The Canadian Association
for Young Children

L'Association Canadienne
Pour Les Jeunes Enfants

www.cayc.ca

THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

WHAT IS THE CAYC?

The Canadian Association for Young Children (CAYC) grew out of the Council for Childhood Education and was officially recognized in 1974 by the granting of a Federal Charter. It is the only national association specifically concerned with the well-being of children, birth through age nine, at home, in preschool settings and at school. Members of the multidisciplinary association include parents, teachers, caregivers, administrators, students and all those wishing to share ideas and participate in activities related to the education and welfare of young children.

MISSION STATEMENT

CAYC exists to provide a Canadian voice on critical issues related to the quality of life of all young children and their families.

THE AIMS OF THE CAYC

1. To influence the direction and quality of policies and programs that affect the development and well-being of young children in Canada.

2. To provide a forum for the members of Canada's early childhood community to support one another in providing developmentally appropriate programs for young children.

3. To promote and provide opportunities for professional development for those charged with the care and education of young children.

4. To promote opportunities for effective liaison and collaboration with all those responsible for young children.

5. To recognize outstanding contributions to the well-being of young children.

IMPLEMENTING THE AIMS OF THE CAYC

1. **The National Conference:**
   The National Conference is a highlight of the CAYC. The program includes lectures by internationally renowned authorities on children, workshops, discussion groups, displays, demonstrations, school visits and tours.

2. **Provincial and Regional Events:**
   The organization of members at the local and provincial level is encouraged to plan events to deal with the issues and concerns pertaining to young children. These events may take the form of lectures, seminars or a local conference.

3. **The Journal:**
   An outstanding multidisciplinary journal is published twice yearly. Articles by nationally and internationally known experts in early childhood education and child rearing are presented in the Journal of the CAYC. Inside CAYC provides information on Association activities.

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND MEMBERSHIP

Membership fees are payable on application and renewable annually on an evergreen basis. To be considered a voting member, fees must be paid no later than 60 days prior to the Annual General Meeting.

CAYC members receive two issues of Canadian Children as well as favourable rates for national and regional conferences.

Regular $55.00, 2 Year Regular $100.00, association/institution $120.00, student/senior $30.00, international $135.00 (CA).

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ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE POUR LES JEUNES ENFANTS

QU'EST CE QUE L'ACJE

L'Association Canadienne pour les Jeunes Enfants, issue du *Council for Childhood Education,* a reçu sa charte fédérale en 1974. Elle demeure la seule association nationale vouée exclusivement au bien-être des enfants, de la naissance jusqu'à l'âge de neuf ans, dans leur foyer, à la garderie et à l'école primaire. L'ACJE est composée de parents, d'enseignants, de professionnels de la petite enfance, d'administrateurs et d'étudiants, ainsi que de tous ceux et celles qui sont intéressés à partager leurs idées en participant à des activités liées au bien-être et à l'éducation des jeunes enfants.

SA MISSION

L'ACJE s'est donné comme mandat de faire entendre une voix canadienne sur les questions essentielles ayant trait à la qualité de vie de tous les jeunes enfants et de leur famille.

SES OBJECTIFS

1. Jouer un rôle sur le plan des orientations et sur la qualité des politiques et des programmes touchant au développement et au bien-être des jeunes enfants canadiens.
2. Créer un forum pour les membres de la communauté canadienne oeuvrant dans le domaine de la petite enfance afin de susciter une collaboration active dans l'élaboration de programmes appropriés au développement des jeunes enfants.
3. Encourager et offrir des possibilités de perfectionnement professionnel au personnel responsable du bien-être et de l'éducation des jeunes enfants.
4. Promouvoir des occasions pour une meilleure coordination et collaboration entre tous les responsables des jeunes enfants.
5. Récompenser et souligner les contributions exceptionnelles faites en faveur des jeunes enfants.

EXÉCUTION DES OBJECTIFS DE L'ACJE

1. **Le congrès national:**
   Il constitue le grand évènement de l'ACJE. Des sommités de renommée internationale en matière de petite enfance y prononcent des conférences et on y participe à des ateliers, des débats, des expositions, des démonstrations, et à des visites guidées d'écoles.
2. **Les évènements provinciaux et locaux:**
   L'ACJE encourage ses membres à organiser des conférences, des séminaires ou des congrès au niveau local et régional afin de débattre des problèmes relatifs aux jeunes enfants.
3. **La revue :**
   Publication bisannuelle et multidisciplinaire de premier ordre, la revue regroupe des articles traitant de questions d'éducation et de formation des jeunes enfants. On y retrouve également des articles écrits par des experts de renommée nationale et internationale. La rubrique Inside CAYCrenseigne les lecteurs sur les activités de l'Association.

ABONNEMENT ET COTISATION DES MEMBRES

Les cotisations doivent être réglées au moment de l'adhésion et celle-ci doit être renouvelée chaque année. Pour se prévaloir de son droit de vote, tout membre doit acquitter sa cotisation au moins 60 jours avant l'Assemblée Générale annuelle.

Les members de l'ACJE reçoivent la revue, et bénéficient de tariffs spéciaux pour participer au congrès national et aux évènements régionaux.

Tarif des cotisations annuelles: général; 55 $, général 2 année 100 $, étudiants/aîné: 30 $, associations : 120 $, international : 135 $ (CA)

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Canadian Children is the journal of the Canadian Association for Young Children (CAYC), the only national association specifically concerned with the well-being of children of preschool and elementary age in Canada. The journal is published twice yearly and contains articles, book reviews and announcements of professional conferences.

Canadian Children is a multidisciplinary journal concerned with child development, child studies and early childhood education. Authors from across Canada, and elsewhere, are invited to submit articles and book reviews which reflect the variety and extent of both research and practice in early childhood education and child well-being.

CONTENT:
Submissions should appeal to an audience that includes parents, professionals in the field of childhood education and child services, as well as teachers and researchers. Most issues are multi-theme in nature and the editor will attempt to balance articles that are research related with articles of a practical nature relating to programming, curriculum, classroom practice or child well-being.

FORM, LENGTH, AND STYLE:
• Articles may be of varying length, written in a readable style. Style should be consistent with the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th Edition).
• Articles should be sent as an e-mail attachment to the email address below.
• All submissions should be accompanied by a copy of the signed permission form available at the website (cayc.ca)
• Authors are to obtain releases for use of photographs prior to e-mailing the manuscript. Signed permissions must be included in the submission.
• Please include a brief biographical sketch (4-5 sentences) including the author(s) full name, title, professional affiliation, and other relevant information.
• An abstract should be included at the start of the manuscript, and should not exceed 100 words.
• In order to enable blind review, manuscripts must be anonymized. No author information should be included in the manuscript.
• All author information (including full name, mailing address and biographical information) must be included in a separate document.
• It is expected that authors will not submit articles to more than one publisher at a time.

ACCEPTANCE AND PUBLICATION:
The editors will acknowledge receipt and will review all solicited and unsolicited manuscripts received. The final publication decision rests with the editors, and will be communicated within three months.

DEADLINES: Submissions for publication are considered in February & August.

Canadian Children est la revue de l'Association canadienne pour jeunes enfants (ACJE), la seule association vouée exclusivement au bien-être des enfants de niveau préscolaire et primaire au Canada. Cette revue publiée deux fois l'an regroupe des articles, des comptes rendus de livres et des avis de conférences professionnelles.

Canadian Children est une revue multidisciplinaire axée sur le développement de l'enfant, les études de l'enfant et l'éducation à l'enfance. Les auteurs du Canada et d'ailleurs sont invités à soumettre des articles et des comptes rendus de livres mettant en évidence la variété et l'étendue de la recherche et de la pratique dans le domaine de l'éducation à la petite enfance et du bien-être de l'enfant.

CONTENU:
Les articles doivent s'adresser à un public composé de professionnels des domaines de l'éducation à l'enfance et des services à l'enfance, de parents, d'enseignants et de chercheurs. La plupart des numéros traitent d'une multitude de thèmes et le rédacteur en chef tentera d'y inclure tant des articles portant sur la recherche que des articles portant sur des aspects pratiques de l'éducation, comme la gestion et la mise en œuvre de programmes d'études, de méthodes d'enseignement en salle de classe et de techniques utilisées pour assurer le bien-être des enfants.

FORME, LONGUEUR ET STYLE:
• Les articles peuvent être de longueur variée et doivent être rédigés dans un style accessible à tous les lecteurs. La présentation doit être conforme aux normes du Publication Manual (6e édition) de l'American Psychological Association.
• Les articles devront être joints à un courrier électronique et envoyés à l'adresse de courriel indiquée ci-dessous.
• Toutes les soumissions devront être accompagnées d'une copie signée du formulaire d'autorisation disponible sur notre site Web (www.cayc.ca).
• Les auteurs devront obtenir une autorisation de publier pour l'utilisation de photographies avant de nous faire parvenir le manuscrit par courriel. Les autorisations signées doivent être incluses dans la soumission.
• Veuillez inclure une brève notice biographique (4 ou 5 phrases) comprenant le nom complet, le titre et l'affiliation professionnelle de l'auteur ou des auteurs, ainsi que tout autre renseignement pertinent.
• Un résumé de maximum 100 mots devra être inclus au début du manuscrit.
• Afin de permettre un examen aveugle des manuscrits, ceux-ci doivent être anonymes. Aucune information relative à l'auteur ne doit être présente dans le manuscrit.
• Tous les renseignements relatifs à l'auteur (y compris le nom complet, l'adresse postale et l'information biographique) doivent être inclus dans un document à part.
• Il est entendu que les auteurs ne soumettront leurs articles qu'à une seule revue à la fois.

ACCEPTATION ET PUBLICATION:
Les rédacteurs en chef accuseront réception et tiendront compte de tous les manuscrits reçus, qu'ils aient été sollicités ou non. La décision définitive de publier un article relève de la responsabilité des rédacteurs en chef, et elle sera communiquée à l'auteur dans un délai de trois mois.

ÉCHÉANCE: Les soumissions sont acceptées en tout temps.

Please send all publication correspondence for consideration to:
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This issue of *Canadian Children* represents an eclectic mix of scholarship.

In "Running with Hermes," Carolyn Bjartveit and Lisa Panayotidis describe how immigrant educators exchange and challenge cultural and Western ideals about pedagogy and child care. The authors bring forth wild dreams, imaginings, and hermeneutic ideas about play, solidly grounded in the lived experience of the educators they have worked with, that contribute to an understanding of a transcultural curriculum that acknowledges diversity and difference.

Luigi Iannacci explores the dynamics of negotiating entrance into a research site in his paper, "Negotiating Consent." He troubles the dominant neoliberal discourses that are pervasive in academic circles. His critical insights highlight the ways in which neoliberal entanglements operate in complex and contradictory ways, and how researcher reflexivity might be shaped.

Shifting gears, John-Tyler Binfet and Amy Gaertner investigate how young children perceive kindness in "Children's Conceptions of Kindness at School." Their research methodology involves inviting young children to draw what kindness looks like. The themes that emerge from this study lead to discussions of positive education and the promotion of prosocial behaviour.

In "Balancing Play-Based Learning with Curricular Mandates," Shelley Stagg Peterson, Donna Forsyth, and Laureen McIntyre take up an often-heard challenge. The proverbial pendulum seems to swinging back in favour of play, and yet the question of how curricular mandates can be met through play are continually in the forefront. Here the authors discuss early childhood educators' perceptions of what constitutes play and contributions of play to children's learning, while acknowledging the tensions that arise in some teaching contexts. A robust revisiting of the play research literature is included.

Kim Atkinson, in "The Dead Tree," points out some of the assumptions that we carry about the ubiquitous presence of toys in early learning contexts. She explores some of the assumptions we carry about toys, and considers how social, commercial, and scientific discourses have shaped and embedded particular "truths" in our educational thought. Critically reflecting on the role of toys can open possibilities for teachers and children to think differently about images of the child and educator, and the construction of knowledge.

And finally (no pun intended!), Anastasia Butcher, in her fascinating contribution "Thinking With Time," highlights the complexity of the concept of time in early childhood. Through a series of narratives, Anastasia portrays how different conceptualizations of time influence practice, providing opportunities for experimentation and creative expression. She challenges narrow conceptualizations of time through engagement with ideas from feminist, physics, and anthropology scholarship. Time is understood as a creative force with agency, and this idea is explored through the use of documentation.

As we prepare to go to print with the Fall 2015 issue of *Canadian Children*, Canada is perched on the edge of a federal election. Child care has become an election issue, with each of the major parties making policy statements and declaring their competing ideologies. Opinions range widely as to where our obligations lie, as a society, in caring for our youngest citizens. Yes, there are many issues at the forefront of voters' minds, but it's encouraging to see that child care has become a mainstream concern. Voting is a hard-won right, and one that we encourage you to exercise. We share the hopes for our country expressed so eloquently by Stephen Lewis, CC, at the November 2014 Symons Lecture in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island:

> *I cherish the possibility of a return to a vibrant democracy, where equality is the watchword, where people of different ideological conviction have respect for each other, where policy is debated rather than demeaned, where the great issues of the day are given thoughtful consideration, where Canada's place on the world stage is seen as principled and laudatory, where human rights for all is the emblem of a decent civilized society. (http://www.theguardian.pe.ca/)*

All in all, this issue provides a great wealth of deep thinking and exemplary scholarship. As editors, we are so proud for the opportunity to work closely with our authors to nurture their work to publication. And, of course, we pay homage to the league of invisible reviewers and our technical editor, Leslie Prpich. Their work may be in the background, but without them this journal just wouldn't happen.

Running With Hermes: Imagining and Traversing a Transcultural Curriculum Path in the Postsecondary Early Childhood Education Classroom

Carolyn Bjartveit and E. Lisa Panayotidis

Carolyn Bjartveit is a sessional instructor at the Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary. Her doctoral research focused on the topics of teaching and learning and the complex intersections between the self (of students and educators) and the curriculum in culturally diverse early childhood education postsecondary classrooms. Her research has appeared in the Journal of Curriculum Theorizing, the Journal of Applied Hermeneutics, and the journal Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood. Email: cjbjartv@ucalgary.ca

E. Lisa Panayotidis is professor and chair of educational studies in curriculum and learning at the Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary. Her multiauthored book Provoking Conversations on Inquiry in Teacher Education (Peter Lang, 2012), with Darren E. Lund, Hans Smits, and Jo Towers, recently won the 2015 book prize from the Canadian Association of Foundations of Education.

While running on a forest path, we imagined the Greek god Hermes flying alongside and interrupting our progress. Similar to navigating alternative routes while running with Hermes, the immigrant educators interviewed for Carolyn Bjartveit's doctoral study veered from a single curriculum course and playfully exchanged and challenged cultural and Western ideals about pedagogy and childcare. Drawing on the work of early childhood education (ECE) scholars and the research participants' lived experiences, we critically consider how wild dreams, imaginings, and hermeneutic ideas about play may contribute to our understanding of a transcultural curriculum that acknowledges diversity and difference.

Keywords: curriculum; hermeneutics; play (spiel); teacher education; transcultural

Hermeneutics is about finding ourselves, which also, curiously enough, is about losing ourselves. (Smith, 1991, p. 200)

Dear Reader,

Over the past several years, running and walking (Panayotidis, 2009) have become daily practices that provide us, Carolyn and Lisa, with the space and time to reflect, meditate, and imagine. While jogging on a forest path, we imagine the Greek messenger of the gods, Hermes, flying alongside us fluttering his winged boots and shaking his head in frustration at our inconsistent pace. Running with Hermes, we see a clearing in the woods ahead: an illuminated place where the sun shines through the trees. It is a resting place to stop, reflect, and reorient ourselves—a space of new understanding. As we linger there, something off the trail catches our attention and we become curious and want to investigate. Surprisingly, we find another course—a new and unfamiliar path to run. We choose a direction and wonder if we might lose our way.

In this article we share a wild dream about running/walking with Hermes, the mythical Greek god of hermeneutics who "entices interpretation … has the character of complication, multiplicity, lies, jokes, irreverence, indirection, and disdain for rules … is the master of creativity and invention. [Hermes] has the capacity to see things anew and his power is change, prediction, and solving puzzles" (Moules, 2002, p. 3). Hermes is also known as the god of thieves and travellers, a conductor of souls to the underworld (he travels between the two worlds of the living and dead), and a messenger between divine and mortal beings. Hermes is a master of trickery—for example, when he was born, he stole Apollo's cattle (Leadbetter, 1997, paras. 1–3). Following Hermes down illuminating paths allows us to chart a metaphoric journey about curricular teaching and learning in culturally diverse early childhood teacher education classrooms.

Hermeneutics is the practice of interpretation—coming to understand experience and the world through language: "Hermeneutics requires a bringing forth and a bringing to language of something new. We work out this newness by working it into a world of relationships that can sustain it" (Moules, 2002, p. 5). Thus, in the process of something new opening up, we come to a deeper understanding of our interrelationships in and with the world. Recognizing that "we interpret always as transients" (Kermode, 1980, p. 145), we created the metaphor of running with Hermes as a way to provoke ideas and dialogue about immigrants' experiences. Gadamer (2004) suggests that "transference from one sphere to another not only has a logical function; it corresponds to the fundamental metaphoricity of language" (p. 429). Therefore, metaphor is a valuable way of coming to understand through figurative language.

Hermes and curriculum are intertwined. *Curriculum* is etymologically defined as "a running, course" (Douglas Harper, 2015) within a "singular … circular track of competition, with fixed lanes for each participant" (Rhedding-Jones, 2002, p. 93). Traversing a transcultural ECE curriculum path challenges us to move "across, beyond" (Douglas Harper, 2015) as a way to "deconstruct [cultural and curricular] boundaries … using early childhood education as its context" (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Bernhard, 2012, p. 167). Our playful, imaginative approach allows for transformative possibilities and helps us to understand how immigrant learners critically encounter notions of culture in a Western ECE postsecondary curriculum. We invite you, Reader, to follow Hermes with us and to see the world anew.

Hermes points us to alternative paths and difficult knowledge—whether on the path or in the classroom. Carolyn recalls the pedagogic event that prompted her ongoing doctoral research.[1] In an ECE postsecondary classroom on child development, adult learners (and their teacher) were confronted with a fixed and unyielding Western curriculum. Carolyn recognized striking differences between immigrant learners' conceptions of child development and child-rearing practices and those written about by American authors in the course textbook (Bee & Boyd, 2010). Specifically, the text noted that most Western parents view newborns' interrupted sleep cycles as a behavioural *problem* that required fixing through parental intervention. When an Ethiopian student strongly disagreed with the American authors' perspective and insisted she had no adverse effects from co-sleeping with her mother from infancy to age seven, her comment prompted questions from other students who both agreed with and argued against her views. Ultimately, class participants came to recognize that non-Western child-rearing customs were represented as abnormal and in opposition to Western practices, which were presented as normative. Hermes enticed the class to follow alternative paths and to understand pedagogy and child care differently.

Significantly, Carolyn recognized that building a course "only around textbooks or scripted programs with a singular voice … provide[d] little motivation or personal meaning to [students] or teachers, simultaneously disengaging and disempowering both" (Myers & Kroeger, 2011, p. 298). In playfully tossing ideas back and forth and *layering*[2] their diverse pedagogical beliefs and practices, the students co-constructed a transcultural curriculum that acknowledged differences and even the productive clashing of cultural ideas. This process follows Nasir, Rosebery, Warren, and Lee (2006), who describe learning as "the acquisition throughout the life course of diverse repertoires of overlapping, complementary or even conflicting cultural practices" (p. 489). The students resisted Western ECE routes with fixed learning objectives, selected (and directed) class experiences, and assessments (Tyler, 1949) relating to child developmental discourses. Choosing alternative curricular paths by incorporating their own cultural knowledge, the students increased their engagement and momentum and changed the direction of teaching and learning for the duration of the semester. Grumet (2012) wrote that curriculum is essentially "the collective story we tell … about our past, our present and our future" (p. 115).

Through her doctoral research, Carolyn wanted to examine how cultural differences might be understood and acknowledged in the Western ECE postsecondary curriculum. The seven immigrant educators she interviewed were all recent graduates of a Canadian ECE postsecondary program and were working in various early childhood settings. Believing it to be the most suitable methodology, she utilized a hermeneutic narrative approach that included listening to and recording the participants' autobiographical accounts, Carolyn met twice with each participant individually and documented their responses to questions relevant to school, culture, curriculum, and their immigrant experiences. This approach allowed her to open dialogue in the interviews through the sharing of life stories—real and imagined cultural narratives and philosophical ideas that point to the Self as a story.

During the interviews Carolyn offered each person a copy of Shaun Tan's[3] graphic novel *The Arrival* (2006)—a story of an immigrant's arrival in a new land—as a way to provoke ideas, questions, and dialogue. Participants were not asked specific questions about *The Arrival* but instead were invited to freely interpret Tan's illustrations relative to their own life experiences. Reading the transcriptions, Carolyn and Lisa recognized how the participants interpreted visual images and exercised their imagination to understand and situate themselves within a Western ECE curriculum.[4] The participants playfully exchanged—through spoken, written, and visual languages—diverse cultural ideas about pedagogy and child care as they interrogated Western pedagogical theories and practices. Drawing on the research transcriptions, we critically consider how immigrants refused a single, preplanned learning course and traversed multiple, uncharted curricular pathways.

Putting the Play Back in Curriculum

Gadamer (2004) wrote about *play* as a way to continue and transcend Kant's and Schiller's earlier work on aesthetic education—subjective meanings of play that dominate modern aesthetics and philosophy. We draw on Gadamer's concept of *spiel* (play)—"the mode of being of play" (p. 103) and its relation to the ontological experience of art—to see how it might also evoke individuals' interpretation of and engagement with curriculum. We want to understand how "holy play" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 104), or play in the purest sense, can enrapture, captivate, delight, and provoke an experience of curriculum in culturally diverse ECE classrooms. How does play, as Gadamer described it, play *out* in culturally diverse ECE classrooms? And how is the curriculum-as-*lived*—or a *living* curriculum, as

opposed to the curriculum-as-*planned* (Aoki, 2005b)—understood when observed through a cultural lens?

Wien (2008) explained emergent curriculum as running an unknown course: "its trajectory develops as a consequence of the logic of the problem, the particular connections that develop as participants bring their own genuine responses to the topic and collaboratively create the course to follow out of these multiple connections" (p. 5). Although similarities may exist, we do not refer to emergent (or generative) curriculum when we describe play as an experience *of* curriculum. We explore how meaning is co-constructed *between* players (or participants) when the focus shifts from the subjects and the curriculum to playing. In other words, what happens when players (participants) are *played* by play?

Citing work from scholars in the field of early childhood education and offering tangible classroom examples, we explain how contemporary reconceptualists (Cannella, 2002; Langford, 2010; Lenz Taguchi, 2008; Pacini-Ketchabaw; 2010; Rhedding-Jones, 2002; Ryan & Grieshaber, 2005) broaden our views of early childhood teacher education curriculum to include collaborating with and recognizing the individual and collective rights of all individuals. Attending to ideas of pedagogues, scholars, and theorists (Brown, 2010; Edmiston, 2008; Egan, 1997; Paley, 2004) who recognize the crucial role of play and imagination in curricular teaching and learning and as a "cultural activity" (Hennig & Kirova, 2012; Kirova, 2013) we ask: How do educators come to know the immigrant students we work with and how does this knowledge influence the curriculum we provide? What curricular boundaries did immigrant early childhood educators identify, create, and cross? And how might we imagine a transcultural curriculum in Canadian postsecondary ECE programs of studies?

