

**DISRUPTING TRADITIONAL NARRATIVES:
NAVIGATING PRESERVICE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION THROUGH
HOSPITALITY, TIME, AND DIALOGUE**

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the concepts of hospitality, time, and dialogue as theoretical and ethical counterpoints to the instrumentalism and anti-intellectualism that persist in preservice early childhood education, particularly within practicum contexts. The inquiry begins with a critical analysis of the neoliberal discourses embedded in contemporary processes of professionalization and standardization in early childhood education in Ontario. It then explores how hospitality, dialogue, and time can create possibilities for more intellectually vibrant and ethically responsive encounters during practicum. Through generative dialogue with key thinkers in education and continental philosophy, the dissertation conceptualizes hospitality, time, and dialogue as potentially transformative, disrupting dominant narratives by foregrounding ethical responsibility and openness to the Other. It concludes with a series of propositions that contribute to ongoing efforts in early childhood education research to envision more ethical and intellectually generative possibilities for practicum and to enrich the educational experiences of future early childhood educators.

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Introduction

Preservice early childhood education is frequently framed through social-historical narratives that position it as both a service and a profession. At first glance, the growing emphasis on professionalization may appear to signal a positive development, one that acknowledges early childhood education as a complex and vital field requiring epistemological specificity. Yet, such narratives of professionalism are often entangled with regulatory discourses that constrain, rather than expand, educators' intellectual and ethical possibilities (Vintimilla & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2020). This shift has been intensified by neoliberal ideologies that promote accountability, efficiency, and standardization as markers of quality (Roberts-Holmes & Moss, 2021; Sims, 2017; Vandebroek et al., 2023). Consequently, preservice early childhood education, much like other educational fields, is increasingly shaped by frameworks that privilege uniformity, measurability, and "best practices" over a more nuanced engagement with uncertainties and interpretive judgment.

The emphasis on standardization in preservice education often reduces students' educational experience to the mere acquisition of instrumental skills, while teaching becomes narrowly focused on enculturation and socialization aimed at achieving specific, predetermined outcomes (Biesta, 2010). This approach risks limiting the possibilities for vibrant intellectual encounters among early childhood educators and hinders educators' willingness to critically consider the field or to engage in inventive practices that seek alternative approaches. Thus, I am particularly interested in how the emphasis on standardization often diminishes the educational experience for future early childhood educators, specifically regarding how students are welcomed into field practicum.

The field practicum experience for students in early childhood education is a vital space for renewal, creation and exchange of professional knowledge (Jardine, 2016). It transcends the mere application of established theories, embodying complex interactions that have the potential to reframe students' perspectives on early childhood education and their practices. The relationships and encounters formed and explored during practicum play a crucial role in shaping their professional identities (Phelan & Janzen, 2024). This immersive experience cultivates an appreciation for the significance of relational time and the value of meaningful dialogue, both of which are essential for promoting an inclusive and responsive educational environment. Considering this, in this dissertation, I propose a reconceptualization of field practicum and offer inventive propositions for such reconceptualization by analyzing the potential implications that concepts such as time, dialogue, and hospitality may have for rethinking and reimagining early childhood preservice practicum in Ontario. Through this exploration, I aspire not only to provide new pathways for reconceptualizing established and often taken-for-granted approaches to practicum but also to ignite a radical dialogue that contributes to the advancement of research in Canadian early childhood education. To do this, this dissertation offers the following questions:

1. How do current efforts towards professionalization and standardization influence pedagogical encounters?
2. What conditions are necessary for nurturing vibrant intellectual encounters among early childhood educators?
3. How might the dynamics of hospitality, the multiplicity of conceptualizations of time, and the practice of dialogue inform and reconceptualize the preparation of future early childhood educators?

By reconceptualizing practicum experiences within preservice early childhood education, my intention is also to uncover the complexity, interdependence, and multiplicity of thoughts, ideas, and viewpoints that preservice early childhood education can draw from to not only flourish but also engage in addressing the many issues associated with “living well together” in early childhood education contexts (Vintimilla, 2012).

