

**Title: RETRIBUTION AND REBELLION: CHILDREN'S MEANING MAKING OF JUSTICE
THROUGH STORYTELLING**

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Abstract: Contemporary social theory and the United Nations (1989) *Convention on the Rights of the Child* have forged current interest in the concept of children's citizenship. However, what citizenship is and can be for young children is surrounded by much debate and ambiguity. This article discusses explorations of possibilities of children's citizenship from a study of the author's practice of social justice storytelling as pedagogy with a class of children aged five to six years of age. The study sought findings to what active citizenship is possible for young children; and who young children might be as active citizens, from children's responses to performed social justice stories. Aesthetic encounters with story provoked affective responses. Retribution and rebellion, though paradoxical to metanarratives of young children and citizenship, were two significant themes amidst these responses. The significant nature of these themes is explored and explained through identification of possible narrative influence and identification of children's initiated actions and comments as life stories of citizenship practice.

Keywords: Aesthetic encounters, Citizenship, Children's rights, Metanarratives, Social justice, Stories, Storytelling

Résumé: La théorie sociale contemporaine et la Convention relative aux droits de l'enfant des Nations Unies (1989) ont forgé l'intérêt actuel pour le concept de citoyenneté des enfants. Toutefois, ce que la citoyenneté est et peut être pour les jeunes enfants est entouré par des débats et une ambiguïté importants. Cet article évoque des explorations des possibilités de citoyenneté des enfants à partir d'une étude de la pratique des auteurs relative à la narration d'histoires de justice sociale en tant que pédagogie avec une classe d'enfants ayant entre cinq et six ans. L'étude a recherché, à partir de réponses des enfants à des histoires jouées de justice sociale, des conclusions sur quel type de citoyenneté active est possible pour les jeunes enfants, et qui pourraient être les jeunes enfants en tant que citoyens actifs. Les rencontres de l'esthétique et des histoires ont provoqué des réponses affectives. La récompense et la rébellion, bien qu'étant paradoxales pour les métarécits des jeunes enfants et pour la citoyenneté, ont été deux thèmes importants parmi ces réponses. La nature significative de ces thèmes est explorée et expliquée grâce à l'identification de l'influence possible de la narration et à l'identification des actions et commentaires initiés par les enfants en tant qu'histoires vécues de pratique de la citoyenneté.

Resumen: La teoría social contemporánea y la *Convención sobre los Derechos del Niño* de las Naciones Unidas (1989) han forjado el interés actual en el concepto de la ciudadanía de los niños. Sin embargo, hay mucho debate y ambigüedad alrededor de lo que es y puede ser la ciudadanía para los niños pequeños. Este artículo discute la exploración de las posibilidades acerca de la ciudadanía de los niños desde un estudio de la práctica del autor sobre la narración de la justicia social como pedagogía con una clase de niños de entre cinco y seis años de edad. El estudio intentó hallar descubrimientos sobre cuál ciudadanía activa es posible para los niños pequeños, y quiénes serían los niños pequeños como ciudadanos activos, a partir de las respuestas de los niños a historias actuadas sobre justicia social. Los encuentros estéticos con la historia provocaron respuestas afectivas. La retribución y la rebelión, aunque paradójicas a las metanarraciones de niños pequeños y la ciudadanía, fueron dos temas significativos entre estas respuestas. La naturaleza significativa de estos temas se explora y se explica a través de la posible influencia e identificación narrativa de las acciones y comentarios iniciados por los niños como historias de vida de práctica ciudadana.

Storytelling is understood to be an oral art form where a teller shares a story with a live audience through dynamic application of voice, gesture and complementing props. Critical theorist Walter Benjamin (1955/1999) described the act of storytelling as the storyteller drawing from her¹ experience or that of others and “making it the experience of those who are listening to the tale” (p. 87). Listeners can connect with the characters and accompany the teller on the journey of experience, then emerge with new insight and understandings. Understandings of humanity are reached via the cultivation of sympathetic imagination that storytelling fosters (Nussbaum (997). As an aesthetic encounter, storytelling can provoke what Greene (1995) referred to as wide-awakeness: aroused vivid and reflective experiential responses by releasing imagination through the arts. Wide-awakeness can be produced by teachers who employ the arts to create spaces for dialogue, personal connections, ‘renewed consciousness of possibility’ (Greene, p.43) and imaginative action. Greene particularly saw that stories bore the capacity to captivate people to see and feel the perspective of another, which motivates relations, possibilities and actions and come to understand what social justice actually means and what it might demand. Nussbaum concurred by suggesting that the goals of global citizenship are best promoted through story in a deliberative and critical spirit, proposing that stories are not simply shared to provoke compassion, but that the stories are deliberated and critiqued as if the story is a friend.²

