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2015

Childhood experiences of introversion : an exploration of navigating social and academic spaces and ways of coping

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Introversion: An Exploration
of Navigating Social and
Academic Spaces and Ways
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of introversion in childhood. This research seeks to understand how introverted children perceive themselves and how this impacts the way they interact with the world around them. The overarching research question is: how does the experience of being an introverted child impact one's sense of self? Given the practical and ethical challenges of interviewing actual children, for this qualitative research I interviewed 12 adult self-identified introverts about their childhood experience of being introverted. The design for this research study is qualitative and exploratory.

Findings included what being introverted meant to participants and how they coped with feelings of difference academically, behaviorally, and socially. This research fills an important gap in the literature and provides justification for paying closer attention to the unique needs of introverted children to help them feel supported, respected, and valued. The findings about which situations and spaces cause introverted children discomfort can provide important implications that can better inform the work of social workers and teachers who are tasked with the job to support these students.

CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES OF INTROVERSION:

AN EXPLORATION OF NAVIGATING SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC SPACES

AND WAYS OF COPING

A project based upon an independent
investigation, submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Master
of Social work

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2015

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis could not have been accomplished without the assistance of many people whose contributions are gratefully acknowledged. First, I am incredibly thankful for my thesis advisor, Carolyn Mak, who is very supportive and dedicated to my thesis process. Thank you to all of my participants who shared their stories, I have learned so much from each of you. Thank you also to my friends and family who have been continuously supportive of me throughout this experience at Smith School for Social Work and beyond.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Childhood is full of important tasks such as navigating new experiences and challenges, moments of connection, feelings of disappointment, and opportunities for learning at every turn. It is the hope that all children feel supported and valued in their homes, families, communities, and schools and when children are provided with this support, the chance of successfully accomplishing these tasks is much more attainable. In recent years the concept and idea of introversion has gained popularity and attention. One reason for this increase in focus on introversion is the work of Susan Cain (2012) who explores the idea that western culture and society has adopted an "extroversion ideal" which undervalues and pathologizes introversion. For introverted children who are more drawn to their internal worlds, school and social situations can be overwhelming.

The purpose of this research study is to explore the experiences of introversion in childhood. This research seeks to understand how introverted children perceive themselves and how this impacts the way they interact with the world around them. Are introverted children supported in their worlds and across various settings? How have these children navigated certain situations and do they ever feel pathologized for being introverted? The overarching research question is: how does the experience of being an introverted child impact one's sense of self? This topic is particularly relevant now as we are becoming more aware of this potential extroversion ideal and examining how this may impact children's sense of self. The years of middle childhood are important for growth, mastery, and gaining a sense of competency both academically and socially. Children who are more quiet or introverted in this setting may face additional challenges

in navigating this social environment. If the true nature of introverted children are not valued or accepted in the classroom environment, this could significantly influence the way children feel not only about school, but also about themselves. The research of Ellis (1998) and Price (2002) provides further justification for pursuing this research as these researchers present findings that the relational aspects of learning often get overlooked in education leading to the emotional needs of children to be ignored to the detriment of their learning as well as their emotional worlds. The aim of this research is to gather personal narratives regarding the experiences of introverted children and provide insight into what social workers can do to better support the needs of this unique group.

For the purpose of this research I will be using Carl Jung's understanding and conception of introversion. Jung (1953) believed that introverts are more drawn to their internal worlds of feelings, thoughts, and emotions while extroverts are more drawn to the external life of people and activities. While introverts need a lot of time to themselves and can feel overstimulated in a crowd, extroverts draw their energy from being around other people. I am also assuming that children who were introverted generally remain introverted throughout their lives, that introversion is a stable, life-long trait given that this is consistent with Jung's (1953) conceptualization and writings on introversion as well as is supported by the personality science conducted by Little (2014). While some previous research has focused on the emotional experiences of children in the classroom, the voices and perspectives of introverted children have not been present in the literature. Therefore my research is important and necessary to address a gap in the research.

Given the practical and ethical challenges of interviewing actual children for this qualitative research I interviewed 12 adult self-identified introverts about their experience being introverted in childhood into adulthood. My study is both exploratory and phenomenological since I am focusing on a shared experience of being an introvert in a specific context. While my research will not be highly generalizable given the small sample size, I believe this captures the context of children's experiences and provides more meaningful in-depth data.

The literature review captures a number of different areas of research including: how to measure introversion, potential origins and correlates of introversion, perception of introversion, and theories of development of self. In order to conduct this research I recruited participants through purposive sampling and snowball sampling. In order to qualify for my study, participants had to be between the ages of 18 and 35, identify as being introverted, identify as being introverted as a child, and answer screening questions to ensure my participants fit under Jung's (1953) conceptual understanding of introversion. In order to gather my data I conducted semi-structured interviews with my participants, in which I used a set of open-ended questions from which to gather narrative data from my participants about their experiences as an introverted child and how their relationship with their introversion has changed over time.

Data gathered from these interviews demonstrated a range of experiences in how participants perceive, understand, and cope with their introversion both as adults and as children. The stories and narratives collected provide interesting and important findings that shed light into the internal emotional lives of introverted children. This research fills an important gap in the literature and provides justification for paying closer attention to

the unique needs of introverted children to help them feel supported, respected, and

valued.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Literature gathered regarding introversion, or personality structure in children focused on four main threads. I begin with the conceptual literature establishing Jung's theory of introversion and a brief description of how researchers have sought to measure introversion. The second area of literature focuses on exploring the potential origins and correlates of introversion. The third set of literature focuses on perceptions of introversion and how this may impact various realms of children's learning and socialization. Following is an examination of the literature that focuses on the emotional experience of childhood and how potential differences in temperament could impact a child's emotional development and sense of self. Lastly, I provide a brief overview of Winnicott's theory of emotional development and the development of the self in order to demonstrate how the experience of introversion in childhood may potentially also impact a child's emotional development and sense of self.

Definition and Measurement of Introversion

There are differing understandings and definitions of introversion and extroversion. For the purpose of this paper, I will be focusing on Carl Jung's conceptualizations of introversion and extroversion since his theory is largely credited for popularizing these terms. Jung first introduced the term introversion in 1910 in a paper titled *Psychic Conflicts in a Child* in which he writes, "The elegiac reveries (of the child) express the fact that part of the love which formally belonged, and should belong to a real object, is now introverted, that is, it is turned inward into the subject and there produces increased fantasy activity. Whence comes this introversion? Is it a psychological

manifestation peculiar to this period, or does it come from a conflict?" (Capobianco, 1988, p. 245).   In Jung's (1953) "Psychological Types" he outlines what he considers an important aspect of personality structure: introversion and extroversion. Jung (1953) viewed extroversion as turning attention outward onto the object, such as other people and the environment. In contrast, Jung (1953) interpreted introversion as turning attention inward and focusing on the internal thoughts and feelings of the self. Jung (1953) wrote that the extrovert "constantly urges him to expend and propagate himself in every way, while the tendency of the introvert is to defend himself against all demands from outside, to conserve his energy by withdrawing, thereby consolidating his own position" (pg. 332).

Important to note in Jung's conceptualization is that both introverted and extroverted qualities are present in all of us. Jung (1953) also noted that these qualities established themselves in childhood and asserted, "one of the earliest signs of introversion in a child is a reflective, thoughtful manner, marked shyness and even fear of unknown objects" (pg. 517). Jung (1953) also believed that introversion and extroversion were relatively stable traits throughout the lifespan, meaning that introverted children typically grow up to be introverted adults. Shapiro and Alexander (1975) highlight an important aspect of Jung's conceptualization of introversion and extroversion to be the attitudinal differences between introverts and extroverts. The authors go on to explain that the "attitude" referred to by young Jung, "refers to a stance toward or a particular view of the world, of one's self in it, and of one's mental processes or experiences" (pg.18). In other words, extroverts and introverts operate within the world in differing ways.

Shapiro and Alexander (1975) provide a history of the conceptualization and "problem" of introversion and how the attempt to study and measure introversion has moved the concept further from Jung's original conceptualization. They identify that the popularity of the practice of using moderator variables in personality research demonstrates the "pervasiveness of the I/E variable[1], and, presumably, of its felt-importance and centrality" (pg. 12). Given the high number of personality variables that are considered derivatives of introversion there has been greater push and desire to measure and define introversion (Shapiro & Alexander, 1975, pg. 12). Shapiro and Alexander (1975) cite the work of Stanfiel (1964) who stated that, "Through the twenties and thirties the primary concern was to develop psychometrically rigorous instruments with which to measure I/E" (pg. 15). Stanfiel (1964) went on to argue that in order to "incorporate certain desirable psychometric properties into their instruments, investigators felt compelled to modify the Jungian concept. In particular, they simplified it" (Shapiro & Alexander, 1975, pg.15). Shapiro & Alexander (1975) assert, "It is clear that the factor analytic studies of Guilford, Cattell, Eysenck, and others, even taken singly, increased the divergence of conceptions of introversion and extraversion[2]" (pg. 16).

An early example of the measurement and study of introversion is the work of Edmund S. Conklin (1923) who created a test which he believed to be statistically significant for introversion and extraversion based on assumptions of likes and dislikes (Gilliland & Morgan, 1931). Conklin based this test on the assumption that one's likes and dislikes are a valid indication of one's temperament. Gilliland and Morgan (1931) go

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[1] "I/E variable" stands for the "Introversion/Extroversion variable"
[2] "extraversion" and "extroversion" are used interchangeably. While "extroversion" is used more commonly some psychology researcher use "extraversion." They refer to the same concept.

on to critique other early attempts to measure introversion and extroversion and discussed the challenges of measuring individual differences in complex traits due to problems in test construction and evaluating the test. Gilliland and Morgan (1931) cite the work of Woodworth who was the first to apply the use of "abnormal individuals" to study personality traits: "[Woodworth] made a thorough study of 'symptoms' as described in the literature of psychopathology, and from the list of characteristics which are included in these symptoms he developed his psychoneurotic inventory. This was not an attempt to study 'types' but the degree of mental stability of individuals" (Gilliland & Morgan, 1931, pg. 297). The authors go on to assert that these inventories of personality traits were found to be faulty and unreliable so Gilliland & Morgan (1931) completed a study to validate the *Northwestern University Introversion-Extraversion Test* that was intended to identify introversion or extroversion. Gilliland and Morgan (1931) used "abnormal patients" from state psychiatric hospitals as participants justifying this by claiming, "This was a distinct advance, and a legitimate one, since a manic-depressive psychosis is generally regarded as a typical extravertive phenomena, while schizophrenia belongs to the introvertive type" (p. 298).

Gilliland and Morgan (1931) then tested the reliability of the *Northwestern University Introversion-Extraversion Test*, which they identified as an "objective" measure, by administering the test to Northwestern students. The authors themselves identify that this sample is likely not representative due to the believed tendency for students to be extroverted (Gilliland & Morgan, 1931). The authors sought validity for this instrument by getting groups of fraternity and sorority members who knew each other well to rate the most introverted and extroverted individuals of the small groups

(Gilliland & Morgan, 1931). This study design began with the development of the instrument through the study of "abnormal patients" and then was validated on a different, potentially unrepresentative sample and then further validated by others rating introversion/extroversion. The test instructed participants to answer yes no questions as rapidly as possible and discourage stopping to carefully read a statement prior to answering. The yes no questions used in this instrument are also problematic and seem potentially negative if not unrelated to introversion including the statement "It takes a great deal to hurt my feelings" and "I loan things to people I can trust" (Gilliland & Morgan, 1931). The researchers further demonstrate their basis and assumed pathology of introversion given their use of "abnormal patients," in addition the sample of Northwestern students was not representative. While the researchers assert they have validated an objective measure of introversion and extroversion the work of Gilliland and Morgan (1931) demonstrates some of the challenges and flaws of early research on introversion as described above.

