodsworth-Lugo, 2009; Sandlin & Garlen, 2017). Indeed, Giroux and Pollock (2010) argue that individuals must acknowledge the pervasive influence of Disney's animated films on children's culture and understanding, especially given its scholarly recognition as a global pedagogy of corporate ideologies and as an agent of socialization (Lugo-Lugo & Bloodsworth-Lugo, 2009) of particular norms and values. In her thesis at Brock University, Garofalo (2013) asserts that Disney's animated films both implicitly and explicitly promote ideologies through a coalescence of a story's narrative and characterizations. She further contends this notion through her work with 7-to-11-year-old girls, where they used critical media literacy as a tool to discuss the representation of female characters in Disney's

earlier animated films. She affirms that women of power are often represented as darkly illustrated, malicious, older, and unsightly characters, which contrasts with the lead female (princess) protagonists who are typically depicted with opposing traits, including stereotypical attributes of femininity (e.g., enticed to matrimony and appearance-oriented) and often assuming subservient roles. Garofalo (2013) concludes that Disney's animated films can be used as a site for critical analyses as children absorb particular norms and values that are represented in the film narratives. Lugo-Lugo and Bloodsworth-Lugo (2009) further support this notion and argue that through Disney-Pixar's characters, children appear to internalize the narrative's values and beliefs—regardless of whether the representations are deemed positive (inclusive/representative) or negative (exclusive/problematic). Thus, whether it be subtly or directly intended, Disney-Pixar's animated films offer ideological lessons to children. In a like manner, Giroux and Pollock argue that Disney's feature-animated films inform children's imagination based on their interests, dreams, and desires. In alignment with Giroux and Pollock, the latter, they argue, is the very reason to challenge the pleasures induced by these films in children's culture and therefore, examine what ideologies are being perpetuated through such media texts.

Animated Films: The 'Modern' Fairy Tales. In the spring of 1937, Walt Disney Productions released its first full-length and feature-animated film: *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. The debut of Disney's *Snow White* (1937) meant that it was also the first animated feature to enter into the realm of Hollywood cinema (Price, 2008), which soon expanded into a favourite medium of leisure and entertainment for families worldwide (Fouts et al., 2006). Child and adult audiences were enthralled by the pristine fusion of colour, sound, and movement that brought the animated characters to life, embellished for the first time without live actors (Kaufman, 2012). Walt Disney Studios' earliest productions based many of its animated features

on fairy tale narratives that were renowned to audiences (Kaufman, 2012). Consequently, Walt Disney sought to produce a cartoon filmization (Kaufman, 2012) on the famous and popular legend of *Snowwhite*, an 1812 classic German fairy tale by the Brothers Grimm (Booker, 2010; Power, 2012). Kaufman (2012) notes how Walt Disney envisioned a film that would absorb the audience into a storyline that was engulfed with theatrical features, which became an entirely new form of entertainment that “built upon the exclusive properties of animation” (p. 30). Thus, *Snow White* reached remarkable success in global and domestic audiences. Audiences were not only moved by the animated characters’ abilities to carry a story throughout the film, they were also transfixed by the characters’ abilities to induce an affective reaction amongst its viewers. Ultimately, the grand success of *Snow White* established the prominent forthcoming of subsequent animated films, becoming an integral form of entertainment and education (Giroux, 2004) in popular culture (Kaufman, 2012).

Disney introduced a novel medium of storytelling that combined art and technology through the innovation of *animation*. Indeed, recent scholars in literature and cultural studies (Booker, 2010; Brockus, 2004) assert that Disney’s animated films have conscripted the fairy tale into a Disneyfied version. Consequently, Disney’s animated films have become increasingly recognized as the principal fairy tales that are experienced by children in North America (Booker, 2010). Booker (2010) argues that Disney’s juxtaposition of animation and fairy tales suggests that these stories are the sole version of the tales heard by children, to the extent that the original fairy tales are paradoxically held as “inauthentic” compared to the reformed Disney versions (Brockus, 2004). These notions affirm Disney’s prominence as a producer of children’s culture (Giroux & Pollock, 2010) in its ability to narrate particular ideologies in the public sphere. Further, scholars have examined Disney’s focus on storytelling through animation, and

affirm that the majority of Disney’s feature-length animated films are indeed inspired by a combination of traditional cautionary and classic fairy tales (Brockus, 2004; Tremblay, 2011; Zipes, 1999). In a similar vein, fairy tale scholar Zipes (1999) argues that Disney productions are essentially *modern* fairy tales (Tremblay, 2011). Giroux (1996) and Lacroix (2004) expand on this notion and assert that Disney adapts and “sanitises the original [tale]” (Artz, 2004, p. 120) into a modified version that is both familiar, entertaining, and comforting within the larger social structure. The question at stake turns to the potential ideologies that are being represented within this new genre of the *modern* fairy tale (Zipes, 1999) in Disney’s animated films—particularly, as these films have now become characterized as “children’s films” being viewed in abundance by child audiences (Booker, 2010). Ultimately, Disney not only transcends as a dominant entertainment medium consumed by children, it has become a trademark of innocence that provides children with a sense of wonder and magic in its feature-animated films (Booker, 2010).

In addition to the aforementioned Disney formula (Ebrahim, 2014) of modernized fairy tales and children’s culture, technological advances emerged into feature-animated films (Smith et al., 2018). As of the mid 1990s until the present, a new 3-D storytelling medium emerged that offered innovative tales to audiences of all ages (Ebrahim, 2014). Pixar Animation Studios soared as the novel producer of animated storytelling, and was soon acquired by The Disney conglomerate. Moreover, “Disney-Pixar” animation is the subject of analysis for the purpose of this study, as it led to the development of the friendship narratives in the *Toy Story* series.

Pixar Animation Studios: A New Storytelling Medium

Disney’s Subsidiary Company. On January 26th 2006, The Walt Disney Company acquired Pixar Animation Studios for \$7.6 billion dollars (Levy, 2016). “Pixar, Inc.,” soon established as *Pixar*, worked in collaboration with Disney (Pixar, n.d.) to generate the revolution

of 3-D animation software, which galvanized the foregoing filmmaking industry. Three-dimensional imagery predicated a new level of realism in animation and computer technology, providing novel capabilities to bring characters and inanimate objects to life with believable emotions (Price, 2008), all of which had not been accomplishable through traditional hand-drawn animation³. Pixar prospered as the first company that combined storytelling with 3-D computer imaging; this innovation not only impressed audiences (Price, 2008) with its captivation into the characters' point of view through 3-D animation, but also supplied a means for a story's characters to depict affective characteristics that would emotionally connect with audiences.

Pixar Animation Studios (Pixar), then, was the first company across several generations to change the world of animated-feature films since Disney (Levy, 2016). Certainly, The Disney Company discerned Pixar's novel storytelling medium as having the potential to propel the company's animated films into the future of computer animation⁴ (Levy, 2016). However, Pixar's innovative medium notwithstanding, the company's quintessential success flourishes through its ability to showcase such newfound 3-D technology in the development of diverse, original storylines and characters, which differed considerably from Disney's central focus on classic tales and legends (Giroux & Pollock, 2010) in its feature-animated films. Indeed, Pixar's story teams developed narratives that were considered personal and relatable to audiences of all ages; its narratives diverged from Disney's fairy tale themes and rather, focused on "adultlike characters with adultlike [perplexities], while still providing entertainment to children" (Price, 2008, p. 22) and adults alike. With such, Pixar forged ahead with narratives that situated

³ Julia Zorthian (2015) from *Time* emphasized how Disney Studios' founder, Walt Disney, incorporated the latest technology in hand-drawn animation of the time, to convey narratives through its animated films.

⁴ Post-Disney Renaissance Era (1989-1999), The Walt Disney Company experienced despondency in its subsequent animated films; thus, Pixar afforded an opportunity for Disney to integrate a new storytelling medium to enliven the domain of feature-animated films (Price, 2008).

audiences into the lives of admirable characters (e.g., anthropomorphized animals and inanimate objects; humans) who navigated through life's complexities and sympathized with adults and children. Apart from the nationwide admiration of Pixar's first *Toy Story* (Lasseter, 1995) film about the complexities of friendship (Giroux & Pollock, 2010), Pixar subsequently produced films that notably pertained to the following themes: progressive personal growth in dyadic adult relationships (e.g., *Monsters' Inc.*, [Docter, 2001]), parents' fears in single-parent families (e.g., *Finding Nemo*, [Stanton, 2003]), and "the tensions of family life" (e.g., *The Incredibles*, [Bird, 2004]; Price, 2008, p. 38). Ultimately, in January 2006, Pixar's accumulated and critically-acclaimed success in its original animated-features prompted Disney to renegotiate its initial contracts with Pixar (Iwerks, 2007); Disney, then, acquired Pixar for its creative capability in storytelling, as a means to rejuvenate its feature-animated films, whereby both companies agreed on the co-branding of "Disney-Pixar" on future films produced by Pixar—a decision that increased Pixar's credibility as an innovative storyteller in the public sphere (Ebrahim, 2014).

Nonetheless, given Pixar's technological breakthrough in CGI animated films and its ingeniously relatable narratives that diverged from Disney's fairy tale legends, little research exists that examines the narratives' themes within its universally celebrated features. Referring back to Disney-Pixar's first CGI film debut *Toy Story* (Lasseter, 1995), this film paved way for a breadth of possibilities (Levy, 2016) for 3-D animation to narrate stories that emotionally connected to audiences. Therefore, I deem it significant to analyze Disney-Pixar's *Toy Story* series as it narrates a progressive (Holcomb et al., 2015) storyline about friendship—a social relation universal in the human condition, with its franchise holding the position as a contemporary icon of children's popular culture (Smith et al., 2018).

***“To infinity and beyond”*: Toy Story and Children’s Popular Culture**

The Development of *Toy Story*. “I got off the phone [with Steve Jobs] and shared what Steve had said. *The biggest film of the year. Pixar. Toy Story...* Audiences were falling in love with Woody and Buzz” (Levy, 2016, p. 4). As noted, Disney-Pixar’s *Toy Story* (Lasseter, 1995) was the first feature-length, computer-animated film that introduced the world to new CGI technology using 3-D movement in animation (Levy, 2016). In comparison to Disney’s animated-features, *Toy Story* became the highest-grossing film in 1995 that staked over \$357 million dollars in global box-office revenues (Price, 2008). Certainly, *Toy Story* elicited astonished reactions from global and domestic audiences, which eventually led to the release of three original succeeding films, making *Toy Story* a universally celebrated quadrilogy (i.e., a film series with four films; Donohoo, 2019). Indeed, as of spring 2020, D’Alessandro (2020) from *Deadline Hollywood* acclaimed *Toy Story* as one of the highest-grossing franchises of all time, worth approximately \$3.4 billion dollars in revenue. Children reacted with excitement over the idea of cherished childhood toys coming to life, while resonating with their own toy collections (Smith et al., 2018), and adults responded with nostalgia for their own childhood toys. Thus, commodities from the *Toy Story* films proliferated in the marketplace and toy industries alike, making the “Buzz Lightyear” action figure one of the highest-grossing toys ever sold in Disney Stores (Treanor, 2019).

The Toy Story Quadrilogy. Disney-Pixar’s *Toy Story* (Lasseter, 1995) invites audiences into the world of 6-year-old Andy’s childhood toys who come to life when humans are out of sight. In contrast with Disney’s foremost focus on modified fairy tales, Pixar looked towards the “buddy salvation” genre (Smith et al., 2018) in erstwhile Hollywood films (e.g., *Thelma and Louise*, [Scott, 1991]), which preceded the well-regarded dyadic friendship narrative between

Woody and Buzz. In this regard, Pixar's story team fabricated a narrative where its two lead protagonists (i.e., Woody and Buzz) were virtually opposite characters, who were obliged to cooperate under inauspicious circumstances (Price, 2008). Indeed, the first *Toy Story* film presents Buzz and Woody's first encounter in the series, where they soon found themselves separated from Andy and fellow toys while next door at Andy's sadistic neighbour *Sid's* house; together, they seek their reunion with Andy. Subsequently, each film in the quadrilogy offers new territories explored by Woody, Buzz, and their fellow (toy) acquaintances as they collectively navigate their world as "toys."

***Toy Story* Characters and Child Audiences.** Pixar's CGI technologies afford audiences of all ages to emotionally connect with its toy characters in the *Toy Story* series. It is important to note that while children and adults readily resonate with *Toy Story's* friendship narrative, this connection is greatly achieved through their identification with the toys' characterization, as well as the toys themselves. Indeed, Summers (2018) examined the intertextual relationship between the *Toy Story* series' characters and child audiences, and found that Disney-Pixar designed its characters based on the premise that the (toy) characters would be readily recognizable to young children. Given the study's focus on the film's two lead protagonists, only Buzz and Woody are discussed in this literature review.

Pixar's chief creative officer and director of *Toy Story* (1995), John Lasseter, sought to design the lead toy protagonists based on children's present-day toy desires, to which he thought, "what might a [young] boy get these days that would make him so excited that he stopped playing with anything else?" (Gay, 2018, p. 19). Lasseter developed *Toy Story's* main protagonist "Woody" as a cowboy doll (voiced by Tom Hanks) who is dressed in Western attire with a star-shaped sheriff badge that symbolized his leadership role amongst Andy's toys. In a

like manner, the cowboy doll was purposefully included in the *Toy Story* series due to its nostalgic appeal of the cowboy narrative with audiences from previous decades (Ebrahim, 2014). Woody's co-star "Buzz Lightyear" (voiced by Tim Allen) was imagined as a space ranger, who was intentionally cast to represent a partition between a "new" (Buzz) and "old" (Woody) toy, both to audiences and Andy's character alike. Haswell (2018) notes that Buzz was highly distinguished from any other toy in Andy's bedroom, much of which relates to his technological appeal (e.g., buttons with sound effect, assembled wings, sheer plastic compared to fabric). Akin to Woody's character, Buzz also assumed a leadership role amongst the other toys.

Previous Literature on the *Toy Story* Series. *Toy Story* has been the subject of ideological scrutiny in cultural studies (Brockus, 2004), gender studies (Dube, 2016), and media scholarship (Ebrahim, 2014) over recent decades. For instance, media scholar Ebrahim (2014) investigated ideologies of gender transgression across the first three *Toy Story* films. Through text analysis, she asserts that female bit characters (e.g., Molly and Hannah) are often represented as disruptive and threatening to the (toy) characters' survival and well-being. Dube (2016) also recognized ideologies of normative American masculinity that are promoted through the characterization of *Toy Story*'s lead protagonists. In *Toy Story 2* (Lasseter et al., 1999), Dube notes that it is the male and not *female* characters who initiate Woody's rescue; additionally, the female characters (e.g., Bo Beep and Mrs. Potato Head) stayed behind in Andy's bedroom, which further connoted women's fragility versus men's heroic endeavors. Moreover, scholars have examined multiple ideologies that are promoted in the *Toy Story* series. Indeed, these findings include, but are not limited to: the consumerist ideologies of toy consumption promoted to child audiences (Brockus, 2004; Giroux & Pollock, 2010); the representation of North American childcare in *Toy Story 3* (Chang-Kredl, 2015); ideologies of childhood imagination

and development in *Toy Story 3* (Tesar et al., 2016); themes of agony and anxiety in the *Toy Story* trilogy (Scott, 2014); and the relations of power amongst dominant and marginalized groups between the (toy) characters (Markham & Chiu, 2012). Ultimately, few studies have identified *Toy Story*'s friendship narrative in its feature-animated films (Booker, 2010; Giroux & Pollock, 2010; Rodriguez, 2010; Smith et al., 2018) and among the latter, there has yet been a study that has investigated ideologies of friendship that are embedded in the *Toy Story* series.

Researching Friendships in Popular Film Media

From a media standpoint, conceptualizations of friendships have prevailed in an abundance of recent and popular motion pictures (Berridge & Boyle, 2012; July, 2019), such as Waters' (2004) *Mean Girls* and Stanton's (2016) *Finding Dory*. July (2019) from the *New York Times* found that many contemporary Hollywood films have diverged from the romantic partnership narrative, a theme that has often occupied multiple film genres, towards stories of deep friendship. July further interprets the prevalence of friendship narratives in Hollywood films as indicative of American adults' current values on close friendships rather than romantic fulfilment; she elucidates this conception based on a 2017 census report in the United States, which reported approximately 45 percent of Americans over the age of 18 are unmarried, compared to 28 percent of individuals in the 1960 census report—thus, implying a shift towards an increase in friendship narratives based on what society may deem as relevant. Similarly, in a study that investigated the gendered friendship narratives in contemporary Hollywood films, Berridge and Boyle (2012) found that an abundance of films centered on either traditional female (e.g., *Bridesmaids* [Feig, 2011]) or male (e.g., *I Love You, Man* [Hamburg, 2009]) friendship narratives, as opposed to romantic partnership narratives. In their analysis, Berridge and Boyle found that *friendship* in Hollywood films is often represented by stereotypical representations of

gender. ‘Female’ friendships are often represented as lifelong, conflict-ridden, or comprised of a storyline where adolescent female friends progress into adulthood, which is often heterocentric (i.e., both female friends engage in a heteronormative lifestyle). The ‘male’ friendship narrative, too, often embodies both friends entering into heteronormative relationships—or, the two lead-male protagonists form of a homosocial bond. In a like manner, Evely (2005) highlights the theme of friendship in feature-animated films, such as Disney-Pixar’s *Finding Nemo* (Stanton, 2003). Similar films have adhered to Disney-Pixar’s friendship narrative (Ebrahim, 2014), as such themes appear in a majority of its feature-length animated films, including: Disney-Pixar’s *Monsters’ Inc* (Docter, 2001) of a dyadic colleague/friendship between Mike and Sully; *Finding Dory* (Stanton, 2016) between Marlin and Dory; and *Up’s* (Docter, 2009) befriending narrative between Carl and Russell. A multitude of ideas notwithstanding, the salience of friendships has been widely acknowledged in media and academic scholarship, and research on the fundamental features of friendships continue to persist (Fink & Hughes, 2019).

Friendship Studies

What is Friendship?

Friendships are a particularly unique phenomenon in the human condition; two or more persons may choose to form a relation that is outside the family (i.e., set apart from parents and siblings; Fink & Hughes, 2019) based on a series of common interests, where time spent together is meant to evoke feelings of happiness and fulfillment. Additionally, research scholars have recognized friendship as a special relation in the lives of children. These relations are often carried throughout the lifespan, and are identified as a significant contribution to children’s emotional and social well-being (Newcomb & Bagwell, 1995). However, over recent decades, Leibowitz (2018) and a multitude of scholars have aspired to identify the fundamental features

and characteristics that define children's friendships (Troop-Gordon et al., 2019). Indeed, the definition and characteristics of friendship emerged as a notable focus of research throughout the past 60 years (Carter & Nutbrown, 2016). Recent scholarship in children's social relations have defined friendship as a symmetric relation (Leibowitz, 2018), where two or more persons demonstrate "mutual affection and support" (Carter & Nutbrown, 2016, p. 396) towards one another. Scholars have argued that children's friendships involve a reciprocal "liking" of one another, where individuals seem to enjoy each other's company and relate to one another over shared interests (Carter & Nutbrown, 2016). Previous scholarship in the fields of psychology (Troop-Gordon et al., 2019) and sociology (Carter & Nutbrown, 2016) have predicated multiple distinctive features and definitions of the friendship phenomenon in middle childhood (Berndt, 2004; Bukowski, 2001; Bukowski et al., 1996; Leibowitz, 2018) and argue that a majority of its prominent features are specific according to a child's stage of development. Indeed, Berndt (2004) describes children's friendships to shift over time as they transition through childhood and adolescence, whereby Bowker (2004) asserts that friendships in middle to late childhood are typically associated with features such as increased socio-emotional maturity (e.g., self-disclosure with peers) and stability. Given the focal research inquiries and scope of this project, I explored children's dyadic friendships in middle- to late childhood/early adolescence (i.e., 13-years-old) since these relations become more central in children's lives during these years (Maunder & Monks, 2019) and influences significant facets of their development, characteristics, and adjustment as they transition into adolescence (Berndt, 2004).

Dyadic Friendships in Middle and Late Childhood

Given the aforementioned illustration of children's friendships, children's *dyadic* friendships are described as interactional relations between two persons (Peters et al., 2010),

which may also be referred to as a friendship pair of a close bond. With such, dyadic friendships may appear in the peer group context (i.e., a close pairing inside a group of more than two persons) or outside the peer group (i.e., a close relation solely between two persons). In fact, a child may label their peer as a “good” or “best” friend, whose label is often reciprocated by the other peer (Newcomb & Bagwell, 1995); however, Newcomb and Bagwell (1995) also discuss the dyad to contain various types of relations, such as: unilateral, non-friend, and/or associate relations. Peters and colleagues (2010) describe the dyad as a significant context for children to practice and develop prosocial skills, and Carter and Nutbrown (2016) argue that children’s dyadic friendships rated as high-quality (i.e., comprised of prosocial behaviour and care for another) significantly contributes to school adjustment and children’s perceptions and beliefs of peers (Troop-Gordon et al., 2019). In a study by Troop-Gordon and colleagues (2019), the authors found bidirectional associations between a child’s peer group beliefs and their experience at the dyadic level. The authors found that children who perceived their peers as exhibiting negative behaviours (e.g., dishonesty and hostility) typically experienced lower quality dyadic friendships, such as unfriendliness and negative treatment. Contrarily, children who perceived peers as exhibiting prosocial behaviours, such as helpfulness and friendliness, appeared to experience supportive friendships at the dyadic level. Troop-Gordon and colleagues argue that children’s observations of—and interactions in—the peer group may help or hinder dyadic friendship formation. In a different study, Deutz and colleagues (2015) further posit that successful friendships in middle childhood are an especially important indicator of a child’s social competence during these critical school-aged years. Similarly, Cassidy and colleagues (2003) assert that children’s perceived social competence in childhood—that is, their ability to form friendships, experience peer acceptance, demonstrate positive affect, and exhibit conflict

resolution skills—may predict subsequent social competence in adolescence. Conversely, school-aged children who experience peer rejection and exhibit high externalizing behaviours (i.e., aggression, violence) may predict adverse outcomes in adolescence.

Friendship Characteristics. Berndt (2004) describes close friendships in middle childhood and early adolescence as characterized by increased levels of intimacy and closeness. Interestingly, Kraft and Mayeux (2018) found differences among boys' and girls' friendships during these years and found girls to partake in more self-disclosure, whereas boys engaged less in *intimate* dyadic exchanges but prefer socializing in the larger peer group (Bowker, 2004). However, previous scholars have identified reciprocity as a consistent characteristic of friendship across gender (e.g., Bowker, 2004). In another study, Laghi and colleagues (2014) assessed school-aged children's perceptions of friendship and had children create pictorial representations of dyadic friendships. After data analysis, they found that children perceived "similarities" as an essential characteristic of their closest friendships. This notion relates to previous literature which found shared common interests as an essential characteristic of dyadic friendships (Carter & Nutbrown, 2016). While considerable research on the developmental features of children's dyadic friendships currently exists, there is little research that describes children's subjective perceptions of their friendships at the dyadic level. I argue that children's perceptions of dyadic friendships are invaluable to the study of children's friendships; in particular, research that addresses their lived experiences in order to understand the dyadic friendship phenomenon.

Shifts in Approaches to Researching Children's Friendships

Friendship studies became a relatively new phenomenon, and active domain, under investigation during the past two decades (Berndt, 2004; Bukowski, 2001). Indeed, Bukowski (2001) discussed how scholars of family systems turned towards the peer system as an

alternative means to examine the process of children's socialization. Thus, shifts in the domain of friendship studies emerged that led to the development of novel conceptual models to examine the complexity of social interactions. One such model was Hinde's (1979, 1987; as cited in Bukowski, 2001) approach, which recognized three pertinent levels of social interaction: the individual, the dyad, and the group. Models similar to those of Hinde's (1979, 1987; as cited in Bukowski, 2001) made it possible for research scholars to conceptualize the socialization process of children amongst their peers which, led to more organized and systematic approaches to analyze the peer relation—and soon after, the study of children's friendships. Peer researchers found that novel measures of peer relations predicted children's subsequent academic success and adjustment into adolescence (Cassidy et al., 2003) and adulthood (Deutz et al., 2015).