Based on these understandings of storytelling, and the author’s experiences of sharing social justice stories with young children who then self-initiated civic action on injustices, a study was designed to investigate relations between storytelling and young children’s active citizenship. In this study, storytelling was positioned as an aesthetic pedagogy that offers an analogical and poetic mode of knowing that can cultivate affective responses, cognitive rigour and analysis (Abbs 1989; Greene 1995). Social justice storytelling was proposed and investigated as a pedagogy that cultivates a forum for young children to engage in open dialogue about social justice issues and practices of active citizenship. The stories shared as part of the study were about experiences of unfair treatment or injustice. According to Stephens (1992), characteristic childhood stories in the west tend to be built on certainties, such as happy-ever-after-endings, which support metanarratives of children as innocent. Telling stories of unfair treatment or injustice was a conscious decision and an attempt to counter metanarratives of childhood innocence and widen child access to knowledge and active citizenship participation. The stories were chosen by the author/researcher to make visible the plights of others and to see what social actions they might provoke.

The study was framed on a view of active citizenship as envisioned in communitarian (Delanty 2002) and global citizenship (Williams 2002), informed by Arendt’s (1958/1998) theory of action which defines action as beginning new ideas with other people in the polis. Based on this conception of democratic action, the children in this study were positioned as active citizens; the teacher and author/researcher engaged with the children as active members of society who possessed potential to initiate action with others.

Study of a Practice of Social Justice Storytelling in an Early Childhood Classroom

To explore possibilities for young children’s active citizenship through storytelling, a series of weekly social justice storytelling workshops with a class of children aged five to 6 years were investigated. Ideas for stories, questions, and

¹ Throughout this article the feminine pronoun is used to imply both males and females. For many hundreds of years the practice has been to use the male pronoun to refer to both genders; this is a small effort to bring balance to this practice.

² Nussbaum adopted this idea from Booth (1988), who suggested viewing a literary work as a friend.

activities for the workshops and interviews were created, enacted, reflected on, and amended on a weekly basis, as guided by reflections on the children's and teacher's responses to the workshops. The duration of the study was not predetermined; as in action research, attention was on the present and no neat conclusive endpoint was envisioned (Whitehead & McNiff 2006). The workshops occurred once per week for 13 weeks.

Through a living theory approach to practitioner research (Whitehead & McNiff 2006) the action research processes of planning, action, and reflection occurred on a weekly basis to examine the author's practice of social justice storytelling as a pedagogy. The storytelling workshops were the action. Each workshop began with the telling of a story purposefully crafted by the author/researcher to provoke critique of social justice issues. These included folktales, biographical stories and stories created in response to the research process. The stories and workshops were informed by reflections of the preceding workshop with the children and the teacher, thereby being crafted on a weekly basis. After the storytelling, the teacher and author/ researcher co-facilitated a critical discussion of the story based on a community of inquiry approach (Lipman 1988) in which children and adults dialogue to search out the problematic borders of puzzling concepts. Further interaction with the story occurred in small group activities where the children explored the stories through drawing, sculpting/building, dancing, and developing social actions to redress injustices. These small group activities provided space for affective responses to the stories, as according to Greene (1995), aesthetic encounters through the arts (e.g., stories, drawing, sculpting/building, dancing) demand affective responses, cognitive rigour and analysis. Both Abbs (1989) and Greene, concur that aesthetic encounters cultivate a sensuous, analogical and poetic mode of knowing which provoke shifts in awareness to transform knowledge, making it more intelligible. Aesthetic encounters could free the children to imagine what they might not be able to know but could feel and experience. These aesthetic experiences offered a means to know and see the world differently.