In this dissertation, therefore, I critically examine the socio-historical discourses that shape early childhood education, particularly concerning the preparation of educators. I aim to engage these discourses in a thoughtful conversation with the concepts of hospitality, time, and dialogue. My purpose is to challenge the current practices that view students primarily as individuals who need preparation for the job market as efficient and technically skilled practitioners. Through this work, I seek to highlight multiple views by exploring how embracing hospitality, dialogue, and a redefined understanding of time, on both a theoretical and practical level, can lead to a reconceptualization of our approach to welcoming those who choose to enter the field of early childhood education. Furthermore, I seek to emphasize the necessary conditions for nurturing dynamic intellectual interactions among early childhood educators.

In this inquiry, I examine the neoliberal principles and values that are currently shaping the processes of professionalization and standardization in early childhood education in Ontario, and critically putting them in conversation with the work of educational theorist and post-structural scholars. My intention is to demonstrate how contemporary practices, operating under the framework of neoliberal accountability, limit democratic possibilities. Through an educational-philosophical inquiry, I engage with the ideas of thinkers such as Byung-Chul Han (2015, 2017, 2018), Emmanuel Levinas (1984, 1985, 1987) and Jacques Derrida (2000, 2005), as well as scholars and educational theorists like Gert Biesta (2001, 2003, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012,

2017, 2019), Mario DiPaolantonio (2019a, 2019b), Liselott Olsson (2023), and Cristina Delgado Vintimilla (2012, 2014, 2018, 2020, 2021, 2023). I hope to create a rich engagement that enables perspectives serving as an alternative to today's students' educational experiences, which often risk falling into strict adherence to standards, the imposition of established "best practices," and dominant normative ideologies in early childhood education.

By engaging with the thoughts of Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida, I aim to highlight the need for an educational experience that embraces ethical interactions and relationships that challenge current practices in the field of early childhood education. Levinas (1984) highlights the importance of ethics, encouraging educators and students to appreciate the diverse experiences each individual brings, which calls for moving away from one-size-fits-all methods. Derrida's (2000) idea of hospitality helps to break down rigid structures, promoting an approach that welcomes different voices and viewpoints. What sets their work apart is its focus on the changing nature of knowledge and how context and discourse influence our interactions and relationships. This perspective encourages us to question established norms and practices, allowing for a more flexible and inclusive educational approach. By grappling with their concepts, we can engage in practices that are not just about following standards but are also responsive to the complex realities faced by our students.

Situating Myself Within the Inquiry

I enter this work already being shaped by the questions I am asking and the discourses I am trying to understand. My years with preservice educators, listening to their stories, witnessing their experiences, watching them navigate practicum tensions, noticing how certain expectations cling to them, have shaped how I see the field. I do not approach this research from a distance. I am not outside the system looking in; I am part of the very conditions that produce these

questions. My position is one of being deeply connected to the same forces that shape the students. This research grows from that entangled place, where my own assumptions, experiences, and desires meet the discursive landscape of early childhood education.

There are moments that continue to stay with me and that have pushed this work forward. I remember a practicum debrief when a student quietly said, “I’ve learned that to fit in, I have to leave who I am at the door.” She explained how her mentor discouraged her creativity, her cultural knowledge, even her curiosity, telling her to “stick to what she needs to do” if she wanted to be seen as professional. Around the room, other students nodded. They too had been told to tone themselves down, follow the checklist, and stop bringing their own ideas. In that moment, I saw how becoming an educator had been reduced to compliance, and how easily students’ gifts were being pushed aside. That moment stayed with me.

Another moment remains just as vivid. A student came to class visibly shaken after a difficult day in practicum. When she asked her mentor why a routine was done a certain way, she was stopped mid-sentence and told, “You’re only a student. Your job is to do what you’re told, not to ask questions.” She described the experience as a door closing. Her eagerness to learn and understand was silenced in an instant. After that exchange, she stopped asking questions altogether. She focused on staying quiet, following instructions, and avoiding anything that might be seen as overstepping. “I thought practicum was where I was supposed to learn,” she said. “But it feels like I’m just supposed to obey.”