Accordingly, we critically reflect on the research participants' ideas relevant to their lived experiences and how they envision curricula— teaching and learning in culturally diverse teacher education classrooms. Inviting intercultural polyphonic dialogue of "multiple voices" (Depalma, 2010) acknowledges differences and provokes an experience of learning fuelled by imaginative and playful interactions in postsecondary ECE settings. Educators and learners are interconnected through their co-construction of a vital and contextual transcultural curriculum. Such dialogue can potentially "world" the curriculum and create an early childhood teacher education program that points to and acknowledges difference, diversity, and individuality.

Discovering Boundaries and Unfamiliar Pathways: Immigrants' Experiences of Curriculum in Canadian ECE Postsecondary Classrooms

> Known as "a patron of roads and boundaries ... [and] for his swiftness and athleticism" (Leadbetter, 1997, para. 7),
> Hermes flies ahead of us and strategically sets up obstacles along the route to block our way. He positions himself at
> a fork in the path and impatiently waits and watches for our re/actions with playful anticipation.

In the research interviews, many participants described their relationships with others in the postsecondary classroom. Acting as mediators between their classmates and instructors, Ann and Sumiko said they assisted fellow students who hesitated, for cultural and language reasons, to participate in class discussions and ask questions about curricular assignments. Remembering how she herself did not speak openly in school in Manila, Ann explained that some immigrant students equated asking questions with "bothering" the teacher: "I took on like a surrogate role of … trying to explain what the assignments asking for.… [Students] were just very hesitant to go and ask the teacher and they kind of, I don't know, elected me as their spokesperson" (interview transcription, March 22, 2012, p. 16). Contrastingly, Tina, who grew up in Zimbabwe, explained how her relationships with instructors in Canadian classrooms supported and engaged her learning:

> What was important to me was getting into a class where I can interact with my instructor more. Because where we
> grow up, we never had friendly relationships with instructors. Like there were instructors and instructors, you know?
> But when I come here [to Canada] … the instructors, they make you feel comfortable with accepting us for who we
> were.... We had boundaries with our instructor, that's what I'm trying to say. But when I came here I can talk, I can ask
> from my instructor. I can tell them what I am thinking about my paper. (interview transcription, April 11, 2012, p. 21)

Jin expressed how the disruptive behaviours of other students distracted her: "I didn't like the environment in the classroom. It bothered me. I couldn't focus on schooling because teacher got disturbing and the whole class got disturbing" (interview transcription, April 14, 2012, p. 30). While explaining how "power play happens" (interview transcription, March 22, 2012, p. 20) between students and instructors, Ann commented: "Canadian students were quite disrespectful toward the teachers, which is very upsetting for me because like we sort of come from a culture where you respect your teachers and you respect your elders" (interview transcription, March 22, 2012, p. 12). Sumiko was surprised that "in Canada, students call a professor or instructor [by] their first name. Canadian students really

don't call them 'sir' or 'madam' or 'professor' [laughs]. Japan is different. Calling their first name is not acceptable at all" (interview transcription, April 24, 2012, p. 19).

Considering the participants' diverse ideas concerning student-teacher relationships, we recognize that our own past attempts to develop equal or co-partnerships with immigrant students—establishing first-name-basis relationships—created road blocks to their learning. Carolyn recalls when an Asian student bowed to her in class and said, "You are my teacher and I will always obey you," and her immediate response was to resist the commanding role the student was culturally accustomed to and wanting me to fill. But reflecting now on the experience, we understand that the student ascribed to a cultural idea of looking up to someone, being cared for, and having specific instructions/directions. Her concepts of "teacher" and "school" were culturally ingrained and situated in an authoritative framework. In later discussing their cultural and personal perspectives, Carolyn and the student built trust between them and came to a different understanding of their student/instructor relationship. Despite relational strains caused by conflicting cultural ideas, Wang (2004) stresses that efforts to "interact" rather than avoiding difficult encounters

> refuses the position of "either/or," addresses the tensions produced by "both/and" and utilizes the in-between interstices for cultivating new thoughts. Such passages, such a dialogue, such a cross-cultural inquiry, does not intend to achieve consensus but aims at a deeper and richer understanding of each, providing space for multiplicity and contraction which can further generate more singularity and more passages. (p. 16)

Describing "curriculum as community" and "curriculum as conversation," Doll (2002) explained that "experience needs to be reconstructed or transformed via public interaction which occurs in a community dedicated to both care and critique.… This community [is] democratic, and it [is] trustworthy" (p. 50). Accordingly, a Muslim participant, Fatima, described how cultural misunderstandings, augmented by a lack of community, care, and conversation among staff, negatively impacted her ability to teach children at her practicum site. Stressful relationships among co-workers and her sense of alienation led Fatima to remove her hijab in order to feel included and accepted at the childcare centre:

> If you are wearing a hijab, you are not part of that group. You know what I mean? They're not as friendly with you as they are with each other. I don't know what message the hijab passes on…. That's why I said it's not that important, let's take it off and work like other people. Why should I give myself headache? (interview transcription, April 12, 2012, p. 27)

Our wild dream of running with Hermes—the mythical story we imagine while writing this piece—momentarily distracts and interrupts our thinking. Surrendering to the fantasy, we envision ourselves on the path, but Hermes is nowhere in sight. We expect he is in the lead outplaying us (as always) or hiding in the woods nearby, and we anticipate his next trick with nervous curiosity. Hermes' games both amuse and frustrate us, as do memories of curricular obstacles we unknowingly created in postsecondary classrooms. As roadblocks stopped and detoured us on the running path, we recognize how the curriculum—understood as a boundary—interrupts and redirects teaching and learning. Familiar with Hermes' boundary-crossing experience and character, Hyde (1998) noted that the "trickster is the mythic embodiment of ambiguity and ambivalence, doubleness and duplicity, contradiction and paradox.… [The] trickster creates a boundary, or brings to the surface a distinction previously hidden from sight" (p. 7). In relating personal and cultural views to curricular topics, the participants and Carolyn crossed and created boundaries and ultimately found new, "previously hidden from sight" (Hyde, 1998, p. 7) ways to live and learn together. Although the participants identified numerous cultural differences relevant to early years pedagogy and child care, we focus here on specific boundaries related to curriculum structure and praxis that echoed among the participants and resonated with us.

Curriculum Structure—"Metal" Versus "Rubber Band" Frameworks

In her past teaching, Carolyn thought she was providing freedom to students by inviting them to make personal choices about assignment topics. She was surprised when immigrant learners resisted her invitation and instead requested structure, asking Carolyn to direct or tell them what topics to write about. Having a choice can be considered as a particular kind of structure, rather than an unstructured way of approaching teaching and learning, and sets up a false dichotomy. As another example, and relevant to our thinking in the paper overall, this lack of structure is often a charge placed against play that is highly internally organized and yet often dismissed as unstructured. Participant Jin used a metaphor about "metal" and "rubber" curricular boundaries to explain and compare the rigid curriculum in South Korean schools with the open-ended and flexible curricular frameworks in Canadian ECE teacher education courses (interview transcription, April 14, 2012, pp. 27–28):

> J: It's hard to see it … almost like you have a rubbers here [Canada] and you go there [to the] boundary and you can feel it.… But in Korea you have a really metal … things. You know it already before you go there, before you touch it, I know that's the place where I'm not supposed to go. You know what I'm saying? That's my metaphor.
>
> C: How was it when you came here [to Canada] and all of a sudden there's a rubber [curriculum] boundary—not a metal boundary?
>
> J: It was hard.

Fatima also described what it was like for her to make personal choices about assignments in Canadian ECE courses. In teacher-directed classrooms in Pakistan, Fatima was taught to memorize rather than to express her own ideas about curriculum topics:

> Back home it was like teacher was telling you everything, right? ... [W]hatever she's telling you, you have to write down and that's it. So in the beginning [of the Canadian ECE program] we were thinking, "Oh my God, how we going to do? Look at this work—the teacher's not telling us what to do and how to do" and we were really frustrated the first two months. (interview transcription, April 12, 2012, pp. 32–33)

Reading the transcriptions, we recognized that Carolyn's attempts to provide choice to what she thought was a "metal" curricular ECE framework was considered *too* flexible by some immigrants and interfered with their learning. Carolyn's Western assumptions about exercising freedom and democracy in the classroom were interpreted very differently by immigrant students.

Curricular Praxis—From the Postsecondary Classroom to the Field

The participants also noticed a gap between postsecondary teaching and field work. Tina explained that although her postsecondary instructors encouraged her to use natural materials in ECE settings, this practice was not permitted at the childcare facility where she worked—safety was the primary focus. While pointing to numerous scars on her limbs from childhood injuries and falls, Tina exclaimed, "I grew up in trees" (interview transcription, May 25, 2012, p. 54). Talking about her strong connection to the natural world, she described how her first math lessons were learned by counting rocks. Concerned about some Canadian children's removal from nature and outdoor playtime, as she observed it, Tina wanted to share her childhood experience of playing with stones at the childcare centre. She hesitated, however, knowing the activity would not be permitted due to safety regulations and fears of choking hazards:

> So they're trying to consider my view and they are also trying to consider the severities it brings, like you know? Like what *if* somebody swallows it? But I still think they should be allowed.... I want to plan that I'm going to teach my children today with rocks, but my director thinks it's not safe. But when we were in school we just discussed it but we never—people still feel that they're not given that opportunity to do it or people think they just have to do it in a Canadian way. (interview transcription, May 25, 2012, p. 60)

Ann also emphasized that although students asked questions in ECE practicum seminars concerning their field observations, the postsecondary instructors she encountered did not adequately explain the underlying reasons why some pedagogical practices are restricted because of provincial health and safety regulations: "There were lots of complaints of how things should be or how things should be better, but never the actual awareness that these things are done this way *because*" (interview transcription, May 4, 2012, p. 30). Referring to in-class discussions about Canadian pedagogical practices, Ann noted how postsecondary instructors "smooth things over" to save time in tightly packed curriculum courses: "I don't feel like there was closure [to the discussions]. It was almost like a shutdown … and then it made me realize that things are different [in Canada] (interview transcription, March 22, 2012, p. 14). For example, Ann said that a disagreement erupted between students in a health and nutrition class regarding the correct time to allow children to return to childcare centres following a chicken pox infection. The textbook said children can return after the contagious period passes when a skin rash is still visible. Ann and other immigrant students wholeheartedly disagreed, and explained that in their countries children stay at home until no pox marks are visible on the skin, as a courtesy to other children attending the program. When Carolyn asked Ann how the instructor handled the situation, she said the teacher "smoothed it over" and continued on with the lesson (field notes, March 22, 2012, p. 4).

Listening to Tina and Ann, we recognize how, in addition to crossing cultural boundaries and making sense of Canadian pedagogical practices very different to their own, immigrants identified and struggled with gaps between postsecondary ECE instruction and field work. Myers and Kroeger (2011) note that,

as any new meanings arise between individuals in classrooms, mutual understanding can be seen as a journey through a journey landscape populated with prior meanings. As such, teachers and students … "experience varying degrees of tension or conflict between and among prior and new understandings" (Edmiston, 2005, p. 57) as they come to act. (p. 298)

Acknowledging these existing strains caused by colliding cultural and curricular differences, Aoki (2005b) stressed that the "pedagogic situation is a living in tensionality—a tensionality that emerges, in part, from the indwelling in a zone between two curriculum worlds: the worlds of curriculum-as-*plan* and curriculum-as-*lived*-experiences" (p. 159). Entering Aoki's "zone of between" means learning to dwell in tension and live with rather than erase differences, because "it is the difference that really matters … not so much the elimination of the differences, but, more so, the attunement of the quality of the tensionality of differences that makes a difference" (2005a, p. 354). Buckreis (2012) emphasizes that "tension also begets transformation. From tension comes imaginative insight and the impetus to move forward" (p. 279). Avoiding or restricting discussions about differing cultural and pedagogical ideas can shut down and interrupt learning in postsecondary classes. Tension also exists in some childcare facilities when staff must negotiate and apply health and safety regulations—friction that is (or not) created when regulations are taken up within some centres. The discursive power of particular regulations and the authoritative power of parents and educators can deaden rather than incite playfulness.

We envision the participants' curricular path as an obstacle course with boundaries to cross, bridges to build, and meandering, intersecting routes to navigate—very different than the "singular … circular track" of learning Rhedding-Jones (2002, p. 93) described. This wild, imagined topography, however, creates a perfect playscape for Hermes' escapades and games.

> Playing with, rather than being trapped by, in-between, a space of one's own bends itself to let go and spirals up to reach beyond. Either/or is replaced by doubling, in-between is folded by netting, and both/and leads to another unexplored path. (Wang, 2004, p. 150)

Running a Course With Hermes: Playful Interpretations of ECE Curriculum-as-Lived

> *Hermes enjoys distracting and slowing our progress on the path. The back and forth, the slow pace, the endless route, and the struggle all contribute to his game. "Now, it is not the function of ... hermeneutics to put an end to those games ... its function is to keep the games in play, to awaken us to the play, to keep us on the alert.... If there is anything that we learn in ... hermeneutics it is that we never get the better of the flux" (Caputo, 1987, p. 258). Despite the challenges of navigating uncharted paths, we increase our pace, welcome Hermes' nudges, and continue to run.*

Similar to running, *play* is etymologically defined as "quick motion; recreation, exercise, any brisk activity … [and an] activity of children" (Douglas Harper, 2015). Play theorists and educators cannot actually agree on a definition of play; it is easily recognized but not so easily defined. The ludic phenomenon is elusive because it is fluid and dynamic, so that almost anything can be construed as play depending on how we frame it. Working as a preschool teacher years ago, Carolyn remembers how, in often chaotic classrooms— oblivious to noise and disruptions around them—children would become lost in play. Moving into the play "zone" and imaginary worlds provided ways for young learners to sort out complicated ideas and cope with tensions. Educator and play advocate Vivian Paley (2004) reminds us that "the more complex the thought, the greater is the child's need to view its meaning through play and find the characters and situations that bring ideas to life" (p. 57). Linking Paley's (1992; 2004) ideas about children's play to adults, the research participants interpreted conflicting and complex ideas through playful exchanges.

Gadamer (2004) explains that the "to-and-fro" movement of play (*speil*) "has no goal that brings it to an end; rather, it renews itself in constant repetition. The movement backward and forward is … central to … play [so] that it makes no difference who or what performs this movement" (p. 104). Moreover, when instructors and learners are "being-played" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 106) such that "play draws [them] into its dominion and fills [them] with its spirit" (p. 109), it is play itself—not the curriculum, topic, or text—that directs learners and learning. In other words, the focus shifts from the students, their curricular learning and "subjective reflection" to the "mode of being of play" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 103)—to being played by play. From the perspective of Gadamer's (2004) idea of the "primacy of play over the consciousness of the player" (p. 105), the players are merely the way the play comes into presentation.

How Did the Research Participants Play?

But how might play, as Gadamer's notion of play, play out relative to the curriculum in culturally diverse ECE contexts? Recognizing its oscillating motion—*play as movement*—Tan's visual poetics provoked playful dialogic exchanges in the research interviews. Interpreting

Tan's visual imaginary world in relation to our lived experiences and tossing written and dialogic ideas "to-and-fro," we came to understand how a "curriculum [fuelled by play] … tends to take on a life of its own" (Paley, 2004, p. 49). As such, the participants and Carolyn communicated in and through multimodal languages. This motion was again observed when immigrants sent ideas back and forth to each other on sticky notes they placed between pages of Carolyn's copy of *The Arrival*. The participants told stories and created their own tales about Tan's characters, moving between real and imaginary worlds as they related experiences depicted in the graphic novel to their own lives. For example, remembering how she had hoped for educational opportunities for herself and her children in Canada, Fatima said that Tan's image of white birds flying over the ship represents hope:

> The pictures are a little bit brighter and the birds are flying and the people are pointing at the birds. And some are looking up … to me, it seems like there's still hope.… Like this man—his eyes are sparkling and hopeful and he doesn't look that worried. He might be a student or might be someone who came for studies, professional worker or skilled worker or something.… Yeah, when I came I was happy and excited to go, but more I was worried and anxious and scared where I'm going, how I'm going to do, what if my money finishes—things like that. (interview transcription, September 3, 2012, p. 69)

Remembering school experiences both in their homeland and in postsecondary classrooms in Canada, and experiencing tensions from differences and painful memories, the participants entered a "zone between" curriculum worlds and played with diverse pedagogical ideas. Wang's (2004) "pedagogy of suffering, love and play" considers the role of play in "soften[ing] the edge of conflicts" (p. 163). In multicultural adult classes, "playing with differences and contradictions is not merely to make learning interesting, but also to touch upon new ground, to experiment with new ideas, and to reconstruct the world in a different way" (Wang, 2004, p. 164).

Figure 1. "Some are looking up... it seems like there's still hope" (Fatima, transcription, September 3, 2012, p.69)

Figure 2. Fatime related her Self to Tan's characters.

The participants imagined and dreamt about the future—what they hoped for themselves and the ECE field. In juxtaposing their own pedagogical knowledge with relative Western beliefs in playful, imaginative ways, the educators thought differently about the gaps and intersections of curricular topics. For example, although emergent curriculum approaches were taught in her postsecondary ECE classes, Jin observed rote teaching and regulated programming in the preschool where she currently teaches—generic curriculum themes which were planned and repeated each year. Jin noted that the program was geared to satisfy parents, and the "cookie-cutter" (interview transcription, April 14, 2012, p. 41) craft projects were embellished by educators to improve the children's work and ensure quality "products." This rationale is powerful, and it takes much energy and discussion to talk back to and shift these related discursive practices. Although Jin did not always agree with the teaching practices she observed, she welcomed the opportunity to explore, play with, and learn different pedagogical approaches. Thus, she formulated her own philosophy of teaching and believes that practical experiences will develop her skills and curricular ideas. Jin explained: "I was very surprised because even though my school are not so many different

culture … teachers who is in our classroom … they still following up the cookie-cutter curriculum because they have to be safe for their job, that's my understanding" (interview transcription, April 14, 2012, p. 41). Referring to "safe" curriculum planning, Cannella (2002) stressed:

> Rather than "What do I do on Monday?" we might ask questions concerning the construction of new discourses, the role of power relationships in our reconceptualizations, the elimination of boundaries between resistance, research, and practice.… Perhaps our collaborations with younger human beings will lead us and our preservice teachers to new conceptualizations of what to do on Monday … perhaps actions would not be predetermined. (p. 171)

Situating the Self in the liminal space did not mean participants found their position on a straight learning path and progressed toward "enlightened" Western ECE ideologies; rather, just the opposite. Buckreis (2012) reminds us of the complexity of the in-between, noting that these spaces "must be looked upon as multi-dimensional, entertaining theories and ideas whose complex intersections and disjunctions cannot be cleanly or clearly defined. [In-between] spaces are contextual, temporal, subjective, fluid and ever changing" (p. 277). Doll (1993) explained that what is indeterminate, playful, and chaotic and unstable can also have order: "From the richness of this milieu comes an order which transforms both ourselves and itself" (p. 288). Although unpredictable, playing with ideas expressed in multiple language modalities enabled us to "try on" or switch roles and to imagine and understand differences—conflicting and otherwise—from the others' perspective. Becoming lost in play during the interviews resulted in Carolyn acknowledging complexities and dissimilarities and giving up control—allowing play itself to direct our inquiry and learning.

Gadamer (2004) noted that although play is not serious to the player, "play itself contains its own, even sacred, seriousness" (p. 102). Contrary to the notion of play as frivolous activities reserved only for children, the research transcriptions point to the "holy" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 104) nature and the crucial role of play in adult learning. Huizinga (1949) wrote:

> Play lies outside the antithesis of wisdom and folly, and equally outside those of truth and falsehood, good and evil. Although it is a nonmaterial activity it has no moral function. The valuations of vice and virtue do not apply here. (p. 6)

Imagining postsecondary ECE classrooms as *playgrounds,* instructors and students as *players*, and learning as active and *in motion,* we wonder how taking play seriously might transform curricular planning, teaching, and learning.

Imagining Transcultural ECE Curricular Paths in the Postsecondary Classroom

> *Suddenly the path seems strangely familiar. We recognize the landscape and sense we have run here before. Has Hermes led us full circle back to where we began? T.S. Elliot (1943) wrote that "what we call the beginning is often the end. And to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from"* (lines 206–227).

Similar to the twisting trails and uncharted paths we traversed with Hermes, following a transcultural curriculum involved risk and moved us (and the participants) off safe, predictable routes into thick, thorny brambles that grew off the beaten track. However, these unexpected excursions provoked curiosity, imagination, and playful explorations that energized us and extended our learning. Discovering how to journey together despite the tension of conflicting cultural and curricular ideas eventually pointed us to familiar territory—specifically, to reflect on our life experiences and our Self. Travelling forward and back, we now envision the curriculum as a "circular track" (Rhedding-Jones, 2002, p. 93), and traversing it as both a hermeneutic and ontological journey. Smith (2006) explains:

> The curriculum must address real human issues and problems connected hermeneutically to the lives of the students; and the teleological purpose of learning must not be determined in advance of its creative engagement, or at least its given auspices must be held up for regular reexamination. Perhaps above all, pedagogical living in the classroom oriented to peace operates in the tension between completion and incompletion, between knowing and what is yet-to-be-revealed. Such is the foundation of hope. (p. 98)

A recent study by Canadian education scholars notes that remarkable similarities exist between national and international ECE curricula/frameworks—including the troubling, "pervasive sense that 'one size fits all'" (Arias de Sanchez, Dorion, & Gabriel, 2012, p. 43). For example, the Alberta ECE curriculum framework is modelled after the New Brunswick ECE curriculum, despite the historical, sociocultural, and geographical differences that shape the unique pedagogical and childcare beliefs and practices in the two provinces. Remembering how immigrant participants interpreted the curriculum in the context of their own life stories, we recognize that the "local cultural values and beliefs" (Arias de Sanchez et al., 2012, p. 43) of *all* learners must be accounted for within frameworks of learning.

We believe that removing "metal" boundaries (as Jin described) or strict controls and inviting intercultural polyphonic dialogue allows for shared ownership of a curriculum that aligns with individual and collective experiences of all learners—instructors and students. Wang (2004) reminds us that

> a curriculum with rich initial beginnings, multiple perspectives, open-ended inquiries, and recursive looping structures (Doll, 1993) encourages students to … play with boundaries…. Within, between, and among teacher, student, and text, multiple layers of conflicting doubling complicate the tales of curriculum along the borders in its movement with the stranger. (p. 178)

We imagine a transcultural curriculum as a narrative—a *mythic* story—including curricular topics layered with the cultural beliefs, life experiences, dreams, imaginings, and pedagogical knowledge that learners and instructors offer. Moving away from a predetermined, compartmentalized "metal"-framed curriculum—purposely constructed to guard and protect Western cultural tradition—and allowing for Egan's (1997) "mythic understanding"[5] we imagine the curriculum as "a set of great stories" and "teachers as the storytellers of our culture" (p. 64). But how are these "great stories" interpreted, and transformed, when told by multiple storytellers of diverse cultures? Kazmi (1990) challenges educators to "design a curriculum which would locate education in one tradition and yet make it open to other traditions … to design a curriculum that is *particularistic* and *universal* at the same time" (p. 294).

