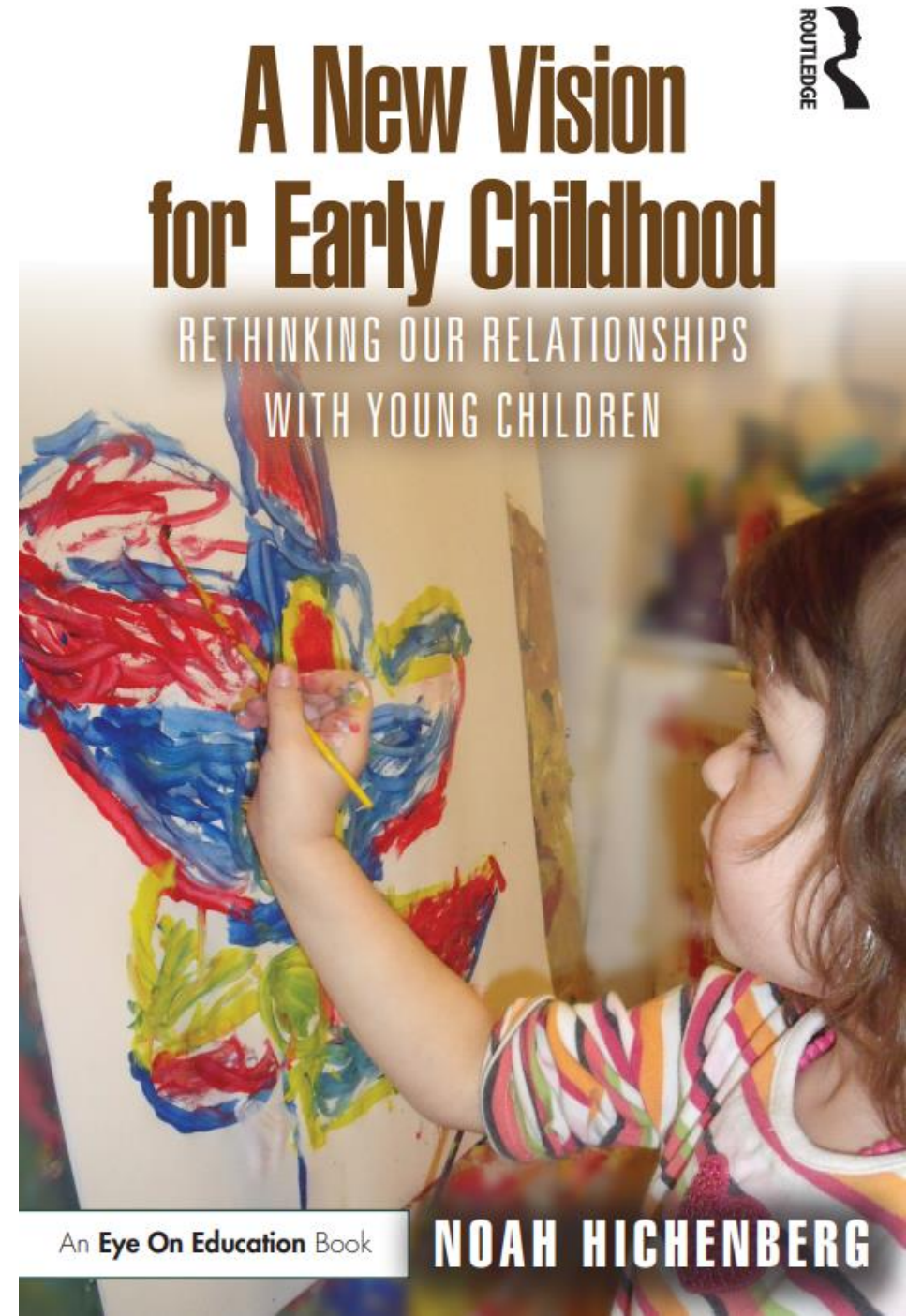


—

Trust Children More.
Control Them Less.
Involve Them More.