All participants contributed to critical reflection on the workshops, through follow-up conversations. Two to three days after each storytelling workshop, the author/researcher visited the class to gain feedback on the workshop through separate follow-up conversations with the teacher and a group of five to six self-nominated children. These conversations with the teacher and the children, and data of preceding workshops were reflected upon to identify points of interest and concern that warranted further exploration to guide the author/researcher's crafting of the following week's story, critical discussion, and post-story activities. In the last workshop, the children told stories individually, in pairs or in groups of three; they were invited to tell stories as a meaningful and familiar way to convey their thoughts and feelings on their experience of social justice storytelling. All of the workshops were both video and audio recorded, and all of the follow-up conversations were audio recorded. Transcriptions of these workshops and conversations were the data gathered for analysis.

Thematic and dialectical analysis

The transcripts of the storytelling workshops and follow-up conversations were read for findings of possibilities for young children's active citizenship, with analytical memos (Creswell 2005; MacNaughton & Hughes 2009) recorded. The transcripts were reviewed again to reduce the data by identifying commonalities in the analytical memos. Common key terms in analytical memos were grouped together to identify recurring themes. The four most common themes in order were suggestions of social actions, and suggestions of retributive actions, consideration of another,

and critical awareness. Data discussed in this article were selected from the second most frequently appearing theme (suggestions of retributive actions) in the children's comments and actions indicative of related responses to the told social justice stories. From data samples indicative of this theme the following were identified: a) what concerned the children, b) what they considered to be just or fair remedies to redress injustices, c) how they acted, and d) possible influences on their ideas and inspiration for action. Indicators of possible narrative influence on children's comments and actions in particular were identified and discussed. What active citizenship is possible for young children and who young children might be as active citizens were identified through interpretations of children's initiated action/s to redress injustice and accompanying comments. From an Arendtian (Arendt 1958/1998) understanding, actions (as initiating something new with others) in conjunction with speech were seen to produce stories of who the children were as citizens. They demonstrated a willingness to act and speak: to be in the polis. Interpretations of the children's initiated actions and comments produced descriptions of who the children were as citizens in the moment.

The following explores the significance of retribution and rebellion as identified significant themes of possibilities for young children's active citizenship given their paradoxical contrast to widely held views of children and citizenship. First, retribution is discussed through analysis of two children's suggestions of retributive action as punishment and reciprocal justice. Second, rebellion is investigated through analysis of a story told by three girls that was representative of rebellion as a suggestion of retributive action. Through dialectical analysis (Dick 1993; Winter 1998) of contemplation, speculation, and relating the data to relevant theory and literature (in this case – Arendt's, 1958/1998, theory of action, and literature on citizenship, narrative and childhood), ideas on the purpose and place of these themes in possibilities of young children's active citizenship are proposed.

Retribution in Young Children's Active Citizenship

The children's suggestions of retributive actions as punishment were particularly high in frequency in response to hearing *Craig Kielburger's Story* (a Canadian boy who started the world's largest network of child activists - *Free the Children*). Many of these suggestions were accumulative, as *Craig Kielburger's Story* built on the suffering attached to child labour that was introduced with *Iqbal Masih's Story* (a Pakistani child activist who was contracted to bonded labour in a carpet factory from the age of 5). To explore the significance of retribution as a theme in young children's active citizenship, a suggestion for retributive action as punishment offered by Molly (aged five) is discussed, followed by Declan's (aged six) suggestions of reciprocal justice.

Burning the Factory Owner

The whole-group discussion after *Iqbal's Story* began with many children expressing their feelings in response to the story. I posed the following question to steer the discussion to suggestions of actions:

Louise: I know you talked about feeling really sad and angry, so perhaps there is something that you think you as an individual or we as a group could do? (Lines 406-408 W6 30/08/2007)

Declan was the first to reply and suggested that we "Tell the owner of the factory to the police, because he is guilty" (Line 409 W6 30/08/2007). Then Molly spoke slowly and carefully with this suggestion.

Molly: To try and—get him—to set a fire and—put him inside the fire (*mouth downturned*).
(Lines 413-414 W6 30/08/2007)

Her comment surprised me, so I sought clarification.

Louise: You want to set a FIRE and put Ghullah [the factory owner in *Iqbal's Story*] in the fire?

Molly: (*Nods head*) (Lines 415-416 W6 30/08/2007)

Molly's comment seemed to position Ghullah as a perpetrator for whom death was the only answer. Declan's suggestion of reporting Ghullah to the police was indicative of a metanarrative of good citizenship through law enforcement. This metanarrative was probably readily available to Molly, as her father is a police officer. However, Molly suggested burning the perpetrator: an act of violent resistance. The teacher considered Molly's suggestion as atypical for Molly.