Recently, Langford (2010) called for providing time to reflect and engage in critical thinking and dialogue about curricular topics in early childhood adult education classrooms. Ryan and Grieshaber (2005) offer strategies that situate the Self, identities, and knowledge of preservice early childhood educators through multiple readings and interpreting visual images. Prochner, Cleghorn, Kirova, and Massing (2014) pay "particular attention … to tensions arising from 'cultural clashes' between euro-centric course contents and students' personal cultural knowledge and beliefs about what is 'good for children' and what constitutes professional early childhood practice" (p. 24). Rhedding-Jones (2002) emphasizes that in taking up a political strategy, educators, scholars, theorists, and curriculum writers "undo" ECE texts—including curricula—through ongoing critical reflection and writing. She suggests that "we need to be able to critically see and critically hear what we ourselves are not doing, not saying and not writing for the benefit of local minorities" (p. 111). Pointing to the ideas of these ECE reconceptualist scholars and drawing on our research findings, we stress that allowing time and opportunities for imagination and play within the curriculum framework are crucial to supporting teaching and learning in culturally diverse adult education classrooms. This includes valuing diverse pedagogical and cultural ideas and inviting critical and playful exploration of curricular texts and topics relative to the players. Although "learning through play" is observed in many childcare centres, preschools, and kindergartens, play is too often restricted and replaced by academic instruction (Beresin, 2014; Frost, 2010). If play is at risk in children's settings, we might also consider how it is observed and included in postsecondary education contexts. Some adults equate play with children's *work*—or amusements long forgotten in their past. Paley (2002) reminds us that "play is the original, open-ended and integrated curriculum. It is the pathway to learning in which differences are valued and rewarded because they enhance the creative potential of the imagination" (p. 136).

Importantly, we recognize how Gadamer's notion of play (*spiel*) relates to the "to-and-fro" movement of dialogue, interpretation, and phronesis[6] relative to the curriculum as well as to the ontology of the work of art. Recognizing its unpredictable nature, we know we cannot plan or '*do*' play. Play "happens to us over and above our wanting and doing" (Gadamer, 2004, p. xxvi). However, remembering that play "renews itself in constant repetition" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 104), we watch for playful interactions in the classroom and provide time and innovative ways within the framework of the curriculum to let play *be*, to nurture and support it when we observe it unfolding. As teacher educators, we might also attempt to create movement—the back and forth action characteristic of play—both in how and what we teach. Knowing that play will be enacted according to the players, when we are introduced to a new class we can ask: How will I play with *this* particular group of students?

Jardine, Friesen, and Clifford (2006) wrote about "play and abundance" (p. 57)—exploring curricular paths and "worlds whose abundance goes beyond our own agency and knowledge and experience" (p. 58). This research has opened up abundant possibilities and investigations for us. Our fictional story about running with Hermes along forest paths ran parallel to our real-life research experience. Through wild dreams and imaginative thinking, we came to understand differently the unpredictable interruptions, fast and slow pace, and circular movement of interpretive research. Like all interpretive inquiries, Hermes has led us on paths that circle back and continue around—routes we had not imagined. The study, and Hermes, have heightened our awareness of how cultural difference and playful imaginings invite different interpretations of an ECE postsecondary curriculum. We remember many years ago when our neighbourhood friends would knock at our door and ask: "Will you come out and play?" Our invitation to run with Hermes on transcultural curricular paths—to imagine, *play*, and live the curriculum "story"—begs a response from you, dear Reader.

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[1] This paper draws from a broader doctoral study, *The Space-in-between: Ontology and the Place of Curriculum in the Culturally Diverse Post-Secondary Early Childhood Education Classroom*, which investigates how immigrant educators' own values and predispositions often live in tension with Western curricular models and particularly conceptions of childhood and early learning. Such curricular frameworks serve to situate culturally diverse educators ontologically through the process of meaning making.

[2] We elaborate on how layering narratives and cultural discourses disrupts Western ECE theory and praxis in Bjartveit and Panayotidis (2014b).

[3] We would like to thank Shaun Tan and Lothian Books / Hachette Australia for permission to reproduce images from *The Arrival* (2006).

[4] In Bjartveit and Panayotidis (2014a), we expand more fully on how the research participants translated their immigrant experiences through imagining and interpreting illustrations in Tan's graphic novel.

[5] Mythic understanding is a prelinguistic understanding of the world that comes into being through language development. As Egan (1997) explained, the "educational implication of Mythic understanding, then, is that young children be encouraged to become fluent and effective users of varied language … developing capacities for forming binary oppositions and mediating them, for abstract thinking, metaphor, rhythm and narrative, images, stories and affective meaning, humor, and no doubt a number of other capacities language development implies" (pp. 68–69).

[6] A phronetic approach to teaching, praxis, and research requires value judgments about the experiences of educators and students, and researchers and participants, and raises questions such as: "Where are we going? Is this desirable? What should be done? Who gains and who loses; by which mechanisms of power?" (Flyvberg, 2001, p. 60).

Negotiating Consent: Neoliberalism and the Politics of Conducting Research With Young Children

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This paper explores the dynamics of negotiating entrance into a research site located in Ontario and provides critical insights about how dominant neoliberal discourses informed processes of acquiring consent to conduct research with young children and interactions between a school board's research advisory committee and the researcher. The paper highlights the ways in which neoliberal entanglements operated in complex and contradictory ways that drew on, asserted, and reinscribed a myriad of dominant discourses operating within education through sanctioned and officiated language and processes. Moreover, the paper explores the multiple meanings of these entanglements, the practices they produce, and how they can shape researcher reflexivity.

Keywords: curriculum; hermeneutics; play (spiel); teacher education; transcultural

Gaining entrance into a research site can be a complex process for researchers as they navigate through a difficult array of logistics, unexpected delays, and complex interactions with the people and places they seek to research. For the education researcher carrying out ethnographic work in contexts where young children learn, these experiences are compounded not only by having to be granted ethical approval at their institutions (i.e., university tri-council ethics approval) but also at the level of school board, day care, ECE association, and so on. These multiple levels and layers of bureaucracy can demonstrate some very strong contrasts in institutional agendas, cultures, and discourses that require sophisticated navigation, thoughtful observance, and effective response. Although these processes and experiences are often significant and telling, once the researcher has established entrance into the research site, they tend to be forgotten as the business of doing research becomes the focus of the researcher's efforts and attention.

The consent and entrance process this paper reports on could very well have become yet another undocumented series of events and encounters left unexamined had it not been for the interesting failure of the project that was to be carried out post-consent, but never was. This interesting failure has given me a great deal to think about over the past six years, and this paper provides an opportunity to share intricate entanglements that informed and shaped what ultimately led to a research project being unfulfilled. To this end, this paper explores the dynamics of negotiating entrance into a research site and provides critical insights about how dominant neoliberal discourses informed processes of acquiring consent to conduct research and interactions between a board of education's research advisory committee and the researcher. These insights are significant to qualitative researchers and research given that Lincoln and Tierney (2004) have found that research review processes have become exceedingly riddled by institutional protectionism and a mistrust of and lack of understanding about qualitative methodologies and models. These authors have noted how anxiety about these forms of research have simultaneously increased along with the regulatory functions of research review boards. Multiple case studies of projects that have been denied, abandoned, significantly modified, and/or have experienced inordinate delays and repeated cycles of revisions fully demonstrate how "the interests of the institution (whatever they are) are more important than the interests of fostering sound research" (Lincoln & Tierney, 2004, p. 230). This paper seeks to critically question and explicate the "whatever" and therefore attempts to highlight the ways in which neoliberal entanglements operate in complex and contradictory ways that inform a school board research advisory committee's decision making as it draws on, asserts, and reinscribes a myriad of dominant discourses operating within education through sanctioned and officiated language and processes. Moreover, the paper explores the multiple meanings of these neoliberal entanglements, the practices they produce, and how they can shape researcher reflexivity. The complex negotiation of neoliberal entanglements is also explored in terms of the limitations and possibilities they create for the researcher attempting to work within contexts where young children learn.

Theoretical Perspectives

To make sense of and attempt to explore the Gordian knot of arrangements that informed the consent and entrance process documented in this paper, it is essential to formulate and work from a pastiche of theoretical perspectives often associated with reconceptualist theorizing (Iannacci & Whitty, 2009). Although the research project being discussed was framed and informed by sociocultural theory and critical lenses, the subsequent analysis provided in this paper also draws on and border-crosses poststructuralist and postcolonial thinking to help make sense of the ways in which neoliberalisms operated within processes and language authorized by a research advisory board. The goal is to critically examine neoliberal-informed entanglements holistically but with attention to the particularities of context and the ways in which this context was shaped by neoliberal doctrine. To this end, sociocultural perspectives that conceptualize language use and literacy events as social practices that are socially mediated are drawn on to develop this analysis. Language and literacy are therefore not understood as merely the use or acquisition of a code, but also, and more importantly, of a culture. Practices and policies that comprise research consent processes should therefore be understood as a particular set of cultural events in need of critical examination with an eye toward uncovering what people in various contexts appropriate as they encounter codes, practices, procedures, and policies, as well as the impact of this appropriation. As such, critical perspectives (critical, poststructuralist, postcolonial) are also drawn upon throughout this paper because they are focused on how domination takes place and the ways in which human relations are shaped by this domination. Such a stance positions language, practice, and policy as cultural constructions that produce rather than merely transmit knowledge within uneven relations of power. The colonial underpinnings of language, practice, and policy are seen as in need of being uncovered to dispel the idea of singular truths, grand narratives, and taken-for-granted discourses in order to "splinter the dogmatism of a single tale" (Grumet, 1988 as cited in Miller, 1998, p. 149). What is referred to as "critical" in all its theoretical manifestations is therefore a hypernym used to describe "culture, language and participation as issues of power in need of critique with the intent of emendation or alteration in the direction of social justice and participatory democracy" (Moss, 2004, p. 363). Being critical is therefore not an exercise in critique for critique's sake, but rather a way of understanding what was, what is, and what can be in ways that develop, rather than diminish, equity.

These perspectives are in keeping with reconceptualist orientations that seek to destabilize taken-for-granted grand narratives, deconstruct the contextual and therefore political, socioeconomic specificities that inform discourses that inform these grand narratives, and then reconceptualize future ways of being and doing informed by this analytic interpretative process characterized by Ricouer (1992) as a threefold mimesis. Contributors to reconceptualist-oriented research, theory, and practice in ECE such as Gaille Cannella (1997), Ridika Viruru (2003), and, from a Canadian perspective, Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw (2011) and Pam Whitty (2009) understand "truths" as plural and unstable and draw on a pastiche of theoretical perspectives to "destabilize some of the dominant discourses and conceptualizations plaguing ECE and children" (Iannacci & Whitty, 2009). These perspectives are particularly significant to this paper and have been important to my work in general because they have allowed for a necessary rejection of dogma and unquestioned ontologies that have ultimately prevented a deeper understanding of lived experience.

The aforementioned framing informs pluralized understandings of neoliberalism conceptualized and demonstrated in this paper. Like other actors examined in reconceptualist-focused work, neoliberalism is understood not as a singular fixed entity, but rather as an inextricably intertwined coalescing of multiple discourses operating within a satellite of other dominant discourses. Contexts, culture, and temporality can bring forward certain forms and permeations of neoliberalism, but naming these incarnations as definitively neoliberal ceases to capture the totality of what is ultimately an array of economic, sociopolitical, and sociocultural phenomena that demonstrate how neoliberalism has shifted and expanded well past its original legacy of privatization, deregulation, and social provision reduction (Harvey, 2005) to become a way of knowing and being. As such, neoliberalism is not solely a way of organizing economics but rather a "technology of power" (Krasovec, 2013, p. 63) that is both epistemic and ontological. With respect to education, for example, it seeks to organize not only the value of education but rather what education is valued, valuable, and worth investing in. By extension, knowledge and human capital become commodities and commodified in particular ways that systematically herald corporate and hypercapitalist values and beliefs while marginalizing critical and emancipatory perspectives positioned as undesirable barriers to standardized and instrumentalist approaches to learning, knowledge, and education/educating. Neoliberalism is therefore a social, cultural, economic, political, epistemological, and ontological project and a "utopia; that is … [a] 'fiction' in the epistemological sense" (Nerlich, 2013). These broadened and nuanced conceptualizations of neoliberalism are commensurate with perspectives offered in a neoliberalism-focused issue of *Canadian Children* (see Vol. 39. No. 1). This paper seeks to add to these perspectives while exploring the tensions, contradictions, and complexities inherent in the consent process the researcher experienced, while theorizing the ways in which neoliberalisms undergirded these processes and experiences. This discussion is especially significant because the paper demonstrates how many tools, strategies, and instruments of neoliberalism (e.g., fear, control, power, language, accountability, centralization, decentralization, and the suppression of diversity) all manifest within decisions and processes meant to foster knowledge rather than limit and surveil it.

Methodology

The project utilized critical narrative research (CNR) as a form of ethnography, and this process of knowledge formation is applied to the research consent and entrance process being critically examined in this paper as well. The content of critical narrative inquiry frequently border-crosses a variety of theoretical orientations that are postcolonial and poststructuralist in nature (Burdell & Swadener, 1999). CNR can be conceptualized as an expression of or form of ethnography that places the "the self within a social context ... [and is] both a method and a text" (Burdell & Swadener, p. 22). The methodology borrows from ethnographic traditions and uses methods closely aligned with ethnography while being aware of and attempting to combat the colonial underpinnings that have traditionally plagued ethnographic practices. The use of the term *critical* is therefore also used purposefully to signal CNR as an "explicitly political project" (Burdell & Swadener, 1999, p. 21) that resists colonial traditions of inquiry that have constructed identities, the Other, and phenomena in general as unified. In contrast, CNR is concerned with uncovering the subtleties, complexities, and biases that come with representing culture (Clair, 2003). As such, multivocality, the questioning of previous assumptions of empirical authority, and the interrogation of the construction of subjectivity (Burdell & Swadener, 1999) are extremely salient to CNR.

As previously mentioned, all of the above framing is relevant to and informs the threefold mimesis that data offered in this paper underwent. This mimesis is realized through a process of construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction or reconceptualization that presents, discusses, and critically examines what was, what is, and what can be in an attempt to essentially highlight ethical issues researchers encounter when meta-narratives such as neoliberalism influence and alter their research. This influence is specifically explored in relation to the "interlinked entities" (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010) and entanglements this researcher encountered as he negotiated a research consent and entrance process. Narrative researchers have long recognized the importance of and the need to negotiate the entrance process carefully and methodically (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). However, as previously mentioned, although this process is extremely important, it is underrepresented in research documentation. More specifically relevant to and focused on in this paper are the ways in which socio/political/economic discourses, dispositions, and doctrines such as neoliberalism organize how the consent process is carried out and the outcomes that result due to this organization. Data presented in this paper, such as email communication, recorded and transcribed voice mail and phone conversations, and documentation such as university ethics protocols, school board applications to conduct research (at various stages of the consent process), and letters from the school board research advisory committee, are drawn on to create the constructed narrative offered in the next section (Data: A Negotiation Story). Discussion of this data and a critical examination of the complexities offered within the narrative are subsequently offered to illustrate entanglements and possibilities inherent in negotiating consent in contexts deeply entrenched in neoliberal ways of seeing, being, and doing.

Data: A Negotiation Story

In an attempt to begin an ethnography at the beginning of a school year, I submitted an application to conduct research in a particular board of education in mid-September. Because the research advisory committee of this board met once at the end of each month (and not in the summer), I waited to hear back from the committee at the end of September as to their decision. The original title of the project as written in the proposal was "An Exploration of Literacy Curricula Provided to Students Receiving Specialized Programming." The stated purpose of the study was to examine the continuum of literacy practices made available to kindergarten to grade 4 students receiving various forms of specialized programming (e.g., English as a second language, special education) within schools over a two-year period. The research was to address how the diverse learning needs of young children identified as ELL (English language learners) and learners with special needs or identified as having a learning disability can be responded to as they transition from kindergarten to the junior grades. Terms such as *specialized programming* and *literacy curricula* were used throughout the proposal and within identified research questions, such as the following:

- What literacy practices and events are made available to K-grade 4 students receiving specialized programming within school settings (ESL and special education)?
- In what ways are these literacy practices reflective of multiliteracies perspectives?
- How does the continuum of literacy practices students encounter address their assets and needs as they transition from kindergarten into the junior grades?
- What "identity options" (Cummins, 2001) do students receiving specialized programming encounter and negotiate as a result of literacy curricula assigned to them?
- What forms of literacy curricula effectively respond to these students' assets and needs?

In October I received a call from the chair of the advisory board asking me to contact her. During our subsequent phone conversation,

she explained that the proposal had been rejected over concerns about the use of the terms *curricula/curriculum* and *learners with special needs*. The committee felt that the word *curriculum* invoked understandings of my role in the schools as someone who would monitor and surveil teachers' ability to "deliver" the Ontario standardized curriculum. Further, the committee had concerns that I would monitor and surveil the degree to which students' IEPs (individual educational plans) were being followed (i.e., if accommodations and/or modifications identified in the IEP were in fact being provided for students with special needs or students formally identified as exceptional through the identification placement review committee [IPRC] process). I was confused by these concerns and fears because the surveillance and monitoring of standardized curriculum was not remotely what I was interested in or what the proposal identified as a focus of the study (as I explained to the chair of the committee). At this point in the conversation I articulated the definition of curriculum that I (and many others) operate from: that is, seeing curriculum not as a document, but rather as a dialogue (Routman, 2000). I restated what was in the proposal by stressing that I was working socioculturally and critically and within that framework I saw curricula as the interactions or transactions that happen between teachers and students within a particular context. The "curriculum" was therefore composed of or shaped by the activities, events, practices, materials, and decisions made within a particular space negotiated among teachers, students, and the environment in relation to its particularities and specificities. The culture created in the classroom by all of these factors constituted the development of the "lived curriculum" (Aoki, 1993), which is, again, what the focus of the initial research proposal explicitly stated it was examining. I also reiterated that monitoring IEP delivery was of no interest or use to me or the project. Further, I explained that as a former special education teacher in Ontario, I was aware that I was not actually allowed to view information provided in the IEP or any other document found in the Ontario school record (OSR) because legally, very few people who actually work within a school and with a specific student are permitted to view these documents. This concern was curious to me because there wasn't any mention of IEPs in my proposal. In addition, "learners with special needs" would be students whom I would recognize within the study as those students receiving some form of programming that responded to their learning needs beyond regular classroom programming. My inclusion of these students in the study would therefore not be contingent on any official documents or designations that I would not be privy to.

Despite this explanation, I was asked by the research advisory committee chair to make changes to my proposal and resubmit it. The changes would require the removal of the word curriculum because the chair felt that the committee would continue to have concerns with the term and would see it as synonymous with official ministry curriculum documents and therefore remain concerned that the project would focus on measuring the degree to which official documents were being delivered. Further, I would need to make explicit that I would not require IEP data. I was also asked to ensure that I would be selecting students for the study based on my observations with respect to their programming rather than official identifications. Again, these concerns and changes presupposed that all students receiving additional programming would have an identified exceptionality and/or an IEP and that I would have access to this information.

In an effort to move the project forward, I made the requested changes and sent the revised proposal and related materials (altered information/consent letters for administrators, teachers, and parents) to the committee by the time they met again at the end of November. Due to the requested changes, the nature of the proposal changed. The title, for example, became very different, as did the rest of the material in the proposal so that it reflected the shift in the title and quelled the research advisory committee's concerns over the use of the word curriculum. The project was now titled "An Exploration of Literacy Support Provided to Students Receiving Specialized Programming." Any mention of curriculum or curricula was removed and language that appeased concerns about IEP data was also added. The research questions I identified reflected these changes in focus and wording, which in turn shifted the project's clarity, focus, and meaning.

In late November I received a recorded voice mail from the chair advising me that the proposal had yet again been rejected despite my having made the revisions I was asked to make. Although the committee "loved the revisions," the chair articulated that there were other "stumbling blocks" to carrying out this research. The committee now had concerns over the phrase *specialized programming* because they felt it signalled and was linked to "learners with special needs." The committee feared that this language gave or could give the impression to parents and teachers that I was in the schools to monitor IEPs in place for students or to monitor whether students who did not have an IEP should. Further, the concern was that such language implied that I would focus and report on whether accommodations or modifications for students with special needs identified in the IEP were "in place." To ensure that there were no misconceptions, I was asked to once again revise the language I was using. A letter sent to me shortly after this phone call by the chair restated what she had articulated over the phone:

> The committee now understands that IEP data will not be required for your study and that your research design allows for you, as a participant observer, to identify students you perceive as having special needs.

> The use of the phrase 'receiving specialized programming' or even 'special needs' in the context of the School Board

implies that an IEP is in place for a student, or that an IEP is in the process of being created for a student. Another implication is that the student is receiving accommodations or modifications to programming based on the content of their IEP. None of these conditions will be in place for the students in your study and the use of the phrase 'receiving specialized programming' is incorrect in this context.

The Committee will reconsider your proposal if you would like to revise the focus to an exploration of literacy *curricula provided to students in the primary grades. This would mean that the words 'receiving specialized programming' would have to be removed from the title of the study consent forms and from the first paragraph of each information letter / consent form.

*The word curricula included in the letter was later clarified by the chair via email as a "typo resulting from a secretary writing the letter of decision based on the original, unrevised application." As such, the word programming was to be used as per the first revisions that were requested and made.

With this new information in mind, I set out to once again revise the proposal. I sent an email to the chair to clarify which language/ phrasing would not be of concern to the committee. From this email and the letter, I then made changes that once again shifted the clarity and focus of the proposal. The new title and phrasing used throughout the proposal (as agreed upon over the phone and through email communication with the committee chair) was as follows: "An Exploration of Literacy Programming in the Primary Grades."

Because the committee "would not be in favour of" and "asked for the removal of references to 'special needs students,'" language that described the students in my study shifted to "diverse learners' assets and needs." Given these requested changes in language, the purpose of the research as identified in the (once again) revised proposal was to identify literacy support that "responds to diverse learners' assets and needs." I made these changes and sent them back to the committee by mid-December.

In mid-January I received a letter stating that the project was now approved. The letter also stated that the committee had "approved the project for the following schools" (two schools were identified). I was surprised by this particular practice because previous research I conducted with other boards of education enabled me to negotiate which particular schools I would conduct research in. In this instance the schools were named as part of the consent process. The approval letter went on to state that I was to "contact the school principals for further discussion and share this letter with any staff member who asks for clarification of approval to conduct research." The operative phrase here was "further discussion." I assumed that the principals of the named schools were contacted by the research advisory committee chair and I sent my approved proposal via email to give them a sense of the project. I was mistaken. When I contacted the school principals (in person and over the phone) it was clear that they had not received any materials from the chair and had no understanding of the project. Further, they demonstrated their hesitancy in participating in the study by questions they asked about whether they had to participate. Because they had only received communication from the board stating that I had been approved to conduct research in their school and that I would be contacting them, it appeared as if the study was yet another thing they were being told to do rather than something they could decide to participate in or not.

In the end, I did not in fact gain entrance into either of the schools I was asked to approach, and the study never happened. Although confidentiality issues also informed why entrance was not gained (some of my own students were placed in the two schools), a lack of understanding about the project was a major factor that ensured its failure. I realized that I would have to use what I learned from this experience in the future when attempting to gain consent to do research in schools within this board.