Another important figure in the study of personality is Hans Eysenck who in 1947 published his book *Dimensions of Personality* where he described what he considered to be the two dimensions of personality, extraversion and neuroticism. Eysenck (1947) proposed that the difference between extroverts and introverts had to do with cortical arousal. Eysenck theorized that ascending reticular activating system (ARAS) functioned to mediate cortical arousal differences in extroverts and introverts (Bullock & Gilliland, 1993). Eysenck hypothesized in his theory that introverts have higher base levels of ARAS, which makes them more highly aroused than extroverts when experiencing comparable levels of stimulation (Bullock and Gilliland, 1993). According to Eysenck

(1967), introverts' tendency to be over aroused leads introverts to display more restrained behavior and seek less arousing social situations so as to reduce external stimulation. Eysenck's (1967) arousal theory has been supported by the research of Bullock and Gilliland (1993) who used brainstem auditory evoked responses (BAER) measured by noninvasive EEG to assess electric activity at higher levels of the brainstem auditory pathways. Bullock and Gilliland (1993) assert that previous attempts to measure introversion based on differences in the I/E arousal system relied too heavily upon unsophisticated psychophysiological approaches and address the issues of previous researchers by using "theoretically significant psychophysiological measures, experimental manipulation of central nervous system arousal, and utilize convergent physiological, behavioral, and psychometric measurement techniques" to carry out a study design that holds validity (pg. 113). Bullock and Gilliland's (1993) research ultimately supports Eysenck's (1967) theory and highlights the difficulty in assessing and empirically measuring introversion.

The Big Five personality traits is a theory in psychology which divides human personality into five broad dimensions, one of which is extraversion. Studies including Calabrese, Rudick, Simms and Clark (2012) and Wilson, Schalet, Hicks, and Zucker (2013) have developed and validated scales to measure these five traits. However, limitations to these scales do exist and others have criticized the Big Five's conceptualization of introversion as a lack of assertive and sociable qualities (Cain, 2013). Other researchers have attempted to develop objective measures of introversion including Krizmanić (1977) and these attempts have highlighted the difficulty in developing a reliable measurement of subjective traits.

As seen above, there are many challenges in measuring an objective and reliable measure of introversion. Through the process of attempting to measure and define introversion, researchers have moved further away from Jung's conceptualization. Shapiro and Alexander (1975) write:

> It is to Jung's credit that he did recognize I/E as attitudinal postures, as differing pervasive views toward the world. He did not reduce them to the simplistic and desiccated inside/outside distinctions of later researchers. But because the underpinnings of his methods were essentially objectivistic, he never approached the attitudes as such in his writings. The phenomenon of introvertedness, a particular embodied posture, a particular mode of being-in-the-world, remains largely untouched… Phenomenology discovers these ambiguities and captures by description the logically offensive features of experience. (pg. 115)

This demonstrates the importance of valuing both Jung's conceptualization of introversion and maintaining space in the study of introversion for the experiences of what it is like to interact with the world as an introvert. This provides support for researching and exploring introversion through qualitative approaches, such as the focus of this research study. While researchers may not have developed an agreed upon measurement and assessment of introversion yet, the research cited supports my conceptualization of introversion for this research study in which I define an introvert as an individual who is more prone to internal thought processes, familiar social interactions, and who becomes overstimulated in a crowd due to sensory input and being around a large volume of people.

Origins and Correlates of Introversion

Much of the early research on introversion focused on identifying correlates and potential origins of introversion. Siegelman's (1966) study examined the hypothesis that introversion was related to punishing and low loving parental behavior. While this study

is out of date, it demonstrates the historical understandings about introversion and highlights the negative image largely attributed to it. Siegelman (1968) considered three developmental aspects of introversion and extroversion: early parent-child relations, sibling position, and heredity. Siegelman (1968) wrote, "The most widely supported association is that accepting, loving, positive parents frequently have extroverted children, while rejecting, cold, negative mothers and fathers tend to have introverted sons and daughters" (pg. 85). Siegelman (1966) theorized "unpleasant experiences for the child… resulting from rejecting parental behavior might produce anxiety about, and a need to escape from, interpersonal contacts as he grows older" (pg. 985). These ideas clearly pathologize introversion as a negative quality that arises from a lack of parental love and interaction.

While these largely negative views of introversion have evolved over time, some of these negative assumptions and beliefs about introversion remain as seen by Koudelkova's (1983) examination of antecedents of extroversion and introversion in children. As opposed to Siegelman (1966, 1968), Koudelkova (1983) acknowledges that there are both hereditary and environmental antecedents to the personality dimension of introversion. While Koudelková (1983) used social learning theory, which assumes "introversion may be the consequence of primarily hostile and punitive approach of parents to the child," the researcher also provides an alternative perspective. According to Koudelková (1983) "the worse acceptance of the child's introversion can be explained as a secondary reactive parental behavior as, generally, the child's inclination to introversion is looked upon by both parents and teachers as an undesirable or even maladaptive manifestation and for this reason, it is accepted unfavourably" (pg. 295).

More current research has expanded beyond these originally suspected influences on personality to include more complex neurobiological factors. Blandin (2013) conducted a longitudinal study on temperament involving biological correlates such as high- and low- reactive behavioral types based on sensitivity thresholds in the limbic system of the brain and found Jung's insights into introversion and extroversion" apply with uncanny accuracy" to the research finding" (pg. 118). Blandin (2013) provides validity to Jung's (1953) understanding of personality types through looking at research on neurobiology. The Big Five personality model also postulates the difference in introversion and extraversion to reflect differences in arousal levels, which supports Eysenck's (1967) theory. This theory proposes that differences across the introversion/ extroversion spectrum suggest difference in arousal levels in neocortical areas in the brain (Little, 2004). According to this theory highly extroverted people have low levels of arousal while introverts have high levels of arousal. In efforts to achieve the optimal level of arousal, extroverts will seek to increase their levels of arousal while introverts seek to lower them.

Another important aspect in the study of personality is temperament. Callueng and Oakland (2014) explain that temperament "reflects behavioral tendencies rather than specific behaviors; temperament traits appear early in life and thus are believed to have a biological origin" (pg. 4). The development of temperament is impacted not only by the environment but "personal choice through the process of acculturation and accommodation, an idea closely related to psychological anthropology that views culture as establishing preferred behavioral styles" (Callueng & Oakland, 2014, pg. 4). The authors identify that those who have a more introverted temperament derive energy from

themselves and are more focused on their own thoughts and personal reflections. Callueng and Oakland (2014) describe children who have an introverted temperament as "more likely to enjoy being alone or with a small group of like-minded peers. They may feel exhausted and bored following intense and long periods of social interaction… They generally are cautious and prefer to listen than to talk when in a group. Although they may have fewer friends, their friendships tend to be more intimate…" (pg. 7).

Brian Little (2014) discusses new findings in personality research in his book *Me, Myself, and Us: the Science of Personality and the Art of Well-Being*. Little (2014) argues that human behavior has three different motivational sources including the biogenic, sociogenic, and idiogenic. Little (2014) defines idiogenic motives as those that "represent the plans, aspirations, commitments, and personal projects that we pursue in the course of daily life…by invoking idiogenic causes we seek the reason *why* a person is engaged in a particular pattern of behavior" (pg. 53). Little (2014) believes that introverted and extroverted behaviors are strongly influenced by sociogenic sources but also have a biogenic component (pg. 51). Sociogenic sources occur through being socialized in a particular setting and learning the specific cultural norms, codes, and expectations while biogenic sources have genetic roots and arise from brain structures and processes. Little (2014) highlights that different cultures place different levels of importance and acceptance of certain traits like extroversion. Little (2014) asserts that extroversion is highly valued in American culture while other cultures, for example some Asian countries, place a higher importance on introverted qualities. These sociogenic influences in behavior as described by Little (2014) contribute to our understanding of the origins of introversion. Little (2014) is also of the view that personality traits such as

introversion and extroversion are stable across the lifespan given the influence of physiological mechanisms. This finding provides further support for the assumption for this research that introversion is a stable trait across the lifespan.

A trait that is often grouped together with introversion is shyness. Cain (2013) explains the difference between introversion and shyness as shyness being "the fear of social disapproval or humiliation, while introversion is a preference for environments that are not overstimulating. Shyness is inherently painful; introversion is not" (pg. 12). While there are some overlapping qualities of introversion and shyness, it is also important to distinguish the difference especially since shyness has certain potentially undesirable connotations. Studies done by Young and Bradley (1998) and Eggum-Wilkins, Valiente, Swanson and Lemery-Chalfant (2014) have studied the relationship between children's shyness, popularity and school liking. Eggum-Wilkins et al. (2014) hypothesized that shy children's discomfort in school and disconnected peer relationships will result in low school liking. They also found that shyness in kindergarten did predict lower social liking but did not have the anticipated effect on cooperative participation, which suggests that the relationship between shyness and classroom engagement is more complex than initially conceived. Part of the difficulty in assessing shyness and introversion in children is that researchers must rely on reports of parents and adults. In the study by Eggum-Wilkins and colleagues (2014), the researchers also failed to take into account children's temperament, which could impact the findings. Cain (2014) argues that part of the reason many introverts may also experience some level of shyness is the "result of receiving the message that there's something wrong with their preference

for reflection" (pg. 12). Clearly there is a complex relationship between shyness and introversion that future research will need to address.

Other correlates of introversion that are often found in the research are those of loneliness and peer relationships. Asher and Paquette (2003) looked at cumulative research on loneliness and peer relations in childhood and assert that while loneliness is not pathological, chronic loneliness "is associated with various indices of maladjustment in adolescents and adults" (pg. 75). The authors define loneliness "as involving the cognitive awareness of a deficiency in one's social and personal relationships, and the ensuing affective reactions of sadness, emptiness, or longing" (Asher & Paquette, 2003, pg. 75). Asher and Paqueette (2003) found that there was no evidence to date that the number of friends one has is related to loneliness however it is the quality and endurance of relationships that matter. This adds important understanding to how we perceive introverts, who typically have fewer but more intimate friendships, since this finding provides support that it is not so much the quantity but the quality of friendships that matter.

Perceptions of Introversion

Another area of relevant research that was examined was literature and research on perceptions of introverted behavior. Conklin (1923) highlights the perception of introversion in the early literature when he writes, "I have found the well known term introversion sometimes used as though it indicated a morbid form of behavior and that only, with the implication that the corresponding or ambivalent form, extroversion, is normal and always so" (pg. 367). Siegelman (1966,1968), Koudelková (1983), Little (2014), and Cain (2013) provide some evidence of a potential "extraversion ideal" where

sociogenic sources such as learning social and cultural norms and expectations may lead people to develop a preference to be extroverted.

Bates and Pettit (2007) examined the relationship between parenting and temperament and emphasized just how little research exists about how parents respond to differences in children's temperament. Bates and Pettit (2007) cite evidence that temperament impacts the parent-child relationship and individual differences in social, emotional, and behavior adjustment but that the studies reveal a complex relationship between temperament and parental response. This demonstrates a need for researchers to examine how parents perceive differences among temperaments and how various responses to temperament impact the parent-child relationship.