Teacher: Yeah the message Molly gave was quite powerful. She's so much a conformist. I wouldn't have imagined that, you know. (Lines 147-148 W6 TI 31/08/2007)

This anomalous comment from Molly prompted closer examination in order to understand what shaped Molly's unconventional suggestion.

On consideration of possible narrative influence on Molly's comment, it is noteworthy that numerous fairy tales tell of painful punishment inflicted on villains to establish the happiness of the hero. Tatar (2003) recognised this pattern in her critique of the Grimm Brothers' versions of fairy tales, where more painful punishment for the villain produces greater corresponding happiness for the hero. In the case of Molly's comment, Iqbal was positioned as the hero, as she suggested that Iqbal set the fire. According to Tatar, heroes are either presented in fairy tales as helpless victims (e.g., Cinderella), or seekers (e.g., Prince Charming), or both (e.g., Hansel and Gretel). Counter to the position of the victim is the villain, who is often so demonised in fairy tales that it is impossible to forgive him or her. This seems to be the case with Molly's positioning of Ghullah, as she saw his acts of cruelty to children as so unforgiveable to deserve total annihilation through incineration. A metanarrative that permeates this pattern in fairy tales is the "Old Testament logic of an eye for an eye" (Tatar 2003, p. 183). This kind of logic works by balancing the humiliation and helplessness of the victim/hero with retaliation and punishment. Such logic may have shaped Molly's response. Her strong identification with the 'helpless victim' (Iqbal) appeared to provoke Molly to articulate such an emotive response to what could be done to address the injustice in *Iqbal's Story*.

The way Molly expressed her comment offered a strong indication of an affective response. She delivered the words with intensity and purpose whilst transfixing a sombre steely gaze. Molly had not expressed a comment in the story discussions in this way before. Her response suggests that the storytelling encounter stirred what Greene (1995) referred to as wide-awakeness: a vivid, reflective, and experiential response to a critical concern.

To read Molly's suggestion of retributive action as producing a story of who she is as an active citizen, in accordance with Arendt's (1958/1998) suggestion that accounts of people's initiated actions form stories of who they are, sees Molly in this context as a citizen incited by emotion. Molly was so angered by the injustices Iqbal and his peers experienced that she viewed the factory owner's harmful practices as unforgivable,

undeserving of the right to life. She sought to enable relief for Iqbal and his peers by removing the cause of their suffering. This interpretation of Molly's suggestion of retributive action describes a possibility for young children's active citizenship as an emotionally fuelled suggestion to balance the harm inflicted on the victim/hero with retaliation and punishment of the villain.

Declan's Ideas for Retribution

Declan had a different approach to retribution compared with most of the other children, and this difference in his suggestions of retributive actions was noted on three occasions. The first occasion was at the children's follow-up conversation after story workshop two. The second was in response to *Iqbal's Story*, and the third was a suggestion in the *Two Blocks* story.

At the follow-up conversation in week two, in discussion of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Terai Arc Project the author/researcher explained how arrested poachers were probably fined or sent to jail, to which Declan replied:

Declan Maybe they could put them in a birdcage. (Line 121 W2 CI 25/07/2007)

His statement was surprising, offering a creative way to consider the situation differently. Prior to Declan's comment we had discussed the hunting of birds. This may have influenced the focus of Declan's plan for reciprocal justice, where those who capture and cage birds are given the same experience. His suggestion for those who caged birds were to experience the same infringement of liberties themselves i.e., confined in a birdcage, thus indicative of reciprocal justice. Declan's idea possessed potential to provoke a shift in consciousness for those who have hunted birds to consider the plight of hunted birds and cease their hunting practices.

The second occasion occurred after Molly suggested setting Ghullah on fire. Juliet, then Declan, made the following suggestions.

Juliet You could do something mean to him to make him feel like the same as they were treated

Declan YEAHHH!! Like make HIM WORK. (Lines 432–434 W6 30/08/2007)

The comment by Juliet can be aligned with thinking about reciprocal justice to which Declan offered an apt suggestion given the context. Declan suggested that Ghullah needed to experience labour firsthand. The strong emphasis placed on the words 'HIM WORK' intimated anger and force suggesting that Declan was wanting to enforce the same working conditions that the children experienced, that is, 12-hour days of knotting threads on a carpet loom, cramped without breaks or food whilst enduring verbal and physical abuse. Hence, through this proposal of reciprocal justice, Ghullah could learn the impact of his actions upon others.