A couple of years later, I once again developed a proposal to gain access into a school within this same school board of education. I applied what I learned while developing the proposal and it was approved in its first iteration. To ensure a level of comfort with and a full understanding of the project, I approached a principal of a school I thought would work for the project and informally explained the research before getting official approval from the school board (which I made explicit to the principal and teachers at the school). The principal suggested that I speak to a few teachers that would possibly be interested in participating. I met with these teachers and discussed the project with them and left them to decide whether they felt comfortable enough to proceed. They later expressed an interest in the project, so I once again explained that I was awaiting approval from the board office to conduct this research. Once I was given consent, I called the research chair to indicate that I had spoken to a school knowing that the regular process was to wait for approval and an identified school. I explained that in the past (i.e., the previous failed project) there was a palpable level of suspicion and a lack of understanding about the work I was doing as the board-selected schools only received a letter stating that I would be doing the project but no information about the project (e.g., the full approved proposal). Having the board send an approval letter to the school before principals and teachers met me and discussed the project created an unease that was exacerbated by them not having

any information about the actual project. Making personal contact with a school and providing them with all of the information they required to feel comfortable with and make an informed decision about participating in the research was far more helpful and effective. I let the chair know that I had done this because I wanted to be completely transparent about how I was working and to also demonstrate how the negotiation process was thwarted and rendered problematic when participants did not feel that they had full control over their participation. I explained that it was essential for me to operate in this way because the reverse experience with the board years prior had proven very problematic, unethical, and ultimately unsuccessful. Although the chair understood my rationale, she reiterated that board policy was such that all projects had to be approved before researchers had contact with the schools/faculty because most of the research they encountered was survey based and quantitative, which required the committee to look at and approve questions/tools/protocols before the research was conducted. The kind of research I was doing, however, meant that a level of trust had to be built with participants which necessitated fostering relationships, engaging in personal interactions, and allowing the participants to understand both the researcher and the nature of the research to be developed with their participation. As demonstrated by my previous experiences, doing the opposite invoked suspicion in participants as consent negotiation became board mediated rather than participant decided, which created coercive relations of power that ethically compromised sound ethnographic research.

Discussion

What was dominant in all of the interactions that occurred and the documentation produced throughout the consent process was the immense amount of fear that permeated and was at the forefront of the school board research advisory committee's decision making. Fear-based behaviour has become modus operandi in how neoliberal subjects often operate within educational institutions (Ross & Gibson, 2007). This fear is driven and informed by neoliberal reforms obsessed with narrow and instrumentalist understandings of accountability. Pinar (2003) argues that these reforms have shifted learning contexts to reflect corporate ways of being that consist of "sphere[s] of politicians—mostly (white) men—are determined to control, disguised by apparently commonsensical claims of 'accountability'" (p. xiii). Intensified anxiety about neoliberal-defined accountability is fuelled by standardized curriculum and assessment regimes that position young children, parents, educators, and schools as accountable to consumption/production measures, desires, and identities. As such, places where young children learn have become fraught with tensions and dominant rationalities and discourses furthered by an overall shift in increased governmentality in education (Ashton, 2014).

Interestingly, increased government control is often what neoliberalism discursively claims to abhor as it heralds individual responsibility and minimized bureaucracy. These contradictions demonstrate the paradox of neoliberal doctrine that purposefully vacillates between centralization and decentralization. This paradox is demonstrated by an ongoing and strategic grappling for power and, conversely, reductions in government funding and involvement in social initiatives. Albo and Evans (2008) observe that "simultaneous centralization and decentralization is a key feature of the process of state restructuring under neoliberalism" (p. 4). Bartlett Hales (2011) argues that

> the global spread of the neoliberal paradigm has propelled a recent worldwide trend of educational decentralization/centralization policies. Such policies constitute a contradictory ensemble that has shifted authority and accountability across national, provincial or state, municipal, and school levels. They have also been marked by contestation over the extent to which curricula are nationally standardized or locally defined. (p. ii)

As these tensions and contradictions accrue, subjects are left to internalize fear-based ways of being fostered by unstable and contradictory polarities.

Neoliberalism-induced fear was present in the school board research advisory committee's concern that I would be monitoring the "delivery" of standardized curriculum. The committee's fears and subsequent decisions were fuelled by understandings of curriculum as synonymous with official/officiated documents created by the Ministry of Education that identify standardized expectations educators are to teach and assess/evaluate. This conceptualization of curriculum renders its complex and co-constructed nature invisible and ignores some 40 years of curriculum theorizing. Politicians become the purveyors of curriculum as opportunities for educators and children to negotiate lived curriculum are diminished. Pinar (2003) argues that the "nightmare of the present" we are experiencing has ensured that educators have "lost" control of curriculum (p. 30). I would add that these phenomena demonstrate that curriculum has been not just lost, but colonized by language and processes that purposefully ensure singular governmental understandings of curriculum that thwart educator autonomy and decision making while heralding uniformity and deskilling, two outcomes that are argued by some to be the intent and desired end result of neoliberal initiatives and policy striving to forward education's "sorting function" (Van Heertum & Torres, 2011, p. 18).

The changes in language I was asked to make to quell the committee's fears were not a particularity of the context I was working in. For

over four decades, language shifts used to capture and advance neoliberal ideology have not only defined but driven its agenda. This language has formed an overall ontology and epistemology that has shaped institutional practices and policies, identities, and social relationships (Massey, 2013). Linguistic/ideological scaffolding that has accompanied neoliberalism has on many levels colonized how we see ourselves in our personal and professional lives and therefore how we speak and act as we manage what and who we are accountable to. Massey (2013) explains:

> The vocabulary we use, to talk about the economy in particular, has been crucial to the establishment of neoliberal hegemony…. The so-called truth underpinning this change of descriptions—which has been brought about in everyday life through managerial instruction and the thorough renaming of institutional practices in their *allowed* forms of writing, address, and speech—is that, in the end, individual interests are purely monetary; and that so-called values are only a means of pursuing selfish ends by other means. And behind this in turn, the theoretical justification of this now nearly-dominant system is the idea of a world of independent agents whose choices, made for their own advantage, paradoxically benefit all. Moreover, for this to 'work' no individual agent can have sufficient power to determine what happens to the whole. (p. 4, emphasis added)

The neoliberal subject as agent / as automaton paradox and the language/relations of power used to forward this paradox captured by Massey in the above quote were present throughout the consent process I encountered in that the sanctioned language the research advisory committee asked that I use forwarded an understanding of curriculum as governmentally mandated rather than mediated by individuals, thus reinforcing how curricular power resides far from the actual context where individuals work and learn. Despite the ways neoliberalism discursively heralds the individual, ultimately it uses curriculum as a means of government control, which compromises individuals' ability to have influence over or take responsibility for its development. Given these dynamics, any mention of the word curriculum in a research proposal would therefore conjure up concerns about monitoring the delivery of government-created documents leading to a request to alter language so as to address these fears. Far from being arbitrary, this shift in language and power mirrors appropriation and renaming strategies employed by colonizers seeking to attain terrain and replace the identities of those who live/work within these terrains.

The consent process I experienced reflected and resigned itself to neoliberal educational reforms spawned by "increased pressures on school boards, administrators, and teachers to adhere rigidly to the management and measurements of standardized curricula and testing" (Hibbert & Iannacci, 2005, p. 716). Within this context, an educator's ability to discern curriculum and develop an autonomous professional identity is compromised because curriculum is expected to be "delivered" in accordance with official documents rather than decided on through a complex process mediated by multiple curricular informants (e.g., students, parents, context). In short, the discursive colonial strategies that were demonstrated throughout the research consent process mediated and mobilized neoliberal-informed practices and texts while defining landscapes and identities in ways that rendered them commensurate with increased governmentality.

Neoliberal-induced fear also had an impact on how students with special needs and "accountability" to them and their parents were understood, positioned, and conceptualized by the research advisory committee. What fuelled this fear was governmentally recognized and officiated language, identities, and processes. Specifically, this meant that "special needs learners" or "learners with special needs" were understood and recognized synonymously with institutional processes, documents, and identifications (e.g., the IPRC, IEP, and government-recognized exceptionality categories). As such, my request to work with these students signalled to the research advisory committee that I was asking to view official documents I legally was not privy to and evaluate the degree to which these documents were in place or being followed, regardless of the fact that this request was not mentioned in the proposal. These fears are also linked and attributable to an understanding of curriculum as governmentally mandated because "special needs" or "learners with special needs" are viewed as students who do not meet official expectations at the provincial level and are therefore only recognized through processes and texts that monitor and document what programming and/or expectations they and their teachers are held accountable to.

What is troubling about this official/officiated understanding of these students is how it fails to recognize learning diversity outside of that which is governmentally defined and documented. The following excerpt from a letter the chair of the school board research advisory committee sent me demonstrates this singular understanding of who these students are:

> The use of the phrase, "receiving specialized programming", or even "special needs" in the context of the School Board implies that an IEP is in place for a student, or that an IEP is in the process of being created for a student. Another implication is that the student is receiving accommodations or modifications to programming based on the content of their IEP. None of these conditions will be in place for the students in your study and the use of the phrase, "receiving specialized programming" is incorrect in this context.

The assumption that students with special needs or receiving specialized programming are *only* students that have been ascribed institutional identities sanctioned by official documents (the IEP) or official processes (IPRC) is problematic. Further, this assumption is inaccurate, since there may have been students involved in the project who had an IEP or was formally identified as exceptional through the IPRC process. However, this does not mean that my interest in them was based on their official designations or documents and whether schools/teachers were adhering to these documents and designations. What the committee's concerns and language requests demonstrate are the ways in which students' semiotic, epistemological, cultural, and linguistic legacies (Delpit, 2003) often remain invisible and inconsequential compared to the powerful neoliberal-informed and government-created identities, documents, and processes assigned to them.

When these institutional identities are examined using critical disability theory, it is clear that discourses informing these identities require interrogation, because what is understood to be disabled / a disability is created by culture and therefore "approached best as a cultural fabrication" (McDermott & Varenne, 1995, p. 323). This fabrication is neither purposeless nor devoid of power but rather indicative of interests that serve to pathologize students rather than recognize their personhood. Paugh and Dudley-Marling (2011) point out that "how students are discursively constructed has material effects" (p. 7). This fact is more than apparent when students with special needs are understood as being those assigned an IEP or an official exceptionality category. Who they are or may be is constructed by special education systems/processes organized in ways that position them as pathological in order to ensure/secure resources. Therefore any mention of students in a research proposal who have, may have, or are understood as having resources allocated to them conjures up fears about whether a researcher will evaluate whether schools/teachers are accountable to/for these resources. Systematized processes for acquiring resources for students with special needs creates cultural/economic contexts that ensure the pathologization of students in order to validate monetary expenditure. The material and human resources allocated to these students becomes a defining feature of what is understood as constituting special needs or specialized programming. All of the above is reason enough to critically question the extent to which children are pathologized in ways that monetize their needs and reduce multiple ways of knowing into language and identities that are organized and sanctioned by neoliberal ways of knowing, being, and doing. Without this critical questioning, students' identities remain colonized by deficit-oriented language and processes assigned to them through official/officiated talk and texts.

Interestingly, and despite being in opposition to Ontario Ministry of Education special education policy, one of the prevailing tensions and sources of confusion in schools is based on the idea that accommodations and modifications can only be provided to students who have or are about to have an IEP. Further, and in some instances, this misunderstanding is extended to recognizing students with special needs only after their exceptionality has been formally identified through the IPRC process (Iannacci & Graham, 2010; Graham & Iannacci, 2013). In large part, the identification is made based on the results of psychoeducational testing administered by an educational psychologist. Privileging this data/process and equating it with what and who students are hampers a system's ability to recognize and respond to what learning diversity is and what is permissible in responding to it for and with students with special needs. Ultimately, neoliberal-influenced processes focused on standardization, categorization, and resource allocation/management prevents an understanding of and response to epistemological diversity as an ethic of care and an ethical responsibility.

Manifestations of neoliberalism as demonstrated through the conceptualization and positioning of curriculum and special needs students that emerged throughout the research consent process were clearly problematic, contentious, and in need of the critical examination that has thus far been the focus of this paper. It is, however, also necessary to examine what researchers can learn about navigating contexts where young children learn. Such an exploration makes explicit the possibilities created by the entanglements and negotiations that occur when human beings meet with grand narratives such as neoliberalism, and reaffirms the ways in which people compromise with, resist, reject, subvert, and ultimately transform how they receive dominant discourses and what they do with/about them as they struggle to act in ways commensurate with their ideals and identities. In terms of what I have documented thus far, the most salient possibility the experience provided me as a researcher was the opportunity to reexamine my sense of ethical praxis. Schwandt (2001) conceptualizes praxis as

> a form of activity that has to do with the conduct of one's life and affairs as a member of society … neither a technical nor a cognitive capacity that one has at one's disposal but … is bound up with the kind of person that one is and one is becoming.… It demands an intellectual and moral disposition toward right living and the pursuit of human good and hence a different form of reasoning and knowledge.… This kind of knowledge is variously referred to as deliberative excellence, practical wisdom, or practical reason. Associated cognitive virtues are understanding, judgment, and interpretation. (p. 207)

Given this definition there is no way of separating the necessary knowledge and virtues that help constitute ethical praxis. They coalesce as they blend and blur in an endless action, reflection, action, reflection cycle that necessitates asking and answering questions such as

"what should I do now, in this situation, given these circumstances, facing this particular person, at this time" (p. 208)? This heavily contextualized process must sometimes occur within nanoseconds. The necessity and immediacy of being able to complete these thinking, feeling, understanding processes quickly is one of the many challenges researchers employing narrative methods experience because their work, their questions, their relationships with participants, and their research landscapes are often intimate and personal. The manifestations of neoliberalism I encountered throughout the consent process necessitated that I constantly engage in this reflective cycle. The neoliberal ways of being and doing I experienced and observed provided me with opportunities to see where ethics and human interaction needed to prevail and how to go about operationalizing this value. This does not, however, mean that this context-dependent knowledge transfers to all situations. Holloway and Freshwater (2007) caution that "ethical values themselves are not absolutes, and one can understand the problems translating abstract and disputable principles into a set of practical and relevant guidelines to suit a variety of researchers and research settings" (p. 53). In fact, it is contrary to ethical praxis to treat "every human situation in which practical-moral judgment is required as a technical problem to be solved by the application of knowledge generated via method" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 208). In the situation I document and analyze in this paper, it became abundantly clear to me that complying with official neoliberal-influenced processes and decisions that were informed by and induced fear would in fact produce more fear and disempower the same people this language and process were supposedly trying to protect. In this case, then, ethically, it was essential for me to comply with requests to change language within a research proposal but simultaneously subvert consent process protocols that require boards to mediate when researchers can make contact with schools, administrators, and teachers. This act of subversion opened up possibilities for research subjects to understand themselves as having full control over their participation in the research rather than being passive recipients of a board-mediated consent process that sees their subsequent understanding of the project and/or participation in it as inconsequential. This is a particularly important reflection and realization. As Holloway and Freshwater (2007) state, very little has been written about the ethical implications of narrative research and, as stated earlier, even less so has been documented about the ethical dilemmas researchers face as they navigate the consent/entrance process.

Conclusion

Neoliberalism was present and shaped the consent process documented in this paper in several ways. Appropriation and renaming strategies informed by several fears the research advisory committee had about my proposal and purpose in the schools mediated neoliberal-informed practices and texts. These fears were provoked by a positioning of curriculum as an official document and an understanding of "special needs learners" as synonymous with an identity granted through government-mandated processes and texts designed to secure funding for these students. A resultant colonization of curriculum, disability, and the education field and its work/workers was reinforced through these strategies. The researcher also became entangled in these colonial relations of power as his work and identity were conceptualized as extensions of neoliberal practice/policy and he therefore as someone seeking to monitor how standardized curriculum and special education documents, categories, and resources are managed and adhered to. Data ultimately demonstrated how neoliberal-informed ways of doing and being compromise the level of autonomy and empowerment subjects are allowed to practice, or to understand they have, within contexts where neoliberal fear operates. Further, this fear diminishes understandings of and responses to epistemological diversity, and an overall focus on ethics. These coercive relations of power as shaped by neoliberalism, however, provided insights into how the consent and entrance process can be negotiated and reshaped in ways that empower individuals working with young children and used as a catalyst for considering how personhood, not politics, can be kept at the forefront of practice.

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Children's Conceptualizations of Kindness at School

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This study investigated perceptions of kindness in 112 young children (57 girls, 55 boys, ages 5–8) in three schools. To assess perceptions of kindness, students were asked to draw what kindness looked like to them and to draw an example of something kind done recently at school. Findings indicated students perceived kindness within the context of dyadic relationships, the recipients of kindness were familiar to them, and kind acts were typically situated outdoors; helping physically, maintaining friendships, including others, and helping emotionally were prevalent themes within drawings. Boys drew acts of kindness as helping physically more frequently than did girls, whose drawings indicated kindness as maintaining family relationships. Findings are discussed within the context of positive education and the promotion of prosocial behaviour.

Keywords: curriculum; hermeneutics; play (spiel); teacher education; transcultural

The Art of Kindness

Being kind or acting kindly toward others is a trait held in high regard by parents and teachers alike as the educational landscape shifts from a singular focus on academics to the inclusion of instruction in social and emotional competencies (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Educators increasingly recognize that students lack the requisite intra- and interpersonal skills needed for social and academic success (Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, & Cox, 2000; Spivak & Farran, 2012). Certainly, there is much discussion around how to promote social and emotional competencies among students, including prosocial behaviour, yet remarkably little is known about students' perceptions of what constitutes prosocial behaviour, especially kindness. In effect, kindness is a psychological construct garnering much lay attention yet little empirical attention because the focus in schools has been on the prevention of bullying (Pryce & Fredrickson, 2013; Smith, Schneider, Smith, & Ananiadou, 2004). In spite of this lack of attention, kindness remains an important and valued trait in Western society. This importance is reflected in how kindness is ranked vis-à-vis other character strengths, with kindness consistently identified as one of the top-ranking character strengths valued by participants across studies, outranking traits such as honesty, gratitude, and hope (Karris & Craighead, 2012; Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004). Despite the importance of cultivating kindness, there is a dearth of work examining how students understand kindness. This study sought to determine how young students conceptualize kindness and to identify examples of kindness done at school.

The paucity of work investigating kindness is in stark contrast to findings at the opposite end of the behavioural spectrum—bullying. Despite all the attention paid to reducing bullying, meta-analytic findings by Smith and colleagues (Smith, Schneider, Smith, & Ananiadou, 2004) and as argued by others (e.g., Pryce & Fredrickson, 2013), whole-school anti-bullying programs have not resulted in significant reductions of self-reports of bullying and victimization. As the tide shifts from bullying to the promotion of prosocial behaviours in schools, researchers have posited that "a lack of caring and sharing the values and feelings of others was most related to direct and indirect bullying" (Munoz, Qualter, & Padgett, 2011, p. 192). This view is in alignment with researchers who argue that empathy plays a key role in children's interactions, lays the foundation for both prosocial behaviour and social relationships, and contributes to reduced aggression (Eisenberg & Miller, 1987; Hymel, Schonert-Reichl, Bonanno, Vaillancourt, & Henderson, 2010; Schonert-Reichl, 1993). In their review of findings examining the relation between bullying and empathy, Hymel and colleagues (2010) concluded: "Taken together, studies to date generally support the notion that children who bully, especially boys, report lower levels of both cognitive and affective empathy" (p. 105). Certainly, the promotion of prosocial behaviour such as kindness in schools through programs aimed at fostering empathy and perspective taking in students is often an attempt to reduce the frequency of bullying-related behaviours. The understanding here is that children who display high levels of kind behaviour are likely to engage in less aggressive behaviour, leading to reduced interpersonal conflict. Thus, in a time of rampant anti-bullying programs and campaigns, the promotion

of kindness may be considered one means of countering bullying in school. Extending the bullying-kindness comparison further, an examination of the number of publications addressing kindness and those addressing bullying as well as an examination of how bullying is defined holds potential to inform our understanding of kindness.

Bullying as a Pathway to Understanding Kindness

A search of the most widely used databases in education (i.e., ERIC, Education Source, and International ERIC), in psychology (i.e., PsycInfo and Web of Science), and in searching general academic topics (i.e., Academic Search Complete and Google Scholar) for peer-reviewed publications containing either the word kindness or the word bullying in the title reveals a marked discrepancy in the number of articles published (see Table 1). When findings are examined collectively across databases for the last 10 years (i.e., 2004–2014) a clear pattern is evident, with one kindness article published for every 28 articles published on bullying.

Table 1

Number of Kindness and Bullying Articles Published, By Database (2004–2014)

Database	Kindness	Bullying	Ratio
Education			
ERIC	14	821	1:58
International ERIC	1	94	1:47
Education Source	53	1,503	1:28
Psychology			
PsycInfo	64	2,011	1:31
Web of Science	218	2,522	1:11
General			
Google Scholar	1,120*	13,200*	1:11*
Academic Search Complete	172	1,966	1:11
Mean			1:28

In contrast to kindness, much is known about bullying, as it is a well-researched human behaviour (Berger, 2007). The definition of bullying contains multiple characteristics or qualifiers, including the following: (1) bullying is a form of peer aggression; (2) the negative actions comprising bullying are intentional; and (3) there is a power imbalance between bullies and victims (Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, & Lattanar, 2014; Olweus, 1993; Thomas, Connor, & Scott, 2014). Further, these intentionally aggressive or negative actions are repeatedly carried out over time (Olweus, 2013). Bullying may take several forms, including physical, verbal, relational, or electronic (i.e., cyber bullying; Hymel et al., 2010). Might our understanding of the definition of bullying hold potential to inform a definition of kindness?

The study of kindness is theoretically grounded in social and emotional learning (SEL; Schonert-Reichl & Weissberg, 2014; Zins et al., 2004), positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and positive education (Seligman, Earnst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009). The field of social and emotional learning provides a theoretical framework for the current investigation because kindness is situated within several, if not all, of the cognitive, affective, and behavioural competencies comprising SEL (i.e., relationship skills, social awareness, self-management, self-awareness, and responsible decision making; Collaborative for Academic and Social and Emotional Learning, 2015). Positive psychology and positive education in particular also theoretically support the current study as teachers increasingly shift from viewing children from a model based on "What's wrong and needs fixing?" to "What are the strengths and positive attributes of the learners I teach?"

Kindness may be viewed within the context of the larger overarching term *prosocial behaviour*, and although few definitions of kindness have been published to date, there has been ample research examining prosocial behaviour in children (Eisenberg, 1986; Eisenberg, Guthrie, Murphy, Shepard, Cumberland, & Carlo, 1999; Layous et al., 2012; Malti & Krettenauer, 2013; Nantel-Vivier et al., 2009; Solomon et al., 1988). Eisenberg and colleagues (1999) defined prosocial behaviour as "voluntary behavior intended to benefit another" (p. 1360). As an illustration of this definition, these authors provided examples of prosocial behaviour within the contexts of preschool

and elementary school. At preschool, prosocial behaviour takes the form of sharing, helping, and offering comfort. At the elementary level, donating and helping were identified as examples of prosocial behaviour.

Although kindness has not yet been well researched as a distinct construct, the underlying dimensions impacting kindness have been identified. Campos and Algoe (2009) present kindness as "an emotion-based motivation that promotes prosocial behaviour without the expectation of a reciprocal benefit" (p. 551). These authors view kindness as promoting prosocial behaviour and as fostering social relationships and social networks. Although Campos and Algoe (2009) see kindness within the context of prosocial behaviour and as the catalyst for social interactions, Lamborn, Fischer, and Pipp (1994) see kindness as a value influenced by individual perspective-taking abilities. These authors view kindness as developmental in nature, with young children emphasizing the concrete dimensions of actions from an egocentric viewpoint. As children mature, their understanding of kindness becomes increasingly differentiated, with increased awareness of the intentions underlying actions.