NoahHichenberg.com











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Research questions & Research methods

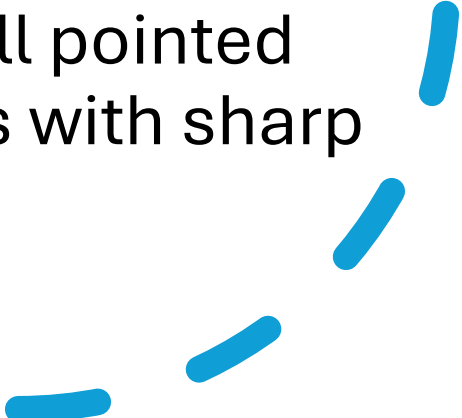
- How and why do adults attempt to control young children?
 - What happens to the child's agency?
 - How did it come to be this way?
-
- Ethnographic day-in-the-life observations of one two-year-old child
 - Historical and anthropological perspectives on ECE.
- 
- A series of blue dashed lines in the bottom right corner, forming a curved shape.



Childhood is cultural (not biological)

Rogoff: “in many other communities around the world, children begin to take on responsibility for tending other children at ages 5-7” (Rogoff, 2003, p. 4).

“Among the Efe of the Democratic Republic of Congo, infants routinely use machetes safely...Fore (New Guinea) infants handle knives and fire safely by the time they are able to walk...Aka parents of Central Africa teach 8- to 10-month-old infants how to throw small spears and use small pointed digging sticks and miniature axes with sharp metal blades. (p. 5)



How we got
here:

Childhood
keeps
changing

- “Right there” through the ages
- Industrial Revolution
- Changing families:
 - Smaller families: 7→1.66
 - Women in the work force: 10% →70%
 - Delayed childbirth: 21→27.3
- Scientific childhood/ DAP
- Anxious parents



Childhood
became
sanitized.

Children
became
useless.

Children went from being active contributors to stale objects of control.

Today's childhood is thoroughly and scientifically described and normed, sealed off from adult society through preschool, segregated by discrete age bands, and imperialistically governed by the anxious whims of narcissistic parents who offer their children a sanitized, useless childhood.

Cora Cooks Pancit

One four-year-old student was dubious:

**“How could a little girl cook soup?
She’s not big, like a grown up.”**

“Mayan children ... being to make a real contribution to household work by age 4 to 6 years ... tending infants, delivering messages and running errands around town, and helping with meals and agricultural work (Rogoff, p. 168).”



Adult imperialism

- The over-extension of adult control into the daily lives of young children
- Creates an **imperial childhood**
- This is not a biological necessity but rather a cultural construction