As noted above, shyness is often associated with introversion since they share some overlapping qualities including a tendency to turn inward. Some research, including Bosacki, Rose-Krasnor, and Coplan (2014), Hinshaw, Han, Erhardt, and Huber (1992), and Spooner, Evans, and Santos (2005) have shown that it is difficult for others to assess shyness and other internalizing behaviors in children and that shyness often can go undetected by both parents and teachers. This finding demonstrates not only that others often misperceive shyness but researchers have also found that those children for whom their shyness was undetected, were found to experience lower self-esteem and perceived themselves as less academically competent (Spooner et al., 2005). This finding provides support for the current study in that it demonstrates how the way one feels about one's self can be influenced by the misperception or lack of recognition of qualities one perceives oneself to embody.

McCroskey and Richmond (1991) demonstrate how quietness itself may be perceived by teachers in the classroom in the handbook, *Quiet Children and the Classroom Teacher*. This resource for teachers in how to help children with "communication apprehension" provides three major theoretical propositions on the effects of quietness (the authors include introversion) based on research they have compiled on quietness. McCroskey and Richmond (1991) assert that these quiet people will "withdraw from, and seek to avoid communication when possible", "quiet people will be perceived less positively," and "in conjunction with the negative perceptions fostered by these behaviors…will experience negative effects in certain aspects of their everyday lives" (pg. 17). This perspective intended to guide teachers in supporting quiet children seems to generalize and pathologize quiet behaviors as negative and undesirable.

Another important aspect of the perception of introversion is how introverts perceive themselves. Hendrick and Brown (1971) conducted three studies on the subjective perceptions of extroverts and introverts to examine similarities and differences among the groups. Hendrick and Brown (1971) found that extroverts were easily identifiable by both other extroverts and by introverts while the introverts were misperceived by both extroverts and introverts. Hendrick and Brown's (1971) research also showed that extroverts and introverts both have extroverted aspirations and that introverts' ideals were incongruent with their perceived actual selves. Hendrick and Brown (1971) write, "He appears to want others to see him as other than what he is. Although he fails to transmit an extroverted image, his 'extroverted act' apparently succeeds in providing sufficient interpersonal noise as to make accurate perception of him difficult" (pg. 315). This finding that introverts aspired to be perceived as

extroverted provides some proof of an extraversion ideal and also gives some evidence to why introversion may be difficult to perceive.

Emotional Experience of Childhood

This set of literature explores the emotional experience of childhood. All of the literature collected takes place in a school setting since the elementary school experience is an especially important period to examine because for many children it is the first exposure to the outside world beyond their family/caregiver relationships. This is where they get introduced to new concepts, challenges, expectations, and ways of relating to peers and other adults. Ellis (1998) explored the nature of elementary school experiences for children's emotional development through a self psychology lens using qualitative research methods. He found that experiences in school settings undoubtedly impact social, emotional, and intellectual development. Ellis (1998) paid particular attention to empathy in this environment and argues that when the school environment is empathic to childhood experience, they are more likely to have their selfobject needs met, which contributes to their psychological growth and wellbeing.

Price (2002) used an object relational psychoanalytic perspective to examine the emotional context of learning in an elementary school classroom. Price (2002) looked at the emotional aspect of learning and how a child's relationship to learning is a largely ignored but important influence on "cognitive learning." Price (2002) and Ellis (1998) highlight how learning and the school environment impact a child emotionally, socially, and academically but are largely absent from discussions about education.

Koomen, Leeumen, and van der Leij (2004) and Ahnert, Harwadt-Heinecke, Kappler, Eckstien-Madry, and Milatz (2012) provide research on the student teacher

relationship and the impact on student emotions, classroom climate, and performance. Ahnert et al. (2012) linked children's stress neurobiologically to the student-teacher relationship by gathering saliva samples to assess cortisol levels. Ahnert et al. (2012) found that positive emotional climate contributes to positive adaptation to school and demonstrates that children's relationships with their teachers can help manage their stress in a potentially overwhelming experience.

Koomen et al. (2004) looked at the impact of emotional security of kindergarteners in their performance. Koomen et al. (2004) formulate that teachers serve as substitute attachment figures and can provide a sense of security for children and cite several studies that confirm a positive relationship with a teacher can positively influence classroom participation. Koomen et al. (2004) found that emotional insecurity in these children affected their rate of involvement, which provides support for the idea that reaching an acceptable state of wellbeing is prioritized above cognitive tasks. This result confirms that emotional insecurity negatively impacts children's involvement and performance in school. The research of Koomen et al. (2004) and Ahnert et al. (2012) demonstrate that the school setting and child-teacher relationships do impact students' emotional experience.

Higgins (2010) provides an interesting examination of how therapeutic notions of wellbeing can be incorporated into the school environment through the study in a Scottish primary school. Higgins (2010) explores the complexity of educating the child's emotional self and the potential benefits of taking a "whole child" approach, which holds consideration of the multiple worlds that children belong to and are influenced by. However, Higgins (2010) cautions that there are risks associated with "educating the

emotional self" in a social space, especially given the influence of parental figures on children's emotional expression. Higgins (2010) advocates that professionals who work with children be mindful and respectful of the individual nature, histories, and influences of that child. Higgins (2010) argues that prior to a child understanding the world around them, it is important to first help children explore and understand who they are and how they relate to the world around them. While this research provides both justification and caution for educating the emotional self in a classroom environment, it creates a compelling case for the importance of social workers who work with young children because this provides a private, individually based arena in which to support the development of children's emotional selves. Overall this research demonstrates that the emotional experience of childhood is an important component to education that has implications for children's functioning.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework I will be using for this research is Winnicott's theories of development, with a particular focus on his understanding of True and False Self. Winnicott's conceptualization of the "self" was constructed to balance his idea of "False Self" which is believed to have been inspired by Freud's division of the self where part of the self is central and powered by instincts while the other turns outward and relates with the world (Bodin, 1994). Winnicott conceptualized the self as the feeling of being, one's psychic reality (Bodin, 1994). Winnicott's concept of a holding environment is central in his understanding of what leads to optimal development. Winnicott has famously centered his understanding of development on the infant-mother relationship. Winnicott (1964) writes, "By constantly looking for and seeing the human being in her infant the

mother has been enabling the infant gradually to come together as a personality, to integrate from within into a unit" (pg.193). Through this maternal preoccupation and a suitable facilitating environment, the infant moves "towards integration of the personality, towards the wholeness of a personality in body and mind, and towards object-relating, which gradually becomes a matter of interpersonal relationships as the child begins to grow up and understands the existence of other people" (Winnicott, 1965, pg. 233).

According to Winnicott, when the child lacks a "good-enough" environment, a False Self develops in order to isolate and protect ones' core self and their inner reality (Bodin, 1994). Berzoff (2011) writes, "A True Self cannot emerge if the child feels she must be attuned to the needs of others in the family system and if she needs to be a certain way in order to be recognized and acknowledged" (pg. 130). If a child's unique needs are not met and the holding environment lacks attunement, "What happens instead is that the child may develop a "False Self," one that seeks to suppress individuality and molds itself to the needs of others. This False Self, trying so hard to be responsive and to take care of others, ultimately becomes overly compliant. Uniqueness, vibrancy, idiosyncrasy, differences are all submerged. In this debilitating, constricting process the energy, the power, the "wildness" of the True Self is lost" (Berzoff, 2001, pg. 130).

Winnicott (2002) highlights the importance of caregivers mending failures when he writes:

It is the innumerable failures followed by the sort of care that mends that build up into a communication of love, of the fact that there is a human being there who cares…A deprived child is one who, after knowing about failures mended, comes

to experience failure unmended. It is then the lifework of the child to provoke conditions in which failures mended once more give the pattern to life. (pg. 76)

Winnicott (2002) identifies that these failures in a holding environment can generate unthinkable anxiety in the child including fear of "going to pieces, falling for ever, complete isolation because of there being no means for communication, disunion of psyche and soma" (pg. 76). Winnicott (1965) writes that if a child learns that their environment is unreliable, a hidden True Self develops, "and all we can see is a false self engaged in the double task of hiding the true self and of complying with the demands the world makes from moment to moment" (pg. 216).

Crewdson (1996) provides a case example of his psychoanalytic work with a patient W who he identified as fitting into Winnicott's concept of a False Self. Crewdson first began working with W when the client was 22 years old after his brief marriage had failed. W asserted, "I feel so inadequate. I am not authentic when I am with people. I fear they can see through my game of pretending" (Crewdson, 1996, pg. 30). It was not until their analysis continued for over a year that Crewdson (1996) began to see more of this False Self when W reportedly stated, "If I really opened up, I would dissolve in a pool of shame…It's like a project that I am constantly engaged in when I am with people. I learn rules and accepted ways so I can belong and not be hated" (pg. 30). The task of W's False Self was to create an image of himself from which he could interact with the world and be accepted but that this lacked authenticity leaving him feeling as though he was sinking, unsure of himself. This case example of someone operating under a False Self fits into Winnicott's description and "corresponds to W's subjective experience of deceptive relating, of imitating others, of a type of conformity to others and of not feeling

real" (Crewdson, 1996, pg. 39). I theorize that when children feel their introverted True Selves are not acknowledge by the world around and do not feel seen by caregivers they develop something similar to this False Self as described above where they follow social rules to be accepted, seen, and to achieve a feeling of belonging. While I am not suggesting that all introverts develop False Selves, I am hypothesizing that if children do not feel seen and valued in their extended holding environments such as in school or amongst peers that these children may develop some aspect of this False Self from which to approach situations so they feel seen and valued, and in doing so may lose some sense of authenticity at the expense of their own genuine temperament and needs.

I have chosen to use this theory in my research on the experience of introverted children because I am interested in exploring how children may cope with their introverted qualities especially if others are perceiving these qualities as negative which has been demonstrated by Cain (2013), Hendrick and Brown (1971), Koudelková (1983), and Siegelman (1966,1968). It may be possible that children may create a "false" extroverted self in order to protect their true, introverted selves. If children are not being seen, mirrored, and validated by others due to introverted qualities this likely impacts their sense of self. Winnicott (1964) writes, "Other people's expectations can become of overriding importance, overlaying or contradicting the original sense of the one connected to the very roots of one's being" (Winnicott quoted in Klein, 1987, pg. 241). By interviewing adult self-identified introverts about their experience as introverted children, I will be looking to gather information about their sense of self and whether they developed something similar to a False Self to cope with social, cultural, and familial expectations. I am also assuming that children who were introverted generally

remain introverted throughout their lives, that introversion is a stable, life-long trait given that this is consistent with Jung's (1953) conceptualization and writings on introversion as well as is supported by the personality science conducted by Little (2014).