Defining Kindness

Despite previous calls to increase our understanding of kindness, little empirical work has been undertaken since Comunian (1998) remarked that "a review of theoretical and empirical literature suggests there has not been much research on kindness as a cognitive development construct" (pp. 1351–1352). One plausible reason accounting for both the absence of a clear definition of kindness and the variability in how kindness has previously been defined likely lies in the varied terms used to refer to kindness, which include prosocial behaviour, compassion, altruism, caring, and helping. Peterson and Seligman (2004) argue that these terms, along with generosity and nurturance, share a common orientation of the "self toward the other" (p. 326).

Although terms such as prosocial behaviour, altruism, and compassion are well-referenced in educational and psychological literature, the concept of kindness as a distinct construct appears relatively infrequently. Curiously, few authors offer definitions of kindness and few studies have empirically investigated kindness from students' perspectives. Even publications with the term *kindness* in their title frequently fail to operationally define kindness (e.g., Andersen et al., 2008; Batson et al., 1978; Isen & Levin, 1972; Schachter, 2011; Zeece, 2009).

Seminal research by Baldwin and Baldwin (1970) defined kindness as a "motivation that is sometimes inferred from the fact that one person benefits another" (p. 30). Long (1997) asserted that "kindness is a behavior driven by the feeling of compassion" and that when we "act on this feeling of compassion in a helpful and caring way, this behavior becomes an act of kindness" (p. 243). According to Long, kindness manifests in the form of an action driven by an underlying feeling. This underlying feeling, or empathic response, is closely related to kindness and is often a strong motive in eliciting kindness. Eisenberg and Fabes (1998) defined empathy as an emotional reaction in response to another's emotional state and posited that an individual's empathic reaction lays the foundation for subsequent prosocial behaviour, including kindness. Smith (1986) described compassion, caring, and helping as comprising "kindness skills" that children learn during childhood (p. 49).

Despite the varied terms used to refer to kindness, definitions of kindness have nevertheless been proffered. Peterson and Seligman (2004) defined kindness as describing "the pervasive tendency to be nice to other people—to be compassionate and concerned about their welfare, to do favors for them, to perform good deeds, and to take care of them" (p. 296). Building on her definition of prosocial behaviour, Eisenberg (1986) specified kindness as "voluntary, intentional behaviors that benefit another and are not motivated by external factors such as rewards or punishments" (p. 63). Peterson and Seligman (2004) see kindness as "doing favors and good deeds for others" (p. 29), while Cataldo (1984) defined it as "an assertion of self that is positive in feeling and intention" (p. 17). Layous et al. (2012) define a kind act as "an activity that promotes positive relationships" (p. 1). Otake and colleagues (2006) interpret kindness as "enacting kind behavior toward other people" (p. 362). More recently, context-specific definitions of kindness have emerged with terms such as *cyber civility* and *cyber kindness* appearing in the literature (Cassidy, Brown, & Jackson, 2011; 2012). The above definitions of kindness are adult interpretations and fail to consider the understandings and perspectives of the child. How do children conceptualize kindness?

Accessing Conceptualizations of Kindness

There has been a call to involve children in research and to elicit children's understandings and perspectives as a means to better understand topics of interest to researchers (Christensen & James, 2000; Einarsdottir, Dockett, & Perry, 2009). Using drawing to access children's perceptions of lived experiences is gaining popularity across varied research disciplines (Einarsdottir et al., 2009; Freeman & Mathison, 2009; Mathison, 2014). Drawing is a familiar activity for children, helping to create a comfortable research context in which to collect data. The drawing context is also nonconfrontational in that children can focus on drawing, rather than making eye

contact or directly interacting with the researcher (Einarsdottir et al., 2009). In these respects, the drawing method allows researchers to gather information from young children using a nonthreatening and developmentally appropriate approach (Weber, Duncan, Dyehouse, Strobel, & Diefes-Dux, 2011).

The use of drawings has proven to be an effective means of eliciting young students' conceptualizations of various social and psychological constructs (Mitchell, 2011). Although the drawings themselves are important because they pictorially illustrate and emphasize various dimensions of concepts being studied from the child's perspective, the interpretation of children's drawings by adults must be undertaken with caution because adult perspectives and interpretations can be markedly different from those of children (Bosacki, Harwood, & Sumaway, 2012; Yurtal & Artut, 2010). It has been argued that children's interpretations of their drawings are necessary (Stanczak, 2007) and that assurances to capture these interpretations must be incorporated into data collection methodology.

The term *drawing-telling* refers to the combined task of drawing while engaging in conversation (Einarsdottir et al., 2009; Wright, 2007). This combined task is often one that is naturally undertaken by children as they discuss their picture in words while simultaneously drawing. Mitchell (2011) posits that allowing participants to add captions to their drawings "expands the visual data" (p. 124). Drawing helps children "capture meanings beyond words, but words can help situate the expressive meaning of the drawing within a specific framework and context" (Freeman & Mathison, 2009, p. 127). Thus, drawing and telling are intertwined in the meaning-making process. Einarsdottir et al. (2009) reaffirm that "drawings and the accompanying narrative are not separate entities—both are integral parts of the meaning-making process" (p. 219). According to Freeman and Mathison (2009), "drawing as a mode of sense making and representation offers different possibilities than talk alone does" (p. 113). Drawing provides a different way to listen to a child's perspectives, rather than relying solely on verbal language. However, the drawing method is strengthened when it is used in conjunction with a verbal explanation or interview.

Current research using drawings to capture students' perspectives and understandings of social and psychological constructs appears to favour a focus on negative constructs such as teasing (Bosacki et al., 2012), violence in school (Yurtal & Artut, 2010), and bullying (Andreou & Bonoti, 2009). There is both a lack of empirical investigation of positive constructs such as kindness, certainly from students' perspectives, and an absence of research using drawing as a means of accessing students' views of kindness. Analyses of students' drawings provide researchers with rich insight into children's views and perceptions of social and educational phenomena.

Bosacki et al. (2012) highlight the difference between coding for pictorial depictions (e.g., objects found within drawings) versus coding for subject matter content, which can be affiliated with emotion or affect (e.g., teasing, bullying, sharing). The distinction between these two elements of a child's drawing requires thoughtful consideration in the coding process. A child's drawing is not just merely concrete objects or people in isolation, but can contain subtle, or even overt, messages about perceptions illustrated through the interaction of the objects, people, or objects and people together.

There is currently a lack of research investigating how school-age children understand kindness. The aims of the present study were twofold: (1) to identify how early-grade students conceptualize kindness; and (2) to identify examples of students being kind at school. In doing so, this study holds potential to inform parents and educators interested in promoting kindness within school contexts.

Method

Participants
The participants were 112 kindergarten through second grade students recruited from seven classrooms in three elementary schools (mean class size was 18, range = 17–24) in a small, middle-class, western Canadian city. Twenty-eight percent of the participants were in kindergarten (n = 31), 30% were in first grade (n = 34), and 42% were in second grade (n = 47). Fifty-one percent of the sample was girls (n = 57, M = 5 years, 9 months, SD = .91; boys, n = 55, M = 6 years, 2 months, SD = .79). All of the students were English speaking and the majority was of Euro-Canadian descent (85%).

Measures
        Demographic information.

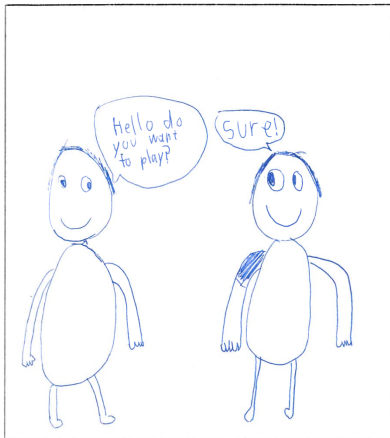Because many of the students had emergent reading and writing skills, students were asked aloud by a researcher to provide demographic information regarding their grade, family composition (e.g., "Who lives in your house with you?"), and ethnicity / family background. Participants' age, gender, and ethnicity were recorded by a researcher and then verified by school records provided by the classroom teacher.

Kindness drawings.

To assess students' conceptualizations of kindness, a scale was developed that asked students to illustrate what kindness looked like to them and to give an example of something kind they had done at school recently. The development of this scale mirrored work done by other researchers who used drawings to examine constructs such as teasing (Bosacki et al., 2012), school violence (Yurtal & Artut, 2010), and bullying (Andreou & Bonoti, 2009). This process included providing a scale to participants that consisted of two empty squares within which participants were asked to draw in response to prompts. For Drawing No. 1, the prompt was *"Draw a picture of what kindness looks like. What does kindness look like to you?"* and for Drawing No. 2, the prompt was *"Draw a picture of something you have done kind at school recently. What have you done to show kindness at school?"* Participants were given five minutes for each drawing (see Figures 1 to 6).

Figure 1: Drawing no. 1, grade 2 boy, theme *including*.

Figure 2: Drawing no. 1, grade 2 girl, theme *friendship*.

Figure 3: Drawing no. 2, grade 2 boy, theme *physical helping*.

Figure 4: Drawing no. 2, grade 2 girl, theme *emotional helping*.

Step #1: In the box below, draw a picture of what kindness looks like. What does kindness look like to you?

Step #2: In the box below, draw a picture of something you have done kind at school recently. What have you done to show kindness at school?

WHO? Self
WHAT? I put a smile on my face for people to see

WHO? Self + teacher
WHAT? I'm helping the teacher by listening

Figure 5: Drawing no. 2, kindergarten girl, theme *other*.   **Figure 6: Drawing no. 2, kindergarten girl, theme *showing respect*.**

Procedure

Once both teacher and parental permission (92% across classrooms) was obtained, students were surveyed by two trained researchers (i.e., the first author and a graduate student) in small groups of 5 outside of their classroom (typically in a nearby empty classroom or hallway and without their classroom teacher present) and asked to complete their two drawings. After each drawing was completed, students were asked by one of the researchers "Who is in your drawing?" and "What is happening in this drawing?" This information was documented in situ and verbatim underneath each drawing.

Coding.

The participants' drawings were analyzed for both pictorial depictions and subject matter or thematic content (Bosacki, Harwood, & Sumaway, 2012). Pictorial depictions involved identifying specifics dimensions found within each drawing, including: (1) the number of individuals depicted; (2) identification of the depicted individuals (e.g., friend, teacher, parent); and (3) the context or location of the drawing. The subject matter content of each drawing was analyzed using content analysis to identify the prevalent theme contained within each drawing.

Qualitative conventional content analysis was used to understand and make sense of participants' drawings and involved a "systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). Conventional content analysis is best suited to capturing prevalent themes found within participant-generated data. Given the dearth of empirical work on children's perceptions of kindness, this approach offers advantages over other content analysis approaches (e.g., directed content analysis where predetermined thematic categories derived from prior research are used).

Identifying the prevalent themes to code drawings was done in two stages. First, each drawing (N = 224) was reviewed independently by both the principal investigator and his graduate research assistant, who identified a general or global initial theme (e.g., sharing, family, helping). These themes were pooled across raters and resulted in a total of 33 general categories. The second step involved a collaborative winnowing approach to reduce redundancy (Wolcott, 1990), in which general categories were collapsed into prevalent themes (e.g., "asking to play" and "inviting to play" were merged). This process resulted in a total of 11 themes. Examples of each theme were identified and listed next to the theme to assist with coding (e.g., theme = including; examples = inviting to play, asking to play, including in play activity; see Table 2). All drawings were independently coded by both raters to identify a primary or dominant theme. Across drawings, inter-rater agreement was 80%.

Table 2

Prevalent Themes and Coding Descriptions

Theme	Description
FAMILY	Spending time with family members, activities with family (e.g., walking, playing)
FRIENDSHIP	Maintaining a friendship, wanting to keep a friend or a friendship
CARING	Showing affection (e.g., giving a hug)
HELPING, PHYSICAL	Helping someone who is physically hurt (e.g., offering a hand to someone who has fallen or tripped)
HELPING, EMOTIONAL	Helping someone who is sad, has hurt feelings, saying "sorry"
GIVING	Giving an object, giving back a toy
SHOWING RESPECT	Taking turns, listening, putting hand up in class, saying "thank you"
SHARING	Sharing an object such as a toy or book
INCLUDING	Inviting/asking/including someone in play, including in a game
OTHER	Miscellaneous themes not fitting in categories above
NO THEME EVIDENT	The drawing and corresponding in-situ description contained no evident theme

Results

Drawing No. 1: Depictions of Kindness Done at School
       Pictorial content.

When asked to draw what kindness looked like to them, the majority of participants (74%) illustrated kindness involving two individuals, most commonly "self with friend" (28%) followed by "self with classmate" (27%), and situated their interpretations of kindness outside (49%). Chi-square analysis revealed a significant difference in the number of individuals portrayed in drawings (χ^2(2) = 80.96, p < 0.001; see Table 3), with drawings containing two individuals more common than drawings containing one individual or three individuals.

Chi-square analyses of "who" was in drawings (i.e., self with friend, self with classmate, self with parent, self with sibling, alone) revealed significant differences in the individuals participants included in their depictions of kindness: χ^2(4) =16.78, p < 0.01. Post-hoc chi-square analyses found borderline significance between "self with friend" and "self with classmate" as well as "self with sibling." "Self with friend" was significantly different from "self with parents" as well as "self alone." No other significant differences were found when comparing the other categories (for all comparisons p > .05).

Chi-square analyses found a significant difference in where (e.g., outside, in school, in classroom) participants situated their depictions of kindness with the location "outside" the most prevalent context for illustrations of kindness, χ^2(2) = 27.80, p< 0.001. Post-hoc chi-square analyses revealed a significant number of drawings had "outside" locations than "other" locations (i.e., miscellaneous settings such as a grocery store or a shopping mall) or illustrations of kindness situated within the context of "family/home."

       Thematic content and in-situ descriptions.

In an effort to discern how young participants define kindness, participants were asked to draw what kindness looked like to them. After drawings were completed, participants were asked to describe their drawings and these descriptions were written verbatim. When drawings were analyzed for their thematic content, participants depicted kindness as predominantly reflecting themes of (1) "helping physically" (46%), as reflected by comments such as "My friend fell down and I helped her get up," (#021) and "My friend is hurt and I gave him a Band-Aid" (#028); (2) "giving" (25%), as reflected by comments such as "We're not fighting and I asked 'Do you want a

flower?'" (#039) or "I made a card for my Dad at school" (042); (3) acts that maintained friendship (25%), as reflected by comments such as "We're playing and I'm saying 'Thank you for playing with me!'" (#083) and "I'm passing my friend the ball so he can play 4-Square" (#087); and (4) helping emotionally" (24%), as reflected by comments such as "Dylan's feeling sad. I'm asking "Are you okay?" (#063) and "I'm sorry for saying I'm going to play with someone else. Do you want to read a book together?" (#096)

Analysis by gender.

Chi-square analyses were conducted between drawings by boys and girls across the primary themes found within participants' illustrations of kindness (see Table 3). The analysis revealed that girls drew significantly more themes pertaining to "family" than did boys (χ^2 χ^2 (1) = 8.33, p < 0.01), whereas boys drew more themes pertaining to "helping physically" than did girls: χ^2 χ^2(1) = 6.76, p < 0.01. No other significant differences between drawings by boys and girls were found across the other themes.

Drawing No. 2: Examples of Kindness
   Pictorial content.

When asked to draw an example of a kind act they had done at school, the majority of participants (71%) illustrated kindness as occurring between two individuals, predominantly between "self with friend" (37%) followed by "self with classmate (27%), and occurring most frequently outside (47%), followed by the general school context (15%) and in the classroom (13%). Chi-square analyses revealed a significant difference in the number of individuals in drawings: χ^2 χ^2(2) = 80.96, p < 0.001. Post-hoc chi-square analyses found that a significant number of the drawings had two individuals rather than either one or three.

Chi-square analyses of "who" was depicted in participants' drawings of their examples of kind acts (i.e., "self with friend", "self with classmate", "self with teacher", and "alone") revealed significant differences: χ^2 χ^2(3) = 37.65, p < 0.001. In their examples of kind acts done at school, participants predominantly illustrated acts involving themselves and a friend over acts done in conjunction with their teacher or done alone. Significant differences were also found between acts of kindness done with a classmate and those done with a teacher or done alone.

As for the location (i.e., "outside," "school context," "classroom," or "other") of kind acts performed, chi-square analyses revealed a significant difference in the context in which participants situated their examples of kind acts: χ^2 χ^2(1) = 41.43, p < 0.001. Participants predominantly illustrated their examples of kindness at school as happening outside—at the school playground or in the field adjoining their school.

Thematic content and in-situ descriptions.

When asked to draw an example of something kind they had done at school, participants' drawings reflected the following themes: (1) "helping physically" others, as reflected by comments such as "I'm helping him throw a ball outside" (#084) and "My friend got stung by a bee and I got help from an adult" (#061); (2) kind acts that "included" others (27%), as reflected by comments such as "Do you want to be on my team?" (#054) and "She had no one to play with so I asked her if she wanted to play with me" (#067); and (3) acts that "maintain friendship" (26%), as reflected by comments such as "We eat lunch together on Friendship Fridays and I said 'Thank you for sitting with me'" (#018) and "A friend wants to play with me and I say 'yes'" (#024).

Analysis by gender.

Chi-square analyses were conducted between drawings by boys and girls across the primary themes for Drawing No. 2. The analysis revealed that boys drew significantly more examples of kindness containing the theme of "helping physically" (χ^2 χ^2(1) = 6.26, p < 0.01) than did girls. No other significant differences between drawings by boys and girls were identified across any other themes.

Table 3

Percentage of Primary Themes and Chi-Square for Drawing 1 and Drawing 2 for Girls and Boys

	Total (N = 112)			Girls (n = 57)		Boys (n = 55)
Drawing		No. 1				No. 2

	Girls % (n)	Boys % (n)	χ^2 χ^2 (1)	Girls % (n)	Boys % (n)	χ^2 (1)
Family	19 (11)	2 (1)	8.33, p < .01	22 (13)	0 (0)	10.29 p = 0.001
Friendship	16 (9)	9 (5)	1.14, p < .28	11 (6)	15 (8)	0.29 p =0.59
Giving	14 (8)	11 (6)	.28, p = .59	7 (4)	2 (1)	1.80, p = .18
Helping (emotional)	12 (7)	12 (7)	.00, p = 1.00	11 (6)	9 (5)	.09, p = .76
Helping (physical)	11 (6)	35 (19)	6.76, p < .01	13 (7)	36 (20)	6.26, p = .01
Including	9 (5)	12 (7)	.33, p = .56	9 (5)	18 (10)	1.67, p = .20
Caring	7 (4)	0 (0)	1.80 p = 0.18	7 (4)	0 (0)	1.80 p = 0.18
Showing respect	5 (3)	10 (6)	1.00, p = .32	3 (2)	5 (3)	.20, p = .65
Sharing	3 (2)	5 (3)	.20, p = .65	13 (7)	11 (6)	.08, p = .78
Other	2 (1)	2 (1)	.00, p = 1.00	2 (1)	2 (1)	00, p = 1.00
No theme	2 (1)	2 (1)	.00, p = 1.00	2 (1)	2 (1)	.00, p = 1.00

Discussion

The findings of this study contribute to our understanding of how kindness is conceptualized by young students. Analyses of students' drawings of *what kindness looks like* and *draw a picture of something kind you have done at school recently* identified a number of salient features of kindness not previously reported in educational or psychological literature.

The findings of this study suggest that the definition of kindness might have more in common with the definition of bullying than has been previously recognized. Just as bullies tend to know their victims, so too it appears do the initiators of kindness, who tend to perform kind acts to known others within the school context. Further, as bullying often occurs within a bully-victim dyad, kindness, as depicted by participants in this study, also occurs most frequently within dyadic relationships. Just as bullying is intentional in nature, so too is kindness. Through the eyes of young students, kindness appears to be an intentional act aimed at providing physical help to others, acts that include others, acts that maintain friendships, and acts that provide emotional assistance to others. Whereas the intent of bullying is to cause harm (physical or psychological), the intent of kindness is often understood to be an act that provides assistance (either physical or emotional)—thus, the opposite of bullying. Just as acts of bullying have been defined as overt (physical acts intended to harm another) or relational (acts whose purpose is to disintegrate social relationships), the findings of this study suggest that kindness may be similarly categorized as overt kindness (e.g., physically helping someone who has fallen) or relational kindness (e.g., inviting or including another in a play activity, gestures to strengthen or maintain relationships). This distinction is in alignment with Noddings's (2012) description of "relational caring" in which caring responses provide "the building blocks for the construction of a continuing caring relation" (p. 53).

The findings of this study also revealed that boys and girls depict kindness in both similar and disparate ways. Across drawings and to the same extent, boys and girls illustrated kindness as reflecting acts of emotional helping and sharing. Discrepancies emerged, however, across drawings in how kindness was perceived by boys and girls for the themes of "family" and "physical helping." Girls' drawings contained themes of family (e.g., acts reflecting time spent with family or maintaining family relations) whereas boys' drawings emphasized kindness as physically helping someone else (e.g., helping someone up who had fallen or was injured).

Certainly a salient finding arising from this study is that young elementary students understand and enact kindness through small gestures and many of these gestures are likely undetected by school agents whose intention is often to reinforce prosocial behaviour such

as kindness. An implication arising from this finding is that students may engage in more acts of kindness than many adults believe, and when adults ask or encourage students to "be kind," students may believe they are already being kind at school. Moreover, students' acts of kindness may not be encouraged because their acts go undetected by school agents seeking to reinforce kindness. In-situ descriptions of participants' acts of kindness illustrate how kindness is enacted in school through small gestures or actions (see below).

Drawing No. 2: Examples of Kindness Done at School
   "I'm telling the sub how we do things so she knows." (#089)
   "I'm returning books so others can use them." (#095)
   "I showed kindness to my teacher by writing and following directions." (#029)
   "I wear a smile for others." (#041)

When examining the prevalent themes of kindness found in participants' drawings, it could be that young students demonstrate acts of kindness that are inspired by or thematically linked to units or lessons taught in class (e.g., themes of friendship, helping, sharing, family) or that are found within the school's mission statement (e.g., themes of respect for one another and community). In contrast, and not captured in the prevalent themes within drawings, young students could also be unorthodox or creative in how they conceptualized kindness (see below).

Drawing No. 1: Depictions of Kindness
   "I'm saying good night to my baby brother and in my head I'm saying I love him." (#022)
   "The sun shows kindness by lighting up the earth." (#023)
   "We're riding bikes to get exercise to take care of us." (#024)
   "Marco doesn't hit me. He doesn't punch me. He plays with me." (040)

Researchers and theorists have argued that one purpose of formal education is to promote well-being or flourishing in students (e.g., Alexander, 2013; Noddings, 2003). An emerging area of positive psychology interventions is to assess the effects that kindness interventions have on well-being, and a future study might examine the impact of different acts of kindness (e.g., helping vs. including) on students' subjective well-being. Additionally, further investigation is warranted to clarify the link between both curricular content taught in classrooms and the mission statements of schools and students' acts of kindness. To what extent might students' acts of kindness reflect and be influenced by these two dimensions of their education?