A multitude of researchers emerged in children's friendship scholarship (Berndt, 2004; Bukowski, 2001; Bukowski et al., 1996; Carter & Nutbrown, 2016; Dunn & Cutting, 1999; Hartup, 1996; Newcomb & Bagwell, 1995) that solidified the essential role of friendships in children's social and emotional development and well-being. Nevertheless, the aforementioned shifts in friendship studies affords further opportunities to examine children's ability to form and maintain relationships, particularly as it occurs at the dyadic level (Parker & Asher, 1993). Deutz and colleagues (2015) are among a multitude of scholars who argue the need for further investigation on the features of children's dyadic friendship interactions. Indeed, Dunn and Cutting (1999) also argued that limited research exists on children's closest dyadic friendships.

Previous Research on Children's Conceptualizations of Dyadic Friendships

Research on children's perceptions of their close friendships have garnered considerable scholarly attention over recent decades (Laghi et al., 2014; Troop-Gordon et al., 2019). Previous scholars in the fields of sociology and psychology have examined children's friendships based

on a child's quality rating of a peer they nominate as their best friend (Deutz et al., 2015). In a similar vein, researchers have employed numerous assessment tools to assess children's perceptions of their close friendships, namely: questionnaires (Troop-Gordon et al., 2019), rating scales (Poulin & Boivin, 1999), observations of interactions (Deutz et al., 2015), and pictorial assessments (i.e., analyzing children's drawings of friendship; Laghi et al., 2014). Numerous assessment tools notwithstanding, there have been few studies that have examined children's subjective ideas of friendships using a qualitative research design—that is, independent of pre-established questionnaires and criteria found in quantitative studies, respectively. As such, I have designed a study that explores children's ideas of dyadic friendships using Disney-Pixar's *Toy Story* films as a critical media literacy tool.

The Present Study

Research Questions

Given the pervasive role of Disney-Pixar's *Toy Story* franchise in children's popular culture and nation-wide family entertainment, as well as the significance of dyadic friendships in children's lives, I will explore two focal research questions:

- (1) How are dyadic friendships represented in the *Toy Story* series through the characters of 'Buzz' and 'Woody'?

Prior to my interviews with children, I conducted a textual analysis to examine particular ideologies that represent Buzz and Woody's friendship. I deemed it important to conduct my own textual analysis, from a critical perspective, on the messages produced by Disney-Pixar in the *Toy Story* series' theme of dyadic friendships. This reading helped inform my ideological interpretations of the dyadic friendship narrative in the series, and facilitated my purposeful clip selection for the audience reading. As suggested by Luisi (2019), a critical analysis of the present

themes was important as these types of character interactions may shape children's ideas and conceptions about the reality of friendships in their lives, which makes it imperative to understand *what* types of themes they observe in the series.

- (2) How do three child participants from different cities across North America explain close friendships after viewing clips of Buzz and Woody from the *Toy Story* series? And how do they describe their experiences with dyadic friendships in middle- to late childhood?

Through an audience reading and critical media literacy approach, children and adults can reflect on the images and representations of friendships as they are depicted in the *Toy Story* films. As Giroux and Pollock (2010) posit, Disney is a pedagogical influence in the way that ideologies are internalized at both a conscious and subconscious level. In a focus group meeting with participants, I applied CML techniques in open-ended questions to encourage participants to actively think about the messages promoted in these texts. Through facilitation and open-ended questions during two interviews—our first meeting for rapport building and subsequent focus group—I gained an understanding of how children conceptualize dyadic friendships after watching clips of Buzz and Woody, and we explored its resonance in their social lives.

Methodology

In this section, I introduce the current study's research design and an overview of the selected theoretical frameworks. I discuss, as well, the participants, recruitment process, the procedures involved to explore my two focal research questions, and ethical considerations.

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design that explores the ideologies of dyadic friendships as they are represented through the characterizations of Buzz and Woody in the *Toy*

Story films, and children's subjective perceptions of dyadic friendships after viewing selected clips of Woody and Buzz interacting. The theoretical frameworks for the project are cultural studies, which involves a text analysis and audience reading, and critical media literacy. For the audience reading, semi-structured and open-ended interview questions were guided by critical media literacy techniques in a focus group interview with participants.

Theoretical Frameworks

Cultural Studies. The field of cultural studies examines the ways in which cultures are produced and reproduced within society (University of Winnipeg, n.d.). Cultural studies theorist Johnson (1987) asserts that cultural studies exercises an array of interdisciplinary fields of study, drawing upon innumerate theories and practices. These fields of inquiry include, but are not limited to: the study of media, popular culture, sociology, and humanities (University of Winnipeg, n.d.). Further, Johnson attributes two key characteristics of cultural studies as informed by elements of Marxist discourse, which are consciousness and subjectivity. According to Marxist theory (as cited in Johnson, 1987) human beings acquire the cognitive capability of *consciousness*; he believed that “the product has ‘already existed ideally’ before it is produced... [and had] existed in the consciousness [and] the imagination” (p. 44). The notion of consciousness (Johnson, 1987) can be traced to early theoretical features of cultural studies, in that cultural products or texts— ‘text’ being a subject or object that can be isolated and analyzed—are produced in its material form in a private space before it is distributed and consumed by the public. In this regard, as discussed earlier in the literature review, the *Toy Story* films were produced by the developers at Pixar, with the distribution on the part of Walt Disney Productions (Levy, 2016). As Giroux (2004) has argued, Disney-Pixar Studios possess immense cultural authority in its child and adult audiences worldwide, where scholars have attested to

Disney-Pixar's animated-films as forms of public pedagogy (e.g., Ebrahim, 2014). Certainly, a cultural studies framework makes it possible to perceive Disney-Pixar's animated films as not only a vehicle of entertainment, but as a cultivation of particular ideologies that are often subtly understood through its viewership. Thus, of the second element derived from Johnson, *subjectivity* refers to human beings' capability to *unconsciously* possess knowledge of the social world based on the elements in their surroundings. Johnson further illustrates the notion of subjectivity to the ability for human beings to inhabit particular ideologies that are promoted through various texts in their social environments. In this regard, cultural studies, therefore, intends to abstract (Johnson, 1987) and describe how texts produce and reproduce specific ideologies that are often inadvertently realized.

In examining the popular culture icon of *Toy Story* for the purpose of this study, children's perceptions of the dyadic friendship phenomenon operate on both a conscious and subjective level as argued through a cultural studies framework. Thus, Johnson (1987) presents a four-step conceptual model that is used to understand the "production, circulation, and consumption of cultural products [i.e., texts]" (p. 46), whose process I integrated into the current study to explore the ideologies of dyadic friendships in the *Toy Story* series and children's subjective perceptions on the latter.

The first step in Johnson's model involves analyzing the production of the *Toy Story* franchise, including the conditions that produced and constructed the text into public discourse (Johnson, 1987). Johnson's second step refers to engaging in an in-depth analysis of the chosen text and its production of particular meanings and ideologies. Indeed, the *Toy Story* films assume the role of a text in its ability to promote meaningful elements of culture to individuals in society. However, in order to explore the ideologies of dyadic friendships in this text, cultural studies

affords “textual analysis” and “audience readings” as two critical modes of inquiry (Johnson, 1987; Kellner & Share, 2007), both of which will be used in my procedures to interpret my research questions. Thus, Johnson’s third step involves an individual’s reading of a specific text, which represents a form of data collection in cultural studies known as *textual analysis*. In this manner, a textual (text) analysis utilizes elements from a semiotic approach (Johnson, 1987) and is defined as the process through which one describes and interprets a particular area of interest (e.g., dyadic friendships) as it is represented in a particular text; this includes a thoughtful analysis on the denotative (i.e., a literal meaning) and connotative (i.e., interpretive) signs as they appear in the film text. For the purpose of this study, a text analysis approach helped to meaningfully interpret the ideologies of dyadic friendships based on examining the interactions between Buzz and Woody in the *Toy Story* films. In a similar vein, an *audience reading* is also an integral data collection component in cultural studies. Kellner and Share (2007) argue for the necessity of examining *how* the audience interprets media texts; through an audience’s perception of media texts, we can best understand *what* messages are being perpetuated through popular media texts, and *how* they are interpreted by audiences of all ages. Therefore, an audience reading was employed with child participants to analyze their perceptions of the dyadic friendship phenomenon in the *Toy Story* text. During the audience readings, the child participants took precedence as the experts whereas I, the researcher, actively engaged with their ideas while claiming a non-expert status. Ultimately, Johnson’s final step in the circuit examines how the subjective interpretations of a phenomenon represents the social relations and lived cultures of society. Through a text analysis and audience reading, these methods helped contribute to our growing understanding of how ideologies of dyadic friendships in the *Toy Story* series appear in

the public sphere (Johnson, 1987). Research from the friendship literature will inform both readings.

Critical Media Literacy. Critical media literacy (CML) is a tool that affords individuals the opportunity to critically engage in, challenge, and interpret images that are produced in the media (Flores-Koulish & Smith-D'Arezzo, 2016); this framework is combined with the audience reading described above in a focus group interview with three children. Originating from critical theory (Garofalo, 2013), CML, in its simplest terms, is the critical analysis of the messages that are promoted in media texts. These critical analyses often work to challenge dominant ideologies that are perpetuated in media texts, while also inviting individuals to reflect on their own life experiences (Garofalo, 2013). Recent scholars have argued for the educational significance of CML to be recognized as a critical element in literacy, given the profound prevalence of popular culture texts in the lives of many North American children (Flores-Koulish & Smith-D'Arezzo, 2016; Kellner & Share, 2007; Kesler et al., 2016). Popular media texts are not only recognized as meaningful cultural artifacts, but as agents of socialization in individuals' understanding (Flores-Koulish & Smith-D'Arezzo, 2016; Giroux & Pollock, 2010; Lugo-Lugo & Bloodsworth-Lugo, 2009). It is important to note that Kellner and Share (2007) assert that CML is often used as a form of social action to critically interrogate representations of political and social issues (e.g., race, gender, sexuality) in popular texts; thus, I used techniques in CML in a focus group with children to facilitate a discussion about ideologies of dyadic friendships.

Media scholar Buckingham (1993) writes that young children lack the ability to differentiate between the accuracy of the messages promoted in the media to that of reality. According to Buckingham, this implies that young audiences are persuaded to accept the ideologies promoted through media texts, as opposed to questioning its authenticity in their

social and emotional lives. However, children as young as 7-years-old appear to demonstrate the ability to evaluate and criticize a television series' degree of realism compared to that of illusion (Buckingham, 1993). Buckingham further posits that children in middle childhood possess the ability to compare what they view in the media to their own experiences; through reflection on their current experiences, they are not only able to acknowledge the media's degree of illusion, but they are able to relate to whether the images promoted in the media reflect current social relations (Buckingham, 1993). In utilizing a CML approach, and its bearings in cultural studies, the latter implies that children in middle to *late* childhood acquire the ability to actively participate in their media consumption in a meaningful way. By a child's eleventh-year, they further exhibit the ability to recognize screen and media as both a construct of illusion *and* realism (Buckingham, 1993). However, it is important to note that children's ability to critically analyze the social discourses that appear in media texts are often facilitated through adults' elicitation of open-ended questions. Thus, as part of the goals for children and CML, this includes the ability to question the representation (Flores-Koulish & Smith-D'Arezzo, 2016) and connotations of particular notions in an abundance of media texts.

Participants

Three participants (2 girls, 1 boy) who were 13-years-of-age were recruited for this study. As inclusion criteria, participants were required to have seen at least one of the four *Toy Story* films to ensure a balance of knowledge in the character narratives. A contingency plan due to the current COVID-19 situation required participants to have access to: (1) a technological device with an audio-visual feature; (2) an internet connection; and (3) a free video conferencing application (e.g., Zoom). The sample includes English-speaking participants of racially and

ethnically diverse backgrounds. A profile of each participant is included in the findings and analysis section of this study.

Recruitment. Participants were recruited through purposive sampling in my close social network. The participants' parents and I corresponded over email throughout the entire process. Participants also received my personal contact information (i.e., phone number and personal email address) if they had any questions, concerns, or comments at any time during the data collection process. Prior to a participant's consent to partake in this study, I emailed parents a letter of recruitment with a succinct overview of the project (see Appendix A), and a child assent form that provided information about the project in child-friendly language. Parents and their child who agreed to participate in the current study received a letter of consent (see Appendix B), alongside the child assent form (see Appendix C). Provided that my participants were minors under the age of 18, it was important to receive participants' written and verbal assent to participant in the study (Hays & Singh, 2012), especially as it contributes to the trust and rapport that is formed between the researcher and participant.

Procedures

Research Question 1: Text Analysis

In order to examine the ideologies of the dyadic friendship between Buzz and Woody in *Toy Story*, I employed a text analysis approach derived from the cultural studies framework. I watched each of the four *Toy Story* films twice in order to familiarize myself with Woody and Buzz Lightyear's relationship. During the first viewing, I recorded descriptive notes of all interactions that occurred between Woody and Buzz Lightyear, as well as comments they made about the other when they were not together. In the second viewing, I reviewed my descriptive

notes from the first viewing, and included musical elements that may be used to interpret the character's emotions.

Data Analysis. I applied an inductive coding approach as my first-level coding based on my observation notes of all interactions that occurred between Woody and Buzz. Following, I formed categories of the emergent codes derived from the first cycle coding as my second-level coding, which formed the basis of my interpretations of the ideologies of the dyadic friendship narrative (see Appendix I for text analysis coding sample). These data were disseminated into a comprehensive body of findings. Lastly, in relation to Johnson's (1987) fourth step of the cultural production of meanings, findings of ideologies of dyadic friendships were closely related to the friendship literature in the analysis and discussion sections of the current study. The aim of the findings is twofold: (1) to gain an understanding on the ways dyadic friendships are represented in the *Toy Story* text, as children who observe these films may shape their understanding of friendship to the associated themes; and (2) to consider how adults may apply these themes to engage in meaningful discussions with children about close friendships.

Research Question 2: Audience Reading

I explored the second research question using a modified version of the methodologies in Garofalo's (2013) published thesis from Brock University. Based on the qualitative nature and cultural studies framework of this study, I collected data from individual and focus group interviews, held two weeks apart, and applied elements of CML in an audience reading of selected *Toy Story* clips with my participants. Interviews were audio and video recorded on my secured, personal devices. (A contingency plan, due to the COVID-19 situation, adapted the audience reading to online interviews through "Zoom," an online video conferencing platform.)

Interview 1: Individual. The first meeting adopted a modified approach to Garofalo (2013), in that this session was exclusively intended to build rapport with the participants, and to help me gain an understanding of their general perceptions of friendships and their relationship to the Disney phenomenon. I met with each of the three participants for an individual interview that lasted between 35-minutes and 1 hr and 15-minutes. I developed two sets of interview questions to explore their ideas of the following two phenomena: Set #1 on ‘friendship,’ and Set #2 on ‘Disney.’ Participants were asked 13 questions in both sets, for a total of 26 questions. Based on the aforementioned friendship literature, I asked participants open-ended questions about their ideas of friendships, such as the following questions:

- What is a friend?
- How would you describe a *good* friend?
- What makes someone a really *close* friend?

Additionally, given the exploratory nature of this study on children’s popular culture, I asked questions about their relationship and feelings towards the Disney phenomenon (see Appendix E for full individual interview protocol), such as:

- How would you rate how much of a fan you are of Disney?
- “What comes to mind when you think about Disney?” (Garofalo, 2013, p. 83)
- Tell me about your favourite friendship between characters. Why are they your favourite friendship pair?

At the end of our first meeting, I introduced children to what we will do in our second and final interview, as well as provided a brief introduction to CML.

Interview 2: Focus Group. The second interview consisted of a focus group that I facilitated with all three participants. Here, participants met one another for the first time, and the

interview lasted approximately 1 hr 40 minutes. The focus group adopted a modified version of Garofalo (2013) in using techniques in CML to provoke thoughtful discussion about the presented ideologies in the film texts. In this meeting, I provided participants with an overview of the interview process, an introduction to the purpose of CML, and subsequently, showed them five film clips of key moments in Buzz and Woody's relationship (based on the text analysis) such as when they first met on Andy's birthday and when they were trapped together at Sid's house (see Appendix F for focus group protocol) through *Disney Plus's* Group Watch platform.

As demonstrated by Garofalo (2013), I informed participants on the events that led up to the shown film clip, in order to provide a full context of the scenario. Participants were shown the clips once, and each film clip ranged between 2 to 3-and-a-half minutes. Each clip was followed by several open-ended questions that opened critical discussion (Garofalo, 2013) on Buzz and Woody's relationship to explore the participants' understanding of the dyadic friendship phenomenon in the *Toy Story* texts. Focused questions include:

- What do you think of this scene?
- How did this scene make you feel?
- What does this scene make you think about in terms of friendship?
- Would you do anything differently in any of the character's positions?

Data Analysis. All interviews were transcribed for the purpose of analyses.

Transcriptions were completed manually and were transcribed onto a word document in the form of a code chart. Given the study's research inquiries, only data from the focus group interview were coded and analyzed; excerpts from the individual interviews informed participant profiles and were periodically incorporated into the audience reading findings. I used an open coding technique as my first-level coding measure; this allowed me to identify key words, phrases (Hays

& Singh, 2012) or themes that arose from the participants' responses to the interactions between Buzz and Woody. Based on the identified codes in the first coding cycle, I used axial coding as my second-level coding technique in order to form emergent themes of their interpretations of dyadic friendships (see Appendix J for coding samples of audience reading). Interrater reliability was conducted by a lab colleague on one of the five film clip discussions (i.e., film clip 1) with an 85% agreement of identified codes.

Ethical Considerations. A certification of ethics approval was obtained for this study (see Appendix G). In combination with the parental consent and child assent forms discussed in the aforementioned procedures section, extra provisions were applied to ensure participants' safety and comfort during both online interviews through the Zoom application. Participants were required to attend both interviews nearby a trusted adult over the age of 18 (i.e., same house or nearby room) in case of any unpredictable circumstances that could occur in a participant's immediate surroundings that were beyond my control. In addition, participant confidentiality was ensured through password protected documents that were only retrievable by myself and the research team. Participant confidentiality was further achieved through participant's personal selection of a unique pseudonym for the purpose of analysis. Moreover, I advised parents of the interview protocol prior to each child's meeting, as well as informed all participants at the onset of each interview on their rights to participate in the study.

Analysis and Discussion

The findings have been organized into two sections. The first section, "Findings: Phase One," explores findings of dyadic friendship themes from the text analysis. The second section, "Findings: Phase Two," reviews findings from the audience reading conducted with three child participants. Both sections are followed by a discussion and implications of the findings.

Findings Phase One: Text Analysis

The first phase of the findings explores the primary research inquiry: “How are dyadic friendships represented in the *Toy Story* series through the characters of ‘Buzz’ and ‘Woody’?”

The text analysis revealed five emergent themes of how dyadic friendships are depicted in the *Toy Story* series that suggest the formation, maintenance, and fate of dyadic friendships as they appear in the *Toy Story* quadrilogy: (1) friendships are formed by a multitude of internal factors (i.e., individual characteristics); (2) external factors as conducive contexts for friendship formation; (3) interpersonal characteristics as key attributing features of friendship formation; (4) friendships as maintained through affective reciprocity; and (5) the fate and future of friendships. Each emergent theme and their subthemes are presented in the forthcoming analysis. (See Appendix H for a table of the findings for Phase One: Text Analysis.)

I decided to isolate the first *Toy Story* (Lasseter, 1995) film for the first three emergent themes of the text analysis (i.e., internal factors, external factors, and interpersonal characteristics) to showcase how Buzz and Woody’s friendship became established around opposition rather than reciprocation, where *Toy Story 2*, *3* and *4* represent the fourth (i.e., maintenance of friendships) and fifth (i.e., future and fate of friendships) themes of how dyadic friendships are depicted across the series.

1. *Internal Factors*

Individual Characteristics. The individual characteristics of Buzz and Woody contributed to their friendship formation. Indeed, analysis found that when both characters exhibited *positive* characteristics, such as receptivity and amiability to the other, their interactions became increasingly congenial. On the contrary, Woody’s display of *negative* behaviours towards Buzz (e.g., aggression and hostility) upon Buzz’s arrival proved adverse to

their friendship formation. Instances that showcased the latter is presented in the following section, whereby positive characteristics are presented in the subsequent analysis.

Woody's individual characteristics were informed, largely in part, by his experiences with Andy. Woody first appeared in the *Toy Story* quadrilogy as the main protagonist in 6-year-old Andy's pretense, as a sheriff who saved the town from danger; his identity, thus, suggested courageous, noble, and assertive characteristics that were distinctive from the larger toy group. Indeed, Woody channeled these attitudes in his interactions with his peers, where he exhibited cordial (e.g., complimenting others) and amiable behaviours towards them. In addition to Woody's relationship with his peers, he is also granted as Andy's "favourite toy," which, as illustrated through Randy Newman's "You've Got A Friend in Me" musical score, accentuates his feelings of loyalty, security, and contentedness in his friendship with Andy. However, Woody's friendly personage and seemingly prosocial behaviour abruptly shifted upon the arrival of Andy's new "Buzz Lightyear" toy; Andy and Woody's peer toys became awestruck with Buzz, wherein Woody appeared to feel dispossessed of his dominant role amongst the group.

While it is inferred that given his altruistic persona he would delightfully welcome, and sustain, a new connection with a peer, his overtly prosocial behaviours shifted to rather *antisocial* acts towards Buzz. By way of illustration, Woody not only exhibited frequent non-verbal and aggressive behaviours towards Buzz—such as being cross armed, eyerolling, and displaying angry facial expressions, but responded through relational aggression tactics (Kraft & Mayeux, 2018) that included, but was not limited to, bouts of name-calling ("Buzz Light-Snack"), belittling ("[his wings] are plastic. He can't fly!"), and threats of violence, such as insinuating a physical fight ("So you want to do it the hard way, huh?"). Buzz seldom engaged with Woody's tactics to the same extent and would disregard, rebut, or exhibit genuine naiveté to

his unkindly remarks; a notable example of the latter was during an instance where Woody taunted Buzz over his space ranger persona as he shouted, “Hey, guys! Look! It’s the *real* Buzz Lightyear!” to which Buzz responded, “You’re mocking me, aren’t you?” Meanwhile, Buzz socialized with the larger peer-toy group where they mutually demonstrated an abundance of prosocial behaviours (e.g., partaking in activities, helping each other, and physical affection). The toys seemed to value Buzz’s positive behaviours towards them and condemned Woody’s unfavourable actions. In this manner, the display of anti- rather than *prosocial* behaviours hindered Buzz and Woody’s initial friendship formation. Indeed, this finding is supported by Bowker (2004) who discussed negative interactions as not only inhibiting the stability of friendship, but preventing a context for companionship and self-disclosure, whereas the display of *positive* behaviours (e.g., helping, generosity) contributes to successful friendship relations.

Self-Worth and Self-Esteem. Self-esteem and self-worth emerged as two recurring subthemes during analysis that provide insight into Buzz and Woody’s friendship formation. In this context, *self-esteem* was found to refer to a character’s feelings about themselves, while *self-worth* relates to the character’s perceptions of their own personal value (i.e., important to others). An association was found between Andy’s actions and Woody’s feelings of self-worth. Specifically, prior to Buzz’s arrival, Woody’s popular status among Andy and his peer toys seemed to correlate with his feelings of *high* levels of self-worth and self-esteem, whereas once his popular status was detracted, he felt obsolete and unvalued by the group; thus, it appeared that his feelings of *low* self-worth and self-esteem made it difficult for Woody to positively respond to a new peer.

By way of illustration, during the first 20-minutes of the first film, Woody seemed content in his role as the leader and favourite among Andy and fellow peer toys; he was proud to

have his own place on Andy's bed, his cowboy paraphernalia around Andy's bedroom, and enjoyed considerable attention from Andy and his peers. In fact, he seemed unthreatened by the possibility of being replaced by a new toy at Andy's birthday party while on the contrary, his friends voiced their insecurities and fears of replacement. Indeed, Woody responded to his peers' concerns with an optimistic intonation, which suggests that their fear of replacement may be associated to their feelings of *low* self-worth. In this sense, Woody seldom shared similar concerns as he appeared to feel *irreplaceable* to Andy, which may be ascribed to the amount of attention received from him. However, as Andy and peers devoted considerable attention to Buzz during- and outside of pretense, Woody's buoyant demeanor became downcast as he now saw Buzz acquire *his* status with the group where in one—among other—instances, he watched Buzz even assume his place on Andy's bed.

