

EXPLORING SCHOOL CLIMATE AMONG CHILDREN AGED 4 TO 6: VISUAL AND ETHICAL METHODS TO GATHER THEIR PERSPECTIVES

Young children's voices remain underrepresented, particularly through qualitative approaches, in studying school climate.

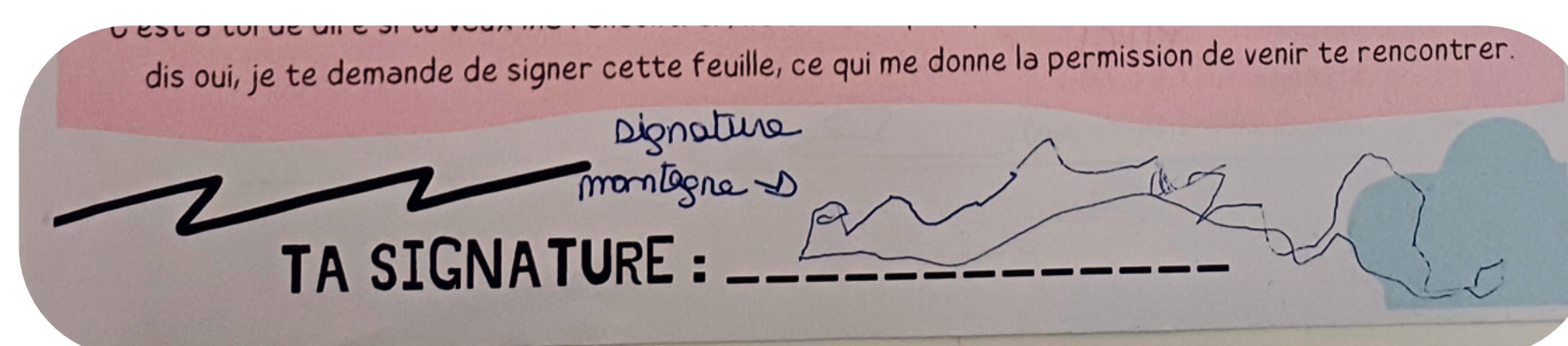
Wang, M. T., & Degol, J. L. (2016). School climate: A review of the construct, measurement, and impact on student outcomes. Educational psychology review, 28(2), 315-352.

Three alternative schools in French-speaking Switzerland :
Montessori ; close to nature ;
active methods

