



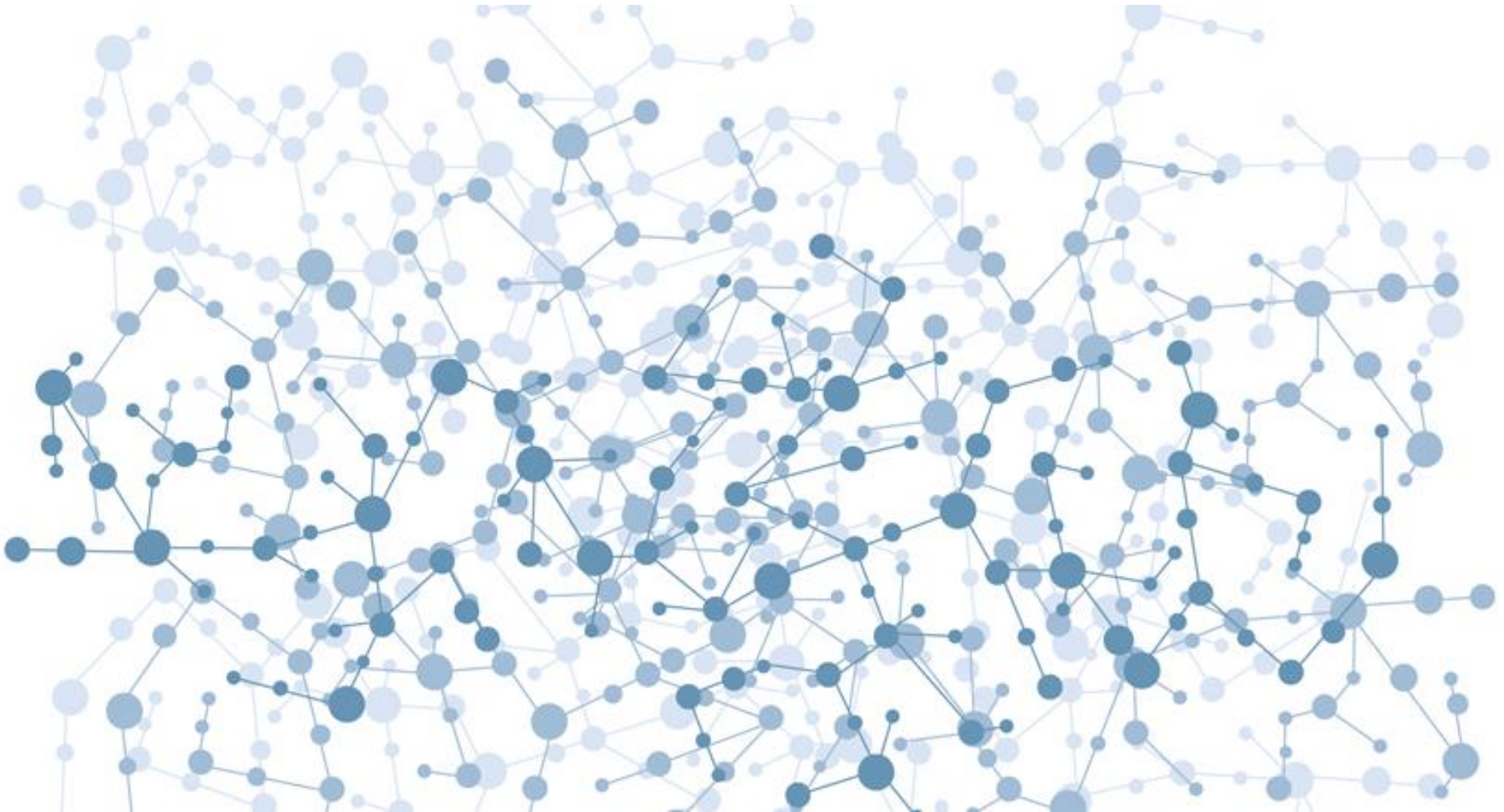
Development isn't
just something that
happens.