Summary

The research reviewed above provides an overview of the definition and measurement, origins and correlates, and perceptions of introversion. I also gathered literature on the emotional experience of childhood to understand how children see themselves and develop. I provide an overview of Winnicott's theory of emotional development and his theory of True and False selves. This literature sets the stage for my research study exploring the emotional experience of introversion in children. While the literature reviewed above spans across over 100 years it also demonstrates significant gaps. While early literature focused on measurement and identifying introversion, there has been little focus on the emotional experience of introversion even in later research. More contemporary research has examined the biological basis of temperament and personality structure but has continued to exclude examinations of experience. There has been little research that has examined introversion in childhood and as far as could be found, no research focused on the emotional experience of introversion and the impact on one's sense of self.   My research will be a valuable and rich addition to previous literature and will hopefully provide insight into how social workers and other professionals who work with children can better support the needs of introverted children. This research study will provide insight into how introverted children experience themselves in childhood and how this experience impacts their sense of self.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of introversion in childhood. This research seeks to understand how introverted children perceive themselves and how this impacts the way they interact with the world around them. The overarching research question is: how does the experience of being an introverted child impact one's sense of self? Given the practical and ethical challenges of interviewing actual children, for this qualitative research I interviewed adult self-identified introverts about their childhood experience of being introverted. The design for this research study is qualitative and exploratory. I have chosen a qualitative approach for this research due to my desire to have a rich and detailed set of data from which to look for common themes about a specific experience, being an introverted child. While a qualitative approach will not be as generalizable, it is important to me that this research captures people's experiences in their own words. This study is both exploratory and phenomenological due to my focus on the shared experience of being an introvert in a specific context and to gather unstructured data about people's true experiences (Engel and Schutt, 2013). In order to gather my data I conducted semi-structured interviews with my participants in which I used a set of open-ended questions from which to gather narrative data from my participants.

Sample

In planning my sample I have considered the population to be all adult self-identified introverts, who also identify as introverted children (it is assumed that introversion is a stable trait). For this study my sampling frame is adult self-identified

introverts between the ages of 18 and 35 who live in the Pioneer Valley. I have chosen

this age range as part of my inclusion criteria because too much generational diversity in

my sample could impact my findings. The childhood experiences of a 65-year-old

introvert are likely different than someone who is 18 years old and just entering

adulthood. I wanted a sample on the younger end of the spectrum because I believe this

will allow me to gather the most accurate information about participants' childhood

experiences. I have included the inclusion criteria of living in the Pioneer Valley due to

the feasibility of conducting interviews. However, my sample includes greater

geographic diversity given the nature of this area given that the Five Colleges draw

people from all over. I attempted to get as much diversity as possible across race,

ethnicity, gender, and class.

Another inclusion criteria that was met by participants is that they self- identify as

introverted. While my participants did self-define as introverted I also used screening

questions from which to draw some parameters to ensure my participants fit under Jung's

(1953) conceptual understanding of introversion. For the purpose of this research study I

have operationalized the definition of an introvert to be an individual who is more prone

to internal thought processes, familiar social interactions and gets overstimulated in a

crowd. My screening questions are based off of this operational definition. One of my

screening questions also ensures that participants identify as having been introverted as

children.

I used nonprobability sampling methods due to the nature of this exploratory

study. While this approach impacts the external validity and representativeness of my

sample I have chosen this approach due to feasibility issues as well as my inclusion

criteria of identifying as introverted. I gathered a majority of my participants through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling does have the potential to introduce bias into my sample and may impact the representativeness of my sample for this research. For example, people who identify as introverted and are willing to discuss their childhood experiences with a stranger may not be representative of the population at large of adult self-identified introverts. However, I believe this still provides me with rich and valuable data. I also used snowball sampling to gather additional participants by asking my participants if there were people who they knew that may be eligible and willing to participate in my study. I believe this served as a useful approach given the relatively "hidden" nature of introverts. It is believed that an introvert might feel more inclined to participate in a study if their friend has referred them as opposed to cold calling a stranger from a recruitment flyer.

I recruited 12 participants to be included in my sample. In order to gather my sample I used social media to recruit my participants and posted flyers around local college campuses. I provided my email address so as to provide open communication with potential participants. Over email I explained the purpose of my research and provided the interview questions in advance. I encouraged the participants to ask any questions at this time. Once participants had agreed to meet with me I arranged a time for us to meet in a public space such as a private room in a library as convenient to the participant as possible. When I met with my participants I went over the consent form and answered any additional questions they might have had. I emphasized that their participation was completely voluntary and encourage them to verbalize any discomfort they may have during the interview and let them know they were able to stop at any time.

I conducted individual semi structured interviews and recorded the interviews on my computer with participant consent. My interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes.

Ethics and Safeguards

I ensured that participants understoo*d that their p*articipation in this study was completely voluntary. I fully explained the nature, purpose, and methodology of the study. I maintained respect for the people who I worked with and protected those with diminished autonomy. I made every effort to minimize possible harms and maximize benefits. I offered to provide my interview questions ahead of time so that participants would know what to expect and were able to decline participating if they were uncomfortable with the topic. I ensured confidentiality of my participants by changing any identifiable information. I did not include names at any point in my report and took all necessary steps to maintain participants' privacy. I will ensure that all research materials including recordings, transcriptions, analyses and consent/assent documents will be stored in a secure location for three years according to federal regulations. In the event that materials are needed beyond this period, they will be kept secured until no longer needed, and then destroyed. All electronically stored data has been password protected during the storage period. Backup copies of this data will also be on encrypted keys or password protected computer. I have not put any information on a cloud system or place where this information can be accessed without a password. I have not included any information in any report that may be published that would make it possible to identify the participant.

There was very minimal risk that a participant might feel uncomfortable or distressed through the course of this study. I made every effort to emphasize that

participation is completely voluntary and that participants can stop the interview at any time. I used my clinical skills to assess for any potential emotional distress. I also provided contact information for local mental health services so that participants know they have access to these resources if they feel triggered by anything that may come up in the interview. Potential benefits to participants include the opportunity to explore and share their experiences of being an introverted child, which is a perspective they might have been encouraged to share before. Through sharing these experiences it is likely that participants will experience a sense of catharsis, a sense of feeling heard or understood, and a potential sense of increased emotional wellbeing. I have also offered to provide my participants with my findings after my thesis is complete. I also provided my participants with a $5 Target gift card as a thank you for their participation in my study.

Data Collection

I collected my data qualitatively through gathering narrative reports through individual, semi-structured interviews. I provided a list of my interview questions to participants ahead of time. I met with participants in rooms at libraries convenient to the participant. I audio recorded my interviews with participants' consent to ensure accuracy.

My interview guide included open-ended questions regarding participants' experience of being introverted and how this has affected them in different settings. I relied heavily on open-ended questions so as to gather narrative reports of my participants' experiences. I also allowed room for participants to also bring up what felt salient to them given the topic of our interview; in that way I did not follow a strict interview guide. It was also important for me to ask questions around participants' feelings about their own introversion and how this has changed overtime.

Sample Interview Questions:

What does being introverted mean to you?

Can you think of a time where you felt different for being introverted? If so, how did this impact the way you interacted with others/the world?

Did you feel others perceive you the way you perceived yourself? Has this changed?

How has your relationship with your introversion changed over time?

After I have gone over my interview questions I asked participants if there was anything they would like to add or think would be helpful for me to know. I also asked participants if they know anyone else who may be interested in participating in my study which ended up being very helpful in gathering my sample. In order to maximize the validity and reliability of my data, I asked participants for their permission to be contacted in order to ask clarifying questions. I also utilized member checking in order to check against my own potential bias. By going back to participants and confirming and verifying my initial findings in the data this has helped to maximize the validity and reliability of my data. I have also left an audit trail in which I document the many decisions I have made in the study design, data collection, coding and analysis to increase the reproducibility of the study (Padgett, 2008,).

Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data I collected I transcribed my interviews. After I transcribed the interviews I looked for common descriptions, themes, and patterns. Once I began to notice themes I began coding. I used the computer program NVivo to code and analyze my data. As I went through interviews I clarified these themes and look for new themes as they emerge. I developed a code book based on these themes and then

coded all of my interviews. Some of the major codes that were significant to my findings included attitudes toward extroversion and introversion, feelings of difference, positive friendship experiences, social challenges and insecurities, spaces of comfort, spaces of discomfort, and ways of coping. I believe this was a useful way to analyze the data due to my study being exploratory and aiming to identify common themes across different peoples' experiences. After the interviews were coded I sorted through the data I have collected and look for broader implications. I constantly compared newly collected data to support reliability, validity, and reflexivity and attempt to constantly be aware of my own bias (Engel and Schutt, 2013).

My findings should provide insight into the experience of introverted children and how being an introverted child may impact one's sense of self. Through gathering personal narratives about their experiences in childhood and the development of the self, I have found common themes that will provide insights that hold implications for social work practice. I anticipated finding some diversity in experiences, for example some people who may have struggled in their introversion or felt this was not accepted while others who had more positive experiences. This diversity in experiences provided rich information in how social workers can better support and meet the needs of introverted children.   Given my personal interest in this topic and having been an introverted child with my own set of experiences, I certainly have a bias and I have had to constantly reflect on my process to maintain reflexivity. This was especially important during my data collection since I had to frame my questions to ensure my data is as reliable and valid as possible. Given that I am not a neutral instrument, it was important that I constantly reflect on my process to maintain reflexivity.

There are limitations to this study. A major limitation is that I am interviewing adults about their childhood experiences and it is likely that their beliefs and memories of their childhood are skewed and not completely accurate to how they occurred. Another limitation is that the participants I recruited may represent a specific subset of all introverts. For example given the nature of how I gathered my sample, it is likely that I have ended up with a sample of people who all have particularly strong feelings about being an introverted child and were interested in sharing their experiences. Given that my sampling frame is adult self-identified introverts, it is likely that those who were willing to reach out and share their experiences may be a certain subset of this sampling frame and not entirely representative of the population at large. Hopefully through my snowball sampling I have been able to recruit additional participants who may not have been as inclined to respond to a flyer or posting on social media. These limitations, as well as the fact I gathered my sample from one specific geographic location, impact the generalizability of the study. It is possible that the experiences of introverted children in other locations may look very different. Given my small sample size, the use of purposive sampling, and my sampling frame, my results are not generalizable to the wider population. I have studied a very specific and unique population.

Despite these limitations I believe the research study provided me with rich data from which to understand how the experiences of introversion in childhood impacts one's sense of self. Through gathering personal narratives about their experiences in the classroom, I have found common themes that hold implications for social work practice and the teaching profession. My findings can provide helpful insight that can inform social workers, parents, and teachers on how best to approach introverted children. It

will also be helpful for social workers to gain awareness into the emotional world of introverts in their practice with clients and to communicate to other professionals, particularly in schools, the importance of acknowledging and valuing introversion. This could have major implications for the way we work with children across multiple contexts, especially since this group of children can go undetected due to their quiet nature. The positive experiences shared by participants will provide further important insight and implications on how to best meet the needs of introverted children. The aim of this research is to gather personal narratives regarding the experiences of introverted children and provide insight into what social workers can do to better support the needs of this unique group.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

This chapter contains the findings from 12 interviews conducted with participants who identified as being introverted and having been introverted in childhood. The purpose of this study was to explore the experience of introversion in childhood. This research sought to understand how introverted children perceive themselves and how this impacts the way they interact with the world around them. All 12 participants referenced negative attitudes toward introversion either internally or externally and described varied ways of coping with feelings of difference as well as social challenges and insecurities. However, nearly all participants reported positive friendship experiences as well as positive self-perceptions and highlighted positive aspects of their introversion. I will begin by reporting my findings regarding how participants described what being introverted means to them. Next I will explore how the theme of feelings of difference impacted participants academically, behaviorally, and socially. Next I will report findings on participants' descriptions of spaces of discomfort in terms of social interaction and spaces of comfort and how participants have been able to use this information to cope with their introversion. Then I will explore participants' reports of negative attitudes of introversion and attitudes towards extroversion and how these messages have impacted participants' sense of self. I will end with exploring a theme of participants putting on a persona or being perceived as different than they feel as a way to cope with their introversion.

