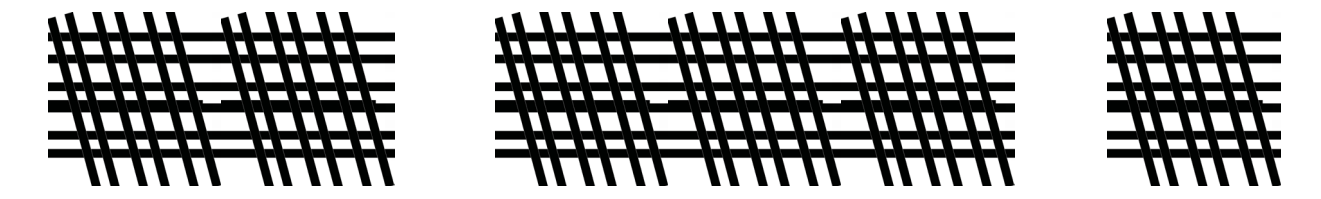
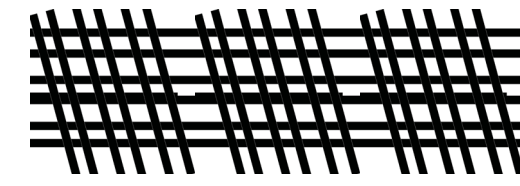


# CHILDREN'S ABILITY TO NAVIGATE DIFFERENCE



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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to determine how children experience their dissimilarities and the results of those relations. There is a complex connection between identity, historical placement, physical setting and a subject.

## METHOD

I worked collaboratively with my research subject, Emily, to develop the process. I used a combination of adult memory, textual analysis and additional scholarly and non-scholarly research.

1. Subject decided on a material artifact from childhood.
2. The artifact, a Kokeshi Doll became central to the study.
3. Two meetings took place:
  - Emily was assigned two prompts to illicit future discussion. (i.e. write down 3 things she remembered about the doll and take 3 photographs)
  - A 20 minute discussion about the object. Questions were spontaneous and informative.
4. Responses to the inquiries shaped scholarly and non-scholarly research.

## DISCUSSION

By analyzing my subject's relationship to the object, I was able to draw out greater conclusions regarding how children contain the ability to understand power imbalances as the result of socially constructed identities. At a young age and through the act of relating, Emily was able to establish her own fluid cultural identity. As a child, Emily was more preoccupied with finding Japanese representation than gendered representations. Female embodiment was more accessible in popular Canadian culture where as Japanese images were almost non-existent.

Emily's unique experiences and historical positioning, a fourth-generation Japanese-Canadian growing up in Toronto during the 1990s and early 2000s, informed her experiences. Against the backdrop of a dominantly Euro-White Canada and in contrast to the increasing number of Chinese migrants, Emily felt her own voice being silenced. Despite the Canadian rhetoric of "multi-culturalism", the country's values remain rooted in Eurocentric ideologies and elaborate "West" and "East" power dynamics. Emily was positioned as an "other" amongst "others".

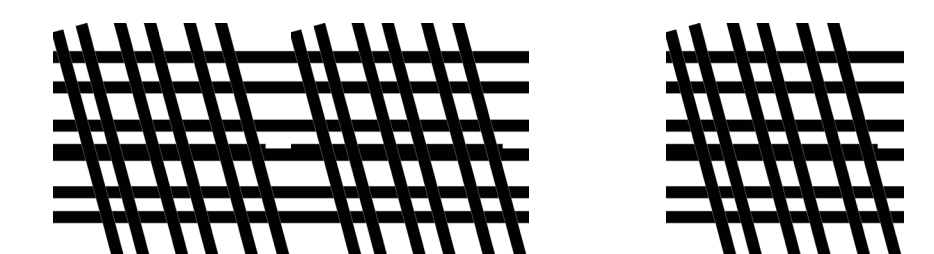
It was in resistance to this invisibility, that as a child, Emily began to create her own representation. She had a heightened awareness of her surroundings. Emily sought validation and the Kokeshi doll became an entity that Emily used to assert her social position. Meaning was reciprocal. Emily's relationship with the doll could be seen as a subversion to the marginalization that she experienced. What has been reiterated throughout my research, is that identity is a multiplicity of ever-changing factors. Emily's identity was not something that was concrete, but something that alternated based on context.

## MOVING FORWARD

In future research, in order to achieve a greater understanding of children's awareness of difference, I would study multiple subjects. The dependency on adult-memory also has its setbacks. Remembering events and feelings from many years prior, is often muddled with present perceptions and therefore cannot be a completely accurate description of childhood experiences. Studying how children navigate difference would be best done while they are living through the experience.

## CONCLUSION

Children can oppose dominant ideologies with the use of any visual, material or auditory artifact. Adolescents are not impressionable subjects; they can resist marginalization by imposing their own meaning onto things.

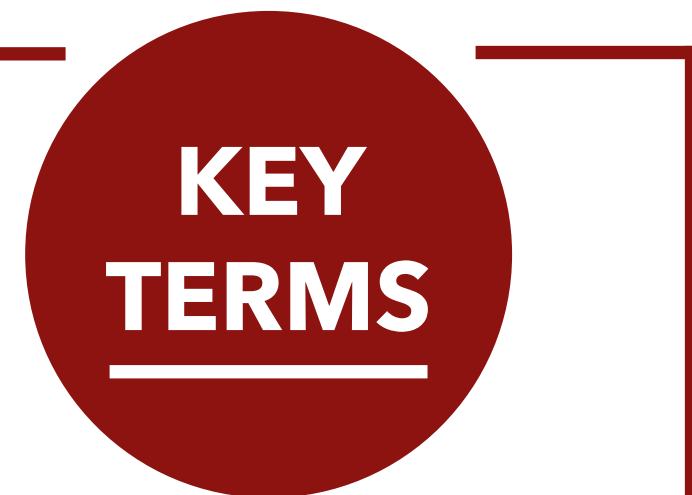


## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What is the significance of the object to the subject?

How did this object relate to the context of the subject's childhood?

What does this more broadly say about a child's ability to understand social relations?



**GENDER**  
**IDENTITY**  
**ETHNICITY**  
**RESISTANCE**  
**NATIONALITY**  
**IMMIGRATION**  
**KOKESHI DOLL**  
**REPRESENTATION**  
**MARGINALIZATION**  
**JAPANESE-CANADIAN**