On the third occasion Declan explicitly described reciprocal justice for the purposes of cultivating empathetic understanding. Following the telling of the *Two Blocks* story, the author/researcher asked for suggestions of how to address the inequitable distribution of blocks as a group of five children had possession of most of the blocks, yet the rest of the class had only five. Declan offered the following suggestion.

Declan We could take all their blocks away so they know what it FEELS like to not have a lot of blocks...Mine's a bit better because they will know what it feels like to not have a lot of blocks. (Lines 79–89 W10 10/10/07)

Like Molly, Declan's way of redressing injustice was to focus his comments on retribution for those who have caused harm. Yet Declan did not propose violent acts of retribution. Instead, he seemed to view retribution as reciprocity with regard to the experience of victimisation. He recognised the infringement of liberties the victim had experienced and then devised a way for the person who had acted unfairly to experience the same infringement of liberties. His approach is suggestive of the aphorism: *walk in the shoes of another*. He seemed to consider that similar experiences of disadvantage may cultivate empathy or at least experiential knowledge of such suffering, just as Nussbaum (1997) claimed that storytelling cultivated sympathetic imagination.

The suggestions of retributive actions by Declan to redress unjust treatment of others produce a story of Declan as a citizen who sees justice as being best played out through reciprocal means. He seemed to want those who treated others unfairly to come to feel the same suffering. He saw that unfair treatment could be addressed through a possible shift in awareness of the person who caused the harm, indicative of wider and deeper thinking on justice. The ideas of reciprocal justice proposed by Declan suggest conscious creative conceptualising, such as observed by Connell (1971) in his study of children's development of political beliefs. These suggestions of reciprocal justice provide examples of the potential of young children's idiosyncratic thinking of ways to redress injustices. These suggestions of reciprocal justice were built on creativity and hope to cultivate empathy in perpetrators towards their victims. Declan was seen as a citizen who seemed committed to equality.

Possibilities of the Purpose and Place of Retribution in Young Children's Active Citizenship

The above comments and actions suggested by Molly and Declan demonstrate how retribution became a notable theme in this study of social justice storytelling. Molly's idea of burning Ghullah suggested anger at the harm Ghullah had inflicted on the children who worked in his carpet factory. The suggestions of reciprocal justice from Declan exhibit a desire for perpetrators to know what their acts of harm feel like. Such suggestions seem to present the intensity of these children's resistance to unfair treatment of protagonists with whom they identified.

After the shock of Molly's comments, the teacher and author/researcher consciously decided to provide space for the children to express their emotive responses to *Iqbal's Story* and *Craig's Story*, rather than attempting to maintain an early childhood environment of niceness (Hard 2005; Stonehouse 1994) where acts of violence are actively excluded from being talked about or performed. This conscious pedagogical decision was informed by ideas on aesthetic encounters in education (Abbs 1989; Dewey 1934; Greene 1995). The story initiated the aesthetic encounter and then interactive activities cultivated imaginative action with what the story aroused. These opportunities to express emotive reactions allowed space for the children to process what the

stories (especially biographical stories of plights of children) had provoked. Plans for retribution surfaced as a strong element in children's comments and actions, with three suggestions noted in the workshop of *Iqbal's Story*, and suggestions noted in the workshop of *Craig's Story*. The proliferation of their retributive suggestions displayed the children's emotive reactions to injustice in these stories.

However, this response of retribution produced 'get the baddies' storylines (Marsh and Millard 2000) with the children readily sorting the people in the stories as either good or bad. Possible thinking behind their comments and actions may be that being good (that is helping others) was acceptable; yet being bad (that is harming others) was intolerable. This message is indicative of the metanarrative of the good citizen equating with obedience, which is perpetuated through fairy tales (Tatar 2003) and other children's stories (Whalley 1996). Such messages would invariably have had an impact on the children in this study, with the traces of these messages infiltrating their responses. However, the complexities of humanity required exploration beyond the binary of good and bad, as the children were responding to biographical stories, leading to the demonization of real people.