As the film continued, it appeared that *any* gesture from Andy or peers in Buzz's favor (e.g., mentioning him in conversation; Andy choosing him to bring to Pizza Planet) provoked Woody's hostility towards him. It is, however, interesting to note that by the end of the film, Andy held Buzz and Woody in a tight embrace after their turbulent journey to reunite, wherein the scene transitioned to Woody dancing alongside his friends as Buzz tuned into a broadcast of Andy opening his Christmas presents. Bowker (2004) is among many scholars of friendship studies to argue that positive friendship experiences contributes to higher levels of self-esteem; it may be inferred that both Buzz and Woody's later friendship formation *and* Andy's renewed affection to Woody by the end of the first film had a positive influence on Woody's self-esteem and self-worth, considering he appeared joyful as he sat alongside Buzz with a playful banter. Ultimately, this shift in Woody's increased self-esteem and feelings of self-worth seemed to

correlate with his successful friendship establishment with Buzz, whereas his prior low self-esteem appeared to hinder their friendship formation.

Expression and Awareness of Individual Needs. The expression and awareness of individual needs illustrates a key feature in Buzz and Woody's friendship formation, which became evident during their first and subsequent interactions in the first film. However, it is important to note that this theme was most pertinent in the case that Buzz and Woody struggled to affectively respond to each other's needs after multiple attempts of expressions which consequently, discouraged amicable interactions and friendship formation between them.

In the seconds after Woody befriends Buzz in *Toy Story I* (Lasseter, 1995), he hesitantly tells him that he is in *his* place on Andy's bed, and it is inferred that he intended to receive a favourable response. Albeit Buzz appeared to intently listen to Woody (i.e., direct eye contact and body language), he seemed apathetic to Woody's concerns as he stood silent in a self-protective stance with his laser pointed at Woody. Consequently, Woody appeared frustrated by Buzz's apathy, as it seemed he sought reassurance from Buzz that his being in his spot was a "mistake," in which this excerpt may also insinuate Woody's attempt to receive validation that he was still Andy's favourite toy. In relation to the latter, Buzz's needs, too, were unrequited by Woody during their first encounter. Of particular importance is that since Buzz identified as a space ranger as opposed to a toy, he spoke to Woody and peers in astronaut jargon that mainly concerned their assistance to repair his spaceship to help him return back home (in space). Woody not only neglected to acknowledge Buzz's space ranger persona as he actively dismissed—and mocked—any comments he made about being an astronaut, he was also reluctant to assist Buzz's spaceship repair. In turn, Buzz appeared frustrated by Woody's trivializing remarks (e.g., "he's not a space ranger!", "he can't fly!", "he doesn't fight evil!") and by his reluctance to help

him repair his spaceship to return home—where he, ultimately, solicited Woody’s acceptance of his identity and cooperation to repair his spaceship.

Both characters’ inattention to each other’s needs persisted in their subsequent interactions, however, a noticeable shift in this behaviour appeared towards the end of the first film. During an attempted escape from Sid’s house, Buzz (while separated from Woody) stumbled upon a *Buzz Lightyear* commercial on television and discovered that he is, indeed, a toy rather a space ranger. Buzz became disheartened after this revelation, and remained stagnant with a visible change in his demeanor. Once Woody reunited with Buzz, he seemed instantly concerned with Buzz’s despondency and asked him with an empathetic tone of voice, “Buzz? Are you okay? What happened to you?” From this excerpt, Woody seemed to recognize Buzz’s distress and promptly rushed to his side. As the film unfolded, it was not until Buzz and Woody were trapped together on Sid’s desk when Woody appeared to effectively listen to Buzz as he divulged his feelings of despair for his newfound (toy) identity; Woody appeared attuned to his sadness and offered both consolation and words of encouragement, “Hey, being a toy is a lot better than being a space ranger!” while emphasizing his physical attributes: “You have wings! You glow in the dark... You’re a *cool* toy!” In addition, Woody seemed to offer validation to Buzz’s query, “But why would Andy want me?” and Woody responded in an uplifting tone of voice: “Why would Andy want you? You’re a Buzz Lightyear! [...] Any toy would give up their moving parts just to be you!” As a result, Woody’s attentiveness appeared to reinvigorate Buzz to his determined, confident persona and in turn, he helped release Woody from beneath the crate on Sid’s desk. Ultimately, their attunement to each other’s needs facilitated subsequent prosocial interactions, such as helpfulness and affective listening, and decreased their antipathic behaviours (i.e., frustration from feeling misunderstood).

2. External Factors

Peer Group Influence. Analysis revealed that negative interactions in the peer group had a significant influence on Buzz and Woody's friendship formation in the first film; in this vein, it appeared that the toys' remarks had hindered amicable interactions between them. Primarily, it is interesting to note that the toys appeared acutely fascinated with Buzz's physical attributes and abilities, over other characteristics, at the onset of their first meeting. In fact, Buzz's physical features and abilities (i.e., "flying") seemed to entice their interest of—and involvement to—him; thus, suggesting that a new peer's materialistic properties (e.g., any type of new object) draws considerable attention from peers. However, the toys seemed to instigate competition in the form of direct comparison between Buzz and Woody's physical attributes, which seemed to ignite Woody's animosity towards Buzz. To illustrate, Slinky used a demeaning tone of voice as he compared Buzz's physical features (e.g., quality sound and buttons) to Woody's (e.g., indistinct sound and a pull string): "Hey, Woody's got something like that," and proceeded to roll his eyes as he said, "his is a *pull string*." In fact, Mr. Potato Head added in a sneering voice, "Yeah, only it sounds like a car ran over it!" Woody appeared dismayed by their comments as he clutched his pull string behind his back. Following the latter comments, Mr. Potato Head continued to taunt: "How come *you* don't have a laser, *Woody*?" where Woody moved beyond appearing dismayed to being visibly upset. Of particular relevance was that Woody exhibited outbursts of negative behaviours following the toys' contemptuous remarks, which suggests that unsupportive statements from peers upon a new peer's arrival has an adverse effect on initial friendship formation. Interestingly, in a study by Peters and colleagues (2010), the authors denote how "Peers can increase each other's deviancy or aggression, especially in friendships" (p. 399), which provides unique insights on how the toys' evidently malevolent comments

provoked a sequence of hostility from Woody. While the toys primarily utilized Buzz and Woody's physicality as objects of scrutiny, these segments suggest that peer group behaviour may not only encourage individual group members' antisocial or prosocial behaviours, but promote the idea to audiences that unkindly remarks may ultimately hinder friendship formation.

Peer Group Status. As the first film unfolded, it appeared that Buzz and Woody's *popular* peer group status had the potential to facilitate or inhibit initial friendship formation. In their study, Kraft and Mayeux (2018) note that "Popularity is an index of social power and visibility within the peer group" (p. 386) and further expressed how a popular peer may experience high levels of jealousy, that is often associated with positive or negative behaviours, upon the threat of the loss of one's relationship (i.e., with a close peer) and peer group status. Buzz's arrival as the new toy shifted the dynamic of Woody's "favourite toy" status; the toys now devoted ample attention to Buzz and *he* was soon established as the popular toy. As a result, Woody not only felt revoked of his popular status—as interpreted through Randy Newman's "Strange Things" score, whose title overtly signifies Woody's perplexity on the novel shift of status after Buzz's arrival—he appeared to experience a sequence of loss, including peer exclusion and decreased attention from Andy and peers. In fact, Woody's friends spent acutely less time in his presence where hitherto, they would constantly conglomerate around him. Similarly, Andy assigned Buzz as the hero during pretense, and changed his cowboy bedroom paraphernalia to space ranger. The latter shifts notwithstanding, Woody exhibited outbursts of negative behaviours in response to Buzz's newfound popular status.

Culture and Acceptance. Culture, in this context, is regarded as "toy culture," in that Woody and his peers abided by specific norms, values, and beliefs in their identity as toys to human children. Of particular significance, however, is that Woody and peers fostered a culture

around being “Andy’s toys”—in that, they collectively agreed upon Andy’s prominence in their lives (e.g., Woody: “What matters is that we’re there for Andy when he needs us”). Ultimately, the theme of culture, specifically in being *accepted* into a culture, emerged in the text analysis as a meaningful condition to understand, firstly, how Buzz—the “new toy”—integrated into the toy culture from “space” culture, and secondly, how Woody and peers responded to a toy who was outside of their accustomed culture.

One moment that portrayed the importance of culture and acceptance was when Buzz shared with Andy’s toys shortly after his arrival, “it looks like I’ve been accepted into your culture. Your chief, Andy, inscribed his *name* on me!” and revealed the word “ANDY” written on the bottom of his boot. In this segment, Buzz seemed to recognize that he had entered into a culture distinct from his own; he seemed humbled and surprised by Andy’s inscription from the pride in his voice, which suggests he felt accepted into “Andy’s toys” culture. It is also inferred that Buzz seemed to believe he was accepted into their culture as himself (a space ranger) rather a toy. However, Andy’s inscription on Buzz notwithstanding, Woody had his own reservations towards Buzz’s acceptance into Andy’s toys culture, despite his efforts to induce the idea upon Buzz that he was a toy and not a space ranger. Indeed, Woody and Buzz disputed over his “toy” versus “space ranger” identity on several occasions throughout the film (e.g., in front of peers, when they were alone), and these quarrels recurred until Buzz’s toy identity revelation towards the end of the film. Moreover, in addition to Woody’s sentiments of obsolescence to Andy after Buzz’s arrival, he seemed to have felt opposed to genuinely befriend Buzz based on his resistance of a toy identity. These excerpts, nevertheless, may suggest that dyadic friendship formation involves a certain degree of shared cultural values and identities.

Setting. A critical theme that emerged from text analysis revealed the importance of setting as an essential context upon which Woody and Buzz formed a close friendship. In this manner, it was during their confinement under precarious circumstances at Sid's house that shifted the nature of their friendship from oppositional into a closer bond.

Prior to their captivity at Sid's house, Woody and Buzz shared a space in Andy's bedroom, surrounded by Andy and their peers. However, within the context of Andy's room, the combination of the peer toys' constant comparison of Woody and Buzz alongside Andy's excitement of Buzz proved to have an adverse effect on Woody's willingness to truly befriend him. To illustrate, Woody appeared visibly upset (e.g., angry facial expression and clenched fists) as he overheard his peers' congratulatory remarks over Andy's inscription on Buzz, where Bo Peep interjected in consolation: "Don't let it get to you, Woody. [Andy will] always have a special place for you," though Mr. Potato Head sneered, "Yeah, like the attic!" Consequently, Woody reacted in frustration and forcefully confronted Buzz: "stay away from Andy, he's mine." The peer toys' contemptuous remarks within the context of Andy's newly altered *Buzz Lightyear* bedroom seemed to ignite their animosity of one another. Buzz and Woody seldom had the opportunity to converse between themselves in the absence of their peers until their captivity at Sid's house, which was conducive in their shift towards a friendship status.

Moreover, in the context of Sid's house, Woody was cognizant of the terror Sid inflicted on toys and thereby feared their safety upon confinement. Thus, when Woody and Buzz were captive in Sid's bedroom—a darkly garnered space with sinister objects, posters of skulls, and decayed furniture—both characters showed concern for each other's welfare and sought protection from Sid. For instance, Buzz and Woody began to follow each other's lead in many attempted escapes from Sid's bedroom, while simultaneously helping the other recover from

Sid's trauma (e.g., Buzz aided Woody's burn after a magnifying-glass incident). Additionally, they demonstrated increased concern for the other's well-being, such as using signals to prevent each other from danger (e.g., Woody: "Buzz, the coast is clear!"). In these manners, it appeared that the very essence of a change of context seemed to facilitate more prosocial behaviour and positive affect between them, particularly as it was exclusive of the peer toys' unkind remarks.

Shared Goals. The text analysis found shared goals as a pertinent subtheme that illustrates Buzz and Woody's gradual progression into a friendship status. During their first exclusive scene alone together while stranded at the DINOCO gas station en route to Pizza Planet, Woody proclaimed that he was now a "lost toy" and shouted to Buzz, "It's all your fault!" though Buzz contested: "My fault? If *you* hadn't pushed me out of the window in the first place!" Both characters appeared visibly exasperated while Woody continued, "If *you* hadn't shown up [at Andy's] and taken away *everything* that was important to me!" Consequently, their antipathy impeded their ability to cooperate with one another to travel back to Andy, and their dispute ended with Buzz leaving Woody to subsist for himself. However, Woody noticed a Pizza Planet delivery truck that was their way back to Andy and, while summoning Buzz back over, convinced Buzz that if he helped them back to Andy, he would help him return "home" (in space). Buzz agreed with Woody's proposition and together they ventured to find Andy at Pizza Planet, albeit much negotiation on *how* they would reunite with Andy.

Following their first moment of cooperation as illustrated in the previous excerpt, Buzz and Woody's communicative styles continued to evolve from disobliging to more cooperative behaviour in the context of Sid's house. Immediately upon their confinement in Sid's bedroom, Buzz and Woody were driven in their pursuit to escape and return to Andy. Indeed, not only would they follow each other's lead in their attempted getaways from Sid's bedroom, they also

appeared to offer each other strategies to bypass danger (e.g., safety from Sid's pit bull and his monstrous toys). These findings are similar to Newcomb and Bagwell (1995) who discussed *task activity* as a significant context for peers' mutual provision of problem-solving strategies to accomplish certain tasks. The authors further describe how friends, more than non-friends, provide mutual support in their completion of a common goal. Thus, the shift in Buzz and Woody's interactions from dismissive to cooperative behaviours appears to be attributable to their shared goal to return to Andy, whereby the absence of a collective objective may have prevented an opportunity for them to develop such collaborative skills in a friendship relation.

3. Interpersonal Characteristics

Following the internal and external factors that influenced their friendship formation, interpersonal characteristics refers to the intersubjective features of togetherness and mutual self-disclosure. These characteristics appeared as antecedents to the longevity and maintenance of their friendship.

Togetherness. The notion of togetherness is defined as the quantity of time Buzz and Woody spent together, where after they spent an increased amount of time with one another, their antipathy transitioned into more of a companionship comprised of mutual understanding. In addition, it is important to note that Woody referred to Buzz as a "friend" for the first time during their shared time together at Sid's house. Woody's ascribed friendship label gradually appeared after their several attempted escapes from Sid's house, which suggests that it was during these shared experiences that Woody recognized Buzz as a friend rather opponent.

As illustrated in the beginning of the first *Toy Story* (Lasseter, 1995), both characters' interactions with one another were brief and overtly confrontational, particularly on Woody's part, which consequently, did not entice opportunities for shared time together. However, as

Buzz and Woody found themselves alone together for the vast majority of the first film, it appeared as though the more time they spent with each other, the more they demonstrated positive affect to one another. Hartup (1996) described differences in friendship based on closeness and the amount of time spent together, whereby it seems that the increased time Buzz and Woody spent with each another facilitated a space to determine their companionship. Indeed, it appears as though the messages promoted to audiences is that both persons' shared time with one another not only facilitates friendship formation though may minimize—or diminish—mutual antipathy.

Mutual Self-Disclosure. A pivotal moment in the first *Toy Story* (Lasseter, 1995) film that helps elucidate Buzz and Woody's transition into a friendship status was their shared moment of vulnerability while trapped on Sid's desk. Particularly, it appeared that through their shared moment of disclosure, they developed a novel understanding of the other that evoked the realization of the extent of their similarities. Interestingly, previous scholars of friendship studies define *self-disclosure* as the act of sharing one's inner thoughts and feelings with another (e.g., Berndt, 2004). In fact, Bowker (2004) discussed the notion of *mutual* self-disclosure as both persons' sharing their inner states, which is recognized as a defining feature of close friendships in adolescence and middle childhood. Indeed, their mutual self-disclosure appeared to facilitate a causal sequence of positive affect (e.g., helping each other; words of encouragement) for the rest of the film, suggesting that mutual attention to each other's self-disclosure is not only associated with subsequent prosocial behaviours, though contributes to potential friendship formation.

During the segment on Sid's desk, Woody initiated the conversation by sharing, "Buzz, I can't do this without you. I need your help"; this was the first instance where Woody not only showed vulnerability in his request for Buzz's help, though he seemed to facilitate a space for

mutual self-disclosure since in turn, Buzz disclosed that he “can’t help” and further shared how he felt “insignificant” as a toy. As the scene unfolded, Buzz and Woody appeared to affectively respond to each other’s disclosure of their inner states before they helped each other escape off Sid’s desk. Woody responded to Buzz’s feelings of insignificance and expressed: “[Andy] thinks you’re the greatest, and it’s not because you’re a space ranger, pal. It’s because you’re a *toy!*” Woody seemed to realize that Buzz felt as though Andy would no longer want him as a toy and therefore, explained that Andy admires him *because* he is a toy. Akin to Buzz, Woody shared how he felt Buzz was “cooler” than him and queried: “Why would Andy want to play with *me?*” Buzz appeared to intently listen to Woody’s disclosure, where it seemed that Woody’s thoughts enticed him to realize that he was significant as a toy. In fact, Buzz seemed to recognize Andy’s importance to Woody and on the contrary, Woody’s value to Andy. Buzz seemed to intently reflect on their disclosure and thus, helped release Woody beneath the carton while asserting: “Come on, Sheriff. [Andy] needs us!” Ultimately, it appeared as though their shared moment of vulnerability was a definitive feature to the beginning of their imminent friendship longevity.

4. Maintenance and Stability of Dyadic Friendships Through Affective Reciprocity

The fourth theme derived from analysis found affective reciprocity as a defining feature of the maintenance and stability of Woody and Buzz’s friendship following the events in the first *Toy Story* (Lasseter, 1995) film. In their study, Bowker (2004) refers to the term *affective reciprocity*, which is understood as the mutual exchange of thoughts and emotions between persons. In a like manner, scholars of friendship studies afford reciprocity as key property of dyadic friendships (Bowker, 2004; Newcomb & Bagwell, 1995), whereby equal contributions from both persons were found to foster the stability and maintenance of friendship. Thus, Buzz and Woody maintained a close relationship across three subsequent films, whose narratives were

comprised of novel contexts, peer relations, and obstacles to overcome. Indeed, analysis found Buzz and Woody's interactions to be consistently reciprocal throughout such endeavors—particularly, their behaviours and interactions with one another were affectively parallel as opposed to unilateral, suggesting the former as a representative feature in their friendship maintenance. In this section, I discuss the affective features that exhibit the maintenance and stability of Buzz and Woody's friendship in three pertinent subthemes: care and concern for others, conflict management and resolution, and emotional and physical help and support.

Care and Concern. A recurrent theme that surfaced across the *Toy Story* series was both characters' care and concern of each other, revealing a representative feature of the maintenance of their friendship. Indeed, Buzz and Woody appeared to demonstrate genuine care and concern for each other's physical and emotional well-being as the films unfolded. Of particular importance is that these themes consistently appeared in two contexts: in one context, they exhibited care and concern *while* they were in each other's company (e.g., Buzz: "Woody, are you alright?") and secondly, during moments where they were separated from each other and voiced their concern for the other's whereabouts (e.g., Woody: "Wait, where's Buzz?"). The presence of these contexts not only suggests that care and concern operates within and outside of dyadic interactions, it implies that both persons' knowledge of the others' safety and well-being are equivalently important when they are apart.

Care and Concern Within Each Other's Company. As the films proceeded, Buzz and Woody appeared affectively considerate to each other; they exchanged thoughtful gestures, actions, expressions, and kind remarks, while also seeming empathetic to one another in moments that concerned the others' feelings. In an example towards the end of *Toy Story 2* (Lasseter et al., 1999), Woody shared with Buzz that he felt apprehensive about Andy "growing

up.” At the end of the film, Buzz softly approached Woody as he gazed at Andy alongside his family from Andy’s window: “You still worried?” Woody replied, “About Andy? Nah, it will be fun while it lasts,” and Buzz smiled, “I’m proud of you, cowboy.” Buzz appeared both concerned and thoughtful in his query about Woody’s disclosure from earlier in the film. In fact, Woody’s following response seemed to accentuate his appreciation for Buzz’s concern: “Besides, when it all ends, I’ll have old *Buzz Lightyear* to keep me company, for infinity and beyond,” which was received by Buzz through physical affection (e.g., smiling with Woody’s hand on his shoulder). This segment suggests how care and concern existed as an affective feature in their friendship, with both persons appearing sensitive to the others’ feelings while, at the same time, offering kind expressions that appeared symbolic of their importance and contentedness to each other.

Buzz and Woody seemed to continue vocalizing their care and concern for each other in *Toy Story 3* and *4*. To illustrate in *Toy Story 3* (Unkrich, 2010), Woody was skeptical over the toys’ decision to relocate to daycare, cautioning: “daycare’s a sad, lonely place for washed up old toys with no owners.” Based on Woody’s premise, he encouraged Buzz and toys to refrain from daycare, albeit they persisted to settle as daycare toys. In this segment, Woody—while also reflecting his beliefs to “be there for Andy” —voiced his concerns about Buzz and toys’ daycare endeavor, where it is inferred that he was worried about their happiness and well-being in an environment he deemed as “sad” and “lonely.” On the contrary, it appeared Woody felt Buzz and toys would feel safer and, ultimately, happier in Andy’s environment—a gesture Fink and Hughes (2019) attribute to friends’ increased awareness of each other’s feelings and desires.

Lastly, in *Toy Story 4* (Cooley, 2019), Buzz and Woody appeared both hypervigilant and empathetic to one another as showcased through their interactions. Interestingly, when one character would voice an observable concern to the other (e.g., Buzz: “Woah, [Forky’s] quite a

handful, Woody”) they persisted to show concern on the same matter as the film unfolded. To illustrate in one instance, Woody was drifting asleep after a several restless days of safeguarding Forky in Bonnie’s RV. As the toys slept, Buzz intently watched Woody struggle to stay awake and with a look of concern, rolled to his side and gently asked: “Hey buddy, you doin’ okay?”

Care and Concern During Separation. In moments when Buzz and Woody were apart, they expressed fear and worry for each other’s well-being, which appeared to be attributed to their genuine care and concern for one another. In *Toy Story 2* (Lasseter et al., 1999), Buzz watched the film’s antagonist, Al, steal Woody from Andy’s garage sale and attempted to follow Al’s getaway car with no success; the film unfolds as Buzz gathered the toy friends to find Woody, being diligent in his perseverance to bring him home. Similarly, in *Toy Story 3* (Unkrich, 2010), Woody discovered that Buzz and friends were in danger at Sunnyside Daycare and, synonymous to Buzz’s endeavors in the latter, he risked re-entering the setting to help them escape. These excerpts suggest that knowledge of the other’s involvement in danger took precedence over any event—in that, they were driven by their care for each other to suspend any premade plans (e.g., going home to Andy). Thus, during moments when Buzz or Woody were independently reunited with the toys, they consistently questioned the other’s whereabouts. It appeared they anticipated a response that either insinuated help (e.g., the peer toys: “Lotso did something to [Buzz], he thinks he’s a real space ranger again!”) or was in consideration of their well-being (e.g., Buzz: “Wait, what about Woody?”).

Conflict Management and Resolution. The subtheme of conflict management and resolution persisted across the three final *Toy Story* films, appearing as a representative feature of the maintenance of Buzz and Woody’s friendship. In his article on children’s friendships, Berndt (2004) suggests conflict as a negative dimension of close friendships, which often appears in the

form of competition or rivalry. Interestingly, conflict appeared across the series in the form of *disagreements* between both characters, whereby Buzz and Woody were conflicted in their views regarding situations that concerned theirs' - and their friends' well-being which consequently, leaves audiences to feel uncertain about the future of their relationship. However, it appeared that through their ability to amicably resolve their disagreements, they were able to maintain their friendship over time. In this regard, Bukowski (2001) notes that interactions in the dyad promotes innumerable opportunities to develop conflict *resolution* skills, particularly as both persons share and discuss different perspectives on matters, which Parker and Asher (1993) further address is a key feature of friendship maintenance and stability. Thus, as the storylines unfolded in *Toy Story 2, 3* and *4*, Buzz and Woody were faced with unique conflicts in each film that entailed a degree of conflict resolution skills, which are illustrated below.