Limitations and Future Directions

Despite best intentions, this study was not without limitations. Certainly, for very young participants (e.g., kindergarten students), leaving their classroom to work with strangers from the university proved, at times, an intimidating task. Due to time restrictions (i.e., one 45-minute period per class), students were restricted in their time to complete drawings (i.e., five minutes per drawing). Further, the fine motor skills of 5- to 8-year-olds is emergent or developing and oftentimes resulted in "stick figure" drawings that failed to provide rich illustrative depictions. For future studies employing this methodology, a pre-study class visit and the scheduling of additional drawing time would enhance participants' abilities to comfortably and comprehensively illustrate their perceptions of kindness. Last, as the prompt for Drawing No. 1 asked students to *"Draw a picture of what kindness looks like. What does kindness look like to you?"* it may have skewed how participants illustrated kindness, emphasizing the physical manifestations of kindness that participants could capture in a drawing. Further prompts to investigate how young students conceptualize kindness might use more neutral language, such as *"Draw kindness"* or *"Draw what kindness is to you."*

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to better understand young students' understanding of kindness and, in doing so, contribute to the scant educational and psychological research devoted to defining kindness. The study's findings contribute to the growing body of empirical work using drawing as a vehicle through which to capture young participants' understandings and perceptions of psychological constructs. Certainly, one strength of the approach undertaken here was to incorporate a drawing-telling methodology that clarified illustrations in situ that would otherwise have been difficult to interpret without supplementary descriptions.

The findings of this study stand to inform both parents and educators of the complexities of kindness in children as they promote prosocial behaviour within the school context. Being kind is more than simply "doing good" and, from young students' perspectives, there are many different ways to be kind. Capturing the perspective of young students on kindness allows for a definition of kindness to emerge. Kindness, from the perspective of young children, is an act of emotional or physical support that helps build or maintain

relationships with others. It is hoped that this research will contribute to countering the imbalance of empirical work done on the topic of bullying versus kindness and play a role in continuing the shift toward strength- or asset-driven school-based interventions characteristic of the positive education movement.

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Balancing Play-Based Learning With Curricular Mandates: Considering the Views of Northern Canadian Teachers and Early Childhood Educators

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We discuss early childhood educators' perceptions of what constitutes play, the contributions of play to children's learning, tensions arising from and principles guiding their use of play in their teaching contexts. Participants, who are primary teachers, early childhood educators, administrators and consultants working in northern communities in Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, and Saskatchewan, voiced their views in interviews. Their views are discussed in terms of curriculum expectations relating to play in curriculum documents and the theories and findings within the play research literature.

Many researchers and designers of recent kindergarten curricula speak with one voice about the contributions of play to young children's learning and literacy, social, emotional, and physical development, and positive dispositions toward learning (e.g., Alberta Education, 2014; Manitoba Education, 2011; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010a, 2010b, 2013; Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2009, 2010, 2013). In play research, as summarized by Wood (2007), "play is regarded as essential to lifelong learning, creativity and well-being" (p. 311). Aligned with this view of play, the curricula for kindergarten in four Canadian provinces direct teachers to "promote high quality, age-appropriate, play-based learning experiences" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 1); "embed intentional opportunities for learning in the physical environment and play activities" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010b, p. 7); "design play-based, developmentally appropriate interactions, relationships, environments and experiences" (Manitoba Education, 2011, p. 1); and "provide support, space and resources for inquiry, play and imagination" (Alberta Education, 2014, p. 69). The underlying assumption across the four curricula, consistent with Wood's (2007) summary of play research, is that "play is the foundation for children's learning" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 5). In kindergarten curricula across Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario, curriculum developers have clearly positioned play as an integral part of the learning landscape for children. However, there is no mention of play in grade 1 curriculum expectations.

There is also no recognition of different conceptualizations of play that might exist across rural, urban, and suburban communities in each quadrant of a province, nor across Aboriginal communities within each province. It appears that curriculum developers have taken up a Western view of play as a universal, natural activity of children that supports their learning and development (Fleer, 2009). Differences in "ways of knowing, doing, and learning, including First Nations and Métis ways of knowing," are recognized in a Saskatchewan curriculum support document (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 2), however. An Ontario policy document moves toward recognizing cultural differences as well, with the expectation that "First Nations play an active role in the development and approach to early years programs that meet their local community needs" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 9). These views have not made their way into the references to play and learning in curriculum documents. Furthermore, researchers explain that there is a "distinct gap in the literature on Indigenous children's play in Canada, and internationally, that is generated through Indigenous methodologies and grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing and doing" (Gerlach, Browne, & Suto, 2014, p. 248), leaving curriculum developers with little research to draw on when designing curricula.

In this paper we identify challenges that arise as teachers navigate among sometimes compatible and sometimes competing provincial policies, local cultures and expectations, and research. We draw on primary teachers', early childhood educators', an administrator's, and a consultant's responses to interview questions on their views of play. Following a description of the participants and our research methods, we discuss themes in participants' views in terms of relevant literature and provincial curricula. We conclude with a summary

of implications for practice and policy and further questions to guide conversations about play in early childhood learning settings.

Methods

Participants

The 34 participants, from Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario, are part of a larger research study exploring ways to enhance children's oral language and writing through play entitled "Northern Oral Language and Writing through Play (NOW Play)." We selected these four provinces because they are where we currently or have previously worked as classroom teachers, speech-language pathologists, and teacher-educators.

As indicated in Table 1, most participants are K-1 teachers. They are experienced educators, with 26 participants having six or more years of experience working with children as early childhood educators or teachers. All Alberta and Saskatchewan participants are female. One Ontario participant and two Manitoba participants are male. One Manitoba and two Ontario participants are First Nations educators, and all other participants are of European background.

The number of participants varies from province to province based on the number of educators who volunteered to take part in the study. Participants in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba work in one northern school division in each province. The early childhood educators work in daycare settings in a town within the school division catchment in each province. The majority of children in the Alberta schools speak English as their mother tongue, with some children speaking Cree and others German in their homes. In the Saskatchewan schools, the majority of children are exposed to varying levels of English and/or Cree in their home and school environments. In the Manitoba schools, the majority of students speak English as their first language, with some children having exposure to Cree and Salteaux languages in their homes and in the Aboriginal Head Start program. The Ontario teachers work in three different First Nations communities in the northwestern part of the province. In one school, Anishnaabemowin is the children's mother tongue. English is spoken in the homes of some children in the other two schools and the children have 30-minute Anishnaabemowin classes daily.

The school divisions were selected randomly within the northern half of each of the other three provinces, and school division superintendents initially granted permission for their schools and teachers to participate in this seven-year project. Flyers were sent to schools and daycares in the communities within the school divisions to recruit participants. The Ontario teachers and Aboriginal Head Start teacher expressed interest in the research study after attending a presentation on early literacy and play conducted by one of the authors of this paper at a conference hosted by the Kwayaciiwin Education Resource Centre. Their community leaders and education director agreed to allow the educators and their students to participate in the research.

Table 1: Participants' Years of Experience and Teaching Contexts

Province	Years of Experience			Teaching Context			
	0 to 5	6 to 15	16+	Daycare	Aboriginal Head Start	Primary School	Consultant/ Principal
Ontario (n=8)	2	3	3	0	1	7	0
Manitoba (n=16)	6	4	6	1	2	11	2
Saskatchewan (n=3)	0	2	1	0	0	3	0
Alberta (n=7)	0	2	5	2	0	4	1
Totals	**8**	**11**	**15**	**3**	**3**	**25**	**3**

Data Collection and Analysis

Data sources are participants' responses to 6 of 14 questions in semistructured interviews conducted in their schools. Interviews were conducted in the spring of 2014 by the three authors. Participants' responses to the remaining questions are data sources for another paper (Peterson, McIntyre, & Forsyth, under review). The interview questions relevant to this paper are as follows:

1. Tell me about your years of teaching/daycare experience.

2. What cultural backgrounds do your children come from? What languages are spoken in children's homes?

3. What makes your school / Aboriginal Head Start program / daycare unique?

4. Tell me a success story where you were able to make a difference with your children. What contributed to your children's success?

5. Have you implemented play activities in your classroom / daycare / Aboriginal Head Start program? What kinds of play activities do you use and what do you find works best with your children?

6. What do you see as the challenges and benefits of a play-based approach to learning?

Interview responses were transcribed and analyzed inductively (Patton, 2014), as we did not want to impose categories on teachers' perspectives on the following topics: definitions of play, benefits of play, and challenges of play. We carried out an inductive procedure for analyzing all documents we could find online relating to early childhood education within each of the four provinces to gain a sense of the curriculum perspectives on play across the four provinces. Initially, using the word *play* as a descriptor, we found references to play in each document. Emerging themes were then identified from each play description in each document, and we compared and contrasted themes across the four provinces' documents.

Compatible and Contradictory Perspectives on Play and Learning

Our analysis of interview responses and curriculum documents has revealed both compatible and contradictory views on play and its contributions to young children's learning. Participants and curriculum documents present a view of play as motivational and important to children's oral language and overall learning, yet at the same time there is no mention of play in grade 1 curricula, and grade 1 teachers find that their students' parents are not comfortable with the notion of their children playing in school. Participants describe play as child-initiated activity where children have freedom of choice as they discover and construct understandings from their interactions with others and with objects. At the same time, participants assert that adult scaffolding is needed to support and extend children's learning through play.

In the following sections, we discuss tenets of the play ethos, juxtaposing them with participants' perspectives and theories that challenge the play ethos and create tensions for teachers and early childhood educators in their daily work with children.

Universality of Play in Early Childhood?
Participants' views on play reflected a "play ethos" (Smith, 2009, p. 4) in that teachers, early childhood educators, consultants, and principals alike championed play as an engaging, natural, and enjoyable tool for discovery and for supporting children's oral language and social development. All agreed with an Ontario grade 1 teacher that "children really want to play." A Saskatchewan pre-kindergarten teacher connected children's enjoyment to their learning by saying that play helps children to "retain [what they learned] better [because] they are doing what they want to do." A grade 1 teacher from the same province furthered this notion by saying that play is "more of a natural way of learning." Participants have observed children engaged in play activities and feel play is motivational and engaging, as described by a kindergarten teacher:

> The benefits [of play-based learning] are that the kids enjoy school and they love to learn. Instead of being upset because they can't do something, say if I just gave them paper work, and they don't quite know how to do it they would probably ... get to that point where ... they don't like school anymore ... and they don't want to do the assignment and they will sit there if they can't do it … and do nothing or wait 'til they get that support ... and when you walk away they stop.… Whereas with the learning type of activities as they play they tend to be much happier. They are excited about school.

This tenet of the play ethos is strong in curriculum documents as well, with the word *natural* appearing in many documents. For example, the Saskatchewan resource for kindergarten teachers (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2009) draws on McCain, Mustard, and Shanker (2007), stating: "Play is a natural mode of learning and the foundation for the kindergarten program" (p. 8). Similarly, the Ontario Ministry of Education (2007) makes an explicit link between play and learning: "Play is a means to early learning that capitalizes on children's natural curiosity and exuberance" (p. 5). Children's enjoyment and engagement, linked to an assumption about the naturalness of play, is an important theme supporting the play ethos. Additionally, proponents of the play ethos feel that children experience feelings of success when involved in play activities, and emphasize the importance of children's freedom to choose how they participate in play activities (e.g., Vitiello, Booren, Downer, & Williford, 2012).

The notion of play as natural and normal is grounded in Western cultural perspectives on children's play (Cannella & Viruru, 2004; Fleer, 2009). Stemming from Rousseau's Romantic view of childhood, the play ethos has such authority "that it makes questioning feel counter-intuitive, irreverent and, indeed, 'un-natural'" (Taylor, 2013, p. 114).

The literature is not universally supportive of the play ethos, however. As critical theorists have pointed out, notions of what constitutes play and ways to participate in play are socially constructed. Children's play "varies from one community to another depending on how children's communities are structured, how play is defined, and the kind of significance attributed to children's play in their communities" (Göncü, Tuermer, Jain, & Johnson, 1999, p. 162). Some children may be excluded from play opportunities and from the potential learning arising from the play on the basis of their sociocultural backgrounds (e.g., Ailwood, 2011; Brooker, 2002). Socially dominant children may exclude certain peers, and a socially dominant group of children might establish expectations for acceptable play in the classroom that do not include the types of play that other children prefer (Wood, 2007). Additionally, certain types of play, such as that involving play weapons and exuberant rough-and-tumble, might be deemed inappropriate and unsafe (Holland, 2003).

Participants, particularly those working in Aboriginal Head Start programs and First Nations schools, challenged the existence of a homogeneous view of play by identifying the need to create culturally appropriate play contexts that may not fit within Western views of play and its contributions to children's learning. Ontario participants said that they provide opportunities for outdoors play, link play to community activities (such as hunting and cooking), and use storytelling as a starting point for dramatic play. An Aboriginal Head Start early childhood educator explained that children in her program "play the drum as they are learning. [They] even say ABCs to the drum." They felt that, when planning play activities, it is important for teachers and early childhood educators to gain an understanding of community members' beliefs about the value of play and how these beliefs are conveyed to children, and to consider the ways that historical, political, and socioeconomic conditions influence children's play (Gerlach, Browne, & Suto, 2014). Taking these conditions into account involves considering the ways in which social relationships, community values, and ongoing practices have shaped what community members attend to when talking about play and providing environments for what they view as play (Fleer, 2009).

Play Supports Young Children's Learning?
Another tenet of the play ethos is the existence of a link between play and children's oral language development. Lewis, Boucher, Lupton, and Watson (2000), for example, found that symbolic play significantly correlated with the development of the expressive and receptive language of children from one to six years of age. Participating teachers also identified this link. An Ontario grade 1 teacher stated, "I find that when the kids are in play, you hear a lot more oral language. The kids are talking more amongst themselves and it's nice to hear them talk to each other and ask 'What are you doing?'" A language consultant also expressed this belief, stating, "It's certainly a natural way in terms of facilitating language learning."

In addition to supporting children's oral language, play-based learning also supports children's social development, as it is an avenue through which children can interact with peers and build numerous social skills (e.g., Teasley, 1995). Participants highlighted the social nature of play. As one Alberta kindergarten teacher explained, children "are learning to get along with a lot of different kids." A participating principal elaborated on the link between social development and play:

> [Students] develop socialization skills. I think, depending on where you are, socialization skills are really important today. It seems like now there are more technical games and the kids are on the couch and they're playing all kinds of games and they're lacking socialization skills. There seems to be less human interaction, so I think that through natural play, they will develop better socialization skills, relationships, and friendships.

Social interaction within play was also valued by participants as a contributor to children's cognitive learning. A kindergarten teacher observed that it was "so interesting to hear the kids talk to each other—the problem solving … it's a benefit for them to work together." Participants agreed with a principal that "students learn from each other."

Links between play and learning also abound in theoretical and research literature. Vygotsky (1967), for example, asserted that dramatic play is "the leading source of development in preschool years…. The fact of creating an imaginary situation can be regarded as a means of developing abstract thought" (p. 6). Other authors have asserted that imaginative play "enables children to function beyond their existing level of competence" (Göncü et al., p. 150). Also supportive of the play ethos, but with the caveat that play has to be recognized as one of many activities in the daily lives of young children that contribute to their development, Smith (2009) explained that a wide body of research "suggests that pretend play is one way of acquiring cognitive (and literacy) skills, and indeed a natural and enjoyable way" (p. 15).

Although all of the study participants said that they valued the principles of play-based learning and were interested in infusing more play into their classrooms, many were conflicted about the legitimate role of play in classrooms beyond the preschool or kindergarten level. This challenge to the tenet of play as a forum for learning has also appeared in the literature. Wood (2007) explains that "play has always sat uneasily between the informal approaches that are more typical in pre-school settings and the more formal demands that are made in compulsory schooling" (p. 311).

School-based participants found that the play ethos is not widely accepted in their communities and even among their colleagues, making it difficult to implement play practices in classrooms. A kindergarten teacher noted that parents of her students had asked questions about how their children would transition from a play-based kindergarten program to a pencil-and-paper-based grade 1 program. She observed: "A lot of parents don't know a whole lot about it and they didn't experience it themselves, so for them, they're very worried." An early years consultant made similar observations:

> I think one of our biggest challenges is getting our administrators and our parents to realize the value in play, so that our colleagues and our parents aren't saying that kids are just coming to school to play. I actually have been asked by parents, "Why should I send my kid to kindergarten? All they're going to do there is play, and they can play at home." So for me, it's been a matter of educating those people, too, that this is play but it's very thought out, and the teacher and the adults in the classroom have a big role in the children's play in classrooms.

The need, expressed by the consultant, to educate others to recognize the learning that takes place in children's play, provides evidence of the power of this tenet of the play ethos.

In spite of their views on play and learning, however, grade 1 teachers had difficulty in scheduling time for play-based learning among competing curriculum demands. They agreed with researchers (e.g., Rogers & Evans, 2007; Shipley, 2013) that daily classroom routines should allow for extended and uninterrupted play times that encourage deeper involvement in play and more complex play activities, including group play, individual play, constructive play, and role play. Longer play periods allow children to explore, to make discoveries, to elaborate on and extend play themes, and to develop symbolic play. However, as explained by an Ontario kindergarten teacher, "there are different literacy activities or math activities and we have to throw art in there; sometimes time for play kind of gets shortened in the day because you just have so much to do, and I think I need to see if I learned how to incorporate it." Participants indicated that time for extended and uninterrupted play periods was often in short supply because they had to implement more formal, teacher-directed approaches to facilitating children's learning.

This was particularly true for grade 1 teachers. Indeed, a grade 1 teacher explained: "Another one of the challenges is just that with the heavier academic load, it's hard sometimes to pull the curriculum in and think, 'How could they learn this through play?' It really takes some creative thinking." Another grade 1 teacher talked about "doing a lot of soul searching in order to give myself freedom to … have stations" where children choose among a number of activities. She worried that curriculum outcomes might not be achieved when students had greater control over the activities within the stations. Additionally, one teacher wondered, "How do you assess play-based learning? What does that look like in comparison to traditional teacher-based instruction? And when do you assess that? … And does that mean that they [the children] do no pencil tasks?" Grade 1 teachers felt that the learning activities, whether play based or pencil and paper based, had to lead to measureable outcomes in order to justify the time devoted to them. The play ethos assumptions about play being child centred and open ended contradicted the accountability demands placed on grade 1 teachers in particular.

Play is Open-ended and Child-centred?
Another tenet of the play ethos is that play is open-ended activity where children interact with each other and with objects. According to participants, open-ended play involves an absence of formal structures and adult-imposed directions/restrictions on the activity and outcomes of play. An Aboriginal Head Start educator talked about children "choosing wherever they're going to play." In addition, all kindergarten teachers talked about having free play times when children were invited to go to centres, such as sand and water tables, construction centres with blocks or play dough, dramatic play centres, or centres with toys. A grade 1 teacher gave an example of how manipulating and experimenting with concrete materials was not sufficient to define play. Instead, she felt that "the kids are playing when they control it. Just being hands on, as we did in math today—to me, that's not play." Indeed, a principal observed that if teachers controlled activities identified as play, they risked "script[ing] to the point of where it wasn't really play at all." These participants' views of play align with researchers' definitions of playful behaviour as "an activity in which the process of playing is more important than the end result" (Pellegrini & Van Ryzin, 2009, p. 70). An early childhood educator provided a metaphor to explain the flexible, child-controlled nature of play: "Rather than saying, 'Here's a bag of flour and you can only make a cake,' you are recognizing that you can make so much more with flour than a cake." All participants agreed that child-centred play is supported by teachers who are attuned and

responsive to students' interests and background experiences when planning activities involving play.

The play ethos assumption regarding play as child centred appears to contradict participants' beliefs that it is necessary for adults to scaffold children's learning through one-on-one interactions. In some cases, as voiced by a grade 1 teacher, the interactions took the form of "expanding [children's] horizons" by encouraging them to engage in more than one particular free-choice activity or centre. Most frequently, however, teachers talked about asking questions and talking one on one with a child about the topic at hand to extend the individual child's knowledge. Another grade 1 teacher gave an example of a time when she met with a child playing with a toy cow and asked the child, "What sound does a cow make? What are the colours of your cow?" Her goal in asking questions was "to deepen the play or to extend it."

Participants said that providing the needed scaffolding requires having educational assistants working alongside teachers. For example, a grade 1 teacher stated:

> For many interactions, to keep that play learning focus, you need an adult to kind of comment and guide you along….
> If there is another person with the play-based learning, it's a way to document … whatever that skill may be that you're
> assessing, whether it is oral language or whether it is manners or conversation.

Vygotskian theorists Bodrova and Leong (2009) support the principle that adult interactions are important to scaffold children's learning through play; they explain that adults' questions and interested conversation raise the level of the play toward more abstract mental representations. This principle is elaborated in the Saskatchewan kindergarten curriculum (2010), which provides specific forms of adult-child interactions in play settings, such as asking authentic questions, offering ideas that extend the play, and introducing vocabulary. Participants advise that the benefits of adult scaffolding can best be realized when teachers and early childhood educators have the time to interact one on one with children.

Contradictions regarding assumptions about play being child centred are apparent in participants' belief that play has to be more teacher directed in grade 1 than it does in kindergarten. A grade 1 teacher had many questions that challenged this tenet of the play ethos:

> If the children control the play, how do you do the learning? You're kind of like, 'Here are some things' and hopefully
> they'll kind of go in the direction you're hoping for. But if they don't, what do you do? … There's a lot more pressure
> on us nowadays because of all of the stuff with the Auditor General slamming First Nations schools. And so now they
> test us constantly and ask, 'Have the kids made a year's progress?'

Some grade 1 teachers used the concrete experiences generated in play activities as starting points for writing and reinforcement to consolidate curriculum learning. One grade 1 teacher, for example, talked about a student in her class "who is obsessed with cars. So he'll play with cars and then write about the car because he can see it, he can feel it, he can touch it." Other grade 1 teachers described games intended to develop literacy or math knowledge and skills, and specific activities where literacy, mathematics, and subject-area curricula played a central role in the play. Some grade 1 teachers listed play activities in the classroom as "playing with pattern, dice, and card games," inquiry projects, music and dance, "puzzles you're putting together for compound words," and sequencing parts of a story. They talked about dramatic play, sometimes using puppets, arising from the teacher reading or telling a story or from the children's favourite movie, playing with magnets and other science materials, playing outside, either at recess or in games during physical education classes, and going on field trips to explore underneath a stone or to search for tadpoles. A language consultant encouraged teachers to find dramatic play opportunities in learning activities across the curriculum. She gave the example "if you're doing an experiment, can you pretend to be scientists?"

Grade 1 teachers felt a need to engage children in more formal, teacher-directed learning activities. In spite of their adherence to the play ethos tenet that play supports children's learning, they felt the need to define play less as a child-initiated activity and more as an activity involving small groups of children using concrete materials to support problem solving and inquiry or to scaffold writing.

Issues for Future Investigation

Early childhood educators, teachers, administrators, and consultants spoke with one voice in support of the play ethos (Smith, 2009). They agreed that play supports young children's oral language, social development, and learning, and is motivational and engaging for children. Taking up Western notions of play as an inherent characteristic of childhood and fundamental to children's learning (Cannella

& Viruru, 2004; Fleer, 2009; Grieshaber & McArdle, 2010), participants believed that play should be part of kindergarten and grade 1 classroom activity. However, grade 1 teachers told us that achievement of curriculum outcomes influences their use of play in classroom activity. Feeling pressured to teach mandated curriculum, they are concerned that the concept of play as a child-controlled, open-ended activity has to be rethought for grade 1 classrooms, particularly given that there is no explicit mention of play in grade 1 curricula across the four provinces. Grade 1 teachers voiced what Wood (2013) refers to as the "struggle with educational and policy-centred versions of 'purposeful' play, as well as ideological versions of free play and free choice" that has remained "a consistent theme in research and practice" (p. 13). As such, our research emphasizes the need for educators, curriculum developers, policy makers, and researchers to place high priority on working together to address these competing demands and to challenge tenets of the play ethos that present tensions in their work with young children.