Demographics

Participants were recruited through snowball sampling and ranged from ages 20 to 31 with an average age of 27. Four of my participants identified as male and eight identified as female. Nine participants identified as white with others self-identifying as Black, Jewish/white, and white/Asian American. Participants represented a diverse range in terms of socioeconomic status of their family of origin. While part of my inclusion criteria was that participants self identify as introverted, potential participants also filled out a screening questionnaire prior to their interview to ensure they fell under the conceptual understanding of introversion for the purpose of this study. Data gathered from these interviews demonstrated a range of experiences in how participants perceive, understand, and cope with their introversion both as adults and as children.

Descriptions of Introversion

When posed with the question "What does being introverted mean to you?" all 12 participants reported needing or valuing time alone. Participants expressed experiencing comfort by spending time alone and preferring spending time alone compared to spending time with many other people. According to one participant:

> So I guess to me being an introverted person means valuing quality time with myself, feeling like I value my own personal spots and personal space, I need quiet, I need to have privacy.

This reflects a theme across participants where they expressed a desire to make time for themselves to be with themselves and their own thoughts. Five participants identified needing time by themselves to recharge after spending time interacting with others. For example:

I think being introverted means to me craving alone time after a long day whether it's at work or whether it's even an evening out with friends I crave the next day being alone and having time to myself, not having to talk to anyone.

I remember this is when I first identified as introverted… remember reading something that said that you are introverted if you recharge by being alone and I definitely identify with that. So I think it's like how you recharge your batteries and what rejuvenates you and for me it's being alone.

These quotations demonstrate participants reporting requiring or needing time to themselves to recharge their batteries. This also went along with participant reports that being around people and interacting with others can be exhausting and overwhelming. Three participants described being introverted in terms of feeling overwhelmed by social interactions. For example:

I think that introverted means that your personality, you have a tendency to kind of prefer to sort of stick to yourself and be less inclined to be in social situations and kind of overwhelmed by a lot of other people and activities.

One participant described feeling so overwhelmed by being around too much social stimuli that she would dissociate:

I still get super overwhelmed in crowded situations and will disassociate, I'll like walk into a crowded restaurant or something and just like whoop, ok not there. I guess it's like feeling really lightheaded or kind of like the feeling when I've taken some Adderall and drunken a bunch of coffee and then start crashing.

There's like a delay between what I'm seeing and what I process in my head and yeah sort of feeling not really connected to your body, just feeling so over stimulated and overwhelmed that I can't really process things.

This theme of feeling overwhelmed and unable to process information was described by three participants in terms of their social and academic challenges in Elementary school and will be discussed further in this chapter. Overall participants described being introverted as needing and valuing time by themselves to recharge and by feeling overwhelmed by being around too many people.

Feelings of Difference

All 12 participants expressed feeling different than others at some point in their childhood which influenced them either academically, behaviorally, or socially. Participants described a fear of embarrassment or getting laughed at by making a mistake in class which impacted their desire to participate fully. According to one participant:

Like even if I know the answer, even in math if I knew the answer, just still I was like yeah... nah... I'm fine, I'll be quiet. I just didn't feel like getting laughed at for some reason, it just felt really embarrassing for people to laugh at me even though I probably did know the answer.

Another participant identified feeling different from her classmates, which increased her feelings of insecurity. She states:

I went to this very intense private school that was really academically rigorous even when we were pretty young. And I went to school with a lot of people who I consider to be much smarter than myself, so I had a lot of road blocks personally in terms of that, and I wasn't like loud or boisterous, I was very quiet.

While some participants reported these feelings of difference that impacted them only slightly in their school experience, three participants identified as having major behavioral and academic challenges potentially related to feeling overwhelmed in a school environment. One participant stated:

> As a child I was very shy around new people but very hyperactive around people I was comfortable with and when I was in situations that were like kind of busy or there were a lot of people around, I would get very overwhelmed and sort of exhibit strange behavior like get out of my chair and jam it up and down into the floor and do weird stuff because I didn't really know how to communicate that it was overwhelming for me.

Another participant described feeling so overwhelmed in kindergarten and throwing desks was her way of communicating. Instead of offering support or adjusting the environment to meet this participant's needs, she ended up going through 8th grade without receiving academic instruction because teachers perceived her as being unable due to her behaviors. According to this participant:

> I just wanted to sit at the table by myself. It was very loud and it was very overwhelming and I just remember feeling the room was always spinning and so that continued through my entire school career, you know throwing chairs, throwing desks. In elementary school they would give me a box of crayons and a coloring book and put me in the corner of the room because coloring was soothing and I was quiet and I wasn't throwing desks.

These participants expressed how these experiences contributed to their feelings of difference as they saw their peers be more successful in school. One participant reported:

I hated myself. Absolutely hated, hated myself you know from the way I looked

to the way I acted, I was comparing myself to my peers and I always just felt out

of place. At school felt very out of place so you know I was always just thinking

what's wrong with me?

For these participants who were unable to express their feelings of being overwhelmed all

identified increased aspects of difference from their peers as well as more negative self-

perception.

Most participants expressed a theme of feeling different from peers in social

situations. Some participants reported feeling like they never quite could fit in, feeling

left out, or saw their peers as having an easier time in social situations. These perceptions

impacted participants' sense of self. When asked if this participant ever felt different for

being introverted she reported:

Pretty much on a regular basis socially, I really don't like going out in groups

because I end up just feeling like a spectator to the conversation since I don't

really like to talk in a group, I get overwhelmed by like listening to a bunch of

people so it's just not that fun for me, I end up feeling like a little bit alienated and

different.

Other participants reported:

It's difficult for me to mingle in large social groups, which it seems the majority

of people have no problem with doing so I sometimes feel like a little bit of an

outsider because stuff as I perceive as being easy for other people is hard for me

and that is frustrating and can make me feel insecure.

I just didn't like I fit, it was like that puzzle piece that you try to put together and

you can't figure out where it goes.

While participants discussed ways they felt different from their peers they also identified

settings and spaces that were more or less comfortable for them which impacted their

feelings of difference and influenced how they felt about themselves.

Spaces of Discomfort vs. Spaces of Comfort

A major theme found across participants' description of spaces of discomfort was

an aspect of having a lack of choice about entering that situation. Participants expressed

a feeling of struggling with forced social interactions, having a hard time saying no to

commitments, or being put on the spot in class. These stories of spaces of discomfort

spanned from when participants were children to when they were adults but share a

common theme of a lack of choice about being in the situation causing them discomfort.

One participant reported valuing the ability to choose her own friends and having a hard

time when not having this option. She reports:

There were a bunch of times where my parents set up play dates for me and I

hated that because I was like don't force me to talk to and spend several hours

with this person, I just don't want to do that, that's exhausting.

Another participant described her experience living in a dorm at college and being

overwhelmed and exhausted by constant social interactions that she could not avoid:

I just feel like living in a dorm for me was really unpleasant sometimes. I just

really didn't like that I couldn't walk from my room to the bathroom without

seeing someone in the hallway and it's like "I don't know you, I don't want to

talk to you" I guess that's why she would think it was rude but it was more like, I

don't know I just feel paralyzed by that. I know that I am supposed to talk to you

and be friendly with you and I do not have the energy and I can't do it.

Comfort level in terms of social interactions was related to the types of friendships

participants were drawn to and choosing to spend time with those types of people. Most

participants identified preferring to spend time with other quiet, calm, and introverted

people. When posed with the question of how she would describe the types of people she

enjoyed spending time with one participant reported:

They were like other quieter people, we wouldn't want to immediately jump into

like some huge game or be part of a huge crowd, other people with big

imaginations. Daydreamers.

A theme found across many interviews was that of as participants got older and were able

to have more choice about what situations they were able to put themselves in, this

contributed to positive social experiences. Participants who reported positive social

interactions and an easy time forming friendships described being in comfortable spaces

as children either socially or in their classrooms

It was always easy to make friends if I already had friends in the situation which I

feel like in elementary school I was always in a class where I at least had one

friend so then it wasn't hard at all to make friends in elementary school…I don't

think in elementary school I ever went into a situation where I didn't already have

friends. So in elementary school I never felt anxiety about making friends.

Having spaces of comfort and knowing how to create these spaces was a theme across

many interviews in how participants have coped with their introversion. For example:

I just feel like when you are younger you are put in situations that you don't want

to be in a lot. Whereas now I don't really, or now if I do put myself in that

situation it was like a choice so if I'm like it's not working, well fuck it, I made

this decision so I can just leave. Like we are planning to go to this party thing

later for like an hour but if it's not fun I'll leave whereas I feel like as a kid you

have to stay and deal with that.

I feel like I was more expected to do stuff and had to do it and couldn't say like

oh I don't want to, like it would have been weird to say that I didn't want to. But

now it's just like ok yeah I don't want to. I am comfortable with the fact that I

would rather stay in not to say that I don't want to go out and hang out with my

friends and see people but I can also recognize that I just want to do me.

Both of those examples demonstrate how these participants felt they lacked choice when

they were children about the types of situations they found themselves in and now that

they are older and have more of a choice they choose to put themselves in situations

where they feel comfortable. Another aspect that impacted participants' level of comfort

in a situation was the ability to feel seen. One participant described feeling frustrated that

more extroverted students' voices were privileged in her elementary school. When asked

how she coped with these feelings she reported:

I mean I had friends who I felt saw me, my family they really saw me and I think

helped me develop more confidence. The other thing is that I felt like this

happened at my school, my small school and joining the swim team where I could

make other friends and have a fresh start with people helped, I went to summer

camp which really helped because I could just be myself and it was a really

supportive environment so that really helped. I think just branching out and

meeting other people so I could start fresh with. Summer camp was huge, a really

formative experience, I felt like was really seen and could be seen and developed

a lot of confidence there. So I feel lucky too that I had all those opportunities.

This demonstrates how participants were able to carve out spaces of comfort for

themselves but also demonstrates the importance of already having an established space

where one feels seen and have their voice be valued, the ability advocate for themselves,

as well as the privilege to access these other opportunities and spaces. These experiences

were not universal for all participants.

Attitudes towards Introversion

All participants referenced experiencing negative attitudes towards introversion,

either feeling themselves at some point or perceiving that others had negative attitudes

about introversion. In addition, 11 of the participants expressed positive feelings about

extroversion, which highlights that nearly all participants believed there might be some

sort of an extroversion ideal or social preference for extroverted qualities. Participants

overwhelmingly reported that it would be easier for them to navigate social situations

especially those involving meeting new people or engaging in small talk. For example

when asked the question what would be easier if he were less introverted on participant

stated:

I think making friends would be a lot easier, I mean I still have a terrible time

making friends.

Participants reported perceiving a preference for introversion in their experiences in elementary school both socially and academically. Many participants reported receiving feedback from teachers that they should be participate more in class. One participant stated:

> Large group discussion I definitely didn't talk enough, like I was definitely told I don't talk enough in class by teachers.
>
> Q: Do you remember how that felt when you heard that feedback?
>
> A: I mean it felt negative, I mean because I got good grades but it seemed like when you get comments like "Didn't work up to my potential" teachers don't interpret it as you doing it the right way or something.

While participants reported an understanding of why teachers provided this feedback it impacted the way they saw themselves. Other participants expressed a sense that they didn't always feel fully seen by teachers and felt like other more extroverted voices were more privileged in the classroom. One participant shared this memory:

> I remember when I got older, like 5th and 6th grade, feeling really frustrated because our teacher selected a few students in the class to go on a leadership training and I feel like she chose the most outgoing, popular, social ones and I was really hurt by that because I felt like I wasn't seen because I was quieter and because I was shy.