In *Toy Story 2* (Lasseter et al., 1999), Buzz launched a rescue mission to save Woody from the toy collector, Al, while asserting: "Woody once risked his life to save me, and I couldn't call myself his friend if I wasn't willing to do the same." However, upon Buzz's arrival after a treacherous journey to Al's apartment, Woody was reluctant to leave with him and stated that he cannot return back to Andy's house; he did not want to leave his new friends (i.e., the Roundup Gang from Al's apartment) behind, after learning that he is a prestigious collectible item from the "Woody's Roundup" franchise. Buzz and Woody appeared to dispute over Woody's newfound attitude, where Buzz asserted, "[you] taught me that life's only worth living if [we're] being loved by a kid, and I travelled all the way to rescue [you] because *I* believed [you]." However, with a frown and crossed arms, Woody exclaimed that Buzz wasted his time. As a result, Buzz declared sternly, "Let's go everyone... [Woody's] not coming with us." After Buzz left through the apartment's air-vent, Woody seemed to reflect on their conversation while

tuning-in to an episode about friendship on the Woody's Roundup television program. As the episode played an acoustic version of "You've Got A Friend in Me," Woody intently watched a human child embrace the Woody doll on television and simultaneously lifted his boot, revealing the word "ANDY." Woody seemed to have realized the results of his actions and questioned, "What am I doing?... Buzz! Wait!... I'm coming with you!" Buzz reacted cheerfully to Woody's turnaround, and seldom appeared to exhibit any hostility towards him after their previous discord.

The events in the latter excerpt can be interpreted through a study by Newcomb and Bagwell (1995), where the authors discuss the significance of friends' uses of *strategies* to reconcile conflicts which, may consequently, maintain friendships; in this manner, Woody intently reflected on their quarrel and seemed to acknowledge that he misjudged the situation, realizing his decision may have risked the loss of his close friend (Buzz). Moreover, Buzz's amicable response to Woody's decision is also interpreted through Newcomb and Bagwell, where they suggest that friends, compared to nonfriends, will often "minimize the damage caused by conflict" (p. 337) to preserve their friendship. Hartup (1992; as cited in Newcomb & Bagwell, 1995) suggests that conflict resolution is often motivated by mutual investment, which is depicted through Buzz's actions as he was quick to dismiss their discord for the purpose that their friendship would subsist.

In the final two *Toy Story* films, Buzz and Woody were conflicted in their differing beliefs for the toys' future and well-being. In *Toy Story 3* (Unkrich, 2010), Buzz and Woody disputed whether the toys should start anew as daycare toys or stay in Andy's attic. Buzz concurred with Jessie that they "can have a whole new life [in daycare]" while Woody contended, "If [Andy] wants us at college, or in the attic, well then, our job is to be there for

him!” Buzz stressed to Woody, “Our mission with Andy is complete... What’s important now is that *we stay together*.” Woody seemed puzzled by Buzz’s response and seemed to believe that staying at Andy’s house was more important than the toys’ togetherness. As the film unfolded, however, Woody was able to dismiss their discord to rescue the toys from danger at the daycare, and simultaneously, the toys expressed they “were wrong to leave Andy.” Finally, while back in Andy’s bedroom, the scene filmed from Woody’s perspective as he gazed into a picture of a young Andy with the toys; his gaze, then, focused on him and Buzz while Andy’s mother’s voice appears in the background, “I wish I could always be with you.” Woody, thus, chose to follow Buzz and the toys to their new owner, Bonnie, instead of leaving to college with Andy, which suggests that Woody realized that togetherness was paramount over being separated. Meanwhile, in *Toy Story 4* (Cooley, 2019), Woody insisted that he, Buzz, and peers return back inside the antiques shop to rescue their friend (Forky) after a menacing escape from the shop’s ventriloquist dolls, though Buzz pleaded against his bid for the sake of the toys’ safety. However, Woody insisted on Forky’s rescue (e.g., “I don’t leave toys behind, Buzz!”) and re-entered the shop alone. This excerpt suggests that Buzz tried to protect Woody from the dangers inside the shop. However, he quickly accepted Woody’s decisions to return inside for the sake of their friend; he seldom displayed any hostility towards him and in turn, encouraged their friends to help him inside the shop. Moreover, both films unfolded quite similarly to that of the previous excerpt from *Toy Story 2* (Lasseter et al., 1999) but in comparison, Buzz and Woody seemed to actively reflect upon the *others’* opinions and adjusted their original plan for the others’ well-being.

Emotional and Physical Help and Support. Finally, analysis found Buzz and Woody’s offers of emotional and physical help and support as features conducive in the maintenance and stability of their friendship. Interestingly, Parker and Asher (1993) discussed *helping* as one of

the six qualitative features of close friendships, which they described as “the extent of [a] friends’ efforts to assist one another with routine or challenging tasks” (p. 612). In fact, in Maunder and Monks’ (2019) study, the authors found that reciprocated, close friendships contained higher levels of help in their interactions compared to non-reciprocated friends. As the series unfolded, Buzz and Woody provided a blend of emotional and physical assistance to one another, revealing prominent and affective features in their friendship maintenance. Of particular interest is that in actuality, there were minimal accounts where Buzz and Woody *explicitly* requested help; it appeared that offering (and receiving) help was more intuitively provided based on one’s attunement and awareness of the other’s needs and behaviours, which is illustrated in the subsequent sections.

Emotional Help and Support. In this context, emotional help and support refers to both characters’ provision of support to one another during moments where one or both persons exhibited emotional distress (e.g., visible apprehension and worry). As the series unfolded, Buzz and Woody’s provision of emotional support seemed to progress towards a deeper level of emotional intimacy in *Toy Story 4* (Cooley, 2019) compared to its two preceding films; this finding was of particular interest as it not only showcased how their emotional support to one another became increasingly complex as their friendship developed, it also suggests that the *depth* of emotional support may possibly be associated with friendship maintenance over time. To illustrate in an excerpt from Al’s apartment in *Toy Story 2* (Lasseter et al., 1999), Buzz asserts: “[Woody], you are a TOY!” in response to Woody’s newfound stardom and imminent status as a museum collectible in Japan. Woody hesitantly responds, “For how much longer? One more rip and Andy’s done with me, and what do I do then, Buzz? You tell me!” Buzz proceeded to reiterate to Woody how his lifelong credence of “being loved by a [child]” outweighs

“[watching] kids behind glass [in a museum]” in response to his doubts of being unplayable to Andy. Buzz’s insights seemed to elicit Woody’s epiphany that indeed, life with Andy was foremost to any other. Ultimately, Buzz seemed attuned to Woody’s rather divergent shift of values (i.e., a museum life versus life with Andy) and offered honest—yet stern—advice, intending to help Woody resolve his feelings of conflict. By the fourth *Toy Story* film, their provision of emotional support seemed to surface in discussions about mental health, a topic that was unobserved in the preceding films. As a case in point, while Woody supervised Forky in Bonnie’s RV, Buzz’s query (i.e., “You doin’ okay?”) prompted Woody to confide: “I don’t know, Buzz [...] I know you weren’t around when Andy was little, but I don’t remember it being this hard.” Buzz seemed receptive to Woody’s sentiments as he offered to watch Forky. Although Woody softly declined Buzz’s request, he offered insight into his inner states: “That little voice inside me would never leave me alone if I gave up.” Buzz inquired on whom the voice was, and Woody elaborated, “My conscience? The part of you that [...] *tells* you things? What you’re really thinking?” Buzz was fascinated by Woody’s wisdom, reciting, “so your inner voice... *guides* you?” This discussion trickled into Buzz’s behaviour as the final film proceeded, as he became attuned to his own inner voice and encouraged Woody to follow his.

Physical Help and Support. Across the final three films of the quadrilogy, Buzz and Woody, firstly, seemed to depend on one another for physical assistance in a multitude of tasks and secondly, they would initiate missions when one person needed rescue. It is interesting to note that these themes suggest that a certain degree of physicality is involved in the maintenance and stability of dyadic friendships, such as cooperation in physically accomplishing a task. In terms of moments of physical assistance, Woody seemed to take the lead to accomplish certain missions and would either delegate tasks to Buzz (e.g., “Buzz, give me a boost”) or, Buzz would

naturally help Woody while unprompted (e.g., following a plane on the runway to help Woody). In fact, Buzz seemed zealous to help Woody accomplish tasks, which denotes how one member of the dyad may be altruistically eager to help the other succeed. To illustrate in a short excerpt from *Toy Story 4* (Cooley, 2019), Buzz was determined to help Woody rescue Forky inside the antiques cabinet, and assisted Woody in escaping from the shop's ventriloquist dolls. In another instance in *Toy Story 3* (Unkrich, 2010), Buzz helped Woody release Lotso (the film's antagonist) beneath a heavy object on a waste conveyor belt as they neared the incinerator. Finally, Buzz and Woody frequently exerted themselves in coordinating each other's rescues. Interestingly, *rescuing* was a common theme across the series that not only suggests the idea that the dyad experiences a certain degree of risk, it implies that the other person will, without hesitation, partake in precarious situations for the sake of the other's safety.

5. The Future and Fate of Friendships

The fate and future of friendships was the final theme derived from text analysis, which refers to the uncertainty of the continuation, or dissolution, of close friendships. Previous scholars of friendship studies found the end of friendship as a significant phenomenon that is worthy of exploration (Newcomb & Bagwell, 1995), particularly for the *reasons* in which they dissolve (Bowker, 2004; Maunder & Monks, 2019). In their study on children's friendships, Newcomb and Bagwell (1995) note that children's friendships are similar to adults' friendships, in that they follow a developmental sequence and pattern—beginning with initial interactions, maintenance and stability—and in some cases, end in dissolution. Moreover, instances that illustrated the fate and future of Buzz and Woody's friendship appeared in two distinct moments in *Toy Story 3* and *4*, which will be explored through the following subthemes: (1) pursuing

one's ambitions in *Toy Story 3* (Unkrich, 2010), and (2) romantic partnerships while maintaining heteronormativity in *Toy Story 4* (Cooley, 2019).

Pursuing One's Ambitions. The third *Toy Story* (Unkrich, 2010) film largely centered around Woody's pursuit to follow Andy to college which, as Jessie had asserted, is "what he's always wanted." In this manner, the film unfolds as Woody anticipates his college endeavor with Andy, while Buzz and peers shared their support of his decision (e.g., pridefully referring to him as "college boy" and displaying genuine enthusiasm). However, Woody's departure also insinuated the disbandment of his friendship with Buzz (and the other toys). By way of illustration, moments prior to Woody's expected venture to college, the scene played a rather moving instrumental tune in the background as Woody reached out his hand to Buzz, asserting "This isn't goodbye" as Buzz shook his hand. While the film ultimately concluded with Buzz and Woody staying together at their new owner Bonnie's house, the former segment promotes the idea that to seek one's ambition is to bid farewell to close companions. In a like manner, and parallel to Andy's departure to college, the combination of the scene's moving music with Buzz and the toys' well-wishes to Woody insinuates that the pursuit to set forth is often a touching moment, where the one who ventures may feel slightly wavered to depart. Indeed, the audience is left to feel saddened that the characters part, rather than joyous for one or the other's adventures.

Romantic Partnerships and Maintaining Heteronormativity. At the end of the fourth and final *Toy Story* (Cooley, 2019) film, Woody chose to stay with Bo Peep as a "lost toy" in the town fair rather than follow Buzz home to be with their child owner, Bonnie. Woody's decision to stay with Bo Peep instead of following Buzz and friends home with Bonnie is aligned with previous research on the depiction of friendships in media that suggests *one* means of friendship

dissolution is the formation of romantic partnerships outside of the dyad (Berridge & Boyle, 2012). Of further relevance, however, is that Woody's partnership maintained the heteronormative narrative, in that, pursuing a character of the opposite-sex (Bo Peep) is, according to Martin and Kazyak (2009, as cited in Luisi, 2019) "always assumed [and] expected" (p. 29) in an abundance of film media. Indeed, *Toy Story 4* is Bo Peep's first appearance since *Toy Story 2* (Lasseter et al., 1999) for a gap of almost twenty years. Woody subtly addressed Bo's absence at the beginning of *Toy Story 3* (Unkrich, 2010), acknowledging that he and his peers had "lost friends along the way" and named Bo Peep amongst others who had departed from Andy's house. Bo's absence notwithstanding, it is inferred that she and Woody were romantically involved in *Toy Story 1* and *2*, based on their mutual displays of physical affection and behaviours; nevertheless, her return in *Toy Story 4* seemed to regenerate an overt romantic narrative between her and Woody, which is suggested through many intimate exchanges throughout the final film. Thus, in the words of Berndt (2004), the final segment in the series promotes the notion to audiences that "same-sex friendships provide a foundation for, but are later supplanted by, romantic relationships" (p. 213).

Discussion and Implications of Text Analysis Findings

A cautious interpretation of these films using a text analysis approach afforded the opportunity to analyze *what* values and beliefs of dyadic friendships are constructed in Disney-Pixar's *Toy Story* films. The findings from the text analysis responded to the first phase of the study's research inquiry: "How are dyadic friendships represented in the *Toy Story* series through the characters of 'Buzz' and 'Woody'?"

The text analysis examined the implicit and explicit depictions of dyadic friendships that are conveyed through the *Toy Story* series, wherein such ideologies have remained an unexplored

area in the realm of media studies and children's popular culture. This study offers novel insight into the dyadic friendship narratives constructed, reinforced, and consumed by audiences through the archetypal dyad of Buzz and Woody, which contributes to the existing literature on Disney-Pixar films as a form of cultural pedagogy (Giroux, 2004; Sandlin & Garlen, 2017). Indeed, *Toy Story's* Buzz and Woody offers important lessons to audiences on dyadic friendships, which yields further implications on modern fairy tales (Zipes, 1999) viewed by young audiences, particularly as Disney-Pixar films have become a primary means for children's acquisition of traditional stories, construed from classic folk and fairy tales (Booker, 2010; Brockus, 2004; Ebrahim, 2014).

The text analysis revealed the dyadic friendship between Buzz and Woody to depict both positive and negative dimensions, which reflects previous friendship literature on the positive and negative characteristics of friendship (e.g., Berndt, 2004; Bowker, 2004). However, it is important to note that the interactions between Woody and Buzz were found to be predominately positive, whereby the *negative* dimension depicted their ability to engage in conflict management and resolution. A strong illustration of the positive (i.e., prosocial) dimension of their friendship revealed affective reciprocity as a prominent feature in their interactions, appearing consistently across the quadrilogy after Buzz and Woody befriended each other at the end of the first film. Among such reciprocal features, the characters exhibited frequent mutual care and concern, while also providing emotional and physical help and support. These findings are in line with previous friendship scholars that describe children's *positive* friendships as possessing qualities of helpfulness (Bowker, 2004) and care and concern for others (e.g., Parker & Asher, 1993). In this manner, Buzz and Woody's dyadic friendship arguably depicts characteristics that have been previously recognized by scholars in the realm of children's positive friendship relations,

especially considering these qualities persisted across the duration of the series for over twenty years (i.e., 1995's first *Toy Story* to 2019's fourth film); the congruency of the text analysis findings to the existing friendship literature suggests that much alignment exists between Disney-Pixar's depiction of dyadic friendships in *Toy Story* and previous friendship literature on the dyadic phenomenon.

Likewise, Buzz and Woody faced inter- and intrapersonal disagreements in the films and, as Newcomb and Bagwell (1995) and Hartup (1996) describe, were able to maintain their friendship through both persons' abilities to adopt effective and efficient conflict resolution strategies. Across the quadrilogy, Buzz and Woody managed their conflicts by self-reflecting on their actions (e.g., Woody realizing he misjudged the situation) and by quickly dismissing their quarrels to both preserve their friendship and to help the other in their distress. Audiences, thus, remain with the idea that successful conflict management and resolution in dyadic friendship relations contribute to friendship stability. This finding is reflected by Bowker (2004) who found that early adolescent boys' use of minimizing strategies positively affected friendship stability compared to girls; however, she explains one reason for this contrast based on boys spending less time discussing their feelings in dyadic relations than girls. Bowker also found boys to engage in more frequent conflicts with peers, but such discords are "perceived as having less importance in the relationship" (p. 104) and are often minimized. It is significant to note that there exist *multiple* conflict resolution strategies (e.g., compromising and retaliating; Bowker, 2004) that—used in conjunction with moments of conflict resolution in *Toy Story*—may help facilitate a discussion with children on ways of reconciliation in friendships.

A significant and unanticipated finding in the text analysis was the *formation* of Buzz and Woody's friendship. Given the characters' status as a quintessential friendship dyad in the public

sphere, Buzz and Woody's primary interactions entailed adverse, antisocial behaviours that ultimately prevented successful friendship formation, particularly in Woody's character. This finding reflects the work of Berridge and Boyle (2012) who assert that *new* dyadic male friendships in most Hollywood films "do not originate with a bromance [platonic relationship]" (p. 25), but they indeed establish a homosocial bond towards the end of the film, with "shared goals" often as the contributing factor towards their friendship formation. In contrast to Berridge and Boyle, the current study found several internal and external factors that were identifiably negative facets that hindered the relationship's ability to flourish from the onset, such as aggressive behaviour, low self-esteem and self-worth, and being unattuned to each other's needs. However, in support of Berridge and Boyle's findings, Buzz and Woody's relationship, too, transformed into a homosocial bond by the end of the film.

Finally, an interesting finding that emerged in analysis found Buzz and Woody's dyadic relationship to operate within the peer group context. During data interpretation, the toys (e.g., Mr. Potato Head, Bo, and Slinky) were found to immensely affect, albeit particularly hinder, the onset of Buzz and Woody's friendship. This is evident through the toys' use of physical comparisons and humiliation taunts targeted to Woody that discouraged friendly, prosocial interactions between him and Buzz. The external influence of the toys' instigative behaviours triggered Woody's hostility towards Buzz and extended negative outbursts towards the them. The significance of this finding supports previous friendship literature that recognized associations between a child's perceptions of the peer group and their quality ratings of their experience at the dyadic level (e.g., Bukowski, 2001; Troop-Gordon et al., 2019). This finding yields important implications for audiences on the power behind *negative* peer group behaviours on the dyadic experience. Despite the text analysis finding that internal factors were contributing

facets to Buzz and Woody’s friendship formation, insufficient support from the peer group persisted to challenge dyadic friendship formation as well as amiable interactions.

Findings Phase Two: Audience Reading

This phase of the findings explores the second research inquiry: “How do three child participants from different cities across North America explain close friendships after viewing clips of Buzz and Woody from the *Toy Story* series? And how do they describe their experiences with dyadic friendships in middle to late childhood?”

Participant Profiles

Participant profiles were firstly informed by the participant’s responses in our first, individual meetings. For additional context, I obtained participants’ demographic information through a short survey administered to their parents through Concordia University’s LimeSurvey software after our focus group meeting (see Appendix D). To attain participant confidentiality, each child had the opportunity to choose a pseudonym during our individual meeting. Therefore, participants will be identified solely by their chosen pseudonym throughout analysis.

“**Olivia.**” Olivia is a 13-years and 11-month old female of South-Asian origin. She currently resides between Ottawa, Canada—her city of origin—and London, England. Olivia shared that one of her favourite activities is watching films, and she cheerily referred to herself as a “movie fanatic” since she enjoys film’s ability to produce a state of euphoria outside of one’s reality. She declared that she is a *huge* fan of Disney due to her fond memories with her friends and family as they collectively watched its films and travelled to Disney’s international theme parks. She specified that she enjoys both Disney’s feature-animated films *and* several live-action television series on The Disney Channel network. Olivia’s favourite character from the *Toy Story* franchise is Buzz, whereby she admires his personality (i.e., his sense of humor) and

relatability to herself. In terms of Olivia's favourite friendship dyad in the Disney-Pixar establishment, she mentioned how there are *multiple* relationships that symbolize her own friendships, but are dependent "on the situation." To illustrate, she shared the example of Dory and Marlin from Disney-Pixar's *Finding Nemo* (2001), where it is inferred that one character (Marlin) offers emotional stability to the other (Dory). Olivia expressed how she enjoys this theme in some of her own closest friendships, such as "grounding" the other person, where she mentioned she views herself as Marlin in the way that she provides stability and support to her friends. Lastly, she included the dyads Lightning McQueen and Mater from the *Cars* franchise, and discussed how there is a level of mutual dependency when accomplishing a specific task—a theme that also recurs in some of her closest relationships.

"Mackayla." Mackayla is a 13-years and 11-month old female of Greek ethnicity. Her city of origin is in Montréal, Canada; she has since lived in Singapore for five years, and she currently resides in Chicago, Illinois. One of her favourite activities is reading books, namely: *Lemony Snicket*, *Aladdin*, and *Lady and the Tramp*, and she stated that she appreciates the meanings encapsulated behind these stories. Mackayla also declared herself a *good* fan of Disney. She shared that she enjoys the narratives, characters, and meanings behind Disney's films—particularly, she admires narratives that embrace diverse cultures and includes an animal focus, such as dogs, as they are her favourite. Mackayla's favourite character in the *Toy Story* series is Woody; she mentioned she admires his leadership qualities amongst his friends, as well as his perseverance to always reach his destination (i.e., home or other). One of her favourite Disney-Pixar friendship dyads are, in fact, Woody and Buzz. She shared that she enjoys how Woody and Buzz evolved from rivals to close friends after they recognized the extent of their similarities, which shifted the nature of their relationship into a closer, loyal bond. Lastly,

Mackayla mentioned that Woody and Buzz are most symbolic of her *own* closest friendships; she shared that close friendships can be a gradual process, where both persons “[get] to know each other more” before they “[become] very close.”

“Falter.” Falter is a 13-years and 2-month old White male. His state of origin is Phoenix, Arizona and he has been residing in Orlando, Florida since 2016 where both his parents work as cast members for The Disney Company. One of Falter’s favourite activities is playing videogames (e.g., Animal Crossing); he shared that he also enjoys creating videogames, as well as playing them with his friends. Falter declared that he is a *huge* fan of Disney. He enjoys watching its films with his family members, and he loves playing in the Disney theme parks due to its abundance of rides, character meet-and-greets, and entertainment activities. Falter’s favourite character in the *Toy Story* series is also Woody, for his friendly nature and cowboy persona. Falter shared that his favourite friendship dyad in the Disney-Pixar enterprise are Lilo and Stitch from Disney’s *Lilo and Stitch* film; he enjoys how Lilo (a human child) and Stitch (an alien) were two different species that “bonded” with one another and eventually “grew a friendship.” Falter further shared that Lilo and Stitch closely resemble his own closest friendships, where he mentioned the importance for both characters to “[stand] up for each other” and offer care and support, which he expressed were important values in his own close friendships.

Analysis of the Children’s Responses to the *Toy Story* Clips

The findings from the audience reading may suggest how children in late childhood conceptualize the messages of dyadic friendships that are promoted in the *Toy Story* text. Analysis from the audience reading found four emerging themes from the children’s responses to Buzz and Woody’s relationship in the selected *Toy Story* clips: (1) dyadic friendships as a

gradual progression from enemies to close friends; (2) reciprocal versus unilateral efforts; (3) negotiating one's identity and ambitions in and outside of the dyad; and (4) the unknown future and fate of friendships. Analysis of each theme is presented in the following sections.

1. Dyadic Friendships as a Gradual Progression from Enemies to Close Friends

They're kinda fighting over Andy's love and the toys' love... I don't think they're friends [now], they're kind of [...] enemies?

— Olivia (age 13)

The findings from the audience reading revealed that the participants recognized Buzz and Woody's progression from rivals to reciprocated friends, and explained the gradual process of friendship formation in terms of its negative dimensions (a term coined in a study by Berndt [2004] that includes features such as competition and rivalry), positive dimensions, and a new peer's orientation into the "friend group." It is interesting to note that the participants interpreted the first film clip beyond Buzz and Woody's relationship and actually discussed Woody's relationship with *Andy*, which seemed to be a significant factor in their understanding of the nature of Buzz and Woody's friendship.