The suggestions of retributive actions from Declan offer a broader view of humanity in that he seemed to have hope of provoking empathy through the experience of a walk in the shoes of another. Declan's ideas seemed to intimate an understanding of the position of those who have been treated unfairly but also an understanding of how the perpetrator could come to experience empathy for the victims. Conclusively, the examples discussed tell stories of children's capacity to sympathise with those who experience injustice and their motivation to redress injustice.

Rebellion in Young Children's Active Citizenship

Rebellion as a response to unfair treatment was strongly evident in a story told by three girls (Molly, Ella, and Fergie) in the last week of data collection. Their story details rebellious acts seemingly played out for retribution. Although this is the only example of a theme of rebellion present in the data, it is discussed because it presents a marked difference to other responses from the children throughout the study, in particular to the stories told by other children in the last storytelling workshop. Further to this, rebellion as an act of defiance is an uncommon theme in stories told by young children, especially girls (Brostrom 2002).

Setting the Scene for Children's Story-making/Storytelling

In week 13 the author/researcher began the workshop by explaining it was the children's turn to tell a story to the author/researcher. The children were asked 'What story do you want to tell me?' This was a conscious decision to provide space for reciprocal story-making/storytelling. The children had listened to the stories that the author/researcher chose to tell for many weeks, so workshop 13 was designed for each child to present a story in reply. Each child had the opportunity to tell her or his story, offering scope for agency and meaning-making through self-authored storytelling.

At the workshop, props were available for the children to select for their stories, including pieces of fabric, stones, sticks, small blocks, and animal figures, finger puppets of families representing differing cultural backgrounds, Guatemalan worry dolls, and small carpets from Pakistan. The intent was to cultivate space for the children to share further thoughts and feelings on the stories told, as opposed to re-enactments. The teacher managed the materials like a props department, keeping track of borrowings and offering guidance on selection of materials upon request. The children then found a space in the classroom to play with the materials and for their story to emerge. The stories were video-recorded by the author when each child, pair or threesome indicated that they were ready to tell.

The stories told by the children were shaped in three different ways. Some stories seemed informed by selected props, for example Declan told of a tightrope walker using a string of miniature Tibetan prayer flags as the tight rope. A second group of stories were abridged recalls of the stories told in the study. A third group of stories played with themes and/or characters from stories told in the study, yet took a new direction, a different context, or combined multiple characters and themes in a different way. The story Molly, Fergie, and Ella told fitted within this third category in that it drew from *Iqbal's Story* yet took the story in a new direction. Their story presented the strongest response that depicted social action to address unfairness.

Molly, Ella and Fergie's Story

In preparation for their story, Molly, Ella and Fergie gathered wooden peg figures that they had made themselves (see Fig. 1), a felt finger puppet that represented a man of dark skin colour in overalls (see Fig. 2) and a Pakistani carpet (see Fig. 1).

Fig. 1 Wooden peg figures representing girls sleeping on a Pakistani carpet



Fig. 2 Finger puppet that represented factory owner



The following is a transcript of their story interspersed with interpretations of narrative influence and Arendtian (1958/1998) interpretations of who they present as citizens. The comments in the transcript in regular font in parentheses were explicit metacommunication signals to other players.

Molly (as factory owner)	<i>(Stern voice)</i> Do the carpets! Do the carpets NOW!! Hurry up! Hurry up! Hurry up! HURRY!!
Ella (as child labourer)	I'm trying to put my hair on.
Molly	(You have to say I'm trying)
Ella	I'm TRYING!!
Fergie (as child labourer)	I'm hurrying.
Molly	Quick!
Ella & Fergie	<i>(In unison)</i> Twist, twist, twist <i>(as they make twisting actions like knotting threads on a carpet loom).</i>
Ella	I've done it!
Fergie	I've done it!
Molly	Quickly! Quickly! QUICKLY!!
Fergie	I'm TRYING! I'm TRYING! I'm trying! I'm done!
Molly	Are you all done? I'm writing you done. Ching ching! But you still stay here and make more carpets the same as THOSE. Quickly! QUICKLY!!
Fergie	We're flying.
Ella	(We are going home and you didn't know where our house was.)
Molly	QUICKLY!
Fergie	(And they flew away to their house.)
Ella	Let's just snuggle up. Okay?