This demonstrates not only how participants identified experiencing a preference for extroversion in the classroom but also how their quiet nature often led them to feel overlooked and unseen. Other participants who had extroverted family members discussed feelings about noticing a preference by society for these extroverted qualities.

Colin got the most attention in the family and outside of the family. So that was

obviously like he's the… or obviously it's better in terms of society to be

extroverted. Or you get more attention and people want to be with you more

obviously or easily.

I always was sort of pegged as the, I don't want to say the loser of the family but

you know, what's wrong with Sarah? Something must be wrong with her because

I come from a family of extroverts so I always was kind of, no one could quite

figure it out, why is she like that? It felt as if I was under a microscope as a child,

like something must be wrong with her. As a child I don't know if that was my

perception of things it might not have been how it really was but it definitely felt

as if I didn't fit in with my family.

Not all participants reported these feelings of difference and the perception that

introversion was associated the idea that something was wrong with them. However, for

those this experience was true it clearly impacted the way they thought of themselves.

Ways of Coping- Persona

An important theme found through this research was that participants described

some aspect of putting on a persona or being perceived externally as differently than they

feel internally. Nine participants reported this in some way. While some identified as

acting more extroverted than they normally feel, others described a more general idea that

the way they acted at home or in spaces of comfort was different than the face they

presented to the outside world and reported doing so in order to navigate certain social

situations more successfully. Many participants identified that others have perceived

them as being extroverted. One participant described how multiple coworkers have described her as extroverted. She reports:

> People think I'm friendly and positive and stuff and then go like, "You must be extroverted!" it's like no. I'm just kind of pretending to be and it's really tiring to be.

When asked why she feels she pretends to be friendly and positive she stated:

> I feel like that's what gets people to like you and I like to be liked. Like if you are really quiet and don't talk to them and keep to yourself and stuff then they think you are rude and they don't like you.

Other participants shared this sense of "this is what I have to do" in order to be seen by others as likeable or not "weird." This was also seen when participants discussed how their relationship with their introversion has changed over time. According to one participant:

> A: I feel like maybe you would try to hide it more, or I don't even know I feel like I still know which situations to try to hide it in more now than others.
>
> Q: How do you hide it?
>
> A: By just trying to act the opposite of whatever I feel like I would like to be acting like, I don't know I feel like I've gotten better at pretending to be outgoing in certain situations then I was in the past, so I don't know if that's really coping with being introverted or what.

Another participant shared a similar perspective when they asserted:

> I'm thinking about myself waitressing too which I loved because I could kind of put on this outgoing persona and liked it a lot. So maybe that persona too of being

more outgoing than I actually feel sometimes. Or like I do feel outgoing but I

loved waitressing for that reason, I could just be super outgoing and put on this

persona.

These quotations demonstrate a theme highlighted by some but not all participants of

feeling as though they must act or choosing to act differently than might feel most

authentic to them in order to navigate social situations. Another way in which

participants described this was by identifying how have used their introversion to change

the way they have interacted with others. Three participants identified doing this either

through manipulating, lying, or what they identified as being sneaky. For example one

participant reported that he often felt misperceived by others and reported:

I think that people perceive me as much more of a goody two shoes and I felt

more like I was a mastermind of playing this game of like doing what was

expected and then doing what you wanted somewhere secretly within that and

getting some kind of satisfaction of excelling but also doing it your own way.

Another participant described being good at developing close friendships due to her

ability to be good at knowing what they wanted. When asked how she was able to do this

she reported:

I think I am pretty good at observing people deeper than just what they are saying

possibly, just knowing. I don't really know how, just knowing. And then using

that information to either manipulate it or to, in a good way, to give them

whatever they need or whatever. Which probably comes from being introverted

because I'm good at observing and do more listening than talking and most

people like to talk a lot so if you let them or just ask a lot of questions then you

find out everything about them and can use it however you like.

While some aspect of this idea may seem to be malicious, participants did not report

purposefully trying to hurt others, it seems instead that they were using their introverted

qualities to gather information about a situation and using that information to navigate the

situation in a way that meets their needs. It demonstrates an important way participants

identified coping with their introversion, through developing a persona in certain arenas

or situations in order to interact in a situation where they may have initially felt

discomfort.

Despite all participants reporting negative perceptions of introversion, nearly all

participants, 10, did identify positive benefits to their introversion. This seems to be a

major source of coping for participants especially as they have gotten older and become

more comfortable in their introversion. This was a theme found across all participants.

Understanding and accepting their introversion not only served as a way of coping for

participants but also having this awareness and knowledge has allowed participants to

seek out spaces of comfort and know how to navigate social situations more effectively.

Most participants identified a time where they did not accept their introversion, for

example:

I think I accept it more about myself now. I think it was something I, maybe in

high school and college I sort of tried to fight more, I'd say I'm going to push

myself to go out and do this thing and now it's more… I don't know if I'm lazier

or just resigned to the fact that this is my personality and it has pros and cons but

you know I do think that I try to do things more that I am comfortable with and I know the situations that I don't really like so I just tend to avoid them.

I think I'm more accepting of it, you know it is what it is. I'm not going to change, not to say that I've made a concerted effort to try to change but it is what it is, like take it or leave it if you don't like me for who I am then… Yeah I think I just accept that this is the way it is. I think I was always sort of looking and seeing what's wrong with me? But again I think I was always concerned about other peoples' perceptions of me in every aspect of my life so I think that now I'm just like screw you

I'm definitely becoming more comfortable with myself and just accepting that I am an introvert and that it is ok and I don't need to be out doing everything with everybody, it's good to have time to yourself.

While all participants identified experiencing negative perceptions of introversion and nearly all identified positive attributes of extroversion, no participant stated that they would rather be an extroverted. Many participants identified not wishing to change being introverted and explained that they would not feel like themselves if they were not introverted. They identified valuing time to themselves to fully know themselves and know who they are. When asked what would be harder if she was less introverted this participant stated:

I think it would be harder to reflect on my own actions somehow. My intrapersonal skills wouldn't be as good and that's what I feel what I personally

like pride myself on is that I love to think and reflect and figure out how I can treat other people better, or just in relation to other people and in relation to myself.

A major theme throughout these interviews was that despite the challenges these participants' experienced due to being introverted, through identifying positives in their introversion, through knowing themselves and developing ways of coping, participants been able to reach a point where they accept themselves and feel comfortable in their introverted nature.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of introversion in childhood. This research sought to understand how introverted children perceive themselves and how this impacts the way they interact with the world around them. The findings of this research demonstrate that there were many similarities in experiences of introverted children, especially in terms of their social preferences and spaces of comfort. The way introverted children perceived themselves was impacted by whether or not they felt seen by others and the level of support they received either in their home, social, or academic environments. All 12 participants referenced negative attitudes toward introversion and described varied ways of coping with feelings of difference as well as social challenges and insecurities. However, nearly all participants also reported positive friendship experiences as well as positive self-perceptions, and also highlighted positive aspects of their introversion. Overall, the findings of this research were consistent with the literature reviewed; however the data collected did provide some new findings that had not been addressed in the literature and also point to gaps in the literature that would be important for future research.

Definition and Meaning of Introversion

The findings of the data collected by 12 adult self-identified introverts about their understanding and definition of introversion was consistent with Carl Jung's (1953) conceptualization of the term. Jung (1953) interpreted introversion as turning attention inward and focusing on the internal thoughts and feelings of the self. This is supported by all 12 participants' reports of needing or valuing time alone and as a basis for how

they identify as being introverted themselves. The finding that many participants identified as needing time alone to recharge after being around many people is further supported by Jung (1953) who wrote that it is the tendency of the introvert to "defend himself against all demands from outside, to conserve his energy by withdrawing, thereby consolidating his own position" (pg. 332). The report of some participants that they feel extremely overwhelmed in social situations supports the literature of Eysenck (1967) who found that introverts' tendency to be overaroused leads introverts to display more restrained behavior and seek less arousing social situations so as to reduce external stimulation. The literature as well as the findings of this data support the conceptualization of introversion used for this study in which I define an introvert as an individual who is more prone to internal thought processes, familiar social interactions, and who becomes overstimulated in a crowd due to sensory input and being around a large volume of people.

Feelings of Difference and Attitudes Toward Introversion

One important finding is that all participants referenced experiencing negative attitudes towards introversion, either feeling these themselves at some point or perceiving that others had negative attitudes about introversion. In addition, 11 of the participants expressed positive feelings about extroversion, which highlights that nearly all participants believed there might be some sort of an extroversion ideal or social preference for extroverted qualities. This finding supports the data by Cain (2013), Koudelkova (1983), Little (2014), and Siegelman (1966,1968) who suggest the existence of an "extraversion ideal" where sociogenic sources such as learning social and cultural norms and expectations may lead people to develop a preference to be extroverted.

Participants identified experiencing a preference for extroversion when they were children across multiple settings but most significantly in the classroom and in social interactions. Participants reported not only experiencing an "extroversion ideal" in the classroom but also reported that their quiet nature often led them to feel overlooked and unseen. Those who felt most unseen and unsupported reported significant impacts on their sense of self as seen by this statement by one participant:

> I hated myself. Absolutely hated, hated myself you know from the way I looked to the way I acted, I was comparing myself to my peers and I always just felt out of place. At school I felt very out of place so you know I was always just thinking what's wrong with me?

This is a clear example of how feeling misperceived and unseen in the classroom can negatively impact a child's sense of self. This finding is supported by the research of Spooner and colleagues (2005) who found that children, for whom their shyness was undetected, were found to experience lower self-esteem and perceived themselves as less academically competent. This is further supported by the research of Bosacki, Rose-Krasnor, and Coplan (2014), Hinshaw, Han, Erhardt, and Huber (1992), and Spooner, Evans, and Santos (2005) who have shown that it is difficult for others including parents and teachers to assess shyness and other internalizing behaviors in children, which leads to (children's) feelings of misperception and feeling overlooked. This suggests that when children feel misperceived or their introversion is undetected, this could impact the way others treat them and thus impacting the way these children view themselves.

Spaces of Discomfort vs. Spaces of Comfort

A major finding of this study was how participants conceptualized spaces of discomfort, particularly social settings where participants felt different, unseen, or had difficulty navigating the situation. This research also demonstrated how participants have been able, both as adults and as children, to create spaces of comfort where they feel at ease, seen, and valued. While the literature did not specifically address or explore creation of spaces, this theme does fit with the research of Young and Bradley (1998) and Price (2002) where children's happiness and self-efficacy was found to be linked to levels of external support. Many participants felt they were able to find these spaces in childhood through a supportive family or school environment. Those who lacked these supportive forces in childhood identified struggling more with their feelings of difference and identified having more social challenges. Fortunately, however, these participants identified being able to create these spaces as they got older and felt more in control of the choices they made particularly in social and academic settings.

A major theme found across participants' description of spaces of discomfort was an aspect of having a lack of choice about entering that situation, particularly in school. This was seen by participants' reports of discomfort in being called on in class or put on the spot. Participants discussed feeling frustrated that more extroverted students' voices were privileged in elementary school and confused by teacher feedback that they "weren't working up to their potential" despite receiving high grades. The comment that they were not working up to their potential seemed more related to their quiet nature rather than actual academic shortcomings. These findings support the research of Koomen and colleagues (2004) who found that emotional insecurity in these children

affected their rate of involvement. This result confirms that emotional insecurity (e.g. unsupportive relationship with teachers and lack of social connections) negatively impacts children's involvement and performance in school, which was also true for the data collected through this research. Participants who reported feeling seen and valued in their classrooms reported fewer academic challenges than those who reported a lack of support. This supports the work of Ellis (1998) whose work focused on empathy in the elementary school environment and argues that when the school environment is empathic to childhood experience, they are more likely to have their selfobject needs met, which contributes to their psychological growth and wellbeing.