The first film clip shown to participants was the scene directly after Buzz and Woody's initial encounter in *Toy Story I* (Lasseter, 1995). This scene began with a crossed arm Woody, who announced: "I'm still Andy's favourite toy," after his group of friends beheld Buzz's ability to "fly" while swiftly clustering around him with amazement. This scene continued with 2-minutes of a visibly distressed Woody, who watched Andy's bedroom paraphernalia fade from cowboy to space ranger while, as previously described, Randy Newman's "Strange Things" score played in the background, whose lyrics evidently conveyed Woody's perplexed feelings with Buzz's arrival, popularity, and acceptance amongst Andy and their peers. The following

sections present participants' responses to the film clip, which are organized into three sub-themes: negative dimensions, positive dimensions, and a new peer's orientation into a friend group.

Negative Dimensions of Friendship

Individual Insecurities and Fear of Replacement. The participants' first reaction to this scene was towards Woody's fear of obsolescence following Buzz's arrival—specifically, in becoming obsolete to Andy. It is interesting to note that the participants responded to the scene from *Woody's* perspective. Falter opened the discussion with an interesting insight into Woody's perspective, in that he believed Woody thought that “Buzz [was] taking Andy over” and “stealing” Andy away from him. Olivia and Mackayla agreed with Falter's ideas and shared that not only did Woody feel like he was being replaced by Buzz but ultimately, Olivia stated that *Andy* was the one who “[replaced] Woody with Buzz.” The participants' initial focus on Woody's perspective yielded unique insight into their affective perspective-taking abilities within the context of one's experience in the dyad. For example, when the participants were asked how the scene made them feel, Mackayla shared that she “felt lonely for Woody ‘cause no one wanted to hang out with him,” and both Olivia and Falter nodded in agreement. In a similar vein, Falter mentioned how Woody got “put in the toy chest,” which evoked a probing question where I asked the group how they might have felt in Woody's position, to which participants shared “put away” (Olivia) and “depressed” (Mackayla). In fact, Falter added “not good because someone stole his hat,” which interestingly, depicts an analogy that Woody felt almost *robbed*—in the literal and metaphorical sense—of his entitlement as Andy's favourite toy. Indeed, the participants seemed empathetic towards Woody's feelings of replacement, and they seemed to associate the idea of replacement to peer exclusion, displacement (i.e., from Andy's bed to the

toy chest), and deprivation of affection and attention. Moreover, this notion of *replacement* was of particular interest as it showed that rather than participants having stated that Buzz and Woody were “not friends,” they opened a thoughtful dialogue around one’s fear of being replaced within the dyad. In fact, what was particularly surprising was that their responses suggested that they recognized Woody’s fear of replacement explicitly stemmed from his friendship with *Andy* rather than Buzz.

Rivalry. Olivia agreed with Falter’s idea that Woody felt replaced by Buzz, and defined the characters’ interactions as “the competition stage” between two peers, which deviates from observable positive features of friendships. It was interesting to see the participants expand upon each other’s insights, which helped evoke thoughtful discussion on the different stages involved in friendship formation. In this sense, the participants perceived *rivalry* (i.e., competing with each other) as a primary feature of the onset of Buzz and Woody’s relationship. With such, Olivia expanded on Falter’s statement by saying “they’re kinda fighting over Andy’s love and the *toys*’ [emphasis added] love,” attributing the acts of rivalry to Woody’s feelings of replacement and loss of affection. However, Olivia recognized that *both* characters were in competition over Andy and the toys’ affection and similarly, Mackayla shared that they were also competing for the group’s attention. The participants seemed to perceive Buzz and Woody’s rivalry as attributed to affection and attention, which not only yielded insight into their ability to reflect on the reasons behind a character’s actions, it also facilitated a dialogue where they expressed *why* peers experience rivalry.

Positive Dimension of Friendship

Moving Beyond Unfamiliar to ‘Familiar.’ During our focus group discussion of the first film clip, I asked participants: “What does this scene make you think about in terms of

friendship?” and one unanimously held sentiment revealed that friendship formation occurs through a process of “knowing” one another. I was particularly intrigued with the participants’ optimistic perspective of this first scene, since this scene centered on Woody’s struggle to accept a new and popular peer. To illustrate, the participants demonstrated an impressive ability to think critically about dyadic friendships *beyond* the shown film clip (i.e., Woody’s qualm about Buzz), where Mackayla shared:

I mean there’s some friendships that [...] in the beginning you don’t like each other- and [...] you get to know the person better. It’s like moving to [...] a good close friendship with them. So [...] it takes time to like, have a healthy friendship with someone, [soft tone of voice and smile].

Indeed, Mackayla’s statement suggests that although two persons may initially dislike one another, the act of getting to *know* each other has the potential to shift the nature of a relationship—and in this case, towards a “good, close friendship.” Additionally, Mackayla’s statement also illuminates the importance of knowing another person, particularly in establishing a “healthy friendship with someone,” and further emphasizes that a friendship of this quality is a process that “takes time.” Olivia agreed with Mackayla’s insights and expanded the discourse of *knowing* to members of a friend group, where she shared, “It happens in a lot of friend groups as well... if there’s a big friend group and [...] you’re mostly friends with [...] another person, but [that] person is friends with *another* [emphasis added] person, then you try to get to know everyone.” In fact, Olivia also added that interactions in the peer group “could start off with... a rough patch, but then once you get to know them, you’re more [...] inclined... to talk to them and [...] get to *know* [emphasis added] them?” Mackayla and Olivia’s statements yield interesting insights into

the phenomenon of dyadic friendship formation, and suggests that close friendship formation is a *process* rather than an immediate establishment.

Moreover, when participants were asked in their individual interviews, “What do you think is the difference between a really close friend and a regular friend?” they each concurrently mentioned *knowing* as a key distinguishing feature of close friendships, where Falter shared, “A really close friend *knows you* [emphasis added] like *extremely* [emphasis added] well [...] while like, a regular friend doesn’t probably know you all that well because you haven’t spent a lot of time with them.” However, Falter mentioned a possible obstacle in the process of the knowing in our focus group, where he expressed: “sometimes you [...] try to get to know the person and then they just completely *ignore* [emphasis added] you,” and Olivia and Mackayla nodded in response. Falter then added, “but whenever you get... their [...] attention you could actually... get to know them a little and form a [...] friendship.” Falter’s sentiments in conjunction with Olivia and Mackayla’s responses suggest that getting to know a peer involves a mutual willingness and devotion of time—and attention—which may, in turn, facilitate friendship formation.

Peer Group Behaviour

New Orientation and Adjustment into the Peer Group. During our focus group discussion of the first film clip, the participants made several points about a new peer’s experience and adjustment into a “friend group.” This finding was of particular interest as it illuminates *how* children perceive a new peer’s adjustment into a novel context and social situation. Of particular interest was how the participants viewed the orientation into the peer group from characters other than Buzz’s (the new toy) perspective. In reference to the participants’ remarks of Buzz and Woody’s rivalry, Mackayla felt that this was due to Buzz “taking more attention”; I asked the group if they thought Buzz took attention from Andy *and* the

peer toys, and Mackayla and Olivia nodded in agreement. Interestingly, Olivia and Mackayla reasoned that Andy and peers devoted vast attention to Buzz “‘cause he [was] the new toy.” The participants seemed to reason that Buzz received attention from peers solely based on his *new peer* status. Indeed, the participants’ perceptions suggest that a new peer’s orientation into a friend group comprises considerable attention and positive affect, such as affection as noted in the previous section on rivalry. However, for Woody, the participants recognized that he struggled with the deflected attention towards Buzz, where Mackayla added that she felt Woody had “a little *hate* for [him].”

It was interesting to see that the participants’ discussion gradually shifted to a discourse on the larger peer group experience, specifically focusing on *how* and *why* certain group members respond differently to a new peer’s arrival. Across the individual and focus groups meetings, our discussion prompted participants to reflect on their own experiences in friendships as the “new” peer. For instance, in my individual interview with Mackayla, she had mentioned that when she started her new school in Chicago after arriving from Singapore:

Everyone knew that I was from [...] Canada, and [...] they didn’t really like having new students in the school, so for me to adjust to that, I mean [...] it took a little time but [her two new friends] were there to help me with it.

Mackayla's statement provides insight into the perceptions of a new peer’s arrival in a novel context based on her own experience as the new student in an international school, which suggests that a new peer’s adjustment into the school and peer culture is a process. In addition, her experience sheds light on peers’ uncongeniality towards new students that seemed to be attributed to cultural factors (i.e., a Canadian in an American school). However, it was interesting to hear that Mackayla perceived her two friends as helpful to her adjustment into the

new school. As discussed by previous scholars of friendship studies, a child's close friendship serves as a buffer to external stressors and facilitates school adjustment (Bukowski, 2001).

Inclusion Versus Exclusion Behaviours. A final question posed during our first film clip discussion was: “What would you do differently in one of [the character's] positions?” and the participants distinctly acknowledged collective peer group efforts as a means to facilitate a new peer's arrival. In this sense, not only did the participants provide guidance for a new peer's entry into the group, their advice was comprised of rather positive affect. To illustrate, Olivia stated: “As the new toy in the group, I would probably get to know *everyone* [emphasis added], not just exclude Woody.” It appeared that Olivia not only recognized that Woody was excluded by Buzz, her statement implied that a child in their thirteenth year may perceive prosocial, inclusive actions (e.g., “[getting] to know everyone”) as valuable and important in the peer group context. Interestingly, Falter added to Olivia's sentiments: “there's also a problem with that [because] Buzz doesn't realize he's a toy yet.” Falter's insights demonstrated a reflexive truth to Buzz's character in the first film, while simultaneously suggesting that Buzz's space ranger identity may have still prevented him from including Woody—in that, had Buzz identified as a toy like the others, perhaps he may have exhibited more inclusive behaviours and included Woody. Mackayla shared her insights from *Woody's* perspective, mentioning:

If I was Woody, I would try to... look at the positive side of the story, not the negative, and I would try to put... more effort to... get to know the person [instead of] being like ‘Oh... I'm gonna be replaced.’

The use of CML techniques in our focus group discussion enabled participants to reimagine and critically reflect on the characters' actions from their own perspectives. Indeed, the participants

demonstrated an impressive ability to respond from a character’s perspective, with insights on how, or how not, these characters may have responded to a new peer.

2. Reciprocity in Dyadic Friendships: Reciprocal Versus Unilateral Efforts

In the beginning, Buzz looks sad and depressed. But as Olivia said, they built each other [up]. [Well], Woody built *Buzz* up.

— Mackayla (age 13)

The findings from the text analysis revealed *affective reciprocity* as an essential feature in Buzz and Woody’s relationship. The theme of reciprocity also resurfaced across both meetings with participants, where Mackayla shared: “you [each] have to put [...] effort into a friendship for it to work,” which echoed Falter and Olivia’s insights on friendship. It is noteworthy to mention that participants immediately recognized *nonreciprocal* acts as they appeared across our collective film viewings in our focus group discussion, which referred to moments when Buzz or Woody’s efforts—or offers—of support were overtly one-sided (e.g., both characters felt sad and only one offered consolation). Indeed, the participants reported that overall, *shared efforts* is both a critical feature of the nature of close friendships, as informed from their own experiences, *and* a “turning point where Buzz and Woody became true friends” (Falter). Thus, our discussions following our collective film clip viewings seemed to elicit participants’ beliefs in reciprocal acts, where Olivia expressed how Buzz and Woody’s “bond got better and more secure” after they exchanged help and support. With such, analysis of the participants’ responses reveals two subthemes that suggest their understanding of reciprocity in dyadic friendships: emotional validations (i.e., “building each other up”) and mutual effort and affect.

The second film clip shown to participants was also from the first *Toy Story* (Lasseter, 1995) film. This segment showed Buzz and Woody trapped on Sid’s desk, hours before Sid

intended to ignite Buzz “into orbit” with a store-bought rocket. In this 3-minute clip, Woody is trapped under a milk crate adjacent to Buzz, who is taped to Sid’s rocket. Woody asked Buzz for help, though Buzz appeared visibly disheartened after discovering he was a *toy* rather a space ranger, and was reluctant to cooperate with Woody. The scene unfolds as both characters shared one another’s inner states. Buzz disclosed that he “[cannot] help anyone” anymore, and told Woody he was “right all along” about the authenticity of his identity as a toy. Meanwhile, Woody admitted to feeling that Buzz was “too cool,” asserting how *he* should be strapped to the rocket instead of Buzz.

Emotional Validation

“Building Each Other Up.” After collectively viewing the second film clip, Olivia was first to share her insights on how the scene “*showed* [emphasis added] from a friendship point of view... that [...] Buzz was feeling down and Woody was trying to build him up,” which corresponded with Mackayla and Falter’s interpretation of the segment. Interestingly, the participants consistently mentioned the notion of “building each other up” throughout our second film clip discussion, which seemed to refer to one’s provision of positive affect (e.g., words of encouragement) to help validate and uplift another’s emotional state and self-esteem. Indeed, the participants seemed to recognize the dyad as a unique context for providing and receiving emotional validation. Particularly, Mackayla shared, “if you have a very close friend [...] they would... try to build you up and... try to take negativity down to... bring the positive side.” Olivia mentioned that she related to Mackayla’s insights, and further expressed how “getting to talk or [getting] a pep talk that you *need* [emphasis added] builds some type of motivation” in a friend who exhibits emotional distress. In the latter sense, Olivia discerned how Buzz felt “determined” after Woody’s speech, which upheld her former sentiment that providing words of

encouragement had the potential to positively shift one's emotional state; in this case, Buzz's demeanor shifted from dispirited to hopeful, where Falter asserted that "Buzz realized that [...] bein' a toy isn't all that bad," which seemed to be attributed to Woody's efforts to "build him up." Thus, the participants seemed to recognize that the act of "building [someone] up" positively contributed to one's emotional well-being and their fortitude to find solace. Of further relevance is that the participants emphasized the importance of *both* persons' efforts to reciprocate such emotional validation. Olivia shared:

Obviously, it goes both ways with friendship, like... you help build each *other* [emphasis added] up. Not just one way, and I could totally relate to that. When I'm feeling *down* [emphasis added] or just need... a pep talk, and [...] same thing to opposite... we're there for each other and... it helps, you know?

Olivia's response implies that reciprocated, emotional validation occurs simultaneously in friendships. Thus, the participants' reports also imply that the intentions in the dyad are mainly positive (i.e., well-intended), in that both persons hope for each other to prosper and thrive in their socio-emotional lives (e.g., promoting positivity and help raising one's self-esteem).

Given the participants' perceptions of reciprocal emotional validation, they recognized unreciprocated acts between Buzz and Woody in the second film clip and further discussed their implications in close friendships. Olivia shared how "Woody kinda came to like a realization that [...] *he* [emphasis added] was feeling down as well. And then, Buzz didn't really build him up but they helped each other escape." While Falter and Mackayla similarly acknowledged that in the end, Buzz and Woody indeed helped each other escape, the participants also noticed when one character sought emotional validation or help and when such yearnings were unreciprocated. Particularly, they recognized how Woody "built Buzz up" (Mackayla) and how he also "tried to

get Buzz to help him escape” (Falter), which insinuated that Buzz seldom responded to Woody’s requests for support. As our discussion unfolded, Falter reflected on his own friendship experience and shared: “With my friends... I try to make *them* [emphasis added] feel better then eventually I feel sad, ‘cause I can’t... really do anything and *they* have to made you feel better [it] just all [goes in a] circle.”

Falter’s statement provides unique insight into particular conundrums in friendships, where it appears that emotional support (i.e., helping someone feel better) in the dyad entails a balance between successfully *providing* and *receiving* validation. Falter’s segment also suggests that children in their thirteenth year feel compelled to soothe and comfort their friends. Interestingly, however, it may happen that despite a child’s intention to help their friend feel better, they can face limitations on the types of support they can offer. In Falter’s case, he shared that while he sought to make his friends feel better, he felt sad that he could not “do anything [to help them feel better],” which then, opens a discourse of how children might negotiate the balance between reciprocal and nonreciprocal efforts in their friendship. Thus, the participants’ perceptions suggest that reciprocal emotional validation is both a valuable component in their friendships and also important for their socio-emotional well-being, whereas unreciprocated efforts evoked sentiments of dissatisfaction (e.g., sadness) in their reflections of their friendship experiences.

Mutual Effort and Affect

After our second film clip discussion, our collective viewing of the third clip continued to evoke a discourse on reciprocity in dyadic friendships. Indeed, our focus group discussion of the third clip expanded the notion of reciprocal emotional validation and emphasized mutual effort and affective gestures as conducive in friendship relations. Olivia exclaimed an unanimous

sentiment that “friendship is a lot of give and take,” and they consistently returned to this idea on several occasions throughout our focus group meeting. To provide context for the third film clip from *Toy Story 2* (Lasseter et al., 1999), Buzz initiated a rescue mission with his friends to save Woody from the dubious toy collector (Al) who stole Woody from Andy’s yard sale; participants were shown Buzz’s reunion with Woody inside Al’s apartment, though Woody resisted to follow Buzz and friends home.

The participants’ first remark to the third film clip was towards Woody, where they perceived him as being impertinent towards Buzz’s efforts to rescue to him. In particular, both Falter and Olivia described him as “being a jerk” and unappreciative of Buzz and friends’ endeavors for his behalf. Indeed, Falter stated that although Buzz declared how he purposely rescued Woody to reciprocate what he did for him in *Toy Story 1* (Lasseter, 1995; i.e., saving him from Sid’s rocket launch), Woody “didn’t care” since he befriended a new group of peers. It was interesting to see the participants focus on Woody’s provision of an inadequate response to Buzz and friends’ rescue efforts, where Olivia noted how Woody did not provide “a type of ‘thank you’ or... ‘glad you cared’ at *all* [emphasis added]” towards Buzz’s venture to help him. Olivia and Falter’s statements insinuate that Woody was, seemingly, unsympathetic towards Buzz, whereas a show of care or acknowledgement from Woody may have been expected or anticipated by participants in this context. By way of an additional illustration, Mackayla shared:

The scene made me feel a little bit sad for the [...] part where Buzz went the *whole* [emphasis added] way to find Woody and bring him back. It’s like [...] somebody puts... a lot of effort into... finding someone, but the other person isn’t putting as much *effort* as the one person is. It’s [...] unfortunate.

The participants' statements not only reveal their attunement to nonreciprocal acts between Buzz and Woody, they also suggest that reciprocity includes an acknowledgement towards a friend's efforts, such as showing care and vocalizing one's appreciation of considerate gestures. Thus, when participants were asked "What did this make you think of in terms of friendship?" Mackayla reiterated the importance of shared efforts in friendship and discussed how she "[felt] like Woody wasn't putting [...] as much effort as Buzz was" and further paralleled this segment to her own experience, where she and friends had "went [their] own ways" after her friends seldom returned equivalent efforts that she had contributed in nurture of the relationship—as well as the opposite. Olivia shared a similar experience to Mackayla and expressed: "If someone's giving a lot... and you're just taking it, it's kind of [...] one way and it's not really, I guess, friendly? [chuckles]." The participants seemed to perceive successful friendships as entailing a mutual provision of effort and an affective response to another's intentions. Indeed, their responses to the third clip indicate that they felt Buzz's efforts exceeded that of Woody's, and argued from their own experiences how the essence of friendship involves reciprocity.

Nevertheless, participants were asked a closing question at the end of our focus group meeting: "What do you like about Buzz and Woody's friendship?" which, revealed a uniform response of certain features about *mutuality* that aligned with their insights on reciprocity from the second and third clip viewings. For instance, Mackayla shared how she liked how "they're there for each other no matter the circumstance." Olivia agreed with Mackayla and included how Buzz and Woody are both trustful, whereas Falter stated how they also "[stand] up for each other." A particularly interesting moment was during an anonymous poll activity at the start of our meeting, where the participants perceived Buzz and Woody as a *best* friendship among any other status (e.g., a friend, close friend, or other). Olivia shared that their best friend status is

suggested through them being “there for each other” and similarly, Falter addressed how they “initially [helped] each other get back to Andy.” The participants appeared to explain, and perceive, Buzz and Woody’s best friendship as comprised of reciprocal efforts and affect, such as both characters’ helpfulness and support to one another.

3. Negotiating Identity and Ambitions in and Outside of the Dyad

Buzz was quoting [what Woody said to him] and was doing the same thing that Woody did for *him*. But Woody didn’t care [be]cause he made new friends with... who he actually was.

— Falter (age 13)

An interesting theme that emerged during our focus group discussion revealed a negotiation process between a character’s individual pursuits and peer group relations. The discussion around this theme sparked interest on the types of complexities that may arise in close friendships, in that one member of the dyad may form friendships outside of one’s “central” peer group—however, the participants seemed to ascribe one’s *new* friendship formation(s) to one’s identity negotiation and questions about belonging in the original dyad and peer group. In addition, the participants also perceived a negotiation process that may occur where one member of the dyad must decide to reside with their close friend or start anew. Thus, the participants seemed to recognize that Buzz and Woody often found themselves conflicted between their own individual identities and desires to that of each other and the peer group. Indeed, the participants engaged in thoughtful discussion on the notion of *belonging*, wherein they perceived Woody as attempting to “fit-in” with a new group of peers with whom he now identifies. Interestingly, they interpreted his quest to fit-in as having derived from Woody feeling obsolete in another dyad pairing—particularly, between him and Andy.

Issues of Belonging

During our focus discussion around the third film clip, Olivia raised an interesting observation concerning the toys' perception of Woody, which I felt reflected a deep and insightful interpretation of the scene in regards to friendship. To provide additional context of the third film clip, Woody seemed perplexed on whether he should leave his *new* friends (the roundup gang) who without him, would spend an eternity in storage—or, follow Buzz and friends back to Andy's house where he essentially became obsolete after his arm ripped during Andy's play. Woody explained to Buzz that he could start anew with the roundup gang as a museum collectible in Japan, since Andy now viewed him as, sorely, unplayable. Olivia's interpretation of the scene highlights the complexities of what may occur when one member of the dyad may feel rejected, or unvalued, based on the actions of an outsider of the dyad, such as Andy. To illustrate, she expressed with an emotional tone of voice:

Woody kind of found a place that he could [...] fit in to, 'cause he was kinda-I guess, Andy kinda made him feel like he was nothing, but the toys kinda showed that he... *meant* [emphasis added] something- that Woody meant something to the whole group. And that... he brought something, like they missed him.

Olivia's statement provided insight into a perspective outside of Woody's, in that Buzz and friends viewed Woody in such high regard that they did not consider him obsolete as inferred by Andy. She further shared, "'cause someone that you didn't really *care* [emphasis added] about, you wouldn't... travel all the way... just to find him. And, to what? Not [chuckles] bring him back?" Mackayla agreed with Olivia's sentiments, and further emphasized how the toys' very action of "[going] the whole way to find Woody and bring him back" symbolized Woody's value to their peer group. It is particularly noteworthy to mention how the participants' responses

prompted me to think about the prevalence of *power* in dyadic friendships; although they did not explicitly mention power in our discussion, they recognized how Andy's actions, however unintentional, compelled Woody to question his belonging in the larger group, despite Buzz and friends' showings of care and support. In this manner, Olivia's earlier comment of how "Andy made [Woody] feel like he was nothing," suggests how Woody seemed to grant immense authority to Andy as a determinant of his self-worth—a theme that was also found in the text analysis. Thus, the participants not only argued how Buzz and friends' actions substantiated Woody's place in their group, but also signified his importance to them *as* he is.

