

Editorial: Sketching Narratives of Movement in Early Childhood Education and Care

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This special issue emerged from a desire to broaden conversations that were initiated through a SSHRC-funded research project we were part of entitled *Sketching Narratives of Movement: Towards Comprehensive and Competent Early Childhood Educational Systems Across Canada* (2019-2022). The project aim was to weave multiple (e.g., policy, practice, theory) and situated narratives that trace, counter, and speculate movements of change in early childhood education and care (ECEC).

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Government of Canada's (2021) announcement to invest nearly \$30 billion dollars over 5 years in a Canada-wide early learning and child care plan intensified the unpredictable and interruptive power of the present. In response, we sought stories of change in movement—as “flows, rhythms, and intensities” (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2010). Consequently, change, and the narrating of it in this issue, is intermittent, erratic, and contradictory, yet simultaneously persistent, relational, and relentlessly hopeful.

In order to create space for conversations and to expand the current discussion about ECEC policy, pedagogy, advocacy, and scholarship, narratives from educators, researchers, undergraduate and graduate students, advocates, and activists are included as authors in this special issue. Collectively, the authors raise critical questions about the various narratives that have generated change and continue to generate change in ECEC. The submissions include stories of slow yet substantive changes that have occurred—going beyond official reports—to better understand the lived experiences of how historically “patchwork” and colonial approaches to ECEC are entangled with present conditions of/for change. Included in this issue are also speculative wonderings that reconfigure future directions and desires for change.

To tantalize a sense of movement, we invite readers to engage with the narratives and counter-narratives of change that are shared in this issue through the prisms of time, space, and ethics.

Temporalities of Change

The COVID-19 pandemic changed time. For many, time passed more slowly (Brand, 2020; Cravo et al., 2022). For others, including those employed in what were deemed to be essential services—like ECEC—time sped up, along with increased demands for more safety, more hours, more availability, more care. In “With Fear in our Bellies”: A Pan-Canadian Conversation with Early Childhood Educators,” Christine Massing, Patricia Lirette, and Alexandra Paquette closely listen to and read educators’ narratives of change from two events that were part of the SSHRC-funded research project described above. First, in a public webinar event, the authors perceive narratives of loss, sacrifice, adaptation, and hope from nine educators’ shared dialogue and storytelling efforts. Second, the authors look at photo collages submitted by educators from across Canada to the research project website. With the photo collage images the educators temporarily freeze time providing snapshots of “what does it mean to be an early childhood educator at this moment?” Forming an archive for future thought and movement. With care, the authors capture the “complex,

multifaceted, and shifting nature of [the educators'] lived experiences over the course of the pandemic.”

In “Slowing, Desiring, Haunting, Hospicing, and Longing for Change: Thinking with Snails in Canadian Early Childhood Education and Care,” Iris Berger, Emily Ashton, Joanne Lehrer, and Mari Pighini make a deliberate attempt to interrupt neoliberal-economic, quick-fix time by centering the figure of the snail. With snails as their thinking companions, the authors wonder if “snails might help disrupt the timescale of the human species” and wonder “what movements of change are made possible if we think ECEC across a range of temporal scales, including calls to ‘return to normal’ after two and a half years of pandemic precarity.” Can snails provoke us to rethink whether returning to “normal” is even desirable? What needs to be “hospiced” in order for new and different narratives to emerge and carry weight (Machado de Oliveira, 2021)? The authors also inquire into whether snails’ movements, “close to earth and immersed in the fluxes of weather,” might disrupt and refuse “the narrative of national childcare as capture.” They wonder about “what might be missed/or reified if we continue to think ECEC through provincial, territorial, and national borders and regulations.” Thinking about borders moves us from thinking change and temporality to change and spatiality.

Spatialities of Change

A book review by Esther Maeers provides a critical overview of *Relationships with Families in Early Childhood Education and Care: Beyond Instrumentalization in International Contexts of Diversity and Social Inequality* (Lehrer et al., 2023). Maeers outlines how the authors located in eight countries: Australia, Canada, Belgium, Germany, Iran, England, Singapore, and Portugal, collectively refuse deficit understanding of parents, educators, and children as they reimagine possibilities of democratic relationships and partnerships in varied communities. From Maeers’s perspective, the editors of this book have gathered together a community of scholars that take a coordinated stance against the neoliberalization of ECEC while providing alternative strategies wherein parents and educators co-inhabit in the responsibility of educating children.

In “Embracing Our Power: ECE Students’ Experiences Creating Spaces of Resistance in Post-Secondary Institutions,” Camila Casas Hernandez, Luyu Hu, Tammy Primeau McNabb, and Grace Wolfe explore the challenges, disappointments, and joys of becoming-resisters. As ECEC post-secondary students and practitioners who formed an advocacy group at their institution, they collectively refuse to be a “good ECE” (Langford, 2007), so long as the position is delimited by child development knowledge that excludes diversity and by neoliberalism that sees them as cogs in the wheel of capitalist and colonial growth. They take turns powerfully narrating their social locations and emplacing themselves within systemic formations of power. Through their “distinct stories,” they “form collective knowledges that challenge, disrupt and dismantle Western onto-epistemologies” in ECEC. The authors move across scales from the provincial to the global, individual to the collective, and the personal to the institutional. Ultimately, though, they collectively story alternative narratives that affirm the importance of mentorship, community-building, advocacy, conversation, and care.