So far in their story-making/storytelling, Molly presents a believable account of the 'work harder and faster' work ethic of a factory owner, to which Ella and Fergie respond earnestly (e.g. 'I'm trying'; 'I'm hurrying') as child labourers. This is suggestive of a master and slave narrative, yet the factory workers that Ella and Fergie play were not passive followers, like Cinderella, who helplessly and silently did the tasks assigned. Instead, they declared that they were 'trying' and that they were 'done'. Ella and Fergie's characters show streaks of agency, as they resist the owner's command to do more work by absconding home to bed. Out-of-role directions were issued by Ella (e.g. 'you didn't know where our house was') to control the actions of the factory owner and the plot. Through their characters, Ella and Fergie seemed to be presenting a story of survival as a child labourer, where you do what you can to survive. In this case their survival strategy was to escape to the safety of bed.

Their story-making/storytelling continued, presenting a new twist to their tale.

Fergie	(Just pretend he could find us)
Fergie	YOU GO AND MAKE SOME FACTORIES [carpets]!

Molly I found you GIR-R-R-LS! (That's the factory owner and that's Iqbal)
*(points to finger puppet of man in overalls for factory owner
and wooden peg figure for Iqbal)*

Ella Get A-WAY!

Fergie (No that's the factory owner.) GO AND MAKE THE CARPETS!!!

Molly (Now in role as a child labourer) Now we're the boss[es] now!

ALL DO IT DO IT DO IT DO IT!!!—
ahhhhhhhh!!! *(addressed to finger puppet of man in overalls as factory
owner)*

Fergie *(Tosses factory owner across the room)* WEEEEEEE!

Ella And we snuggle up in bed (pretend you don't see me go)
...
Fergie If we go away for a minute then she might come to us.
(To factory owner with a stern voice)
You make the carpet!

Fergie & Molly GO AND MAKE THE CARPET! AHHHHH!!!
GO AND MAKE THE CARPET! AHHH !!!
GO AND MAKE THE CARPET!
AHHH !!! *(Fergie tosses factory owner)*

Molly Sis-terrrr! (pretend she's in the shadows) She's in the SHADOWS!!
(Quietly) Quickly he might find us. They are going to kill us.

Ella Over here! He will never find us here.

Fergie Let's dump it in the garbage *(making reference to the precious carpet
they have stolen from the factory owner).*

In the remaining passage of this story, the child labourer characters progress from survival strategies to outright rebellion. The existing authority (the factory owner) was overthrown (both in position of power and literally as Fergie repeatedly tossed him across the room) with the declaration of 'We're the boss[es] now' and 'GO AND MAKE THE CARPET!!!' (repeated a further nine times as their story continued). Through this blatant power reversal, a theme of the children's desire for power over authoritarian adults is made visible. Molly, Ella and Fergie seemed to connect with the helplessness and powerlessness experienced by child labourers in *Iqbal's Story* and recognised that freedom could be achieved through power reversal.

Themes of defiance were strongly present in the story. The inclusion of such elements as mutiny and stealing treasure suggested traces of pirate adventure stories. Pirate adventure tales counter metanarratives of good citizenship and convey disregard for authority, rules and conformity. However, pirate adventure stories rarely position females as non-conformist adventurers; male characters are more commonly positioned as active and potent (Nikola-Lisa 1993; Turner-Bowker 1996; Zipes 1983). Non-conformist behaviour was previously observed as atypical for Molly. This raises questions as to why Molly, Ella and Fergie have played out a story

that defies authority. Their story indicates an affective response to the powerlessness and suffering that they felt in their experience of *Iqbal's Story*, which spurred their desire for power reversal as a means of stopping the unfair treatment of children: another possibility for young children's active citizenship.

Molly, Ella and Fergie also presented awareness of their offences through acts of hiding to avoid being caught. This suggests that their acts of defiance were not performed with a completely anarchic attitude. Although they expressed little regard for the factory owner by frequently tossing him across the room, they acknowledged it was risky for them as they chose to hide for fear of repercussions. This is suggestive that Molly, Ella, and Fergie possessed awareness of possible consequences of their actions. Although they may have placed themselves in the position of power, and the factory owner in a position of subservience, they knew that the factory owner had the lasting authority. As storytellers, Molly, Ella, and Fergie then wove numerous efforts to sustain the child labourers' position of power by stealing the factory owner's carpet, repeatedly demanding 'GO AND MAKE THE CARPET', tossing him across the room, and discarding his carpet. Molly, Ella and Fergie saw that only through the physical removal of the authority figure (the factory owner) was there any hope of releasing the children from forced labour.