Although participants took up a Western cultural perspective on play as a universal, natural part of childhood, they also believed that play must be culturally appropriate, taking into account the local community's cultural expectations about what is considered to be play, what types of play are appropriate within and outside classrooms, ways in which adults interact with children in play activities, and the allocation of space for play. They described particular play practices that aligned with cultural practices in their communities. Their practices enact a view, espoused by researchers and theorists (e.g., Chen, Masur, & McNamee, 2011; Dender & Stagnitti, 2014; Hedges, Cullen, & Jordan, 2011), that children's play is influenced by cultural, social, and historical factors and must be understood as a culturally and contextually situated practice. Their views and observations indicate a need for further exploration of what counts as play across diverse communities, and ways in which conversations about the contextual and sociocultural constructions of play can be initiated among teachers, early childhood educators, curriculum developers, and policy makers.

This paper has brought together the perspectives of early childhood educators, teachers, consultants, and administrators to identify issues that will guide our ongoing "NOW Play" research. We hope that this paper will be helpful to inform research and conversations among all who work with and care for young children and who develop curriculum and policy as we strive to address issues and tensions that endure in the everyday lives of early childhood practitioners in northern Canadian communities.

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Thinking With Time in Early Childhood

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This article contributes to the existing literature on the concept of time in the context of early childhood, highlighting its complexity. Using four narratives, it demonstrates how different conceptualizations of time influence practice, having the power to either restrict and constrain or enrich and provide opportunities for experimentation and creative expression. After challenging narrow conceptualizations of time, the article engages with the writings of feminist theorist Elizabeth Grosz, feminist physicist Karen Barad, and anthropologist Tim Ingold, who view time as a creative force that has agency. The article also explores ways of using documentation in early childhood settings when viewing time as a process and as a creative flow.

Keywords: curriculum; hermeneutics; play (spiel); teacher education; transcultural

As an early childhood educator, I often think about time. It is a very important part of our practice: we need to have time to meet, connect, document, reflect, share, respectfully disagree, seek multiple perspectives, listen to each other, inquire, breathe, really notice, stay in the moment, appreciate. Several early childhood scholars have highlighted the complexity of time in the field of early childhood (Kummen, 2010; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2013; Rose & Witty, 2010; Wien & Kirby-Smith, 1998).

Wien and Kirby-Smith (1998) problematized the production-schedule organization of time, emphasizing how deeply certain practices, such as following the clock, as well as routines and transitions, are embedded in the field of early childhood, with educators acting as timekeepers. They argued that when the clock governs the schedule of the day, it intrudes on children's creativity and exploration. By removing the clocks from their program, they wanted to remove taken-for-granted ideas, challenge educators to rethink practices, and allow new ideas to emerge.

Rose and Witty (2010) contributed to the critical problematization of time by illuminating its social construction. They examined how clocked time influences and governs children, families, educators, identities, learning, relationships, and curriculum planning, thus contributing to their normalized constructions.

Pacini-Ketchabaw (2012) expanded on thoughts about the tyranny of time and early childhood "clocking practices" (p. 155) by exploring the clock as being both "a producer and an enabler," affording "possibilities and exclusions for practice" (p. 159). She invited educators to discover ways of acting with the clock instead of being acted on by it.

Kummen (2010) problematized the discourse of routines and transitions in early childhood spaces. She examined how dominant discourses of child development embedded in routines and transitions result in rigid implementation, preventing opportunities for rich and meaningful exploration and learning. She also emphasized the importance for early childhood educators to engage in critical reflection in order to resist dominant discourses, and to invite complexity and intention into their practice.

Pacini-Ketchabaw (2013) also explored the temporal dimension in relation to transitions in early childhood. She disrupted and politicized the focus on time as "linear, time as extensive, time as a series of 'nows'" (p. 224). By bringing in Deleuzian-inspired writings, Pacini-Ketchabaw (2013) proposed to engage with the notion of time in early childhood in a different way, by thinking about it as an intensive flow, as duration.

The purpose of this article is to highlight the complexities of time and to demonstrate how its different conceptualizations influence practice in the field of early childhood, having the power to either restrict and constrain or enrich and provide opportunities for experimentation and creative expression. The article also explores ways of using documentation in early childhood settings when viewing time as a process and as a creative flow.

I use four narratives in this article. Three of them took place in local childcare centres. The fourth story took place at a family friends' birthday party. All the names used in narratives were changed to ensure confidentiality. The first narrative is an example of educators' practice being influenced by narrow conceptualizations of time, and the restricting implications of these conceptualizations on children's experimentation and creativity. The three narratives that follow are examples of possibilities that unfold when time is viewed in broader terms. I draw on the writings of feminist theorist Elizabeth Grosz, feminist physicist Karen Barad, and anthropologist Tim Ingold to explore time as a creative force that has agency.

Mittens

It was a busy morning at the childcare centre. The air was buzzing with energy, with children involved in many projects. An educator set up an art activity on one of the tables. She approached children in the dramatic play area who were involved in the process of negotiating rules for the game they had just started. "Karen, it is your turn to do art. We are making mittens today," she told one of the children. Karen looked at her and reluctantly left the area, walking to the table. She sat there, looking at the purple cut-out shape of a mitten. The educator explained to her that she needed to dip cookie cutters in paint and then press them on the mitten to create a design. Karen quickly picked up a cookie cutter, dipped it, and pressed it. She did it again. "I am done!" She announced, stood up, and ran back to the dramatic play area, where the game was continuing without her. The process took about 30 seconds. The educator then approached another child, and another, pulling them from their deep engagement in activities to the art table so they could make mittens. The children did not complain. They knew they were expected to do art, but the energy at the art table was flat, with children impatiently dipping and pressing and skipping away, looking relieved.

As I was watching the process, I wondered about the intention for this activity. I also wondered, what is wasted time and time well spent? Does time get wasted when spent in chunks that interrupt the flow? When time is viewed in chunks, such as an art time chunk, or a free play chunk, is it possible to notice the magic of the experience? When time is controlled by adults assigning certain small chunks, does it truly allow for experimentation? Where does this practice of time-chunking come from? Is it a reflection of our society's beliefs about being useful and productive: when you produce something, it is visible and noticeable, and then you are accountable? Does it arise from the need to show a product to the families, thus asking for recognition and respect? How is it connected to beliefs about educators and about children? Pacini-Ketchabaw (2012) challenges the belief in the "productive, professional, and orderly early childhood educator" (p. 158) as opposed to children who "materialize as 'unruly' human beings in need of intervention to encourage more organized behaviours" (p. 158). Do these beliefs somehow influence the decision to interrupt children's deep engagement in order to produce something? Do we have a right to interrupt their flow? What gets lost in this process?

What are the possibilities for practice when time is not viewed in chunks? In the next section, I explore a different conceptualization of time, drawing on the writings of feminist theorist Elizabeth Grosz, feminist physicist Karen Barad, and anthropologist Tim Ingold to challenge myself to think about time broadly, moving away from chunks of time toward time as a creative force.

Time as a Creative Force

Many metaphors are used to describe time. I thought about my upbringing in Russia and the expressions that were used there regarding time: to waste time, stretch time, kill time. I started travelling, and I found that in the USA, Norway, and Canada people used similar expressions: If only I had enough time! Time is running out! I need more time. Time is money. Time is precious. Time is up. Don't waste your time! It's not time yet. Time flies. Time heals.

When I thought about all the metaphors surrounding time, I was surprised to discover that time was often represented as something passive, something that could be controlled. It could be wasted, stretched, or even killed. I wondered, is time passive? Are past, present, and future separate entities or interconnected, influencing each other?

Grosz (1999a) finds similarities in the ways time is conceived in the writings of Darwin, Nietzsche, Bergson, and Deleuze. Each of the philosophers rejects the concept of time as passive and neutral (Grosz, 1999a). Instead, each of them proposes in his own way to consider time as "an open-ended and fundamentally active force . . . whose movements and operations have an inherent element of surprise, unpredictability, or newness" (Grosz, 1999a, p. 4). In the heart of this conceptualization is the concept of chance as random, unpredictable, not controlled and regulated, but unfolding "with its own rhythms and logic, its own enigmas and impetus and signaling the openness of the future" (Grosz, 1999a, p. 4).

Grosz (1999a) "raises time as a question, as the question of the promise of the new" (p. 6). Grosz (1999b) inspired me to think about time

as an open, creative, active force that is unknown, emerging, and becoming, not being, where past, present, and future are intertwined and influence each other. Her writing challenged me to rethink time as a concept that "can no longer be contained in the model, plan, blueprint, or representation of the present, but must be seen as a positive leap into an unknown" (Grosz, 1999a, p. 8).

Grosz (1999b) connects the concept of becoming with Deleuze's ideas about "the movement from a virtual unity into an actual multiplicity" requiring "a certain leap of innovation and creativity" (p. 27). She considers becoming, not being, to be necessary for this process as "a movement of differentiation and divergence" (Grosz, 1999b, p. 28). Deleuze (cited in Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kind, Kocher, Wapenaar, & Kim, 2014) called this creative process "lines of flight" (p. 3). I picture these lines of flight as strong rays of energy able to break through the old systems and generate new thoughts and ideas, fuelled by the power of creativity.

Agency and Intra-Activity

Barad (2007) proposes that everything in this world has agency. She introduces the concept of intra-activity as a dynamic in-between space that offers a means of engaging in the world (Kind, 2013). Barad (2007) does not consider time to be a "succession of evenly spaced individual moments" (p. 180). Instead, temporality "must be accounted for in terms of the dynamics of intra-activity" (Barad, 2007, p. 180). Time comes into existence, is reconfigured through each intra-action, "thereby making it impossible to differentiate in any absolute sense between creation and renewal, beginning and returning, continuity and discontinuity, here and there, past and future" (Barad, 2007, p. ix). This perspective shifts the focus away from subjects and objects to the spaces in-between, allowing us to consider multiplicities and alliances (Kind, 2013).

Past, Present, and Future Interconnected

Barad's ideas about agency are visible in the writings of Ingold (2011b), who argues that the world is not something we look at, "but a process that we are part of" (p. 201). According to Ingold (2011b), landscape is not passive, fixed, and unchanging, but is in fact "in motion, but on a scale immeasurably slower and more majestic than that on which our own activities are conducted" (p. 201). Ingold (2011a) describes landscape as "a textured composite of diverse materials that are grown, deposited and woven together" (p. 130). Landscape has history, and everything that comes into contact with it influences it (Ingold, 2011a). I imagined landscape being shaped and layered by many diverse forms of intra-actions among all living organisms and materials. We cannot stand aside and observe this process as spectators, nor can we stand aside and observe a passage of time (Ingold, 2011b). Merleau-Ponty (1962, cited in Ingold, 2011b) wrote: "The passage of one present to the next is not a thing which I conceive, nor do I see it as an onlooker, I effect it" (p. 196). According to Ingold (2011b), the present cannot be *marked off* from the past that it has replaced or a future that will, in turn replace it; it rather gathers the past and future into itself, like refractions in a crystal ball" (p. 196, emphasis in original). Ingold inspired me to think about time as being layered with memories, experiences, history, and dynamic intra-actions that affect it, with time itself having agency, influencing, and shaping everything that comes into contact with it.

How are these ideas relevant to early childhood practice? I proceed with three narratives to illustrate possibilities for creativity and experimentation that unfold when time is conceptualized as a creative force.

Dance of Agency

Jake was standing on one side of the room, being very still, concentrating on something in front of him. I was curious, and watched quietly. All of a sudden, he ran fast to the other side of the room, where a fan was. When he reached the fan, he stood there for a moment and then ran back. He continued running to the fan again and again and again, always with a long pause before the next run. He stood quietly, concentrating. The more I watched, the more curious I became.

After Jake's second run to the fan, I noticed it too. The fan was rotating: turning to a certain point and then turning back. Jake was intently watching, timing the rotation of the fan. At a particular moment, the fan blew on a white curtain hanging from the ceiling, making it full like a sail. Jake timed his movement precisely—just a moment before it would happen, he ran to the curtain, and when he got there, he became wrapped in its full curve.

Ingold (2011a) perceives the role of the artist as joining with and following

the forces and flows of a material that brings the form of the work into being. The work invites the viewer to join the artist as a fellow traveller, to look with it as it unfolds in the world, rather than behind it to an originating intention of which is the final product. (p. 216)

In this narrative, Jake was joining in with materials and materials were joining with him. Each of them was an active participant in the process, and each of them offered "certain possibilities in their relations to each other" (Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010).

Ingold (2013) writes about "the dance of agency" (p. 99) in which each partner acts on and is acted on in turn by other partners. If one of the partners is taken away, the performance will fail (Ingold, 2013). This dance of agency is the dance between equal partners who relate and interact with one another (Ingold, 2013). In the narrative "Dance of Agency," Jake, curtain, fan, and wind were engaged in improvisation as "a rhythmic quality of working with the ways of the world" (Ingold, 2011, cited in Kind, 2013, p. 437).

Experimentation and creative processes need time. Artists take time to really engage with materials. By taking children's deep involvement in creative experiences seriously and by moving away from viewing time in chunks, we communicate to children that their work is respected, that it is valuable and worth spending time on and putting effort into.

Energy of the Forest

A group of 15 children and three educators went to the forest across the street from a childcare centre. It was Eddie's first time coming to the forest with this group of children. He had recently joined the centre and was just starting to speak English. I watched him getting to know the forest, taking it in, and experimenting with his senses, the movement of his body, and the movement of the forest. He picked up a big branch that had fallen from a tree, and was swinging it from side to side with a big smile on his face.

Eddie picked up a large stick that curved like a hook on one side and tapped it on the rocks, the trees, the branches, the ground, the hill, and the dirt repeatedly. He was following his own rhythm, although there was a lot of activity going on around him, with children following their own rhythms. He continued tapping, then walked with the stick, leaning on it and using it like a cane, bending his body forward, taking big steps. He ran up and down the hill with his stick, tapping the hill with it as he ran up, sliding on his bottom and tapping it again on the way down.
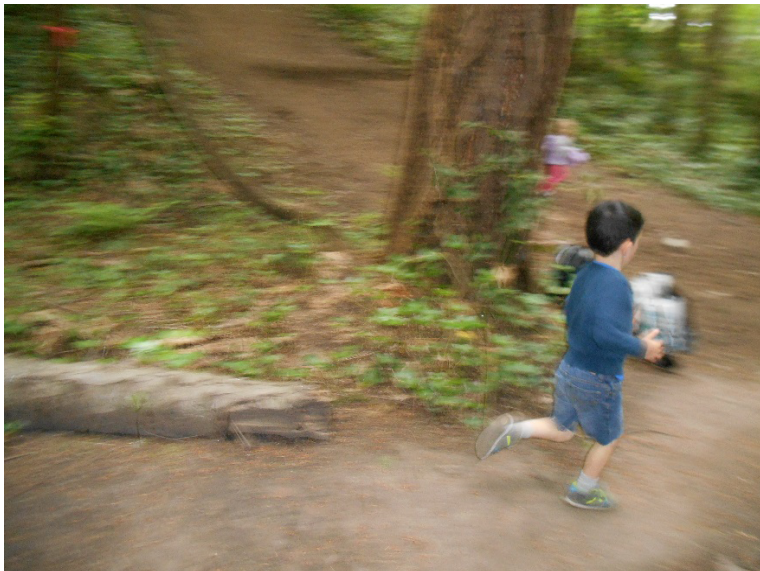
A group of boys were running up and down the hill, and Eddie started running up and down with them, holding his stick. They ran up and down several times together, and then when the boys moved to a dried up creek nearby that would flood when it was raining but was now dry, Eddie ran with them, still holding his stick. The boys took turns jumping across the creek. They repeated the movement over and over, developing their own rhythm. I felt the sense of connection and belonging that the movement offered.

When two boys left and only Eddie and Kevin remained at the creek, they continued the movement. When Eddie moved away from the area, Kevin ran after him, inviting him to come back, and Eddie did.

The boys did not speak when they were jumping, but I felt an invisible connection grow between them. Can movement and time connect? Can they build relationship? It was not only the two boys present, but the space, the landscape, the duration, and the movement that all played a role in this moment.

A large group of children were running up and down the hill. When they reached the top of the hill, Donna chanted, "I am the king of the castle, and you are the dirty rascal!" The others joined her, and soon they all started chanting it together, very loudly, repeating it over and over. I felt the energy of connection, power, and rhythm. I watched the duration, the unfolding of this moment, "the doing and the undoing" (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2014, p. 35): where exactly it started, how it was flowing, and how it faded, taken away by another development. The hill that offered the children the possibility of the experience was "not just a surface or supporting structure on which to stand, but part of the world, the substances of the world, in motion" (Ingold, 2011a, p. 435). The children were engaged with the world: the hill, the landscape of the forest, "the layers of what has come before, and what continues to shape what comes next" (Kind, 2013, p. 436). I noticed how the energy was changing, shifting; the children were leaving the forest carrying the energy of the experimentation, of the forest, of the hill, influenced by the landscape, its memories, and the energy. The children had uninterrupted time to engage with the forest, and the educators respected and appreciated their exploration, noticing connections, belonging, energy, and movement, and experiencing it all together with the children.

Birthday Party

I attended my friends' son's birthday party last summer. There was music, dancing, running, spinning, lights, darkness, friends hugging, snacks, cake, candles, excitement, laughter. . . . I tried describing it in words, this amazing energy, this duration, the intensity, the flow. Then I saw a picture that my friend took at the party. "And this is how it all felt," she commented on it.
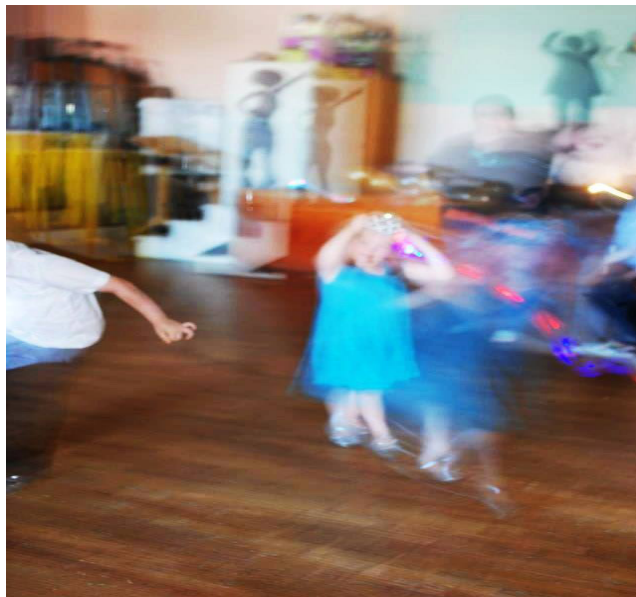
I was stunned. The photograph conveyed all those feelings that I was unable to describe with words.

Artist Leah Oates (n.d.) talks about just such a transitory space:

Transitory spaces have a messy human energy that is always in the present yet constantly changing. I find them endlessly interesting, alive places where there is a great deal of beauty and fragility. They are temporary monuments to the ephemeral nature of existence.

This beautiful description inspired me to think about using photography for documenting something not "frozen in time, but animated by it" (Oates, n.d.). How can I convey the energy, transitions, messiness, intensity, flow, beauty of time? How can documentation be used in early childhood settings when time is viewed as a process, as a creative flow?

Shifting Focus Away From Representation

Grosz (1999a) describes time as having "a quality of intangibility, a fleeting half-life . . . an evanescence, a fleeting or shimmering, highly precarious 'identity' that resists concretization, indication or direct representation" (p. 1). If time resists direct representation, and cannot be contained, how can I move beyond representation? What unknown will open up for me?

According to Kind (2013), focusing on representation means emphasizing "the passivity of the world and the agency of the subject who perceives" (p. 428). Kind (2013) encourages her readers to consider photography "as a process of collaborating and moving *with* the world, an in-between space, rather than a view from either the outside or inside" (p. 429, emphasis in original).

According to Modeen (2013), it is necessary to shift focus from "an insistence on representation to a perspective that functions as a perceptual 'gathering'" (p. 136), with the emphasis on memory, "particularly for images that are haunting with the evocation of the past" (p. 141). Her thoughts connect with Kind's ideas about looking with, experimenting, attending "to the intra-activity of materials and processes" (p. 439). Kind (2013) poses this question: "What would it be not to render the world in appearance, but in substance" (p. 435)?

Ingold (2011a) differentiates between optic and haptic perspectives, with optic being distant and detached and haptic being hands on, close range, and bodied. Going back to the narratives "Energy of the Forest" and "Birthday Party," when I see, through an optic perspective, a boy jumping over a creek or a girl standing, I see them as objects of perception, "separate from the world of which they are part" (Kind, 2013, p. 435). Looking through a haptic perspective gives me an opportunity to "attend to the world's aurality" (Kind, 2013, p. 435) and to experience the whole process filled with energy and movement.

Considering optic and haptic perspectives also made me think about the many times I tried so hard to capture the image that was perfectly representing what was happening in front of me, a moment that was frozen in time. However, looking back at that perfect image, I sensed that it was auraless; it could not possibly represent the energy, the messiness, and the intensity of the moment. I also reflected on the many times I had deleted blurry photos because they were mistakes, in my opinion. I am intrigued by the blurriness of the photos used in the narratives "Energy of the Forest" and "Birthday Party." They hold the moments' aura, intensity, mystery, and movement, and I can feel the energy of the intra-activity when I look at those photos. Kind (2013) inspired me to consider making photos instead of taking them. For her, photography is not about "objective truth about a moment captured and frozen, rather rendering of eerily evocative and colourful processes and exchanges" (Kind, 2013, p. 439). Photography is about improvisation and creativity (Kind, 2013). It is about letting go of the preconceived ideas of what an image should be and relaxing into the unknown, into possibilities, playing with the image and being excited about it and inspired by it.

Viewing time as a process and a creative flow invites a different kind of documentation into the field of early childhood. This documentation needs to be intriguing, playful, and thought provoking; it needs to encourage us to "consider complicated ways of seeing" (Kind, 2013, p. 429). When time is conceptualized as a creative flow and documentation is seen as an invitation to engage in a conversation, possibilities for surprises and experimentation are endless.

Conclusion

Recently, one book on the library shelf caught my eye. I opened *Perfect* by Rachel Joyce (2013) and read the following passage on the first page: "Only when the clock stops does time come to life" (William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury*). The purpose of this article was to contribute to the existing literature on the concept of time in the field of early childhood by showing how different conceptualizations of time can either narrow or enrich creativity and experimentation. Rose and Witty (2010) challenged others "to keep the problem of time alive so that educators may follow the lines of flight that inquiry might take" (p. 271). I invited multiple perspectives into the conversation to challenge narrow conceptualizations of time. I invite you to join me in the process of opening the mind to new ideas, of attending to time coming to life with possibilities for creativity and experimentation.

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The Dead Tree: Reconsidering Toys in Early Years Spaces

Kim Atkinson

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Toys are ubiquitous in early years settings. Providing particular toys and grouping them in particular 'activity areas' has come to be regarded as an indicator of a quality program. How did this homogeneity of toys in childhood spaces emerge? This article explores some of the assumptions we carry about toys, and considers how social, commercial, and scientific discourses have shaped how we see childhood and toys and embedded particular "truths" in our educational thought. The author suggests that critically reflecting on the role of toys in early years settings can open possibilities for teachers and children to think differently about the image of the child, the image of the educator, and the construction of knowledge.