It is also something you do

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Thinking about development poststructurally



Identities are socially constructed

- We are aware of social norms
 - Gender
 - Class
 - Culture
- Our awareness of social norms exerts power over how we conduct ourselves
 - Speech
 - Activities
 - Movement and posture

(Butler, 1990: Foucault, 1977)



Identities are socially constructed



- Discourses / norms don't determine our actions but they do govern them
- The possibility that we are being watched influences our actions
- Cultures reward and privilege actions that reflect norms
- If we act in non-normative ways we can feel visible
- Actions that are repeated enough seem natural

(Butler, 1990: Foucault, 1977)

A Day in the Life of Bruce



A mostly fictional account (based on a true story)














Understandings of
childhood and adulthood
are circulated socially



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5g4ayKtbqUg>



As well as a biological and genetic process, is development something that is also socially constructed?

CHAT TIME!



When/where have you felt compelled to act “like an adult”?

Session content

- Researching with older children in OSHC
- Being older is important to children
- How children access knowledge about ages & stages
- How children 'perform' ages & stages
- Implications for educators



Children aged 9 to 12 years in OSHC



- Considered more difficult to work with than younger children
(Smith & Barker, 2000; Kennedy & Stonehouse, 2004)
- Older children have concerned Australian practitioners for at least 25 years (Gifford, 1991)
- Older children are a minority in OSHC
 - 398,730 children per day
 - 105,600 older children per day (ABS, 2015)
- Sometimes a disadvantaged minority
 - Activities suited to younger children
 - Resources suited to younger children
(Hurst, 2013, 2015)

How does OSHC think about older children?



- Pedagogies founded on developmental knowledge:
 - All older children are similar
 - Almost adolescent
 - Risk-takers
 - Rebellious
 - Morally ambiguous
 - Peer-oriented
 - Capable of self-care
- More 'adolescent' than 'middle childhood'

What was I investigating?

- What do children aged nine to twelve years consider important in the provision of Outside School Hours Care?





Conducting the research

Seeking children's voices

- 10 children in Grades 5 & 6 from one SAC setting (Banksia Gully) in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne
- 6 months in the setting
- Participatory methods
 - Children as co-researchers (Kellest, 2010)
 - Focus group activities
 - Individualised, self-guided projects (Clark & Moss, 2001)
 - Observer & play companion
 - Interviews