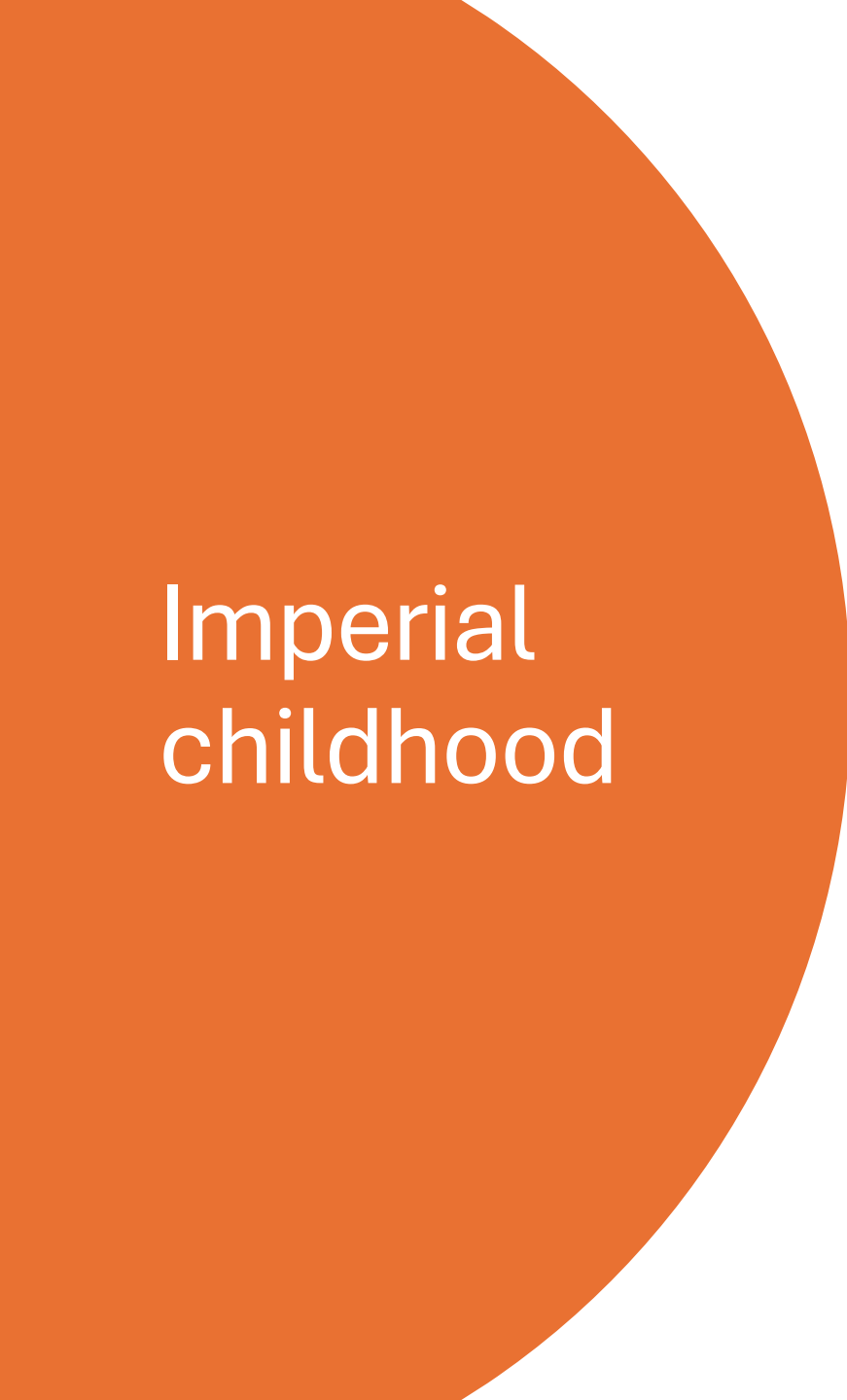
Imperial
childhood



Age-based segregation
Over-infantilization
Constant surveillance



In Emily's life, there was always a sheriff. Her choice was to submit or resist – this was the axis on which her relationships with adults rested.



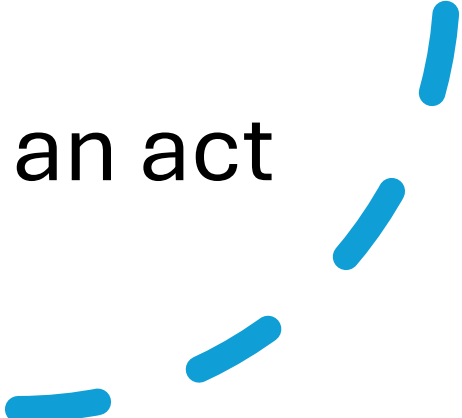
Imperial childhood

The sheriff and the outlaw.

Rules (preschool, DAP) &
resistance (the child's agency).

Teaching means controlling
children.

Speaking up as a child is an act
of resistance.



Adult
imperialism

in

Emily's life

Age-based segregation:
Little Ones classroom

Infantilization: Lunch

Control: Cantaloupe



Emily mattered: Child agency

They may be small, but
they are not trivial.

Emily embodied Stetsenko's Transformative Activist Stance.

Emily's agency was present “in **modest** ways and merely on **local** scales” (p. 182); “even seemingly **mundane** events...are starkly agentic and transformative” (p. 220); “activist contributions...always matter (if only on a small scale) and typically, in **modest** ways” (p. 259).

Due to their size and position within society, children are not capable of grand revolutions. But they are capable of small, local acts of agency, showing their powerful resistance (and contribution) through the means available to them.

Transformative Activist Stance

Audacious acts of human agency are...

“often **against the odds**, that is, even if a particular version of what is to come in the future is not anticipated as likely and, instead, **requires struggle and active striving to achieve it**. This applies in cases when a person struggles for one’s vision of “what ought to be” **in spite of the powerful forces that might be pulling in other directions**. (Stetsenko, 2017, p. 239, emphasis added)

Submit or
resist?

I knew which Emily would
choose.

Emily just never bought into
the status quo.

Her appetite was bigger than
what the world allowed for.