Analysis of the story told by Molly, Ella, and Fergie from an Arendtian (1958/ 1998) perspective, revealed possible answers to who the heroes were as citizens, which in this case is just as much about Molly, Ella, and Fergie as the characters they portrayed. Perhaps they acted out what they desired. As Davies (2003) and Gilbert (1994) suggested, children act out what they desire in their play. For these reasons Molly, Ella, and Fergie can be interpreted as citizens who resist injustice and value freedom of choice (e.g. the choice to go home when their work was done in the factory) and control of their actions (e.g. retaliated to being told what to do, by telling factory owner to what to do). A strong message in their story was a desire of power for children, presenting a possibility for young children's active children's citizenship in which children possess power to choose and act as they determine.

Possibilities of the Purpose and Place of Rebellion in Young Children's Active Citizenship

The story told by Molly, Ella and Fergie seemed to view the experiences of Iqbal and his peers working in a factory as suggestive of such extreme feelings of powerlessness that rebellion was necessary. From the children playing with objects they produced a story packed with elements of adventure (e.g. mutiny, hiding, stealing) and innovative and playful suggestions to redress injustices. As claimed by Sutton-Smith (1997), play can provide space where children use power, construct meaning, devise and adopt multiple roles and identities, and express their resentment at being a captive population through stories that portray a world of great flux, anarchy and disaster. The story provided space for Molly, Ella and Fergie to express their affective response to *Iqbal's Story*, to be rebellious in a way they would not ordinarily be. The three girls had not rehearsed or planned the story together beforehand, as identified in a conversation 2 weeks later (ME&F I 14/11/ 2007). By inviting the children to tell a story, Molly, Ella and Fergie had space to express their thoughts and feelings on *Iqbal's Story*, in which they could defy authority and claim power. Molly, Ella, and Fergie imagined a place where children could defy adult authority through power reversal, expressing opinions, making decisions and having greater

control over their actions. Their story of rebellion portrays a possibility of young children's active citizenship as defiance of unfair authority and desire for control of their actions; a counternarrative to the metanarrative of adults controlling children enacted through the establishment of schools to cultivate child obedience (Foucault 1977; James et al. 1998; Luke 1989). A possible underlying meaning to this story of rebellion could be that as children, Molly, Ella and Fergie were acutely aware that children possess only brief moments of power, as adults hold ultimate authority in society. Through this story Molly, Ella and Fergie can be seen as citizens who resist injustice and claim rights for child choice and participation.

Storytelling and Young Children's Active Citizenship

The above discussion of the emergent themes of retribution and rebellion in young children's active citizenship from a study of social justice storytelling, points to the strength of the affective capacity of storytelling, as espoused by Nussbaum (1997) and Greene (1995). Though retribution and rebellion grate against metanarratives of children and citizenship, their significant presence in children's comments and actions indicated a need to listen to what the underlying desires might be. Exploration of Molly, Declan, Fergie and Ella's comments and actions enabled recognition of how children may choose to redress the unfair treatment of others, as examples of young children's active citizenship. In each of the data events discussed the children expressed opinions and participated autonomously. Such a view recognises children's agency not as a quality that adults can cultivate but rather as something that emerges, that children seize at their will. As Gallacher and Gallagher (2008) noted, children exercise agency when and how they choose, regardless of the methods a researcher uses. The examples of suggestions of retribution, and rebellion were evidence of children exercising agency. Those who honour niceness in early childhood education may not condone violent resistance and rebellion, yet they are valid responses. By scratching below the surface, understandings of desires to seek balance to unfair treatment and claims for rights were identified. This suggests validity in a shift from pedagogical and research emphases on adults endeavouring to support and enable children's agency, to adults being alert to how, when, and where children seize agency. Young children's active citizenship may then be defined through awareness of how, when, and where young children choose to exercise agency to redress injustices, with learning continued through provision of relevant support as required. Engagement with stories and storytelling can provide possibilities for young children to express agency and make meaning of justice. As aesthetic encounters, the stories told provoked sympathetic imagination (Nussbaum 1997) and moments of wide-awakeness leading to imaginative action (Greene 1995).

NOTE

All children's names mentioned are self-selected pseudonyms.

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