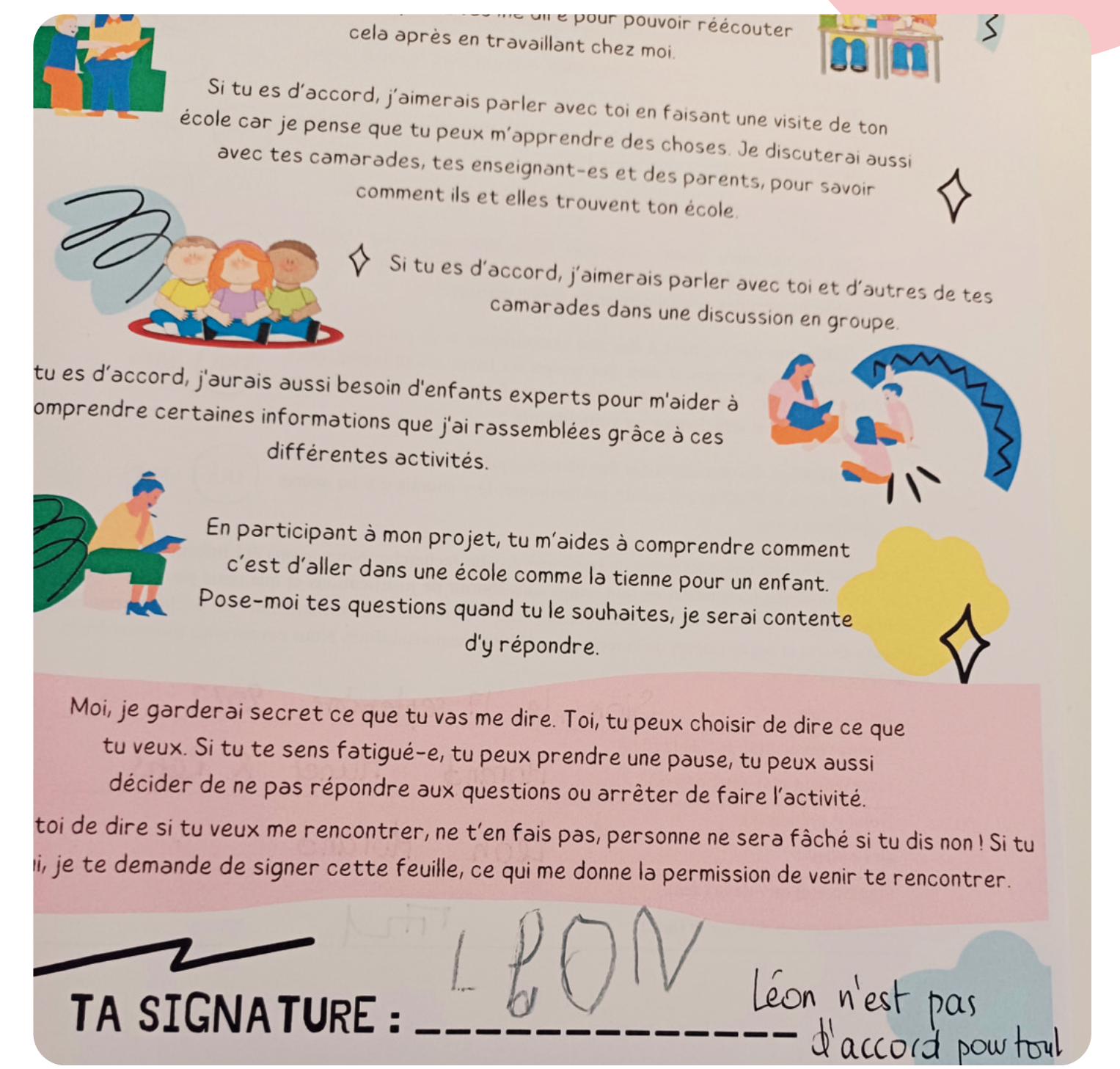
Drawings followed by a narration



Presentation of the research and consent form



a "mountain signature"



Agreeing... or not

Collective interviews with "Lily"

A plush toy

Questions asked:

- What do you like about your school?
- Who are the adult and children that you like at school ? Why?
- What do you do if you have a problem with a friend?
- What do you do learn in class?
- Is there anything you would like to change about your school?

Thanks and short feedback



Ethical and Methodological Reflections

Ethical considerations with consent: If parents did not consent but the child wanted to draw, I accepted the drawing, did not record their words, and excluded it from the research while allowing the child to participate.

Classroom dynamics and participation: In schools, class routines and structures limit children's choices, influencing participation and sometimes making alternatives seem more appealing. I had to align with teacher-led rules (e.g., raising hands, waiting for turns to speak) to fit into the school environment.

Accessing marginalized voices: Capturing the voices of children who disliked school or struggled to engage was a significant challenge with the collective interview methods.

Methodological limitations: Drawing was not very clear with younger children (3-4yo). I could use other methods like sorting image or using visual questionnaires with smiley faces to better adapt to children's preferences.

Preliminary results

Children often drew objects from their **outside and inside environment**, such as their playground, slides, or mattresses, as well as their friends.
During the collective interviews, children often talked about their **friendships**, highlighting play and shared activities. Some found teachers helpful in solving problems, while others felt unheard. They preferred **kind teachers** who gave them more freedom. Preliminary findings reveal that children describe their experiences by emphasizing **the importance of friendships, play, and outdoor spaces in fostering a positive school climate**.



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