Togetherness Versus Individual Pursuits

An interesting concept that emerged during our discussion of the fourth film clip revealed a *negotiation* process that occurs in one who must decide between starting anew or remaining in one's acquainted environment. In this manner, the fourth film clip shown to participants was moments before Woody was due to leave for college with Andy, which was his lifelong aspiration. However, prior to his departure, he intently gazed at a childhood photo of Andy holding him and Buzz while surrounded by the rest of the toy group. He then seemed to reconsider his college venture and thus, followed Buzz and friends to their new child owner, Bonnie. The participants' responses to the scene revolved around their perceptions of Woody's decision to have followed Buzz and friends. Interestingly, they unanimously agreed with Woody's decision to stay, and they shared unique insights on *why* and *what* factors contributed to his decision to, essentially, relinquish his college pursuit. Moreover, among the participants' discussion, they believed the longevity of their friendship was a critical factor in Woody's decision to stay; more specifically, they expressed how Buzz and Woody's long held history and fond memories elicited them to perceive each other as *family* where Mackayla expressed, "I

think... family goes first and I mean, for example, he's been with the toys for like *multiple* [emphasis added] years, and... it's hard for Woody to... leave them behind." In this matter, Woody still embarked on a new journey, though it was as Bonnie's new toy alongside Buzz and friends. In a similar vein, Falter and Mackayla shared how in both the fourth and fifth film clips they would have preferred Buzz and Woody to have stayed together as opposed to separating. Falter stated that he agreed with Woody's decision to stay with Buzz in the fourth clip and stressed how he, "[likes] to stay with [his] friends and [he's] very protective over them." Olivia agreed with Falter and mentioned, "you wanna be *there* [emphasis added] for your friends... you wanna be with them as well... and I think that's what Woody was going for."

4. The Unknown Future and Fate of Dyadic Friendships

It's just [...] quite how a lot of friendships go... 'cause... when you make friends throughout high school or middle school... you don't know if you'll see them when you go [somewhere else].

— Olivia (age 13)

A significant and parallel final theme found across the text analysis and our focus group discussion was the fate and future of dyadic friendships. The fourth *Toy Story* (Cooley, 2019) film ends with Buzz and Woody parting ways after what appeared to be over ten years of companionship and thus, evoked a critical and thoughtful discussion on the continuity, and discontinuity, of close dyadic friendships. Indeed, the final film clip shown to participants corresponds to the above account from *Toy Story 4*, whereby Buzz approved of Woody's decision to stay with Bo Peep instead of following them back to Bonnie. It is important to note that this film clip evoked mixed sentiments from participants. Predominantly, they expressed immense sadness and worry over Woody's departure, which not only elicited an introspective

discussion on dyadic friendship separation, but also on *why* Buzz and Woody's parting elicited such response. At the same time, the participants also expressed an impressive optimism towards their separation, which is encapsulated by a statement from Olivia: "leaving [friends] is like leaving a part of *you* [emphasis added] behind, but finding yourself on your new path as well." Thus, the final theme in the audience reading presents the participants' conceptualizations of the future and fate of dyadic friendships as perceived in terms of one's embarkment of a "new life" path and how one emotionally navigates the unanticipated separation of their close friendships in a multitude of contexts.

Embarking on a New Life Path

The participants perceived Woody's departure in the final film clip as his embarkment to "start a new life" (Olivia) and to follow his "inner voice" (Mackayla). Of particular interest was a statement from Olivia, where she expressed how she felt Buzz and Woody's parting was essential to both characters'—and other toys'—future, which I felt demonstrated her ability to meaningfully reflect on the series' narrative through the facilitation of CML prompts. In fact, Mackayla also added that she agreed with Buzz *and* Woody's decision in the final scene, which entailed Buzz's acceptance of Woody's venture and following Bonnie home without him, while also accepting Woody's decision to stay with Bo. Nevertheless, the participants explained how Woody's decision to part ways with Buzz and friends for the purpose of seeking a new life path is attributable to the fate of their relationship. To illustrate, the participants seemed to recognize that the decision to follow one's inner voice is significant to pursue, despite the unknown future of the friendships with those they (physically) leave behind. However, the participants raised an interesting sentiment on how the embarkment of a new life pursuit "takes initiative on both parts" (Olivia), which is further illustrated in a statement by Mackayla: "If you have a good

friendship it will last, and they will support your opinion and idea.” Olivia also added how she viewed Woody as the leader amongst their group of friends, to which she said he “passed down” such leadership obligations to Buzz in lieu of his absence. In turn, she interpreted Buzz’s reaction to Woody as saying: “It’s okay to go, you could start a new life and I could take care of [the toys]” to which she emphasized how “[saying ‘it’s okay’] could mean a lot from someone that you care [about].” The participants seemed to perceive the dyad and the individual’s new life embarkment to function synchronously, where a close friend offers support towards the other’s need to find themselves on their own path.

In relation to the participants’ perceptions of a dyad’s mutual initiative to part ways, one finding that correlated with the text analysis was Olivia’s remark that Woody seldom followed Buzz and friends on the premise he sought to stay with Bo Peep. It was interesting to hear Olivia assert how not only did Woody anticipate to start a new path, he ultimately intended to live with Bo Peep. For instance, she expressed “Buzz really supports what [...] Woody wants and, in this case, [...] it’s a girl.” Although Olivia was the only participant to discuss the latter, her statement yields insight into how a child in their thirteenth year can recognize how one member of the dyad’s romantic partnership may contribute to the dissolution of a close friendship in feature-animated film media. Thus, the participants conceptualized Buzz and Woody’s parting in the final film clip to entail both persons “moving in different directions” that comprises mutual acceptance over each other’s decisions.

Emotionally Navigating Unanticipated Separation

The final subtheme derived from the audience reading revealed an emotional navigation process that a friendship dyad may experience in the event they may unanticipatedly part ways. The participants intently reflected upon the final two film clips and seemed to relate them to

moments where they felt perplexed about the future of their *own* friendship(s). Particularly, they stressed the notion of not knowing “what the future holds” of whether one would see—or remain in contact with—a close friend. The participants seemed to exhibit both sadness and uncertainty over the possibility of diminished contact with their own close friends, suggesting that 13-year-old children may conceptualize a dyad’s parting as a complex, emotional venture. By way of illustration, Mackayla expressed: “You don’t really see yourself... leaving your friends [...] behind to like, have a new life and everything... so, I feel like it’s a [...] very large step to leave people behind and to like, move on.” In a similar vein, Falter shared how the final scene made him feel very sad since Woody was “saying goodbye to all his friends.” Mackayla and Falter’s statements suggest that friends hold a valuable place in children’s lives, where parting ways with a close friend (i.e., inferably of high or good quality) is both an unexpected and emotional event. Interestingly, the participants were unanimous in how they related to the final scene of both persons parting ways, as well as the uncertainty of prolonged contact with friends, with Mackayla sharing:

For someone that travels a lot and goes to different places [...] You make a lot of good, close friends in [...] one area, and then, let’s say the next day you get like, a note from... one of your parents that says, ‘Oh,’ uh, ‘we’re moving to this place,’ [...] ‘in this month.’ And then you don’t know what to do [...] in that specific time, and you don’t wanna say goodbye ‘cause you know you’re probably gonna see them again.

Olivia expanded upon Mackayla’s statement and expressed: “I can relate [to what Mackayla said] from like moving from different schools. You make friends there and then you don’t know if you could [...] see them again.” The participants’ excerpts suggest that children’s friendships in context are often at the forefront of their concern(s) in moments where change is uncertain; in

other words, Olivia and Mackayla's statements imply that while friendships appear to be an important concern for children in their thirteenth year who may travel or change schools, they also seem to begin a thought process of how, or when, they may see their friends again in the future. In the case of Buzz and Woody, the participants expressed their optimism that they will reacquaint, but admitted their uncertainty considering they are, indeed, toys. Nevertheless, the participants concluded that despite the perplexities on whether their friendships will fade or sustain, they aspire to stay connected with those who are important to them.

Discussion and Implications of Audience Reading Findings

An audience reading combined with elements of CML in a focus group with three children explored *what* messages of dyadic friendships are interpreted and internalized by children in late childhood. The findings from the second phase of this study responded to the research inquiry: "How do three child participants from different cities across North America explain close friendships after viewing clips of Buzz and Woody from the *Toy Story* series? And how do they describe their experiences with dyadic friendships in middle to late childhood?"

Informed through Johnson's (1987) cultural studies framework, children's reading of the *Toy Story* text afforded the opportunity to examine the types of messages consumed by child audiences on Disney-Pixar's portrayal of dyadic friendships. One goal of this study was to extend the existing literature on dominant ideologies promoted in Disney-Pixar films (e.g., depictions of gender, Ebrahim, 2014) and include analysis on the dyadic friendship narrative—particularly to raise awareness on what types of dominant messages are interpreted by child audiences from the perspectives of children themselves. Indeed, children's subjective insights on the ideas promoted in popular film texts is a vastly unexplored area, albeit such perspectives are among those most significant considering children are the primary audiences for much of

Disney-Pixar's media entertainment (Buckingham, 1997; Garofalo, 2013, 2014; Kellner & Share, 2007). This study offers a novel perspective, includes the perspectives of three children across North America, and presents their ideas of *Toy Story*'s dyadic friendship narrative. While a second goal of the study sought to examine how Buzz and Woody can be used as archetypal models to elicit children's ideas of dyadic relations depicted in the films, the third goal aimed to explore how clips from *Toy Story* can be used as a CML tool to help adults facilitate a discussion with children about friendship. In addition, this study explored how combining critical thinking techniques derived from CML (Kellner & Share, 2007) with film clips from *Toy Story* may help adults learn about children's dyadic friendships in middle to late childhood from the children's perspectives which, ultimately, may help adults support their positive friendship development. Thus, this study contributes to three pertinent areas of existing literature on: the use of Disney films as a CML tool to challenge ideas promoted in film texts (e.g., Garofalo, 2013, 2014), studies on children's dyadic friendships (Berndt, 2004), and Disney films as a pedagogical force in children's learning and understanding (Giroux & Pollock, 2010).

The children's reading of the *Toy Story* text found Buzz and Woody's dyadic friendship to depict multiple dualisms, namely: enemies to close friends, reciprocal versus unilateral efforts, individual versus collective pursuits, and the continuance or discontinuation of friendships. The pertinence of these dualisms reveal the children's unanimous and ardent position that genuine, close friendships are comprised of shared efforts (e.g., "building *each other* up") and intentions of togetherness (i.e., "staying *with* friends"), whereas unilateral or unreciprocated acts seemed to evoke feelings of dissatisfaction. Our focus group discussion of the second film clip is a strong example of these sentiments, whereby the children expressed strong unfavourability towards Woody's dismissive reaction to Buzz's rescue efforts; in turn, they shared from their own

experiences that one's underappreciation of their friends' efforts is unacceptable and may ultimately contribute to friendship dissolution (e.g., Mackayla: "going separate ways"). This finding contributes to Bowker (2004) who discussed unilateral friendships as "weaker but important social ties" (p. 87) in studies of children's friendships, whereby the children in this study discussed their experiences with—and perceptions of—unilateral friendships, and expressed that reciprocated efforts were indicative of a positive friendship experience. These findings also reflect Berndt (2004) who found children's perceptions of close friendships in middle childhood to entail descriptors that are positive (i.e., helping). In addition, the children explained how Buzz and Woody's mutual provision of emotional support was a definitive feature of their close friendship status as well as in their *own* friendship relations; a considerable example was during a segment where Olivia discussed how Woody's provision of emotional support to Buzz was synonymous to her own friendship experience, where she emphasized how she and her friends also benefited from talking to each other (e.g., "a pep talk") if one felt down. Newcomb and Bagwell (1995) found close friendships to significantly contribute to children's emotional and social well-being, which is reflected by the children in this study's qualitative accounts of how their friends' actions positively contributed to shifting their mental state. The children's reading of the *Toy Story* text drew an abundance of parallels to the existing friendship literature on children's perceptions of positive dyadic friendships (Carter & Nutbrown, 2016), reflected in the *Toy Story* narrative itself.

This study contributes to existing literature that found Disney-Pixar films to be a powerful force in shaping children's ideas and beliefs of specific phenomena (Giroux, 2004; Lugo-Lugo & Bloodsworth-Lugo, 2009), whereby the child participants interpreted a multitude of dyadic friendship messages in the *Toy Story* series. A unanimous ideology perceived by the

children in this study was that Buzz and Woody's oppositional status in the first *Toy Story* (Lasseter, 1995) showcased how not all friendships start successfully, but may entail a process that can eventually shift the relationship to a close friendship status, such as through reciprocal actions (e.g., helping) and consistent emotional validation (e.g., building each other up). The children also discussed the possible dissolution of friendships as being attributed to the pursuit of one's ambitions, while also discussing *parting ways* with friends as a complex, emotional event. These findings reflect those in Lugo-Lugo and Bloodsworth-Lugo (2009), Giroux (1999), and Garofalo (2013) that found children to interpret a multitude of values in Disney's popular films that align with its corporate beliefs, which are often implicitly weaved into its narratives. An interesting finding in this study revealed how children from cities across North America provided similar interpretations of the dyadic friendship narratives, yielding valuable insight on the messages consumed by young audiences. However, among the study's limitations, literature on the portrayal of friendships in feature-animated films would have been invaluable to data interpretation, particularly from children's perspectives. Nevertheless, a strength of this study is that it provides new knowledge of the dyadic friendships in film media from children's perspectives, where future research may employ and expand upon the current study's children's reading of this text and include a larger sample of North American and transnational children.

The audience reading findings also contributes to the existing literature on the potential for Disney film clips to be used as a CML tool with children (Garofalo, 2013, 2014) to evoke critical discussion and reflection on the dominant messages promoted in popular film texts. Indeed, the use of open-ended questions informed by CML provided a rich context for participants to share a wealth of insight on what the selected *Toy Story* clips meant in regards to friendship; these findings also contribute to the existing literature on children's understanding of

media texts (Buckingham, 1993; O'Brien, 1996) as 13-year-old participants demonstrated the ability to meaningfully interact with the *Toy Story* text while reflecting on their own friendship experiences through the facilitation of an adult's open-ended questions. The participants provided meticulous interpretations of the scenes' connotations of friendships while actively relating these excerpts to moments in their own friendship experiences. As illustrated through the children's interpretations in the findings section, the five clips from *Toy Story* depicted relatable moments of friendship to children; the children's responses indicate that they possess their own unique expectations of friendship (e.g., Bukowski, 2001) which, is invaluable knowledge for adults in understanding how to nurture and support children's friendships. Indeed, the children in this study expect their close friends to "support [their] decisions" (Mackayla), promote positivity, and provide emotional validation; these statements are reflected in Berndt (2004) who discussed how children expect friends to support and enhance multiple aspects of their self-esteem and self-worth.

These findings reflect Guerrero (2015) who discussed the potential of teaching moments in Disney's films, whereby Garofalo (2013) asserts how discussing film clips with children may help adults learn about specific phenomena specific to children, and ways we can use this knowledge to empower them. Buckingham (1997) suggests that the narratives embedded in Disney films are readily relatable to children's lived experiences. In this manner, the use of an audience reading with CML techniques promoted children's active participation in their media literacy experience (Kellner & Share, 2007) where ultimately, the findings revealed that children in late childhood and early adolescence not only strongly resonate with *Toy Story's* dyadic friendship narrative, they used these prompts to critically reflect on these messages in relation to their own lived experiences.

Future Directions

The current study contributes to the existing literature on Disney-Pixar's *Toy Story* and the representation of friendship in popular media that explores the ideologies of the dyadic friendship between Buzz and Woody. However, of particular relevance for future investigation is the association of gender in how friendships are represented at the dyadic level in popular film media. In their study, Kraft and Mayeux (2018) found that girls experienced higher levels of emotional intimacy in their closest friendships than boys and additionally, boys relied *less* on peer status (i.e., popularity) than girls. The text analysis discussed *peer status* as one of several key external factors that influenced Buzz and Woody's friendship formation, however, the current study focused little attention on the same-sex nature of their relationship. Therefore, further exploration on gender differences may be invaluable to our growing understanding of how dyadic friendships are represented in popular feature-animated films, as well as to help children and adult stakeholders develop a critical awareness of societal constructions of the latter. In a similar vein, considering the characters in the *Toy Story* series consist of a predominately White-American background, future studies may explore whether there are cultural variations in media depictions of dyadic friendships. In this manner, future researchers may employ a cultural studies lens to examine how dyadic friendships are represented in popular media, perhaps in a cross-case study approach of a diverse sample of Disney-Pixar films texts.

In relation to using the *Toy Story* films as a CML tool to discuss friendships with children, future studies may include additional materials, such as drawings and other pictorial representations, for participants to share their perceptions of friendship through multiple means of expression. Another interesting direction would be to examine whether there would be a correlation between children's friendship quality before and after viewing clips from the *Toy*

Story films; analysis of whether children may adopt more prosocial behaviours or assign high quality ratings of their dyadic friendships would be an interesting avenue—particularly as Buzz and Woody demonstrated an abundance of positive affect that was maintained throughout the series. Lastly, a strength of this study is the inclusion of gender with two girls and one boy, wherein future studies may include a larger sample of children of different gender to expand upon knowledge of their conceptualizations of dyadic friendships in the *Toy Story* text.

Limitations

There were several limitations to the current study. One limitation of the study is participant selection and recruitment. Participants were purposively selected in my close social network (i.e., friends and family friends), which may have influenced the participants' responses. Another limitation is the study's sample size; a larger sample size may have developed more generalizable findings of the phenomena—however, a small sample of three children provided rich and detailed accounts.

In terms of the study's methods for the audience reading, the five selected film clips from the *Toy Story* films may have limited participants' discussion of other representative moments of Buzz and Woody's friendship; this may have also resulted in possible researcher bias since I selected moments in their friendship that I deemed critical to elicit a focus group discussion on children's interpretations of the scene(s), as informed through text analysis. Future studies may explore the phenomenon by asking children to find moments in the *Toy Story* films that *they* felt depicted dyadic friendships and thus, facilitate a discussion around their selection(s).

Limited research exists on the depiction of dyadic friendships in popular film media, particularly in Disney-Pixar's feature-animated films. Research on dyadic friendship portrayals in animated film media may have strengthened the study's literature review, as well as

contributed to my interpretations of the findings. However, one of the strengths of the current study was exploring the phenomenon through an adult's text analysis approach and three 13-year-old children's readings of Buzz and Woody's friendship, which may then provide literature for future researchers who explore dyadic friendship ideologies in further Disney-Pixar feature-animated films.

Conclusion

The present qualitative study examined how dyadic friendships are represented in the *Toy Story* series through an adult's text analysis and an audience reading with three 13-year-old children from different cities across North America.

One of the goals of this study was to examine the denotative and connotative messages of dyadic friendships in *Toy Story*'s characters of "Buzz" and "Woody" to understand the ideologies that may be promoted to, and internalized by, audiences in the realm of Disney-Pixar's omnipotence in children's popular culture. The text analysis uncovered *affective reciprocity* as a defining characteristic of the maintenance and stability of Buzz and Woody's friendship over time; analysis also revealed internal (e.g., individual characteristics), external (e.g., setting), and interpersonal (e.g., mutual self-disclosure) factors as pertinent in Buzz and Woody's friendship formation, whereby one's pursuit of ambitions and the formation of romantic partnerships contribute to the possible fate of close friendships.

A second goal of this study was to examine children's interpretations of the dyadic friendship narrative in the series and to explore how clips from *Toy Story* can be used as a CML tool for adults to facilitate a discussion with children about friendship. The children interpreted *Toy Story*'s dyadic relation as one that progressed over time from rivals to close friends through a process of "knowing," while also indicating that the definitive feature of friendship is

reciprocity; the children described Buzz and Woody's provisions of help and support as indicative of their close friendship. The children also shared a wealth of insight on the interrelation between the dyad and the peer group, whereby they interpreted dyadic friendships as a space for negotiating identity and ambitions. Lastly, the children interpreted Buzz and Woody's friendship as comprised of an unknown future and fate; they expressed mixed sentiments of sadness and hopefulness of the possibility Buzz and Woody will reunite in the future, while also sharing a ray of optimism that to find oneself on their own path may entail leaving close friendships behind.

The text analysis and audience reading findings of this study harmoniously formed an analysis on the educational and entertainment capabilities of Disney-Pixar's *Toy Story* films and contributes a novel dimension in children's media culture and friendship studies, presenting Disney-Pixar's "Buzz" and "Woody" as a pedagogy of friendship.

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Appendix A

Email Letter of Recruitment

Hello,

My name is Anita Jandaly and I am a student researcher in the Department of Education at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada. I was contacting you to see if your child would be interested in participating in a research study.

This research is being done as part of my master's thesis project, and my supervisor's name is Dr. Sandra Chang-Kredl. The focus of this project is to explore children's ideas of friendships using Disney-Pixar's *Toy Story* films.

To participate, your child must be between the ages of 10 and 13*. Your child should also have seen at least one of the four *Toy Story* films produced by Disney-Pixar Studios. Due to the current COVID-19 situation, we are required for safety measures to conduct our research online, so it would be important that your child has access to a technological device with an audio-video component, Internet connection, and a free video conferencing application, such as Zoom or Skype.

If you agree for your child to volunteer, your child will be asked to attend two, approximately one-hour online interviews with myself as the researcher and interviewer. There is also a possibility your child may attend these interviews with one or two other children, who will also be within the same age range. In the first interview, your child will be asked questions that will describe what friendship means to them, and what they think about Disney. In the second interview, your child and I will watch a maximum of five short film clips of "Buzz Lightyear" and "Woody" from the *Toy Story* films. After we watch one of the film clips, your child will be asked questions about what they thought about each scene.

In total, your child's participation in this project will take approximately two hours. However, given the adjustment to online video conferencing platforms (e.g., stable connection, minimal technical malfunctions), additional time may be warranted. Therefore, with potential unforeseeable technicalities, participation may take a maximum of three hours.

In greatly appreciating you agreeing for your child to participate, you will receive a \$10.00 CAD or USD equivalent gift card upon your child's completed participation.

Your child's participation in this research project is completely voluntary. If you or your child wish to withdraw from the study, there will be no negative consequences with myself or Concordia University.

If you are interested in your child's participation in this study, or you would like any additional information, you may absolutely contact me by email at:

anita.jandaly@mail.concordia.ca.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Anita Jandaly,
B.A., Child Studies,
M.A., Child Studies Candidate,
Department of Education, Concordia University,
anita.jandaly@mail.concordia.ca

Appendix B

Participant Consent Form

**INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM**

Study Title: Children’s Ideas of Friendships and the Dyadic Relationship Between “Woody” and “Buzz Lightyear” in Disney-Pixar’s *Toy Story* films

Researcher: Anita Jandaly

Researcher’s Contact Information: anita.jandaly@mail.concordia.ca

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Sandra Chang-Kredl

Faculty Supervisor’s Contact Information: sandra.chang-kredl@concordia.ca

Source of funding for the study: N/A

Your child is being invited to participate in the research study mentioned above. This form provides information about what participating would mean. Please read it carefully before deciding if you want to participate or not. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please ask the researcher.

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of the research is to explore children’s ideas of friendships using the *Toy Story* films.

B. PROCEDURES

If your child participates, they will be asked to attend two, approximately 1-hour interviews via an online video conferencing application (e.g., Zoom, Skype) with the student researcher. There is also a possibility your child may attend these interviews with one to two other children in the same age range. In the first interview, your child will be asked questions about what friendship means to them, and what they think about Disney. In the second interview, we will collaboratively watch a maximum of five short clips of “Woody” and “Buzz Lightyear” from Disney-Pixar’s *Toy Story* films. Each film clip ranges between 30 seconds to 8-minutes in duration. After they view a film clip, they will be asked questions about what they thought about each scene.

In total, participating in this study will take approximately two hours. However, given the current COVID-19 situation and adjusting to online video conferencing platforms (e.g., stable connection, minimal technical malfunctions), additional time may be warranted. Therefore, with potential unforeseeable technicalities, participation may take a maximum of three hours.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

Your child may face certain risks by participating in this research. These risks include: possible increased sensitivity when reflecting on their friendship experiences; possible social pressure to share their experiences of friendships with other children in the interview. To mitigate these risks, we request that you or a trusted adult be present and nearby the child during the interviews.

Potential benefits include: learning to actively think about friendships through the *Toy Story* films; practice thinking about messages in the media; exploring what friendship means to them; applying critical thinking skills in everyday consumption of media; sharing personal experience(s) about their friendships; reflecting on thoughts of friendships in a safe space; having the opportunity to possibly talk with others who may share common interests and or experiences about friendships/Disney/other; having fun watching clips from *Toy Story*.

D. CONFIDENTIALITY

We will gather the following information as part of this research: both interviews will be audio-visually recorded on the researcher's secured, password protected personal device.