Participant description of spaces of comfort was also supported in the research. One finding related to this was that most participants identified preferring to spend time with other quiet, calm, and introverted people. This finding is supported by Callueng and Oakland (2014) who found that children with introverted temperaments are "more likely to enjoy being alone or with a small group of like-minded peers…They generally are cautious and prefer to listen than to talk when in a group" (pg. 7). This description of introverted children's social preferences is certainly in line with what was reported by participants through this research both of their childhood experiences as well as their social experiences as adults.

Ways of Coping- Persona

An important finding of this research was that most participants described some aspect of putting on a persona or being perceived externally as differently at times than they may feel internally. While some participants identified as acting more extroverted than they normally feel, others described a more general idea that the way they acted at

home or in spaces of comfort was different than the face they presented to the outside world and reported doing so in order to navigate certain social situations more successfully. Most participants reported this as a way to cope with their feelings of difference and the understanding that their introverted tendencies were not socially desired.

This persona put on by some introverted participants in some way resembles what Winnicott (1965) described as a False Self. However, it does not have the same intensity nor lead to the same level of defective functioning as Winnicott's (1965) False Self. Winnicott (1965) theorized that if a child learns that their environment is unreliable or if the holding environment is not attuned to the needs of the child then a False Self, which "seeks to suppress individuality and mold itself to the needs of others" may develop (Berzoff, 2011, pg. 130). While in some ways the persona described by participants served a similar function of suppressing one's own needs to meet the needs of others, the participants described doing this only in certain settings and expressed that doing so was often exhausting and not something that could be kept up for extended periods of time. Rather it was something they were more able to control, to use, as they needed to slip into a persona in order to navigate a situation more successfully and with greater ease.

A comparison between Winnicott's (1965) theory of a False Self and the persona described through the participants of this research can be seen by the two narratives below. Crewdson (1996) provides a case example of his psychoanalytic work with a patient W who he identified as fitting into Winnicott's concept of a False Self. Crewdson (1996) quotes W as saying:

I feel so inadequate. I am not authentic when I am with people. I fear they can see

through my game of pretending… It's like a project that I am constantly engaged

in when I am with people. I learn rules and accepted ways so I can belong and

not be hated. (pg. 30)

Here, W identifies that he goes through the world pretending, feeling inauthentic, and

following rules according to what he perceives as being necessary to be accepted by

others. While W's feelings of inauthenticity are to such a degree that it impacts his life

and his ability to form connections with others, it is reminiscent of the report of some

participants from this research. When asked why a participant feels she needs to act

upbeat and positive in order to convince people she is fine, she reported:

I feel like that's what gets people to like you and I like to be liked. Like if you are

really quiet and don't talk to them and keep to yourself and stuff then they think

you are rude and they don't like you.

In both these examples the person is expressing that they are picking up social cues as to

how to be accepted by others. In the case of W, it seems he has fully had to engage in

this deceptive form of relating which leads him void of feeling anything real. In the case

of the participant, she expresses a desire to be liked by others and an understanding that

in some situations she feels it is necessary to approach the situation differently that might

go against how she would prefer to respond. However, there is not a sense of a lack of

realness or a lack of authenticity, more being aware of a societal preference for a certain

type of social interaction, which she feels she must act or put on a persona to navigate.

While the finding of this research that introverts at times may put on a persona in

order to navigate a social situation more successfully does not support the hypothesis that

introverted children develop a False Self described by Winnicott's (1965) theory, there exists a useful comparison and also provides a cautionary message. It does seem possible that if a child's holding environment was to consistently fail to meet the child's unique needs and constantly invalidate a child's introverted way of being, that a False Self more similar to Winnicott's (1965) theory could develop. While participants' experiences with early caregivers were varied, overall participants identified feeling loved, supported, and valued in their families. Having such holding environments and a space where participants felt seen and held likely served as a protective factor against developing a full False Self as described by Winnicott (1965). A False Self would not be something the child or person would be able to slide in and out of and instead lead to what Berzoff describes as when, "uniqueness, vibrancy, idiosyncrasy, differences are all submerged. In this debilitating, constricting process the energy, the power, the "wildness" of the True Self is lost" (Berzoff, 2001, pg. 130). Since participants described numerous ways of coping with their introversion and described spaces of comfort where they received support from others and where they felt seen and valued, there was not an extreme lack of attunement from their environment that could have lead to the development of a False Self. In other words, participants' abilities to negotiate spaces of comfort and ways of coping were protective against the development of a False Self. While some participants did describe altering their behaviors in different settings in childhood, overall this seems to be a way of coping with introversion that has developed as they have grown older, along with their understanding and acceptance of their own introversion.

The stories and narratives collected through this research provide interesting and important findings that shed light into the internal emotional lives of introverted children. This research attempts to fill an important gap in the literature and provides justification for paying closer attention to the unique needs of introverted children to help them feel supported, respected, and valued. Previous research has not focused on introverted children and their experiences, ways of coping, and perceptions of themselves and the world. These concepts are crucial to explore through research in order to support this population. The findings of my research further support there is a need to understand and support these children as many participants identified struggling to navigate certain situations in their childhoods. Overall, I was fascinated by the data collected and feel as though it provided rich and useful information about the experiences of introversion in childhood. I believe semi-structured interviews was an appropriate method of data collection and that doing the interviews in person was especially helpful in making participants feel at ease and to want to share their stories.

Limitations of the Study

While I believe my sample was adequate, it would have benefited from an increase in diversity across race and gender however, I did have diversity across socioeconomic status. While the findings are not very generalizable since the sample was only 12 and is specific to certain location and group of people, I believe the data provided useful and valid information specific to this population.

A major limitation is that I interviewed adults about their childhood experiences and it is likely that their beliefs and memories of their childhood are not completely accurate to how they occurred. I found that some participants struggled to identify how

events impacted them emotionally as children. Another limitation is that the participants I recruited may represent a specific subset of all introverts. Given that my sampling frame is adult self-identified introverts, it is likely that those who are willing to reach out and share their experiences may be a certain subset of this sampling frame and not entirely representative of the population at large. These limitations, as well as the fact I gathered my sample from one specific geographic location, impacts the generalizability of the study. It is possible that the experiences of introverted children in other locations may look very different. The results of this research would also look very different if it had been conducted in another country especially since the concept of introversion and the extroversion ideal are culturally constructed. Little (2014) identifies that other countries view introversion differently than in the United States and place a premium on more quiet, introverted behavior, for example some Asian cultures.

It is also important to note is that all of my participants identified feeling positively about their introversion and had been able to develop appropriate ways of coping to deal with the social challenges they may have struggled with. Obviously experiences of introversion are not universally positive and the fact that there were greater commonalities across my participants may demonstrate that my sample was not entirely representative. It seems very possible that those with more positive feelings about their introversion would be more willing to participate in such research, the lack of more negative experiences does not signal that these cases don't exist, but that unfortunately for a variety of potential reasons, were not part of my study.

Given my small sample size, the use of purposive sampling, and my sampling frame, my results are not generalizable to the wider population. This research is focused

on a specific and unique population. While this research does have issues of reliability due to the concerns mentioned above however, I believe that the stories and experiences of other adult self-identified introverts would be similar across much of the country. Future research should be done to attempt to capture the true emotional experiences of introverted children so as to get more accurate reports of the way they think and feel about the world around them so as to better support their needs.

Implications for Clinical Practice and Research

Given the limitations of this research described above, there are important areas for future research to explore. Given that the sample of participants that I gathered reported more similar experiences than different, particularly in terms of their coping, it would be important to design research to gather information on more diverse experiences of introversion. It is likely that people who feel more negatively about their introversion or who have not been able to develop ways of coping with their introversion would be less likely to reach out to participate in an interview. This provides justification for further research on this population and with varied research approaches. For example some people might have felt more comfortable participating in an anonymous survey. It would also be critical for future research to use a validated measurement of introversion so as to more accurately and universally report levels of introversion and see how this impacts other outcomes.

It would be important for future research to explore the experiences of introversion in different countries. It would also be important to conduct research on how children in the United States whose families' come from cultures who view introversion differently cope with differing messages about their introversion. Another

interesting area of future research would be the impact on gender in experiences of introversion. It would be crucial to explore how our cultural beliefs about gender impact perceptions of quietness and introversion and how this plays out socially as well as academic settings.

A major implication from the findings of this research is that introverted children can be overlooked and unseen in certain settings, especially the classroom. Those participants who reported feeling supported and seen by their families, teachers, and peers reported more positive social experiences, positive self perceptions, and fewer academic challenges. Those participants who felt perceived as different, who struggled academically, and did not feel supported or seen by teachers reported social challenges and insecurities and negative self perceptions. These results point to the importance of social workers and school staff to be aware that they may be missing students who are struggling, simply because their behaviors are often more internalized and may not be easily identifiable by others. Similarly, the finding that introverted people may develop a more extroverted persona which they may embody at certain times and in certain social situations is important for social workers and teachers to be aware of. This suggests that social workers and teachers should make efforts to get to know and support the inner world and needs of children, which may not always be present at the surface and may take more time to for a child to reveal their whole and complete selves, especially if they have felt this self has not been seen and supported by others in their lives.

The research of Heinz, Miller, Seifer, Dickstein, and Locke (2015) provides both justifications and practical suggestions for what this type of support may look like. Heinz et al. (2015) looked at children with low emotion knowledge and the impact on

internalizing behavior. From this research the authors assert the importance of not overlooking children's internal experience because doing so can play a part in later internalizing problems. Given the potential dangers in missing children with internalizing behaviors, Heinz et al. (2015) highlight the importance of using multiple data sources in order to get as much information about children's' internal worlds, including the self, peer, teacher, and parent reports. Logue (2007) provides further suggestions for how social workers can work collaboratively with teachers to support the unique needs of children. Logue (2007) focuses on how social emotional learning standards ensure that teachers are paying attention to the emotional needs of students. These social emotional learning standards further offer a common language for social workers and teachers to work collaboratively to identify goals, interventions, and track progress of children's social emotional learning.

Heinz et al. (2015) advocate for emotional knowledge focused interventions which include emotional regulation strategies. Heinz et al. (2015) further highlight the particular importance of social workers focusing on accurate interpretations of the children's experiences. This seems especially helpful when working with introverted children who feel potentially unseen or misperceived in their worlds. It is important that social workers work hard to validate and interpret their experiences accurately. Other emotional knowledge focused interventions include helping children cope effectively with negative emotions as well as helping children gain greater awareness into their emotional experiences. Based on the findings of this research and the literature, social workers can support the needs of introverted children through attunement, increasing emotional knowledge, and providing a holding environment for them to feel their whole

selves are seen. The support and therapeutic connection provided by a social worker could be an important protective factor against children developing a False Self. Other protective factors could include having social workers communicate the importance in valuing quietness and normalizing these behaviors for teachers and families.

The findings about which situations and spaces cause introverted children discomfort can provide important implications that can better inform the work of social workers and teachers who are tasked with the job to support these students. Understanding how introverts have coped with social challenges they have faced provides social workers with further information on how best to support the needs of introverted children and understand what might be going on for them in their rich emotional worlds. Social workers and teachers should be aware that underneath a quiet exterior of an introverted child is a unique and deep inner world that is constantly taking in information and impacts the way they view themselves and navigate the world around them.