Emily's
agency

Struggling
against the
odds

Friends: Clyde
Activities: Peekaboo
Materials: The
“grown-up thing”



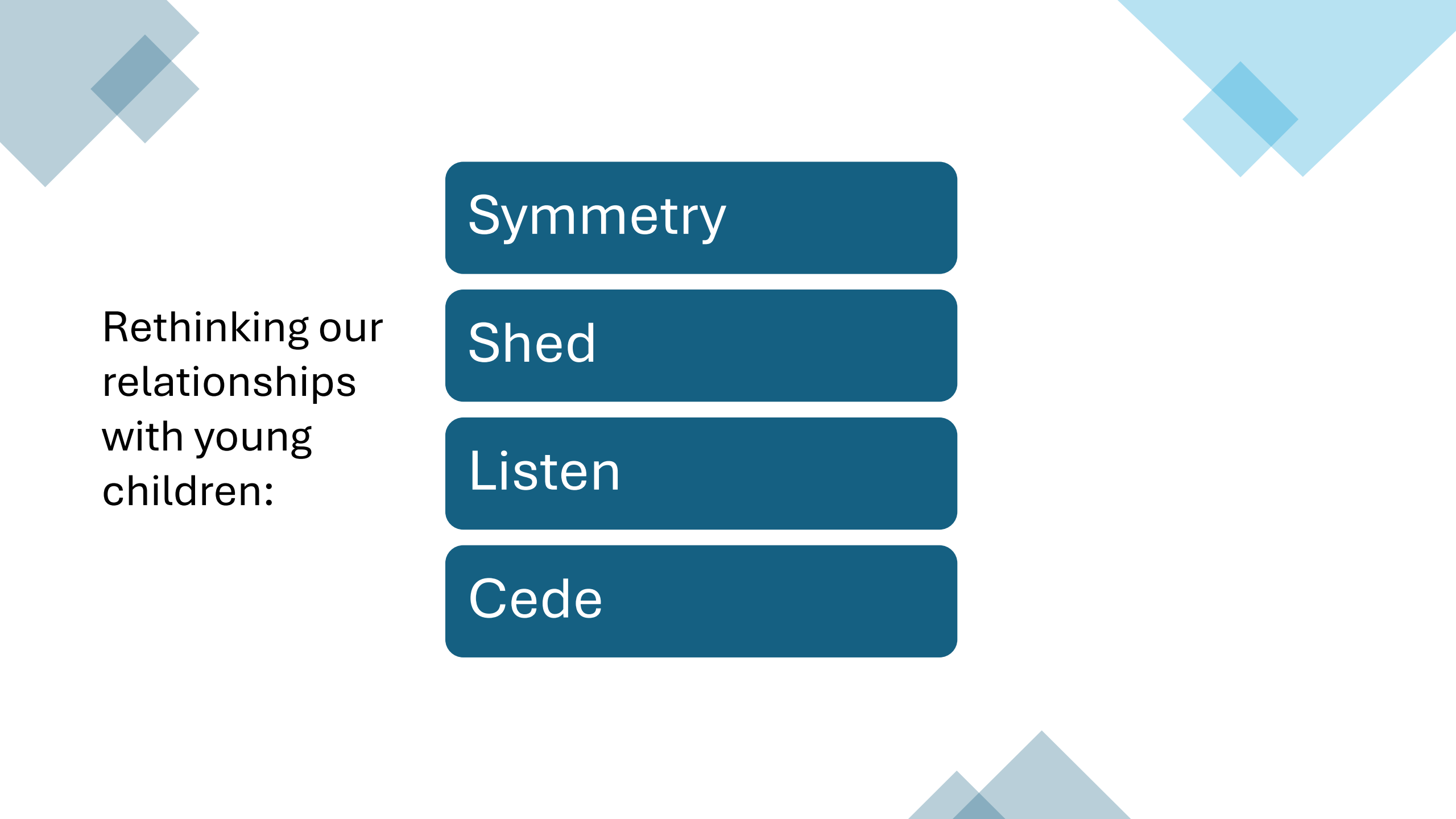
A new vision for early childhood

Do less...

...give children the time and space needed to express their thoughts and complete their plans without turning into an outlaw, and,

Involve more...

...provide an on-ramp, or an entryway, for children to participate meaningfully in the wide world instead of being cut off and kept within the narrow box of early childhood.

The slide features decorative geometric shapes in the corners: a grey diamond in the top-left, a light blue diamond in the top-right, and a grey diamond in the bottom-right.