We will not allow anyone to access the information, except people directly involved in conducting the research. We will only use the information for the purposes of the research described in this form.

The information gathered will be coded. That means that the information will be confidential and identified by a code. The researcher will have a list that links the code to your name.

We will protect the information by keeping them on a password protected computer and password protected documents.

We intend to publish the results of the research. However, it will not be possible to identify you in the published results.

We will destroy the information two years after the end of the study.

F. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

You do not have to participate in this research. It is purely your decision. If you do participate, you can stop at any time. You can also ask that the information you provided not be used, and your choice will be respected. If, however, the sessions are combined with another child, there may be a limitation to withdrawal of data

should, in certain conversations, the shared discussion be pooled. We will ensure that no participant will be identified. If you decide that you don't want us to use your information, you must tell the researcher before the analysis of data is completed by November 1, 2020.

If participants are being offered compensation:

As a compensatory indemnity for participating in this research, you will receive a \$5.00 CAD or USD equivalent gift card upon completion of each interview in the current study. If you withdraw before the end of the research, you will still receive the full amount owed of \$5.00 CAD or USD equivalent gift card upon completion of each interview in the current study.

There are no negative consequences for not participating, stopping in the middle, or asking us not to use your information.

G. PARTICIPANT'S DECLARATION

I have read and understood this form. I have had the chance to ask questions and any questions have been answered. I agree to participate in this research under the conditions described.

NAME _____ (please _____ print)

SIGNATURE _____

CHILD'S NAME _____

DATE _____

If you have questions about the scientific or scholarly aspects of this research, please contact the researcher. Their contact information is on page I. You may also contact their faculty supervisor. If you have concerns about ethical issues in this research, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 or oor.ethics@concordia.ca.

Appendix C

Child Assent Form

CHILDREN'S ASSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

[Please note: this form is for children aged 10-13*; I will ask the child to read the consent form before we meet on an online video conferencing format. Once it is read, we will go over the form together on the online video conferencing format, and ask them to sign the form]

Study Title: Children's Ideas of Friendships and the Dyadic Relationship Between "Woody" and "Buzz Lightyear" in Disney-Pixar's Toy Story Film

Investigator: Anita Jandaly

Investigator's Contact Information: anita.jandaly@mail.concordia.ca

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Sandra Chang-Kredl Faculty Supervisor's Contact Information: sandrachang-kredl@concordia.ca

Why are we doing this study?

We are doing this study because we would like to know what you think about friendship, Disney, and some of the clips in the *Toy Story* movies.

Why am I being asked to participate in this study?

We are inviting you to be in this study because we would like to hear from someone your age about what friendship, Disney, and movie clips from *Toy Story* means to you. We think that your thoughts about these topics are very interesting and can help adults learn how to talk with other children about friendships.

If I am in the study, what will happen to me?

If you want to take part in the study, I will meet with you 2 times online with one or two other children who are the same age as you. Meeting online means we will see each other and talk through our computers. We will do an interview together when we see each other. An interview means that I will ask you questions and you can tell me what you think. The 1st time we meet, I will ask you about what friendship means to you, and also about what you think about Disney. Then, the 2nd time we meet, we will watch some clips from the *Toy Story* movies together, and I will ask you questions about what you thought of those clips. There are no wrong answers to any of the questions I ask you. We are interested to learn about what you think about these topics. If I ask you a question that you might not understand, you can tell me and I can fix the question to make it better.

Our meetings will not take too long. We will meet for around an hour each time, and maybe a few minutes longer if we need more time. So, we will spend a total of 2 and a half hours together.

Because we are doing 2 interviews, our talks together will be recorded. Recorded means that I will keep a video of our talks on my computer to help me remember what we spoke about. But, I am the only person who will be able to see our video talk.

Will I be hurt if I am in the study?

You might feel a bit shy to talk about friendships, Disney, or the *Toy Story* clips with me or other children. But, I am there to make sure you feel comfortable to talk about your thoughts. It's important for you to know that you don't have to tell me or other children anything that you don't want to share. Your thoughts are unique and valuable and we are happy to learn from you. And, me and the other children will not make fun of anything you share with us.

Will the study help me?

If you are part of this study, it may not directly help or benefit you. But, you will have the chance to think about what a friend means to you, and what's important for you in a friendship. This is also called a reflection. A reflection means that you can think about something, and ask yourself questions about what you're thinking about. You can also practice using reflection when we watch clips from *Toy Story* together.

Do I have to be in this study?

It is your choice to take part in this study. You can say okay now, and you can also say no. If you say yes now but want to stop later, that's okay too. You can let me or your parent/caregiver know and we will not be upset with you.

You can ask questions at any time. If you have any questions about this study, you can contact me at: Anita Jandaly, anita.jandaly@mail.concordia.ca and I will happy to answer any questions.

Would you like to be in this research study?

_____ Yes, I will be in this research study _____ No, I don't want to do this study.

NAME OF CHILD (please print)

SIGNATURE OF CHILD

DATE

Appendix D

Participant Demographic Information Questionnaire for Parents
Concordia's LimeSurvey Software

Toy Story Study: Questionnaire and Gift Card

Description:

This 3-minute survey is designed to: **1) obtain some demographic information about your child;** and **2) select which gift card your child would like!**

All information provided is strictly confidential, and will only be viewed by **myself and my research team.**

In the final thesis, we intend to include your child's: **gender, age, ethnicity,** and potentially **countries/regions lived** (e.g., residing in x, Canada; residing in X, U.S.). However, as mentioned, your child is addressed by a pseudonym and is unidentifiable to anyone other than myself and the research team.

Demographic questions:

- I. When is your child's birthdate? (DD/MM/YYYY).
- II. How would you describe your child's ethnicity? (*see below for examples of ethnicity).
- III. What country/city was your child born (E.g., "Canada – Montreal, Quebec").
- IV. What countries, cities, or regions has your child lived? (Please feel free to include the duration lived in each area).
- V. What is your child's gender?

Ethnicity "describes their feeling of belonging and attachment to a distinct group of a larger population that shares their ancestry, colour, language or religion," (Lefringhausen, 2012). (e.g., Latino/Hispanic, Middle Eastern, White, African, South Asian, East Asian, Mixed, and other.) ***If mixed, please feel free to describe.**

Appendix E

Interview 1: Protocol and Interview Questions for Individual Interviews

1) Introduction to the study via Zoom shared screen with PowerPoint (5-minutes)

1. Welcome to the study – thank you for agreeing to participate
2. What is our meeting about? (i.e., *Toy Story* and friendship; research, etc.)
3. Who am I? (e.g., research student, interested in Disney/popular culture, etc.)
4. What is their role? (e.g., they are the experts)
5. *What would they like their secret name to be?* (e.g., pseudonym for thesis)

2) Interview (30-45-minutes)

1. Introduce what will happen (e.g., I will ask them questions and they'll reply; they can think about the question for a few minutes before they answer; I may ask them to expand upon some of their questions, too; there are no wrong answers; they can let me know if they don't want to answer any questions, etc.)
2. We will have 2 sets of questions: Set #1 about friendship, and Set #2 about Disney (i.e., 13 questions about friendship, and 13 questions about Disney)
3. We will start with questions about friendship then head into Disney

Friendship interview questions:

1. What is a friend?
2. What does friendship mean to you?
3. What makes someone a *close* friend?
4. What do you think is the difference between a close friend and other friends?
5. Who are some of your closest friends right now? (names will not be included in thesis)
6. Tell me about how you became friends.
7. What do you like to do with your friends?
8. What do you do with your *close* friends?
9. What's your favourite topic to talk about with your friends?
10. What qualities are important for you to have in a friend?
11. How do your friends make you feel? How do you feel around your friends?
12. Can you tell me about a time when you had a disagreement or fight with a friend?
13. If you had the chance to tell your friends how you felt about them, what would you tell them?

Disney interview questions:

1. **Interactive component with Zoom poll option:** How would you rate how much of a fan you are on Disney? **Huge fan; *A good fan; *Sometimes a fan; *Not really a fan.*
2. "What comes to mind when you think about Disney?" (Garofalo, 2013, p.83)
3. What do you like about Disney? (Garofalo, 2013)
4. "Is there anything you don't like about Disney?" (Garofalo, 2013, p.83)
5. "Why do you think Disney makes movies?" (Garofalo, 2013, p.83)

6. “Is there anything that Disney can teach us with their movies?” (Garofalo, 2013, p.83)
7. Who is your favourite Disney character, and why are they your favourite?
8. Who is your least favourite Disney character, and why are they your least favourite?
9. Think of friendships between characters in Disney movies. Tell me about your favourite friendship between characters. Why are they your favourite friendship pair?
10. Tell me about your least favourite friendship between characters. Why do you dislike this pair?
11. **Interactive component with PowerPoint images via shared screen option on Zoom:** Here are some of Disney-Pixar’s friends [several images of Disney-Pixar friendship dyads, including siblings]. Looking at these pictures, how do you know they are friends? What makes them friends? [e.g., one is of Buzz and Woody with their arms on each other’s shoulders]
12. What Disney friendship pair reminds you of your friendships? And why?
13. For our last question, do you have anything else you would like to share about Disney?

3) Interview conclusion (2-3-minutes)

1. Introduce our next interview (i.e., a focus group with 2 other participants, same age)
2. Introduce CML (briefly, such as what it is and why it’s important)
3. We’ll watch the clips together
4. Ask questions to the group of what they thought of each scene

Appendix F

Interview 2: Protocol and Interview Questions for Focus Group Interview
(Held Two Weeks After Individual Interviews)**1) Welcome back to the study! (Zoom shared screen with PowerPoint; ~3-minutes)**

1. Share highlights from individual interviews of their perceptions of friendship and Disney [they discussed the friendship as: where you can be yourself; someone who is trustful; their insights on Disney: all mentioned they enjoyed the movies, enjoys the messages embedded in Disney films, etc.]

2) What are we doing today? (~5-minutes introducing CML and warmup below)

1. Introducing CML (briefly)
2. Watch five 2-3 ½ minute clips from *Toy Story*
3. I'll interview you as a group

3) Introductions and warmups (2-minutes)

1. **Interactive component #1.** Let's meet everyone! [participants were asked to share their non-pseudonym name, where they were born, where they are living now, and share something they'd like others to know about them]
2. **Interactive component #2. Zoom anonymous poll.**
 - (i) Which of the *Toy Story* films did you like the most? [all four films listed]
 - (ii) Which *Toy Story* film did you like the least? [all four films listed]
 - (iii) Who is your favourite character from *Toy Story*? [e.g., Potato Head, Buzz, Woody, Jessie, etc.]
 - (iv) Do you think Buzz and Woody are friends, best friends, neither, or other? [they selected which option]

4) Introduce CML (2-3-minutes)

1. [Picture prompt: Participants were shown a picture of children/adolescents watching TV with thought-bubble above their head asking "Who made this? Why was this made? What values does this represent?"]
2. Briefly discuss: CML means to think critically about what you see in the media and thinking about your own experiences
3. Remind participants of the images we looked at last week about "How do you know they're friends?" [Show Disney-Pixar dyads on PowerPoint], and discuss their use of critical reflection on the Disney friendship pairs
4. Why is this all important? Important to realize films are informed from people's experiences (e.g., Disney-Pixar story creators) and we may pick up on certain messages promoted in these films
5. Overall message of CML: Become active in our media consumption, asking questions about what we see or hear. challenge what we see or hear. reflect what we see or hear

5) Interview procedures (~ 4-minutes)

1. Explain overview of the interview process

- (i) I'll share a summary of what happened up until the scene
 - (ii) Together we'll watch the pre-selected scenes from the *Toy Story* films
 - (iii) Once the scene is over, I'll ask you questions as a group
 - (iv) We can talk about a question for as long as you want, but we may spend a few minutes on each question
2. *What participants need to do: **Before** we get started checklist:*
- (i) Paper and pen/pencil: You can write or draw something that comes to mind as you watch the clip
 - (ii) Good view of the screen
 - (iii) Maybe headphones (for comfort)
3. *What participants need to do **during** interview:*
- (i) Answer questions (like last time), but now as a group
 - (ii) Questions will be about what you thought + relating to own experience or ideas
4. *Group interview rules:*
- (i) Most important: Safe space to share your thoughts
 - (ii) Anyone can answer first
 - (iii) I *may* ask others to start first from time to time
 - (iv) Everyone's opinions are respected
 - (v) It's okay to agree or disagree with someone's opinion
5. *Important for you to know:*
- (i) You don't have to answer anything you don't want to answer
 - (ii) You can stop the interview at any time
 - (iii) You can take your time to think about these questions
 - (iv) There are no wrong answers
 - (v) I may ask you to further expand on your questions

6) Focus group interview: (~35-50-minutes)

The main questions are as follows:

- (1) What did you think about this scene?
- (2) How did the scene make you feel?
- (3) What does this scene make you think about in terms of friendship?
- (4) What would you do differently in one of their positions?

If participants respond to one of these questions in response to *another* question, I will refrain from *re-asking* the question. For example, if I ask them question #1, "What did you think about this scene?" and they mention they felt (for example) *sad*, I will refrain from asking question #2, "How did the scene make you feel," carefully gauging the conversation.

1. Clip #1: *Buzz and Woody after their first encounter in Toy Story 1 (Lasseter, 1995)*
00:20:04-00:22:10

Description given to participants before watching clip #1: The movie opens with Andy playing with Woody and other toys, but it becomes well known that Woody is Andy's favourite.

On the day of Andy's birthday party, Andy opens his last gift and it's a Buzz Lightyear action figure. Andy ends up placing Buzz in Woody's spot on the bed, causing Woody to fall behind the bed. Woody seems slightly frazzled; he comes up from beneath the bed, introduces himself, welcomes him to Andy's room, and tells Buzz that he's in 'his spot' on the bed, but Buzz doesn't respond to his concerns. Woody's friends become really fascinated with Buzz, and appear to give him a lot of attention. Meanwhile, Woody attempts to downplay Buzz's abilities, while subtly saying that "[he's] still Andy's favourite toy."

Main focus group questions: (without prompted questions)

- (5) What did you think about this scene?
- (6) How did the scene make you feel?
- (7) What does this scene make you think about in terms of friendship?
- (8) What would you do differently in one of their positions?

2. Clip #2: *Woody and Buzz are trapped together on Sid's desk in Toy Story 1 (Lasseter, 1995)*
00:57:20-01:00:13

Description given to participants before watching clip #2: Earlier, Woody confronted Buzz to say away from Andy and later pushed Buzz out of Andy's bedroom window the night Andy was supposed to take Buzz to Pizza Planet. After several events, together they wound up at Pizza Planet to get back to Andy, but instead, Andy's sadistic next-door neighbour 'Sid' saw them in a vending machine and took them to his house. Together, they were stuck in Sid's house and have been unsuccessful to escape and cooperate with one another. At Sid's house, Buzz saw a 'Buzz Lightyear' commercial that showed he is actually a *toy* and not a real space ranger. He became vocally 'depressed' and reluctant to move. Woody seemed to notice Buzz's change of behaviour. Now towards the end of the movie, Woody and Buzz are trapped on Sid's desk and the scene is as follows.

Main focus group questions: (without prompted questions)

- (1) What did you think of this scene?
- (2) How did this scene make you feel?
- (3) What would you do differently – if anything – in any of these character's positions? Or, maybe you wouldn't! And why wouldn't you?

3. Clip #3: *Buzz finds Woody in Al's apartment in Toy Story 2 (Lasseter et al., 1999)*
01:04:27-01:06:05

Description given to participants before watching clip #3: Woody gets stolen by "Al" at Andy's garage sale while he was trying to save another toy. Buzz uses clues from Al's getaway car that eventually leads him to Woody inside of Al's apartment. Up until that point, Buzz rallied up several friends to come with him to rescue Woody, and stopped at no costs. However, Woody was befriended by 'Woody's Roundup Gang' and appeared to enter into a utopia of his own paraphernalia and "fame." The scene goes as follows.

Main focus group questions: (without prompted questions)

- (1) What do you think about this scene?
- (2) How did this scene make you feel?
- (3) What did this scene make you think of in terms of friendship?

4. Clip #4: *Woody and Buzz temporarily parting ways (Andy's going to college) in Toy Story 3 (Unkrich, 2010)*

01:25:40-01:28:15

Description given to participants before watching clip #4: Woody, Buzz, and friends finally return to Andy's bedroom after being donated to Sunnyside Daycare, and almost finding themselves inside an incinerator. Woody and Buzz are about to part ways – Woody is supposed to go to college with Andy, and Buzz and friends are on their way into the attic. The scene goes as follows.

Main focus group questions: (without prompted questions)

- (1) What did you think about *this* scene?
- (2) How did the scene make you feel?
- (3) What does this scene make you think about in terms of friendship?

5. Clip #5: *Buzz and Woody's final encounter in the series in Toy Story 4*

01:24:04-01:26:17

Description given to participants before watching clip #5: Woody, Buzz and their friends finally reunite after a treacherous journey to bring Forky back to Bonnie. However, towards the beginning of the film, Woody *also* reunited with Bo after several years apart – *but*, he has just learnt that his time with Bo may come to an end once again. Buzz and friends open the RV's awning and attach it to the top of the carousel, where Woody and Bo wait. Buzz heads onto the awning and motions for Woody to come with him, and the scene goes as follows:

Main focus group questions: (without prompted questions)

- (1) What did you think of this last clip? How did it made you *feel*?
- (2) What did this scene make you think about in terms of friendship?
- (3) What would've made you happy about this scene?
- (4) Can you relate to this scene?
- (5) What would you do differently in any of the characters' positions in this scene?

7) Interview wrap-up! (~5-minutess)

a) Some final questions:

- (1) What do you like about Buzz and Woody's friendship?
- (2) What do you like about *Toy Story*?
- (3) What friendship scene did you like the most?
- (4) What friendship scene did you like the least?

b) Any last questions?

c) Congratulations on completing these interviews!

Appendix G
Ethics Certification



CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY
FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Name of Applicant: Anita Jandaly
Department: Faculty of Arts and Science\Education
Agency: N/A
Title of Project: Children's Ideas of Friendships and the Dyadic
Relationship Between "Woody" and "Buzz Lightyear"
in Disney-Pixar's Toy Story films
Certification Number: 30013475
Valid From: August 19, 2020 To: August 18, 2021

The members of the University Human Research Ethics Committee have examined the application for a grant to support the above-named project, and consider the experimental procedures, as outlined by the applicant, to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard DeMont".

Dr. Richard DeMont, Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee

Appendix H

Summary Table of Main Themes and Subthemes from Phase One: Text Analysis Findings

Table 1*Themes of Friendship Formation, Maintenance, and Fate in the Toy Story Series*

Main themes	Subthemes
Internal Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual characteristics • Self-worth and self-esteem • Individual expression/awareness of needs
External Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer group interactions • Peer group status • Culture • Setting (i.e., location and current circumstances) • Shared goals
Interpersonal Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Togetherness • Mutual self-disclosure
Maintaining Friendship Through Affective Reciprocity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care and concern for others • Conflict resolution • Emotional and physical help and support
The Future and Fate of Friendship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pursuing one's ambitions • Romantic partnerships and maintaining heteronormativity

Appendix I

Coding Sample for Phase One: Text Analysis

Table Sample of Buzz and Woody's First Encounter in *Toy Story I* (Lasseter, 1995)**Coding legend:**Purple text illustrates **individual expression of needs**Green text illustrates **negative peer group behaviours**

Time	Film Clip Observation	Interpretation	1 st Level Inductive Categories	2 nd Level Categories
00:16:17	Woody and Buzz stop circling and stand in front of each other. Woody smiles and in a nonchalant tone of voice: "And also, there has been a bit of a mix-up," (concerned facial expression,) "This is <i>my</i> -" (points to his chest) "-spot. See, the bed here-" The camera zooms in on Woody's "Sheriff" badge. Buzz stops his laser and points to the badge; he interrupts saying, "Local law enforcement! It's about time you got here," (calm tone of voice,) "I'm Buzz Lightyear. Space ranger, universe protection unit," (looks around the bedroom). Woody stands upright with a confused facial expression. Buzz continues, "My ship has crash landed here by mistake," (walks away from Woody	Woody appears determined to inform Buzz that he is in his spot. Buzz seldom reacts (or acknowledges) Woody's concerns, and seems hyper-focused on his officer status.	Individual expression of needs	Internal factors as an inhibiting factor in friendship formation
		Woody reattempts to reiterate to Buzz that his being in <i>his</i> spot is a mistake.	Individual expression of needs	Internal factors

	<p>towards the end of the bed). Woody replies, “Yes! It is a mistake!” (points to gesture), “You see, the bed here is my spot,” (firm tone of voice; gestures). Woody follows Buzz. Buzz turns to face Woody and rambles about the state of his spaceship.</p>	<p>However, Buzz (again) does not respond to Woody’s comments.</p>		
00:16:53	<p>Buzz thanks the toys for their “kind welcome,” (gestures). Rex asks Buzz what one of his buttons does. Buzz stands tall and goes, “I’ll show you,” (soft and smug tone of voice). Buzz clicks a button on his chest and his voice box speaks. The toys awe in amusement. Slinky says, “Woody’s got something like that. His is a pull string” (degrading tone of voice; rolls eyes).</p> <p>The camera zooms in on Woody. He appears taken aback with a shocked facial expression, shifting his head back (frowns; his eyebrows swoop upwards). Mr. Potato Head’s voice plays in the background and says, “Yeah, only it sounds like a car ran over it!” (sneering</p>	<p>Buzz intently responds to the toys’ welcoming, however, he did not reciprocate the same appreciation when Woody had “welcomed” him to Andy’s room.</p> <p>Mr. Potato Head and Slinky immediately compare Woody’s physical features to Buzz’s, instead of any of the other toys.</p>	<p>Exclusion (Woody is excluded in conversation)</p> <p>Negative peer behaviours Degrading/belittling (the toys to Woody)</p> <p><i>Humiliating others on appearance</i></p> <p><i>Drawing comparison (between abilities)</i></p> <p><i>Inferiority (an ‘older’ toy and pull string versus a new space toy)</i></p>	<p>External influences: Negative peer group behaviours</p>

	<p>tone of voice). The camera zooms close into Woody's back torso as he faces the other toys. He reaches his left arm backwards and clasps his pull string hoop [Sad violin music plays in the background.] The camera zooms in on Woody's face; his face moves from sad to appearing upset.</p>			
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Appendix J

Coding Samples for Phase Two: Audience Reading – Focus Group Interviews of Film Clips

Code for Participant Pseudonyms: **O** = Olivia, **M** = Mackayla, **F** = Falter

Focus Group Discussion on Film Clip #1: Buzz and Woody after their first encounter in Toy Story 1 (Lasseter, 1995)

Main focus group interview questions: (without prompted questions)

Code for corresponding main interview question:

- 1 = What did you think about this scene?
- 2 = How did the scene make you feel?
- 3 = What does this scene make you think about in terms of friendship?
- 4 = What would you do differently in one of their positions?