Using observations & theory to explore children's views



Giving children time to think about the research question and form their views





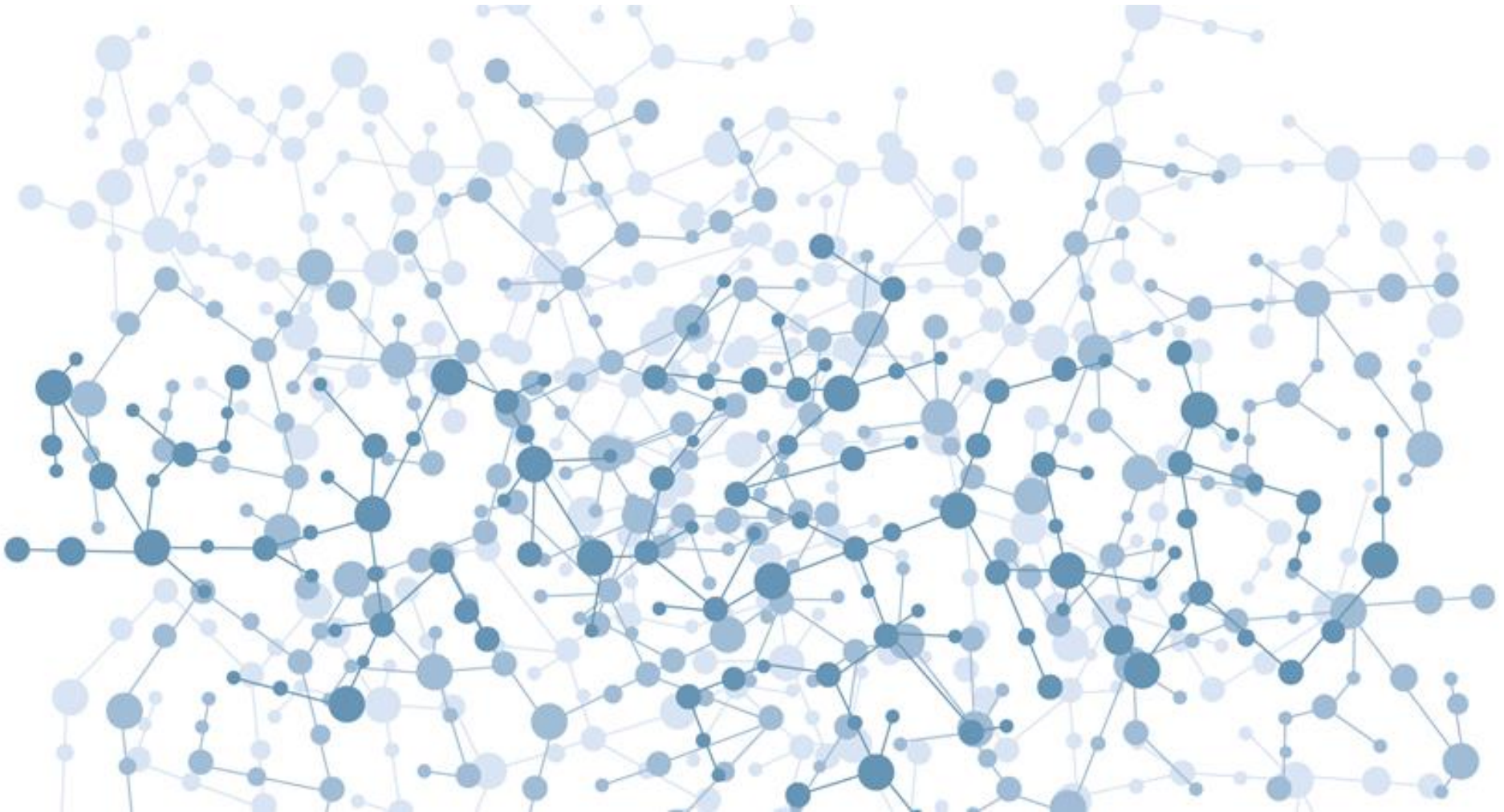
What did I find?

Being seen to be older was the most important thing to the participants



- Older children desired pedagogies that recognised them as a separate category
 - More challenging play experiences
 - Their own spaces
 - Their own resources
 - Access to same-age peers
- Being seen as older was central to the children's identities

Thinking about the data poststructurally



The performative construction of aged/stage identities



- Children have an understanding and awareness of social norms associated with age or developmental stages
- Social norms associated with age or developmental stages govern children's actions



Children are aware of
developmental discourses &
desire to be seen as more
'adult'

Adults are 'superior'

- Developmental discourses construct adults as superior to children
- Adults :
 - Are considered more rational, sophisticated, experienced & responsible
 - Have access to more power, freedom, privileges & resources
(Cannella, 2008)
- Children desire to be more 'adult'
- Children get more social privileges as they age



Children can desire to be older

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fElh8TKLiYM>

Accessing discourses of maturity

Bruce. *What would you call an older kid?*

Sky. *Um like kind of threes (Grade 3) and up.*

Bruce. *... So what makes an older kid different?*

Sky. *Well they're more mature hopefully. And... they see things differently because... I haven't explained it but um they see things differently I reckon.*

Accessing discourses of strength & masculinity

Bruce. *So are there any other ways you think you're different from younger kids?*

Kevin. *Um well bigger I guess... and we have more muscle... We build muscle. We build bone. We get stronger and stronger by the second. And that increases our power.*

Where do children access developmental discourses?



- Local practices
 - Separate spaces & playgrounds for older children
 - Mentoring programs
 - Leadership programs
 - Conversation – “Act like a big girl”
 - Behaviour management – ‘demotion’
- Global practices
 - Media classifications
 - Age grouping of children
 - Schooling structures
 - Rites of passage
 - Toy classifications

Local practices as a way of accessing developmental knowledge

Bruce. *So is being a role model something that's expected of you, that you're supposed to do?*

Penny. *Yeah*

Bruce. *So who talks to you about that?*

Penny. *Well, my teacher at school... She tells us that the Grade Sixes are supposed to be role models to all the younger students at our school. And Robyn tells us here um that we're supposed to be responsible and show the other kids how to act.*

Bruce. *... So how do you feel about that?*

Penny. *I feel it's good, seeing that they're looking up to me and to all of my friends.*

CHAT TIME!