Rethinking our
relationships
with young
children:

Symmetry

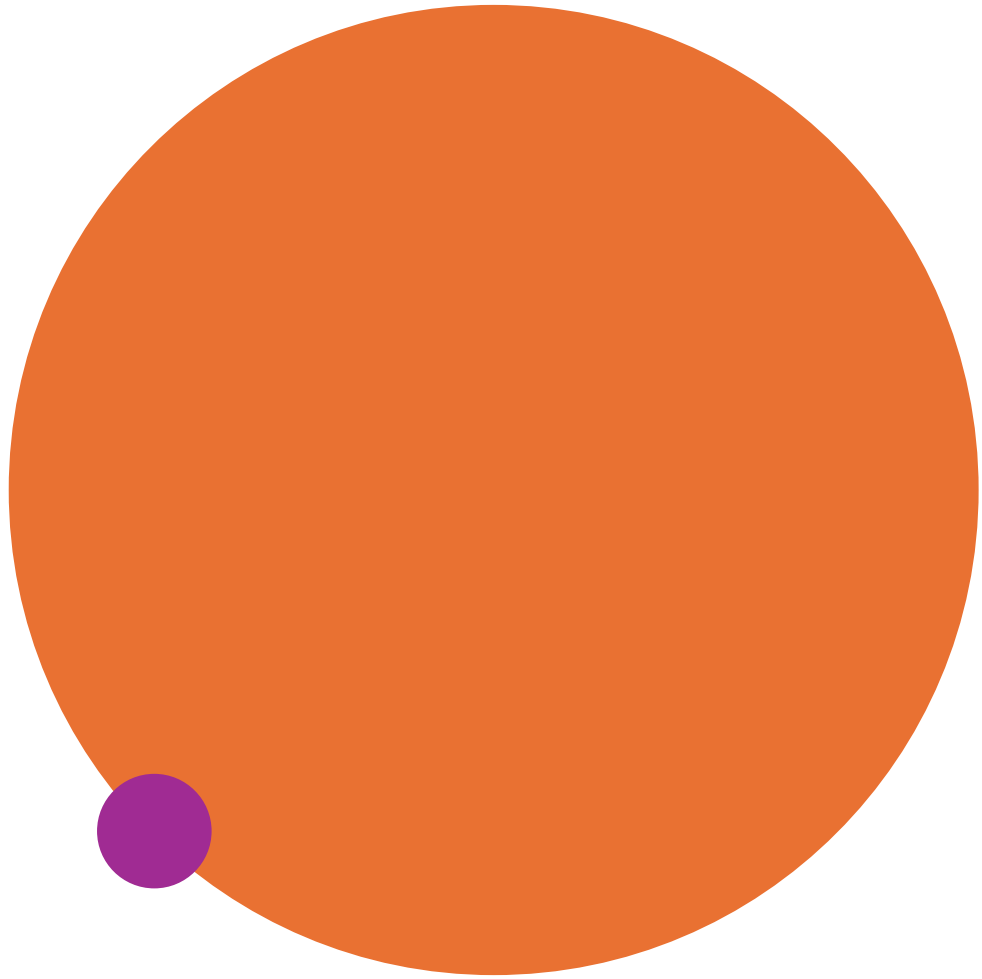
Shed

Listen

Cede



Do less



Be an ally



Children
are not
useless



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Re-introduce
children to the
world

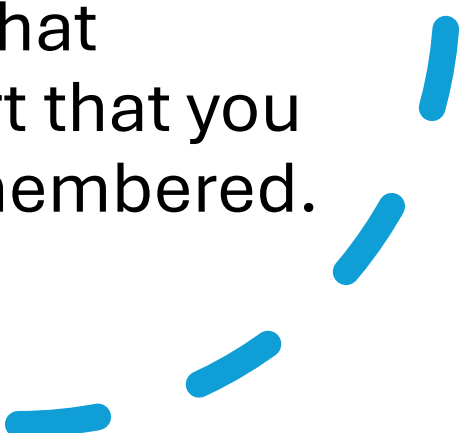
Access,
participation,
& contribution

A blue dashed line is located in the bottom right corner of the slide, consisting of several short, curved segments.

A large, solid orange circle is positioned on the left side of the slide, partially cut off by the edge.

I read the passage about me the night before my graduation while trying on my cap and gown.

Thank you for letting me paint and express myself creatively. You as a teacher made a huge impact on me. Putting vulnerability and emotion in my work is something I have never been afraid to do. Making that butterfly painting and the support that you provided is something I have remembered.

Several blue, brush-like strokes are scattered in the bottom right corner of the slide.