In these moments, I saw how easily a student’s becoming can be redirected from curiosity to compliance, from inquiry to silence. I saw how the structures and hierarchies of the field can teach students to leave their questions, insights, and identities at the door. These

encounters did not simply influence my research; they compelled it. They continue to shape my thinking and call me into responsibility.

My decision to focus on preservice early childhood education and practicum is therefore not accidental. It emerges from years of witnessing how students' possibilities are shaped, constrained, and sometimes diminished by the very spaces meant to support their learning. It grows from a desire to understand how these dynamics unfold and to imagine more hospitable, inquiry-rich, and justice-oriented pathways for becoming an educator. This dissertation arises from that desire and from the entangled conditions that shape both my students and myself.

With my own positioning now brought into view, I turn to the shape of the dissertation itself and outline how each chapter takes up the questions that have emerged from these encounters.

Breakdown of Chapters

The dissertation is organized into six chapters, dedicated to approaching the topic from diverse perspectives. In the **first chapter**, I describe the methodology employed in this work, linking it to educational-philosophical inquiry. Since the concepts of hospitality, time, and dialogue are addressed as essential dimensions of practicum, they require deeper attention when reconceptualizing it. Therefore, I elaborate on my choice of methodology, which is closely connected to the need for fostering deeper reflections on practice. I situate my work within the field of pedagogy, conceptualizing it as a distinct “body of knowledge” (Vintimilla & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2020, p. 630) with its own unique problems and questions, while also recognizing its connection to interdisciplinary studies and theorization.

I clarify the meanings of interdisciplinarity and pedagogy in this context. The chapter concludes by emphasizing the significance of interdisciplinary dialogue as a lens for approaching this

dissertation. It highlights how interdisciplinary language can influence professional identities and underscore the fluid and relational nature of meaning within learning environments.

In the **second chapter**, I explore the professionalization of early childhood education in Ontario, highlighting the crucial role that educators play and the sense of pride and accomplishment it fosters within the field. I examine the implications of this movement, particularly in relation to the influence of neoliberal ideology. Additionally, I analyze the neoliberal framework underpinning the preparatory programs for preservice early childhood educators. I argue that the professional values currently being promoted, serve to sustain oppressive practices and anti-intellectualism. By drawing upon various perspectives, I emphasize the obstacles that students and educators face in engaging in ethical and intellectual work. I conclude the chapter by advocating for a shift in the dispositions of future educators.

In the **third chapter**, I explore Emmanuel Levinas' ethics and Jacques Derrida's idea of hospitality to highlight that teaching is an ethical work with others. Starting with Levinas' (1984) view on how the responsibility to and for Others puts us in the position of response, I aim to disrupt conventional narratives surrounding practicum practices. This disruption invites a reimagining of students as pivotal actors in the quest for alternatives to dominant instrumental and managerial paradigms. Informed by Derrida's conception of hospitality (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000), I seek to unveil the constraints imposed on ethical engagement when practices are rigidly structured by standards and professional frameworks. My objective in initiating this discussion around the notion of unconditional hospitality is to prime the reader for a deep engagement with the richness, complexity and differences of the many perspectives I will be exploring in the following chapters.

In **Chapter 4**, I explore various conceptualizations of time with the aim of critiquing the neoliberal perspective that reduces time to a mere resource to be optimized for productivity and future achievement. I specifically focus on the implications of this perspective within the context of field practicum, highlighting how existing temporal structures, especially the emphasis on time management, restrict students' meaningful relations with children, families, and educators. These constraints inhibit students from appreciating their experiences, resulting in significant missed opportunities for personal and professional becoming, as well as establishment of vital connections. The chapter begins by looking at the practice of chronocracy and its impact on the creation of a culture characterized by temporal hierarchy, power dynamics, and exclusion. Informed by philosophical discourse, I provide new insights into the complex nature of our current neoliberal perception and understanding of time, emphasizing its profound influence on thinking and our interaction with the world.