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INFORMED CONSENT

SMITH COLLEGE

Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Smith College School for Social Work ● Northampton, MA

....

Title of Study: Childhood Experiences of Introversion

Investigator(s): Leah Schwartz

....

Introduction
- You are being asked to be in a research study about childhood experiences of introversion.
- You were selected as a possible participant because you identify as introverted and identify as having been introverted as a child, fit within the parameters identified through a brief screening tool, and are between the ages of 18 and 35.
- We ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Purpose of Study
- The purpose of this study is to explore the experience of introversion in childhood. This research seeks to understand how introverted children perceive themselves and how this impacts the way they interact with the world around them. This study is being conducted as a research requirement for my master's in social work degree.
- Ultimately, this research may be published or presented at professional conferences.

Description of the Study Procedures
- If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things: Participants will be asked to participate in a 1 hour in person interview that will be audio recorded with participant permission. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and will be confidential. With participant permission, I may contact you after the interview over email or phone to ask follow up questions. If you choose not to be audio recorded I will take written notes throughout the interview.

Risks/Discomforts of Being in this Study
- There are no reasonable foreseeable risks for participating in this study.

Benefits of Being in the Study
- The benefits of participation include the opportunity to explore and share their experiences of being an introverted child, which is a perspective they might have been encouraged to share before. Through sharing these experiences it is likely that participants will experience a sense of catharsis, a sense of feeling heard or understood, and a potential sense of increased emotional wellbeing.
- The benefits to social work/society are: Increased insight into the emotional world of introverted children to inform and support the work of social workers, teachers, parents, and others who work with children and could help provide useful information to better meet the needs of introverted children across multiple contexts.

Confidentiality
- Your participation will be kept confidential. I will ensure confidentiality of my participants by changing any identifiable information. I will use pseudonyms throughout my report and will take all necessary steps to maintain participants' privacy. I will ensure that all research materials including recordings, transcriptions, analyses and consent/assent documents will be stored in a secure location for three years according to federal regulations. In the event that materials are needed beyond this period, they will be kept secured until no longer needed, and then destroyed. All electronically stored data will be password protected during the storage period. I will not include any information in any report that may be published that would make it possible to identify the participant. Backup copies of this data will also be on encrypted keys or password protected computer. I will not put any information on a cloud system or place where this information can be accessed without a password.
- All research materials including recordings, transcriptions, analyses and consent/assent documents will be stored in a secure location for three years according to federal regulations. In the event that materials are needed beyond this period, they will be kept secured until no longer needed, and then destroyed. All electronically stored data will be password protected during the storage period. We will not include any information in any report we may publish that would make it possible to identify you.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw
- The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study *at any time* (up to the date noted below) without affecting your relationship with the researchers of this study or Smith College. Your decision to refuse will not result in any loss of benefits (including access to services) to which you are otherwise entitled. You have the right not to answer any single question, as well as to withdraw completely up to the point noted below. If you choose to withdraw, I will not use any of your information collected for this study. You must notify me of your decision to withdraw by email or phone by three weeks after our interview. After that date, your information will be part of the thesis, dissertation or final report.

Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns
- You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact me, Leah Schwartz at lschwart@smith.edu or by telephone at XXX-XXX-XXXX. If you would like a summary of the study results, one will be sent to you once the study is completed. If you have any other concerns about your rights as a research participant, or if you have any problems as a result of your participation, you may contact the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Committee at (413) 585-7974.

Consent
- Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep. You will also be given a list of referrals and access information if you experience emotional issues related to your participation in this study

……………………………………………………………………………….

Name of Participant (print): _____

Signature of Participant: _____   Date: _____

Signature of Researcher(s): _____   Date: _____

………………………………………………………………………….

[if using audio or video recording, use next section for signatures:]

1. I agree to be [audio or video]**taped for this interview:**

Name of Participant (print): _____

Signature of Participant: _____   Date: _____

Signature of Researcher(s): _____   Date: _____

2. I agree to be interviewed, but I do not want the interview to be taped:

Name of Participant (print): _____

Signature of Participant: _____   Date: _____

Signature of Researcher(s): _____   Date: _____

Form updated 9/25

Are you an INTROVERT?

Are you willing to share your experiences of being an INTROVERTED child?

Smith College School for Social graduate student
Seeking participants for

Research Study on Childhood Experiences of Introversion

The purpose of this study is to explore how childhood experiences of introversion impact how introverts feel about themselves. As part of this study, you will be asked to participate in a 1 hour in-person interview. In order to be part of the study you must:

- Answer 5 brief screening questions that determine whether you qualify under the definition of "introverted" for this student and be between the ages of 18 and 35

Participation in this study will be kept confidential. Participants will receive a small gift card as a thank you for their time and participation in this research study.

If you would like additional information, are interested in participating in this study or know someone who might be please email lschwart@smith.edu

INTROVERSION RESEARCH STUDY	INTROVERSION RESEARCH STUDY	INTROVERSION RESEARCH STUDY	INTROVERSION RESEARCH STUDY	INTROVERSION RESEARCH STUDY	INTROVERSION RESEARCH STUDY	INTROVERSION RESEARCH STUDY
lschwart@smith.edu	lschwart@smith.edu	lschwart@smith.edu	lschwart@smith.edu	lschwart@smith.edu	lschwart@smith.edu	lschwart@smith.edu

APPENDIX C

SOCIAL MEDIA RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Do you identify as an introvert and are willing to share your experiences being an introverted child? Do you have thoughts about how being introverted shaped who you are and how you were perceived by others?

I Am seeking participants for my research study to complete my Masters at Smith School for Social work on experiences of introversion in childhood.

The purpose of this study is to explore how childhood experiences of introversion impact how introverts feel about themselves. As part of the study you will be asked to participate in a 1 hour in-person interview. In order to be part of the study you must:

- Answer 5 brief screening questions that determine whether you qualify under the definition of "introverted" for this student and be between the ages of 18 and 35

Participation in this study will be kept confidential.

If you would like additional information, are interested in participating in this study or know someone who might be please email lschwart@smith.edu. Please do not post personal information on this wall.

POTENTIAL PARTICIPANT EMAIL TEMPLATE

Hello,

Thank you for your interest in my research study. I am a Smith College School for Social work graduate student completing this research for my thesis on childhood experiences of introversion. The purpose of my research study is to seek to understand how introverted children perceive themselves and how this impacts the way they interact with the world around them. My goal for this research is to gain insight into the emotional world of introverted children that could have implications for social workers, teachers, parents, and others who work with children. My hope is that this provides useful information to better meet the needs of introverted children across multiple contexts, especially since the needs of this group of children can go undetected due to their quiet nature.

In order to qualify for this study you must identify as an introvert, identify as an introvert when you were a child, and be between the ages of 18 and 35. If you are interested in participating in this research I will send you a short screening questionnaire to ensure you fit under the definition of introversion I will be using for this research. I will also provide you with a copy of the interview questions and the informed consent form. Participants will be asked to participate in a 1 hour in person interview that will be audio recorded with participant permission. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and will be confidential. Feel free to ask questions you might have. Thank you for your consideration in participation in my study!

Best.

Leah Schwartz, MSW Candidate

Email for those who don't qualify for study

Hello,

Thank you for your interest in my research study on childhood experiences of introversion. I appreciate your time and willingness to help me with this project. Unfortunately due to the parameters of the study I will only be able to include participants who answered agree/ strongly agree to my screening questions. If you are interested in possibly being contacted at a later date should the qualification requirements change, please let me know via email. Again, thank you very much for you interest and help in this project thus far.

Best,

Leah Schwartz, MSW Candidate

APPENDIX E

SCREENING QUESTIONS

1) After being around a lot of people I often find myself craving time alone. (circle one)

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

2) I prefer social situations that are familiar to me as opposed to meeting many new people. (circle one)

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

3) I often find myself drawn to my own internal thoughts. (circle one)

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

4) I tend to feel overwhelmed in a crowd. (circle one)

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

5) I see myself as having been introverted as a child. (circle one)

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

If you agree/strongly agree with all of the above, and are interested in participating in this study, check " I am eligible to continue and agree to continue the recruitment process."

If you do not meet the about, you do not meet eligibility criteria and I ask that you not continue, I thank you for your interest

☐ I am eligible to continue and agree to the recruitment process.

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Demographic Questions:

1. How old are you?
2. What gender do you identify as?
3. What cultural identity or identities do you self-identify as?
4. Did you grow up in a rural area/city/ suburb?
5. What is the highest level of education you have achieved?
6. How big was your family growing up?
7. Who were your primary caregivers
8. What was your estimated income level growing up? Choose one.

Under 25,000   25,000-50,000   50,001-75,000   75,001-100,000   over 100,000

Interview Questions:

1. What does being introverted mean to you?

2. How would you describe yourself as a child? How did you feel about yourself?

3. How did your introversion impact you socially? What was your experience making friends?

4. What was your experience being introverted in your family?

5. What was your elementary school experience like?

6. What types of school activities did you enjoy or excel at? What were your strengths?

7. What types of school activities were more challenging for you? How did you cope?

8. Can you think of a time where you felt different for being introverted? If so, how did this impact the way you interacted with others/the world?

9. As a child did you feel others perceived you the way you perceived yourself? Has this changed?

10. What would be easier for you if you were less introverted, what would be harder?

11. How has your relationship with your introversion changed over time?

12. Is there anything you would like to add?

APPENDIX G

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

The following are a list of local resources in case after the interview, you feel it would be helpful to access further support

Behavioral Health Network, Inc.
Outpatient Counseling Locations:

Agawam Counseling Center
30 Southwick Street
Agawam, MA
413-786-6410

BHN Sloan Clinic
471 Chestnut Street
Springfield, MA
413-737-2439

Mount Tom City Clinic
230 & 235 Maple Street
413-532-0389

Mount Tom Center for Mental Health
and Recovery
40 Bobola Road
Holyoke, MA
413-536-5473

School Street Counseling Institute
110 Maple Street
Springfield, MA
413-846-4300

ServiceNet- Outpatient behavioral
health
Locations:
Northampton
50 Pleasant Street
413-584-6855, press 3 for intake

Greenfield
55 Federal Street
413-772-2935, press 3 for intake

Holyoke
98 Lower Westfield Road
413-533-5201, press 3 for intake

Amherst
400 Amity Street
413-549-0095, press 3 for intake

Gandara Center- Walk-in, Bi-lingual
Clinical and support services
2155 Main Street
Springfield, MA
413-736-0395

Clinical & Support Options
Behavioral Health locations:

1 Arch Place
Greenfield, MA
413-774-1000

130 Maple Street., Suite 325
Springfield MA
413-737-9544

River Valley Counseling Center, Inc.
Central intake: 413-540-1234
Outpatient services locations:

303 Beech Street
Holyoke, MA
413-540-1100

249 Exchange Street
Chicopee, MA
413-549-2141

APPENDIX H

HSR APPROVAL LETTER

SMITH COLLEGE

School for Social Work
Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063
T (413) 585-7950   F (413) 585-7994

February 3, 2015

Leah Schwartz

Dear Leah,

You did a very nice job on your revisions. Your project is now approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee.

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Forms: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

Maintaining Data: You must retain all data and other documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Congratulations and our best wishes on your interesting study.

Sincerely,

Elaine Kersten, Ed.D.
Co-Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Carolyn Mak, Research Advisor