January can be grey and dreary on the west coast of British Columbia, and our preschool yard was no exception. Wet sand stuck to trucks, shovels, and buckets; all appeared uniformly grey. The grass had been trampled down to mud and dampness permeated everything. To top it off, someone had dumped a dead Christmas tree in our yard. It sat in the middle of the muddy space, a few straggling pieces of tinsel clinging to its branches. A boy walked up to it and examined it closely. He grasped the trunk and pulled. Nothing happened. He called out to his friends. A few gathered, grasped branches, and pulled. The tree moved! The children were delighted, and gleefully pulled it around the yard. The dead Christmas tree became a focal point of outdoor play for weeks. It was pulled, pushed, sat on, bashed, and crashed until it was reduced to a trunk with a few meagre branches.

The very thought of a dead tree as a plaything contradicts traditional ideas of what constitutes an early childhood toy, and provokes interesting questions about what a toy is. Why are particular toys deemed essential for early childhood settings? What assumptions do we carry about toys? What messages do toys send? How do toys shape who a child can be and how children can play? In this article I explore some of these questions and suggest that critical reflection on the role of toys in early years settings can open possibilities for teachers and children to think differently about the image of the child, the image of the educator, and the construction of knowledge.

In my role as a pedagogical facilitator in the Investigating Quality Project at the University of Victoria, I work alongside educators in their centres, and in my work with the Images of Learning Project (www.imagesoflearningproject.com/info/), I travel to communities all over the province of BC presenting seminars to educators. Within these roles I have the opportunity to visit many childcare settings and, while there are a few exceptions, the overwhelming majority share a common characteristic: they are filled with toys. Bins filled with cars, trucks, and animals are lined up on shelves, tubs of manipulatives that can be constructed into different configurations are stacked alongside unit blocks, lacing cards, peg boards, and puzzles. Toys for use with play dough and water and in sensory tables sit with felt pens, tracing shapes, and crayons. Dramatic play areas burst with plastic food, dishes, pots, pans, scarves, dresses, and capes. Dolls of varying sizes, colours, and shapes fill cradles and sit in small high chairs and in plastic strollers. Storage closets are filled to overflowing with extra materials, more puzzles, garages, castles, and barns. Toys are everywhere.

Not only are early years settings filled with toys, they are filled with the *same* toys. While the specifics vary slightly, they all have puzzles, cars, trucks, dolls, blocks, and so on. Furthermore, the toys are organized in the same ways, with particular areas designated for particular kinds of toys: block area, dramatic play area, puzzle area, sensory area. How did this homogeneity of toys in childhood spaces emerge?

The answer lies with the dominance of developmental theories of childhood that permeate North American educational thought. These theories contend that learning and development proceed along a universal, linear progression through well-defined stages within concrete categories such as motor skill, social emotional, and cognitive development. The implicit image of the child in developmental theory is of a child who is needy and incapable, a universal being who will "naturally" develop in predictable stages, no matter cultural or contextual differences. The image of the educator in this theory requires adults to provide the "right" kind of knowledge at the "right" time in a child's development. Knowledge within this framework is situated as concrete and measurable, where "meaning is taken for granted as pre-given, problems already preset with corresponding solutions, everything turns around finding, standardizing (and

trivializing) method in order to effectively reach the goal: stable, permanent knowledge" (Olsson, 2012, p. 92).

Developmental theories dominate how children are viewed, and, by extension, developmentally appropriate practice determines what materials children require to ensure that particular learning goals are met. These theories are embedded in our pedagogies and have come to be viewed as truth (MacNaughton, 2005). These "truths" are powerful; as Moss (Moss, 2001a, p. 10, cited in Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2014) writes, they "govern our ideas, thoughts, and actions, and determine what can be said and not said, what we consider normal or not normal, appropriate or inappropriate" (p. 51).

These "truths" about children's "normal" development were taken up in the late 1920s by toy manufacturers who advertised their use of "experts in developmental psychology and education" to design toys that "improved intelligence, school readiness, and character building" (Ogata, 2004, p. 8). The notion of toys as linked with scientific theories of learning continued even more forcefully into the postwar baby boom years as toy companies recognized an emerging new market of early education and care. Ogata (2004) elaborates on this expansion of toy marketing:

Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget's theory of developmental stages and a child's desire for hands-on experiential learning was known among prewar American nursery school teachers, but it became widely adopted in postwar pedagogy and fit neatly with educational toy manufacturers' aim to sell toys continuously during infancy and youth. . . . Playskool and Holgate both divided their catalogues into sections for different ages and advised retail merchants to suggest age-appropriate goods. A 1950 Playskool catalogue offered a short essay, "What Toys Shall I Buy for My Child?" by University of Chicago child development expert Ethel Kawin, who exclaimed, "It is not enough that toys are educational—they must be correctly educational so that they teach the right things at the right time in the right way!" (p. 10)

A rise in the familiarity and acceptance of theories of children's learning and development, along with new commercial opportunities that came with the baby boom and an increased focus on parenting as a social responsibility resulted in heightened importance placed on providing the "right kind" of toys.

Structuring early years environments with particular toys arranged in particular ways is regarded as an indicator of a quality program, as evidenced by the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-R), a quality assessment tool used widely in Canada and the USA. ECERS-R recommends "at least five different interest centers to provide a variety of learning," including props that relate to at least two different themes, two kinds of blocks, puzzles, and peg boards and "similar toys stored together; sets of toys in separate containers" (cited in MiraCosta College, n.d.).

Educational resources for teachers abound with advice on creating centres, exemplified by this excerpt from *Early Childhood News*:

Learning centers, often called zones or stations, provide a variety of curriculum activities using cognitive modes of learning, such as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. By using centers in your program, you can reach all children in the way they learn best. . . . You'll be amazed at how quickly your program turns into a "super-center." (Tomlin, 2006)

It is no wonder that most early years settings have the same toys arranged in the same ways. Decades of powerful social, commercial, and scientific discourses have shaped how we see childhood and toys and embedded particular "truths" in our educational thought.

However, many scholars and educators are contesting developmental theories, suggesting that there is no single truth about children, knowledge, or learning. They argue that these theories are simply one lens through which to view children, and they ask us to consider multiple lenses, multiple ways of seeing and thinking about children, learning, and childcare spaces. Moss urges us to consider children as "rich in potential, strong powerful, competent" (p. 1). He elaborates, citing Children in Europe (2008): "The 'rich' child is an active learner, 'seeking the meaning of the world from birth, a co-creator of knowledge, identity, culture and values; a citizen, the subject of rights not needs'" (Moss, 2010, p. 1). Within this alternative conception, children's learning is viewed as processes of constructing knowledge, where hypotheses are continually built and refined. Children are seen as researchers investigating their world. Educators' roles shift from transmitters of the "right kind of knowledge" to co-constructors of knowledge, researching alongside children. Learning is understood, not as a predictable linear progression, but as a series of advances, stops, and retreats as theories are tested, questioned, and taken in new directions. Children's pursuit of knowledge is conceived of as "intense, undomesticated, and vital experimentation" (Olsson, 2012, p. 89).

But how do shifting perspectives on the image of the child, the image of the educator, and ideas about knowledge relate to toys? Is

playing with toys still okay? Does free play with toys still make sense? What is wrong with activity centres? How is a dead tree any different from a toy prescribed by developmental theory?

The children who played with the dead tree in the preschool yard created stories and imagined possible worlds. The tree itself carried stories, perhaps of forests and holidays, but it did not prescribe particular uses or ways of being. A dead tree carries no expectations, no history of how it should be played with or understood. There is no wrong way to use a dead tree. There are no boundaries limiting character roles, dialogues, and scripts.

Toys, on the other hand, carry many meanings. They possess stories, histories, and messages of how they can be used. Wohlwend (2009) contends that toys are texts that hold particular meanings that "invite players to read and perform particular identities through play" (p. 61) She suggests that

toys communicate through the physical properties of their materials and their associated histories of use. Materials have iconic meanings: For example, the velvety fleece covering of a stuffed doll sends one message, whereas the sparkly metallic finish of a fashion doll's tiara sends another. . . . Through its iconic softness and its indexed history of nurture, the fleece doll communicates "cuddle me" to a young child. It is a sign, a form (in this case, a toy doll) that stands for something else. (p. 61)

Children are adept at identifying how toys can or should be used, as well as how they should not be used. They can "read" the landscape of a room and the toys within it. Early years settings' environments and materials prescribe certain ways children can be and do, with particular centres prescribing particular identities. For example the house area suggests specific roles and actions that are deemed appropriate; gender stereotypes and a "natural" domestic order (mother, father, baby) are embedded as an idealized image of home. A particular kind of play is expected in the home corner, play that "is regarded as intrinsic to early development and valorised by the DAP [developmentally appropriate practice] approach" (Taylor & Richardson, 2005, p. 166).

Space and objects speak, sending messages of what can and cannot be done and how one can or cannot be. So while "free play" in early years settings seems natural and unstructured, the environment and materials are inscribed with dominant understanding of "normal" behaviour and "normal" ways of being, doing, and playing. Gallacher (2006) puts it this way:

It is in this sense that Basil Bernstein (1977) has referred to nursery pedagogy as "invisible": the standard practices of freedom in preschool education—of "free play" or "free choice"—make it appear that everything comes from the child, that nurseries simply encourage the "natural" developmental unfolding of individual children. It seems that nursery educators do very little. Yet, this developmental unfolding is far from open-ended, and nursery educators do more than "babysit"; everything that happens in the nursery is calculated to ensure the "normal" development of children. Universal developmental norms are enacted in "developmentally appropriate practice" which governs both preschool educators and children, ordering them as particular kinds of subject. (p. 4)

A teacher observing children play with a dead tree cannot quickly correlate the play to learning goals. While learning will likely occur while children play with a dead tree, the kind of learning or outcomes that may occur cannot be easily predicted. There is no notion of a normal way to play with a dead tree, nor are there identifiable or measurable skills associated with playing with a dead tree.

In contrast, toys and materials recommended by ECERS are specifically suggested for their potential to teach particular skills. Block play, for example, is intended to provide "the opportunity to explore spatial, mathematical, and role-play possibilities" (p. 4); sand and water play gives children the "opportunity to learn concepts through active exploration with their senses" (Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 2005, p. 4). Under the heading "fine motor [activities]" we are advised that "children need a variety of age-appropriate and developmentally-appropriate toys and materials that they can manipulate with their hands and play with at will. These activities strengthen fine motor control while encouraging skill development that contributes to academic readiness" (p. 3). Even the daily schedule is considered a teaching tool; the ECERS guidelines state that "math skills can be taught effectively through routines, schedule, and play activities" (p. 3).

Toys are inscribed with highly identifiable meanings of the "correct" way to play. In this line of thought, "normal" child development occurs as children play with toys in particular ways and learn particular skills. Adults are easily able to judge whether a toy is being used correctly and if the appropriate skills are being attained. Conversely, adults can quickly see and judge children who seem not to be using toys in the correct way. Toys are embedded with developmental ideals, and how they are used thus becomes a measurement of developmental skills.

Traditional early years settings imply a very particular image of the child, wherein identifiable norms are enacted. This image of the child suggests that children of different ages require different materials (e.g., there are baby toys and toddler toys), that knowledge is static and compartmentalized into subjects and disciplines, and that children are only interested in materials of a particular kind. The image of the educator in this setting is of a teacher who controls the flow of the day, is able to enforce prescribed ways of being with toys and materials, and can asses skills and appropriate developmental stages through observation of children's use of toys. Learning is understood as individualistic and motivated by the material environment. As Gallacher (2006, citing Edwards & Knight, 1994) observes:

Educators organize and plan their material environments into a series of "learning centres" or "activity areas", such as the block play area, the sand pit and the doll corner. In this way, they embed the curriculum in the learning environment, planning and resourcing their environments to sign-post and create pathways to particular learning goals. (Gallacher, 2006, p. 8)

While I am not suggesting that toys are bad and should be removed from early years settings, I would argue that critical reflection on materials and environments might open possibilities for seeing and thinking differently. The many unseen assumptions embedded in materials and environments limit who children and teachers can be. Recognizing the social, cultural, commercial, and scientific discourses through which the "truths" of early learning materials have emerged allows for new questions and new conversations to begin. If we are to embrace an image of the child as competent, capable constructors of theories, and an image of teachers as co-researchers alongside children, then we must also reconsider materials and environments. If we are to embrace learning as "a cooperative and communicative activity, in which children construct knowledge, make meaning of the world, together with adults and, equally important, other children" (Moss, 2010, p. 1) and to consider "the destination of learning [as] open and uncertain, with a strong element of surprise and wonder" (Moss, 2010, p. 1) then we must embrace an environment that is open to possibilities of investigation and research.

The dead tree was wildly popular for the few weeks it was in our yard. While I never knew exactly what children learned while they played with it, I know there were multiple narratives and much experimentation, research, and investigation as the tree was dragged, pushed, pulled, climbed on, and made to stand. As a teacher, I had no expectations of how the tree should be handled, what learning outcomes I should expect, or even what learning might emerge. Nor did the children hold preconceived ideas about the proper use of a dead tree.

I am certainly not recommending that dead trees become standard material in early settings, but I would like to broaden our conversation about toys and environments. By engaging in critical dialogue that is open to thinking differently about childhood, learning, and teaching, I hope we might see the possibilities inherent in a dead tree.

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Promising Emerging Leader

We are happy to announce that our very own Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw has been selected as a Promising Emerging Leader in the Child Care Exchange's Most Powerful Emerging Leaders Search, an international process based in the USA. Of the 191 nominations vetted by a board of senior experts in the early childhood field, 56 were identified as fulfilling the board's criteria as a promising emerging leader. The criteria for selection was based on qualities and accomplishments in leadership, knowledge base, and spirit; in addition, applicants had to be 45 or under.

A write-up about Veronica appears in the May/June 2015 issue of the journal of the Child Care Exchange. Her accomplishments include leadership in research, prolific publication of books, articles, and editing of this journal; superb supervision and mentorship of over a dozen doctoral students; commitment to and multiple roles with practitioners; participation in government policy, and her work has had impact internationally.

Letters of nomination for Veronica included the following quotes:

"Veronica is an exceptional professor, supervisor and mentor."

"Veronica's outstanding contributions are characterized by her humility as well as her relentless and steely determination to make a difference to the lives of young children."

"She has an extraordinary output of high quality work that consistently brings new cutting edge interdisciplinary theoretical framings to the field."

"She sets an ethical example in her deep concern for the conditions of the world and their connections to the construction of learning in early childhood, keeping both the "big picture" and the micro world of classrooms in mind. She is approachable, supportive, and a person of moral beauty in the relationships she has forged in her interactions with others."

We are very happy to see her stunning contributions to our field recognized.
The nomination was made by Carol Anne Wien and seconded by Laurie Kocher.

PUBLICATIONS CHAIRPERSON

Iris Berger

Children and Child Care in the Upcoming Federal Election

Prior to the last federal election of May 2011, in my first Publications Chair entry in *Canadian Children* for the Spring 2011 issue, I surveyed each party's website and wrote about how the different parties in Canada included children's agendas in their party's platforms. As we approach another federal election in October 2015, I am tempted to carry out a similar exercise and share it in this issue of the journal. My survey of the action plans of the various parties with regards to children's issues is not meant to be exhaustive. Rather, my intention is simply to shed some light on the ways that children and children's issues (especially related to child care) are formally presented in our Canadian pre-election political landscape. My hope is that the readers of *Canadian Children* will be enticed to peruse the various parties' platforms with a keen eye for assessing the parties' goals for children and their families.

For the most part—and this should not come as a surprise—children and child care are mainly discussed in relation to tax benefits and benefits for the Canadian economy. It was the New Democratic Party of Canada (NDP) that put publicly funded child care on the national political agenda in October 2014. At the time, party leader Tom Mulcair announced the party's plan to create one million affordable (no more than $15 a day) child care spaces across Canada (see www.ndp.ca/news/mulcair-draws-his-experience-to-launch-affordable-childcare-plan). In the party's platform, child care is listed as a major national issue, along with creating jobs and protecting the environment. The main goals of affordable child care, according to the NDP, are to save young families money and enable greater participation of parents (especially mothers) in the workforce (see www.ndp.ca/issues#childcare-issue).

The Green Party of Canada is also committed to federally funded child care. With a focus on creating workplace child care, it is the only party that expands on the purposes of child care beyond its potential economic advantages (see www.greenparty.ca/en/policy/vision-green/people/child-care). The Green Party's plan is to restore the 2005 Early Learning and Child Care agreement reached by the federal government, the provinces, and the territories. The party's platform lists benefits of high-quality workplace child care that include more time for parents to spend with their children, an extended period of breastfeeding, and the option of parents and children sharing public transit. The Green Party also suggests creating a national Children's Commissioner (as recommended by UNICEF) to ensure that children's best interests are considered in policy development and that services across the country are better coordinated. A special section in the platform discusses the promotion of the Roots of Empathy program, an elementary classroom program aimed at raising children's social-emotional competence by introducing them to the major milestones in the life of a newborn baby, whom they get to know and follow over the course of one year (see www.rootsofempathy.org/).

Federally funded child care was never a part of the action plan of the Conservative Party. Instead, the CP endorsed the Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB) through which families receive monthly payment to support them with the expenses of caring for their child. The Conservatives recently announced an enhancement of the UCCB. With the increase, families with children 5 and under will receive $160 per month per child (up from $100). The stated purpose of the UCCB is to "make life more affordable for Canadian families" (see www.conservative.ca/). The Conservative Party has also promised to help Canadian parents who adopt children by significantly increasing the value of the Adoption Expense Tax Credit (see www.conservative.ca/cpc/making-adoption-more-affordable/)

Similar to the Conservatives, the Liberals also focus their plan on giving Canadian families more money to help raise their children.

The Liberal Party platform promises a tax-free monthly Canada Child Benefit worth up to $533 a month per child (see www.liberal.ca/realchange/canada-child-benefit-plan/). A new initiative by the Liberals is the introduction of a Teacher and Early Childhood Educator School Supply Tax Benefit (see www.liberal.ca/realchange/investing-in-our-children-and-educators/). The purpose of the tax benefit is to help teachers and early childhood educators offset the expanses they typically incur for purchasing school supplies. The Liberals even list allowable school supplies that could be included under this new tax benefit. The list is surprisingly detailed and reflects, in my opinion, a rather reductionist view of what is important and necessary to support our educational workforce. For example, the list includes items such as bulletin board decorative items, flashcards, coffee stir sticks, stickers, and motivational items.

While the province of Québec established universal affordable child care in the late 1990s, the current Bloc Québecois platform makes no mention of children or child care.

So what are we to make of all this? Generally speaking, children's agendas (including child care) are still discussed predominantly in economic or financial terms. Less attention is given to questions regarding the relations between the well-being of young children and their families and the provision of child care. None of the federal political platforms aim to examine our narratives about children and child care, the role of governments in ensuring and securing children's rights, including their right to education, or the possibility to envision children's spaces as rich social, cultural, and pedagogical projects. If your curiosity about how children and child care are being portrayed in the various parties' platform has been piqued, I would encourage you to go to the websites listed above, carefully read their content and form questions that you can then raise with your local candidate. As early childhood professionals, we can make an important contribution by raising questions and by expanding the discourses and narratives through which children and child care are commonly represented in the Canadian political landscape.

Call for Contributions

Special Issue on 'The Visual Arts in Early Childhood Education'
For Canadian Children, 2016 On-line edition
Guest Editor: Dr. Sylvia Kind, Capilano University

Children's artistic engagements are increasingly taken seriously as investigative, relational, and meaning making processes involving various fabrications and compositions and multiple ways of knowing. This is a shift from thinking about children's artistic engagements as primarily individual, self-expressive, emotional representations. Rather, artistic engagements are understood as complex, intertextual, performative, material practices that produce particular worlds and meanings.

As such, we are interested in what art is, what it does, and how it matters in early childhood educational settings. We invite submission of papers that address the visual arts in early childhood from a variety of perspectives, particularly those that offer an alternative to conventional understandings of children's art making. In addition we are interested in contributions that:

a. Propose innovative ways of thinking about the visual arts in early childhood education.
b. Conceptualize children's artistic engagements and experimentations through relational-materialist, Deleuzian, and Indigenous perspectives.
c. Explore the interconnections of contemporary art/artists and early childhood contexts.
d. Experiment with visual/textual forms of representing children's artistic experimentations and forms of world-making.

Educators, researchers, and artists are invited to submit a 250 word abstract for this issue of Canadian Children focused on Visual Arts in Early Childhood Education to Sylvia Kind by December 31, 2015. If the abstract is accepted, the manuscript is due by March 31, 2016. Once the review process has been completed, accepted papers must be resubmitted by April 30, 2016.

Abstracts and papers can be submitted via email to Sylvia Kind (skind@capilanou.ca)

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Canadian Children is the journal of the Canadian Association for Young Children (CAYC), a national association specifically concerned with the well-being of young children in Canada. The journal is published in print twice yearly and online once a year. *Canadian Children* contains invitational articles, peer-reviewed articles, articles from professionals in early childhood related fields, and reviews of books and other resources.

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We welcome manuscripts between 4000-6000 words for the Invitational & Child Study sections, and between 1500-3000 words for the Directions and Connections section.

Form, Length and Style:

- Articles may be of varying length, written in a readable style. Style should be consistent with the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th Edition).
- Articles should be sent as an e-mail attachment to the email address below.
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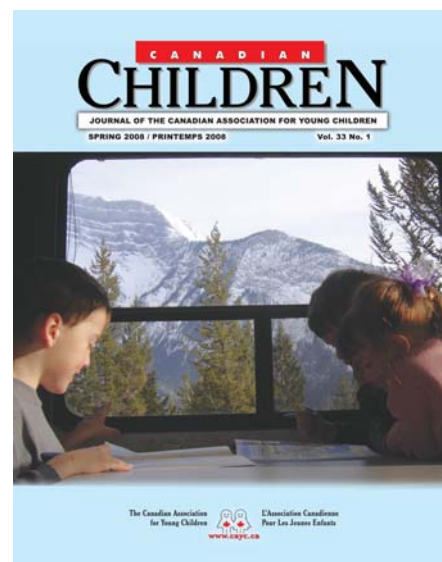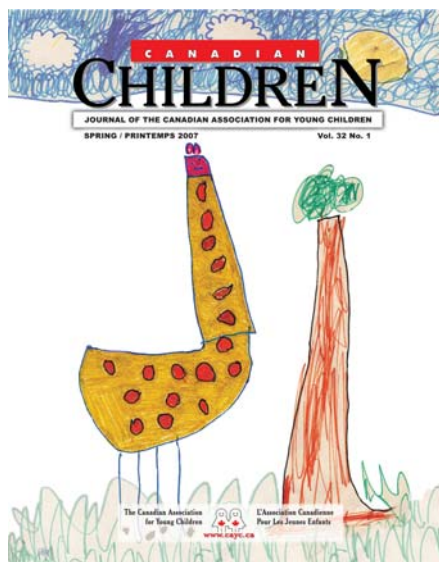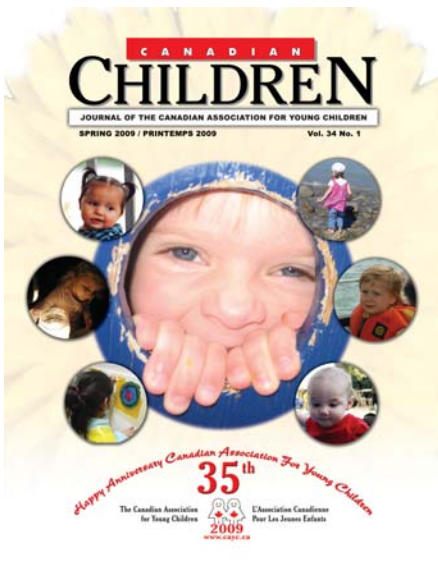
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