In “Doing Twitter, Postdevelopmental Pedagogies, and Digital Activism,” Nicole Land and Narda Nelson propose Twitter as a potential space for activating postdevelopmental pedagogies. Digital spaces can queer space, place, and time relations—they can be sites of alternative world-making that bring people together in messy “micromovements” that are counter to Twitter’s “neoliberal politics of promotion and capture.” In this way, the authors do not

conceptualize “Twitter itself as a movement,” but are “interested in the micromovements we might enact with Twitter.” As such, Land and Nelson refuse the “performative self-curation practices” often attributed to individual users and instead connect through “postdevelopmental energies and alliances” that begin with their [BC Early Childhood Pedagogies Network](#) and [Common Worlds Research Collective](#) accounts and network outwards in unpredictable, uncontrollable ways from there. The authors are clear that online spaces are never free of ethics and politics—as the recent Twitter ownership transfer that post-dates this article submission makes readily apparent—but remain potential spaces “where we grapple toward a commons with questions of living well together.”

Ethics of Change

Inspired by Unanga scholar Eve Tuck’s (2018) provocative work on theories of change, which moves from damage narratives to narratives of desire grounded by the concern, “How shall we live?” (p. 157), we invited authors to offer speculative wonderings that reconfigure future directions and desires for change. While all submissions engaged with Tuck’s important provocation—many explicitly, some implied—we highlight three submissions below.

Throughout “Pandemic-Provoked ‘Thrown-togetherness’: Narrating Change in ECEC in Canada,” Esther Maers, Jane Hewes, Monica Lysak, and Pam Whitty “question the potency of dominant narratives proliferated in media and policy initiatives as a way to effect large-scale change and seek to better understand alternative narratives of ECEC.” The authors focus on discourses and narratives that emerged from conversations amongst Sketching Narratives project team members, alluded to above in the introduction, and with policy influencers. Many of these exchanges were part of a public webinar, which was thrown together quickly but intentionally, at a time when the global pandemic exposed the ongoing crisis in ECEC in Canada. Through a bricolage of minor stories (Taylor, 2020), and thinking with the ethics of incommensurability (Tuck & Yang, 2012), the authors individually narrate change, bringing forth parts of the webinar that resonated deeply for them, while looking to spaces where new texts are generating possibilities of moving forward. Through the process of narrating change, the authors “became more fully aware of the deeply embedded and damaging nature of colonialism and how paralyzing it can be, and of the possibilities of moving beyond—from damage to desire.”

In “Node-ified ethics: Contesting codified ethics as unethical in ECE in Ontario,” Lisa Johnston explores the discrepancy between codified ethics and the ethical, especially when the former is used as an instrument for ECE professionalization. Johnston evokes the concept of dematerialization to explore how early childhood educators can “become estranged from their relational, ethical and emotional selves and disappear as they are transformed into technicians through the masculinist and instrumentalizing technologies of professionalism.” She transitions from this regulatory mode of codified ethics towards a speculative ethics by invoking the imagery of nodes in the dystopian film *Sleep Dealer*. In doing so, Johnston repositions ethics as a complex practice of caring and responsive relationality. In refusing to privilege the scientific and technical over the ethical and political, Johnston moves the ethical from mechanistic “nodes and networks” to relational “knots and meshworks” that have the capacity to grapple with uncertainty, ambivalence, variability, and unpredictability: “What would it mean to recognize the knotted and storied meshworks in ECEC that interrupt coded and technical networks,” and, instead, invite “relations across difference”?

In a personal essay contribution, Kamogelo Amanda Matebekwane tells stories that capture the everydayness of racial microaggressions that she experiences as a Black woman, mother, immigrant, graduate student and educational researcher. She adopts a trauma-informed approach to share “Where do I come from?” “Where am I going?” “Why am I here?” and “Who am I?” (Wallace & Lewis, 2020), but reframes the provocations within a critical race theory framework. This becomes a practice of counter-storytelling within the article, and also a methodology she will use co-constructively in her future graduate work with young Black immigrant children in early childhood settings. For Matebekwane, the “generativity of counter-storytelling ... recognizes the experiential knowledge of people of colour as a strength rather than weakness.” These stories “build community... and deeper, more vital ethics” for living well together. They also mark a commitment to “having difficult conversations with people who are committed to social justice.”

Storywork

In her book *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit*, Stó:lō scholar, Jo-anne Archibald (2008) shared teachings from the Coast Salish tradition. Archibald explained that in gatherings where important stories are being shared, the person who guides the event begins by saying “our *work* is about to begin,” implying that the guests are called to give the stories their full attention as those may have significance for how we are to live. We invite you, the reader, to join us and many others in doing storywork by attending to the narratives that are shared in this special issue. How these narratives will be taken up (“worked”), we cannot know; however, narratives of change, once they are made public, may “expand our own visions of what is possible” (Benjamin, 2016, p. 2), and mark a commitment to the uncertain, unpredictability of narratives of movement about creating the world we would rather be in.

To continue the movement (and move against stagnation), we are interested in deepening our collective thinking by asking you to leave a comment/response about the special issue or a specific article on the *ECE narratives* project website: <https://ecenarratives.opened.ca/in-education-special-issue/>

Special Issue Guest Editors: Dr. Emily Ashton, Dr. Iris Berger, Esther Maeers, and Alexandra Paquette

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