Main Interview Question	Participant Code	Line No.	Direct Participant Quotes	1 st Level: Open Coding	2 nd Level: Axial Coding (Subthemes)	Main Theme
1	F	137	Woody is thinking that Buzz is like, taking Andy over	Characters' POV "taking Andy over" Feelings of replacement	Negative feelings of friendship; negative dimension	Gradual progression to a closer friend status
1	F	139	stealing Andy from him	Replacement (feelings of insecurity)	Negative aspect of friendship	Gradual progression to a closer friend status
1	O	141	yeah, what, uh, Falter said was what I was thinking as well like, they were fi- they were kinda like, at a compet- like, competition	"competition stage right now" Rivalry and competition	Negative dimension	Gradual progression to a closer friend status

			stage right now			
1	O	143	They're kinda fighting over Andy's love and the toys' love-	Competing for affection/attention	Negative dimension Rivalry	Gradual progression to a closer friend status
1	O	145	- 'Cause they're just... right now I don't think they're friends, they're kinda like [pause] enemies?	Enemies Non-friend	Negative dimension	Gradual progression to a closer friend status
1	O	147	aware of how Andy's treating them and like, kind of how Andy's replacing Woody right now with Buzz 'cause he's the new toy.	"Andy's replacing Woody with Buzz" New peer Replacement	Peer group behaviour; new peer orientation (i.e., more attention as the 'new peer')	Gradual progression to a closer friend status
1	M	151	I feel like the scene- well, basically a mix of what... uh, they said, but... like, getting replaced I feel like it's not a good feeling	"not a good feeling" Feelings of replacement Perspective taking	Negative dimension of friendship	Gradual progression to a closer friend status
1	M	153	I feel like Woody has a hate- well not 'big hate' but like	"Woody has a little hate for Buzz"	Negative dimension of friendship	Gradual progression to a closer friend status

			a little... hate for like Buzz because taking more attention. [gestures with left arm and looks at the screen]	Hateful Reasons for rivalry: deflected attention and affection	Peer group behaviours to a new peer	
2	M	163	I felt lonely for Woody, 'cause, like, no one really wanted to hang out with him, and they all like wanted to be with the new toy [gestures with right arm].	Lonely (emotion code) Decreased attention from peers	Peer group behaviours; peer group influence	Gradual progression to a closer friend status
3	M	178	I mean there's some friendships that, I mean... in the beginning you don't like each other-	Friendship beginnings as "non-liking"	Positive dimension (liking)	Gradual progression to a closer friend status
3	M	180	-and like, you get to know the person better, it's like moving to like, a good close friendship with them. So I mean it takes time to like, have a	Shifting friendship status "healthy friendships" take time	Positive dimension	Gradual progression to a closer friend status

			healthy friendship with someone. [soft tone of voice and smile.]			
3	O	181	I totally agree with what Mackayla is saying. 'Cause it's- it happens in a lot of friend groups as well- like if there's a big friend group and... you're mostly friends with... another person, but the other person is friends with another person, then you try to get to know everyone	"Friend group" behaviour Knowing Amicability	Positive dimensions; peer group behaviours Gradual process of knowing	Gradual progression to a closer friend status
3	O	183	And sometimes it could start off with like a rough patch, but then once you get to know them, you're more... inclined, I	Unfriendly beginnings Knowing (process)	Positive dimension (knowing)	Gradual progression to a closer friend status

			guess, to talk to them and... get to know them?			
3	F	190	[looks at screen]. But... it's just, sometimes you... try to get to know the person and then they just completely ignore you sometimes-	Rejection Obstacles to knowing (being ignored)	Peer group processes Positive dimension	Gradual progression to a closer friend status
3	F	192	But whenever you get like, their... attention you could actually like 'get to know them' a little and [gestures with hands] form a... friendship.	Obstacles to knowing (getting attention)	Positive dimension: Moving from unfamiliar to familiar (knowing)	Gradual progression to a closer friend status
4	O	206	as the new toy in the group – I would probably get to know everyone, not just exclude Woody	Peer group Inclusion versus exclusion	Peer group behaviour	Gradual progression to a closer friend status
4	F	208	here's also a problem with that. Woody doesn't realize- I mean, Buzz	Identity (identifying as a toy versus other) Inclusion based on one's identity	Inclusion and exclusion in the peer group	Gradual progression to a closer friend status

			doesn't realize he's a toy yet. He still thinks that he's a space ranger			
4	M	211	if I was Woody I would try to like, look at the positive side of the story, not the negative	Inclusion strategy (looking at the positive rather than negative of a situation or story)	Inclusion and exclusion in the peer group	Gradual progression to a closer friend status
4	M	213	I would try to put some more effort to like, get to know the person	Inclusion strategy (putting more effort)	Inclusion and exclusion in the peer group	Gradual progression to a closer friend status
4	M	216	At the place of like... saying like negativity and being like 'Oh, oh I'm gonna be replaced'	Inclusion strategy (shifting mindset to refrain from thinking you'll be replaced)	Inclusion and exclusion in the peer group	Gradual progression to a closer friend status

Focus Group Discussion on Film Clip #2: Woody and Buzz are trapped together on Sid's desk in Toy Story 1 (Lasseter, 1995)

Main focus group interview questions: (without prompted questions)

Code for corresponding main interview question:

1 = What did you think of this scene?

2 = How did this scene make you feel?

3 = What would you do differently – if anything – in any of these character's positions?

Or, maybe you wouldn't and why wouldn't you?

Main Interview Question	Participant Code	Line No.	Direct Participant Quotes	1 st Level: Open Coding	2 nd Level: Axial Coding (Subthemes)	Main Theme
1	O	231	it showed that... Woody,	Helping behaviours		Reciprocal versus

			um- Buzz was feeling down, and Woody was trying to [uses hand gesture] 'build him up' -	Emotional support "trying to build him up"	Emotional validation Building the other person up	unilateral efforts
1	O	233	you could see after that Woody kinda came to like a realization that... he, like he was feeling down as well-	"he was feeling down as well" Context for mutual disclosure	Emotional validation	Reciprocal versus unilateral efforts
1	O	237	Buzz didn't really like... 'build him up' but they helped each other escape.	Unilateral "building him up" Helping	Emotional validation Building the other person up	Reciprocal versus unilateral efforts
1	O	240	you could see on, uh, Buzz's face that he had like a determination from what Woody said.	Provision of emotional support (Woody to Buzz)	Emotional validation	Reciprocal versus unilateral efforts
1	O	242	talking about how their bond got like, better after this and more secure.	Relationship quality (i.e., high quality; bond got better and more secure)	<i>Stability</i>	

1	O	244	your kind of... build this type of bond of 'family.' And like, one that you would understand, like a special type of connection	Relationship quality (i.e., high quality)	<i>Stability</i>	
1	O	246	that no one else would really get, 'cause you've been through kinda the same thing	Shared experiences	<i>Affective properties</i>	
1	M	259	they built each other-well, woody built Buzz up	"they build each other up" "Woody built Buzz up"	Emotional validation	Reciprocal versus unilateral efforts
	F	264	they just... helped each other, kind of	Helping behaviours	Reciprocity (helping each other)	Reciprocal versus unilateral efforts
	F	266	Buzz realized that... bein' a toy isn't all that bad	Emotional support (Woody to Buzz)	Building each other up Emotional validation	Reciprocal versus unilateral efforts
2	M	278	I could... relate a little bit to like, how Buzz felt...	<i>Participant relation to character</i> <i>Emotional connection to the character</i>		
2	M	280	in like, that specific time. And like... how...	"building him up"; provision of emotional support	Building each other up	Reciprocal versus unilateral efforts

			Woody was like, 'building him up,' like		Emotional validation	
2	M	282	if you're, like, have a very close friend... they would build- build -try to, 'build' you up	"try to build you up" Support; helping	Building each other up Emotional validation	Reciprocal versus unilateral efforts
2	M	285	try to take negativity down	Emotional uplifting (lowering negativity) Supporting one's inner state	Building each other up Emotional validation	Reciprocal versus unilateral efforts
2	M	289	bring the positive side	Emotional uplifting	Building each other up Emotional validation	Reciprocal versus unilateral efforts
2	O	293	obviously, it goes both ways with friendships, like you build- you help build each other up	"goes both ways with friendship" "you help build each other up"	Building each other up Emotional validation Mutual investment in providing emotional validation	Reciprocal versus unilateral efforts
	O	298	And I could totally relate to that. When I'm feeling down or just need like a pep talk, and... same	<i>Participant relation to character</i> (resonance to children) Availability to provide support	Emotional validation Mutual investment in providing emotional validation	Reciprocal versus unilateral efforts

			thing to opposite. I'm- we're there for each other and we just... it helps, you know?	"there for each other"		
	O	300	Getting to talk or... a pep talk that you need	Opportunities in friendships (talking, receiving support aligned with needs) Availability to provide support	Emotional validation Building each other up	Reciprocal versus unilateral efforts
	O	303	Builds some type of motivation, I guess?	Benefits to inner state (building motivation) Friendship opportunities	Emotional validation Building each other up	Reciprocal versus unilateral efforts
2	F	307	with my friends it's technically, like, I try to make them feel better then eventually I feel sad, 'cause I can't like really do anything and they have to make you feel better	Expression and awareness of needs (i.e., those that may be unmet)	Emotional validation – unilateral efforts of not knowing best approaches to console friends	Reciprocal versus unilateral efforts
3	O	332	at the end-like, in the end, they're both helping	Helping behaviours (physical and emotional)	<i>Mutual investment to help each other</i>	

			each other, in both different ways, um, physically Buzz is helping Woody – and emotionally , um, uh-Woody’s helping Buzz physically	“Both helping each other”	<i>Feature of reciprocity</i>	
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Focus Group Discussion on Film [Clip #3](#): Buzz finds Woody in Al’s apartment in Toy Story 2 (Lasseter et al., 1999)

Main focus group interview questions: (without prompted questions)

Code for corresponding main interview question:

- 1 = What do you think about this scene?
- 2 = How did this scene make you feel?
- 3 = What did this scene make you think of in terms of friendship?

Main Interview Question	Participant Code	Line No.	Direct Participant Quotes	1 st Level: Open Coding	2 nd Level: Axial Coding (Subthemes)	Main Theme
1	F	365	Woody was... kind of being a jerk, because-Buzz as you said that [clears throat] he was quoting on Woody, and was doing the same thing that Woody did for him, but Woody	Negative behaviours to peer Unreciprocating friends’ efforts “made new friends with what he actually was”	Identity conflict in the dyad (“what he actually was”)	Negotiating identity and ambitions in and outside of the dyad

			didn't care 'cause he made new friends with... what he actually was			
1	O	371	Woody kind of found a place that he could... 'fit in' to	"a place that he could fit-in to"	Belonging	Negotiating identity and ambitions in and outside of the dyad
	O	373	Andy kinda made him feel like he was nothing	Negative peer influence "felt like he was nothing"	Issues of belonging	Negotiating identity and ambitions in and outside of the dyad
1	O	375	But the toys kinda showed that he... that he meant something	Peer group value	Belonging	Negotiating identity and ambitions in and outside of the dyad
1	O	377	someone that you didn't really care about, you wouldn't... travel all the way just to find him. And, to what? Not [chuckles] bring him back? And I agree with Falter, he was k-Woody was being a jerk 'cause he didn't see the appreciation	Care and concern (characteristics of friendship; efforts to show the other's value) Negative behaviours to peer (being unappreciative)	Belonging/ issues and obstacles in the face of belonging	Negotiating identity and ambitions in and outside of the dyad

			that he already had			
2	M	383	the scene made me feel a little bit sad for the... for the part where Buzz went the whole way to find Woody and to bring him back	Sad (emotion code) Efforts in friendship Care and concern for a peer (“went the whole way to find him”)	Reciprocated effort and affect	Reciprocal versus unilateral efforts
2		385	somebody puts as- a lot of effort into like finding someone	Efforts in friendship	Unilateral efforts	Reciprocal versus unilateral efforts
2		387	but the other person isn’t putting as much effort as the one person is. It’s... unfortunate.	One-sided efforts; Negative quality of friendship (“[not] putting as much effort”)	Efforts and affect (unilateral)	Reciprocal versus unilateral efforts
2	O	395	there should’ve been some type of... appreciation	Expectations Exhibiting care and concern for others	Efforts and affect (unilateral)	Reciprocal versus unilateral efforts
2		397	Buzz did all this. Brought everyone... tried to... um, bring Woody back, and... there was no type of ‘thank you’ or... just	One-sided efforts Negative quality of friendship (i.e., no positive response to a peer’s effort)	Efforts and affect (unilateral)	Reciprocal versus unilateral efforts

			like, 'glad you cared' at all			
2	F	403	Rollercoaster of emotions	<i>"rollercoaster of emotions"</i> (emotion code)		
3	M	412	you have to put... effort into a friendship for it to work	Friendship efforts Successful friendship outcomes	Reciprocity for successful friendships	Reciprocal versus unilateral efforts
3	M	415	Woody wasn't putting... as much effort as Buzz was.	"Woody wasn't putting as much effort" Friendship efforts	Efforts and affect (unilateral)	Reciprocal versus unilateral efforts
3	M	417	bringing him home, to... where he's supposed to be. And I mean... it's like, there's like some stories I have with friends that happened in the past, where I was putting effort and they were putting... not as much, or when I wasn't putting effort and	Consideration of the others' needs ("home... where's he's supposed to be"); care and concern Efforts in friendship	Mutual efforts and affect	Reciprocal versus unilateral efforts

			they were putting... more effort			
3	M	419	then we went our own ways	Unrequited needs	Parting ways; unreciprocated efforts; dissolution	Reciprocal versus unilateral efforts
3	O	425	I've had an experience with that 'cause... friendship is a lot of 'give and take'	"friendship is a lot of 'give and take'"	Mutual effort and affect	Reciprocal versus unilateral efforts
3	O	427	if someone's giving a lot of... "give" [emphasis] and you're just taking it it's kind of... one way and it's not really, I guess, friendly? [chuckles]. But, it's just... yeah. I've been in that position	Unreciprocating is unfriendly; opposite of friend quality	Mutual effort and affect	Reciprocal versus unilateral efforts
3	O	430	Mostly the one giving	<i>Participant awareness of behaviour in friendship</i>		
3	O	434	I think in this scene as well... it's like... Woody is... kind of lost in some sort of way? 'cause he	Personal struggle/ internal conflict ("Woody's kind of lost")	Belonging; issues of belonging	Negotiating identity and ambitions in and outside of the dyad

			felt like- like there's no place for him back home	"No place for him back home"		
3	O	436	But everyone's showing him that there is, that they mean a lot to- that Woody means a lot to them. But I guess they're both set in their own mindset	Care and concern for others ("showing that Woody means a lot to them")	Belonging Issues of belonging	Negotiating identity and ambitions in and outside of the dyad
3	O	438	they don't... see that the other's wrong. But technically, both of them- there's no 'right or wrong' in this situation	<i>Assertive (characteristic s in the dyad; both are not right or wrong)</i>		
3	O	442	Woody wants to like 'fit in,' have some comfort... but, Buzz is trying to help a friend	Acceptance "Fit in [and] have some comfort"	Belonging	Negotiating identity and ambitions in and outside of the dyad

Focus Group Discussion on Film Clip #4: Woody and Buzz temporarily parting ways (Andy's going to college) in Toy Story 3 (Unkrich, 2010)

Main focus group interview questions: (without prompted questions)

Code for corresponding main interview question:

- 1 = What did you think about *this* scene?
- 2 = How did the scene make you feel?
- 3 = What does this scene make you think about in terms of friendship?

Main Interview Question	Participant Code	Line No.	Direct Participant Quotes	1 st Level: Open Coding	2 nd Level: Axial Coding (Subthemes)	Main Theme
1	O	469	I don't really know how to go about this scene... but I do- I think that, Woody really related to... what, um, Andy's mom said to Andy, how 'I always wanted to be with you,' 'I always want to be with you,'"	Desire to stay with friends	Togetherness	Negotiating identity and ambitions in and outside of the dyad
1	O	471	Woody just wants to have the feeling that... the toys will be 'taken care of'	<i>Care and concern for others' wellbeing</i>	Togetherness	Negotiating identity and ambitions in and outside of the dyad
1	O	475	obviously, he would miss them going off to college	Care for the others' wellbeing		
1	M	486	think... family goes first and I mean, for example,	Friends as family; friendship longevity	Togetherness over individual pursuits	Negotiating identity and ambitions in and

			he's been with the toys for like multiple years			outside of the dyad
1	M	488	I feel like it's hard for... Woody to like, leave them behind because there's so much history that's behind them	Friendship longevity Stability ("so much history")	Togetherness versus individual pursuits	Negotiating identity and ambitions in and outside of the dyad
1	M	492	maybe he would've gone with Andy but then... there's also the side where there's all of like... his friends he's made on the way	Intrapersonal conflict (i.e., identity to follow his ambition)	Togetherness over individual pursuits	Negotiating identity and ambitions in and outside of the dyad
1	F	497	Woody... was like, remember at how much... he ha- how much he had fun with his friends and... he wanted- he didn't want to leave them	Memories of friendship Friendship maintenance	Togetherness over individual pursuits	Negotiating identity and ambitions in and outside of the dyad
1	F	499	he decided to go with them and go	Following (going with them to	Togetherness over	Negotiating identity and

			to Bonnie's house	Bonnie's house)	individual pursuits	ambitions in and outside of the dyad
2	M	511	I was gonna say like, in a way, sad and like... worried [hand gesture] for like, what's gonna go on in the future with them	Sad (emotion code) Worried (emotion code) Uncertainty of friendship maintenance	Emotional response to separation; navigating uncertainty	Future and fate of friendships
2	O	520	Andy's going to college that's a huge change for the relationships of the whole toys	"huge change" Uncertainty of friendship maintenance	<i>Adjustment</i>	Future and fate of friendships
2	O	522	not knowing what the future holds can be scary	Scary (emotion code)	Unknown future of friendship	Future and fate of friendships
2	O	525	Woody wants the toys to be taken care of, and as well as them- as well as Woody I mean- like, they wanna be together. They wanna... maintain I guess, their friendship?	Care and concern Continuation of friendship	<i>Friendship maintenance through togetherness</i>	

2	O	528	And keep-keep it as long as they can	“keep it as long as they can”	<i>Maintenance and stability of friendship</i>	
2	O	530	Cause they’ve been through so much together as well!	<i>Shared experiences (reason for remaining with friends versus venturing)</i>	<i>Stability and longevity of friendship</i>	Negotiating identity and ambitions in and outside of the dyad
2	O	532	the same experiences that they had kinda holds that bond together	“same experiences” “holds that bond together”	<i>Shared experiences</i>	<i>Negotiating identity and ambitions in and outside of the dyad</i>
3	M	550	you have a little of history behind them. They’re like basically considered family to you	Longevity (“history behind him”) Family status	Togetherness	Negotiating identity and ambitions in and outside of the dyad
3	M	554	losing them would be like a part of your world that’s gone	Friendship loss	Affective attachment and association	Future and fate of friendships
3	O	565	I can relate to like, how the toys are feeling. Kind of like I said before, ‘not knowing what the future holds’	Uncertainty of friendship maintenance and continuation	Emotionally navigating separation	Future and fate of friendships

3	O	569	it's kinda like 'moving on' I guess	Intrapersonal growth	Embarking on a new life path	Future and fate of friendships
3	F	578	I can truly relate to being like Woody	<i>Participant relation to character</i> (resonance to children)	Togetherness	Negotiating identity and ambitions in and outside of the dyad
3	F	580	I like to stay with my friends. I am very protective over them	Protective of friends (characteristic)	Togetherness over individual pursuits	Negotiating identity and ambitions in and outside of the dyad
3	O	584	you wanna be there for your friends	Available to friends (characteristic)	Togetherness over individual pursuits	Negotiating identity and ambitions in and outside of the dyad
3	O	586	You wanna be with them as well, 'cause they- if you're friends with them you obviously enjoy their presence	Shared time	Togetherness over individual pursuits	Negotiating identity and ambitions in and outside of the dyad

Focus Group Discussion on Film Clip #5: Buzz and Woody's final encounter in the series in Toy Story 4 (Cooley, 2019)

Main focus group interview questions: (without prompted questions)

Code for corresponding main interview question:

- 1 = What did you think of this last clip? How did it made you *feel*?
- 2 = What did this scene make you think about in terms of friendship?
- 3 = What would've made you happy about this scene?
- 4 = Can you relate to this scene?

5 = What would you do differently in any of the characters' positions in this scene?

Main Interview Question	Participant Code	Line No.	Direct Participant Quotes	1 st Level: Open Coding	2 nd Level: Axial Coding (Subthemes)	Main Theme
1	F	656	Woody's leaving. He's saying goodbye to all his friends	"saying goodbye to all his friends"	Emotionally navigating separation	Future and fate of friendships
1	M	660	you don't really see yourself-what's it called leaving your friends behind.	Friendship stability	Emotionally navigating separation	Future and fate of friendships
1	M	662	to like, have a new life and everything . Start over and like follow, your like what your inner voice [smiles] like how Buzz said	"follow your inner voice" Individual pursuits Acceptance (characteristics)	Embarking on a new life path	Future and fate of friendships
1	M	665	it's a very large step, to leave people behind. And to like, move on	"large step to leave people behind" "move on"	Emotionally navigating separation	Future and fate of friendships

1	O	668	I think it takes a lot of initiative on both parts to say that... but you can tell by the way that they looked at each other that he wanted to stay with Bo Peep	Agreement (between both persons) Acceptance (characteristics)	Embarking on a new life path Heteronormativity	Future and fate of friendships
1	O	670	Buzz was kind of accepting that. He's like- [looks intently thinking to the side] 'cause, I guess in this way that Woody's kinda the leader of the other toys from Andy. Woody's kinda like 'passing it down' to Buzz	Acceptance (characteristics) Delegation of leadership roles	Embarking on a new life path	Future and fate of friendships
1	O	675	'it's okay to go,' 'You could start a new	Reassurance (opportunities in the dyad; approving	Embarking on a new life path	Future and fate of friendships

			life,' and 'I could take care of them,' and- well not even that he gives him permission	the other to start anew) Mutual encouragement		
1	O	677	just those two words could mean a lot from someone that you care	Reassurance and validation	Embarking on a new life path	Future and fate of friendships
2	M	686	If you have a good friendship it will last, and they will support your opinion and idea	Unconditional support (from one dyad member)	Embarking on a new life path	Future and fate of friendships
2	O	688	Buzz really supports what... Woody wants	Compassionate (characteristic) towards the other's decision to start anew	Embarking on a new life path	Future and fate of friendships
2	O	690	in this case it's a girl. But like, following-going on his own path, I guess? Away from	Intrapersonal development (shifting identity and desires)	Embarking on a new life path Heteronormativity	Future and fate of friendships

			being owned by someone			
2	O	692	but now he's a part of the "lost toys" group	<i>Group identity and membership</i>		
2	O	694	makes me kinda feel like, sad but in a happy way kind of. Like, you know? I feel sad that... they're leaving each other, but they know that they're gonna meet again probably	Happy (emotion code) Sad (emotional code) Uncertainty of friendship maintenance	Emotionally navigating separation	Future and fate of friendships
2	O	696	they're moving on in different directions, and they don't really know 'what' the future holds	Intrapersonal growth Uncertainty of friendship maintenance	Embarking on a new life path	Future and fate of friendships
3	F	717	I would not like to Woody leave	Needs in friendships (i.e., not having the other leave)	Togetherness versus individual pursuits	Negotiating identity and ambitions in and outside of the dyad

3	F	725	they're such long friends and they have been through so much together	Friendship longevity Stability ("so much history") Shared experiences	Togetherness versus individual pursuits	Negotiating identity and ambitions in and outside of the dyad
4	M	754	for someone that travels a lot and like, and goes to different place like, you make a lot of "good," close friends in... one area, and then, let's say the next day you get like- a note from, like, one of your parents that says, 'Oh,' uh, 'we're moving to this place,' um, 'in this month.' And then you don't know what to do	Uncertainty of friendship continuation (i.e., in separated cities/ when moving) Implications for opportunities to sustain friendship	Emotionally navigating separation	Future and fate of friendships

			in that specific time, and you don't wanna say goodbye 'cause you know you're probably gonna see them again. It's... relatable in a way 'cause I travel a lot			
4	O	770	I can relate from like moving from different schools	Adjustment (context: school)	Emotionally navigating separation	Future and fate of friendships
4	O	773	you make friends there and then you don't know if you could- you'll see them again	Uncertainty of friendship maintenance and continuation	Emotionally navigating separation	Future and fate of friendships
4	O	775	it's hard to stay in touch when you're so young and don't know-like, don't have a	Challenges in friendship maintenance (limited technology at certain ages)	Emotionally navigating separation	Future and fate of friendships

			phone as well			
4	O	777	you don't know if you'll see them again even on vacation	"you don't know if you'll see them again"	Emotionally navigating separation	Future and fate of friendships
4	O	779	when you meet a friend, you get along so well, you could live in different places and you don't know when you would meet them again	Obstacles in friendship maintenance: uncertainty of shared physical time Uncertainty of friendship maintenance	Emotionally navigating separation	Future and fate of friendships
5	O	817	leaving them is like, kinda leaving... apart of you behind. But, finding yourself like on your new path [gestures with right hand] as well	Intrapersonal growth (identity negotiation)	<i>Embarking on a new life path</i>	Future and fate of friendships