Can you think of examples where children have demonstrated knowledge of ages/stages?



Children engage actively
with developmental norms

'Good girls' performing older child

- **Bruce.** *So what about the other stuff you do here...? You know like the craft activities. You know they do papier mache*
- **Apple.** *Erh (disapproval)*
- **Bruce.** *Or they might build things, you know. Um is that of interest to Grades Fives and Sixes?*
- **Apple.** *Um I don't think so...I think we probably just like to do our own stuff... as you get older you get better at things, especially drawing. When you're younger, you're not that good at drawing, so I think a lot of the younger kids like to do arts and craft and follow the books. Whereas we just like to do our own thing and just make whatever we want.*

'Good girls' performing older child

- Creating physical separations between older and younger
- Friendship hierarchies
- Rejecting 'little kids' activities
- Engaging in solitary play
- Demonstrating mastery - 'Art' and NOT 'craft'
- Avoiding tensions with adults



'Sporty boys' performing older child

- **Bruce.** *You three, love basketball and you pretty much rule the roost don't you...*
- **Kevin.** *Yeah*
- **Bruce.** *... on the basketball court? So how do you do that? How do you control the basketball court so no one else gets on it unless you're not using it?*
- **Kevin.** *Well you've just got to make yourself look controllable (sic).*
- **Bruce.** *What do you mean?*
- **Kevin.** *... well first play King Court, because that takes up, not the whole area, but that ring... So then if someone comes, you say, can you please play like at whatever ring? Um yeah, and you just always play, it makes it look like you rule basketball.*

'Sporty boys' performing older child

- Creating physical separations between older and younger
- Physical domination of activities & spaces
- Teasing
- Patrolling spatial boundaries
- Performing to an audience



Performances of age & gender shift with changing contexts



- Late in the day when friends have gone
 - Tiger wandered, secretly not engaging in activity
 - Kevin performed 'bored', visibly refusing to engage in activity
 - Klay played with slightly younger children, but not whilst Kevin was around



What does it mean?

Is it relevant for early
childhood educators?

We embed developmental norms in our pedagogies

- Age grouping of children
- Privileges for older children
- Speaking of older children as more mature and capable
- Specific resources for different age groups



Our actions sometimes communicate that older is 'better' than younger



- Privileges attached to age
 - Access to resources and content
 - Rites of passage that celebrate 'older'
 - Access to responsibilities
 - Access to power
 - Higher social status

CHAT TIME!



What aged pedagogies do you employ in your work?

Do children ever use those pedagogies fairly/unfairly?

Is it problematic to categorise children according to age or stage?



- Not all children develop at the same rate
- Not all children desire to appear older
- Not all children desire same-age peers
- Aged pedagogies can be problematic for children who reside outside their category
- Aged programming is neither 'good' nor 'bad'
- What matters is how children and adults engage with aged pedagogies



I still don't fully understand
what it means

But I do wonder about...

- Should we always be bound by age-rated resources and media?
- Should there be separate spaces for different ages?
- Should mentoring and behaviour programs be organised by age?

- Are there 'older' children's resources that younger children can also use?
- Can younger children also have their own spaces?
- Can younger children also be leaders?
- Can we see it as 'normal' for older children to have younger friends?

Thinking about aged practices in Early Childhood



- REFLECT
 - How do I enact aged discourses in my practice?
- OBSERVE & ASK
 - How is power exercised around aged discourses and what are its effects?
 - How does my practice affect children who don't reside within developmental norms or powerful groups?
- BE OPEN TO THE UNCOMFORTABLE
 - Do my aged practices advantage, disadvantage, problematise, exclude and silence?
- BE OPEN TO NEW WAYS OF PRACTISING



Thank you!

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