In **Chapter 5**, I explore the importance of dialogue in shaping relationships within the field practicum. I discuss how dialogue plays a key role in promoting creation, interpretation, and collaboration. The chapter starts with an examination of Platonic dialogue as a mode of philosophical inquiry and a tool for challenging narrow perspectives within the field. Additionally, I delve into the concept of a dialogical encounter and emphasize the significance of active listening and silence. My goal is to highlight the potentially transformative influence of these perspectives on our understanding of relationships within preservice early childhood education. By organizing this chapter into two parts, dialogue and active listening (including silence), I wish to emphasize the need for ethical and responsive preparatory practices, while highlighting the interconnectedness and complexity of educators' daily responsibilities.

In the **final chapter** of my dissertation, I organize my work around the three research questions, intertwining the main themes and insights drawn throughout the dissertation. In conclusion, I present a brief list of propositions for educators, students, and anyone interested in re-evaluating and reshaping current pre-service education practices, particularly regarding field practicum components. I recommend prioritizing the development of pedagogical dispositions, exploring new directions, creating more opportunities for intellectual engagement, and reevaluating our approach to ethics. I also suggest ways to increase awareness of and responsiveness to the various justice issues we encounter daily in the field of early childhood education.

Chapter 1: Methodology

I view the concepts of hospitality, time, and dialogue as essential dimensions that illuminate the complexity of practicum experiences. Re-examining their roles can lead to more nuanced understandings of practice, learning, and identity formation within the field. Engaging with these three concepts may facilitate a reconceptualization of the field practicum, encouraging students and educators to embrace ambiguity and remain critically engaged with the evolving nature of their professional environments. This dissertation is an educational-philosophical inquiry that considers how the dimensions of time, hospitality, and dialogue might open possibilities and create conditions for reconceptualizing field practicum. Drawing on Claudia Ruitenberg's (2009) work, this dissertation embraces philosophical inquiry as a mode of thinking and writing that is "systematic, purposeful, and responsive to past and present philosophical and educational concerns and conversations" (p. 316), rather than as a method constrained by social science paradigms.

I have chosen this methodological approach as a way to problematize and enliven the questions raised in this dissertation, focusing on the limitations and possibilities of engaging with the ideas and concepts that shape early childhood educators' subjectivity, ultimately contributing to the ongoing conversation (Ruitenberg, 2009) about the future of the field in early childhood education. By integrating and considering conceptualizations of hospitality, time, and dialogue alongside insights from my practice as an educator of future educators, this work offers ethical, pedagogical, and political considerations for advancing early childhood research and practice in Canada. In adapting Ruitenberg's conception of educational-philosophical inquiry, I emphasize the importance of dialogue and reflection to uncover richer understandings of the educational journeys of preservice education students.

Problem and Definitions

Before moving into my conceptualization of pedagogy, I would also like to outline my interpretation of the term “problem” that is employed in this dissertation. This framework serves as the foundation of the methodological approach that underpins my research, establishing a starting point for the subsequent analyses and discussions within this study. According to Monika Walczak (2022), a problem involves the dynamic process of defining a question, which is essentially an interrogative statement in a specific language (discipline). Formulating a question involves an interplay of existing knowledge and the desire to uncover new insights. Consequently, conducting research entails venturing into uncharted territories to deepen our understanding of a specific topic. My problem and problematizing, therefore, centers around a critical examination of how the concepts of hospitality, time, and dialogue can be engaged within the pedagogical discipline, both theoretically and practically. The aim is to foster a reconceptualization of our current approaches to preservice early childhood education.

Walczak (2022) also discusses the concept of interdisciplinary problems. She suggests that interdisciplinary problems should be considered when a comprehensive understanding and formulation of such problems require perspectives and approaches from multiple scientific disciplines. Drawing from this insight, I view preservice early childhood education as an interdisciplinary problem. This is because preparing students to be responsive to the complex dynamics of children’s programs entails formulating a wide array of questions (problems to be explored) in different “disciplinary languages”. Relying solely on the language of early childhood education would limit exploration and knowledge acquisition to a particular, singular framework. Therefore, this dissertation draws from multiple disciplines to explore knowledge from diverse perspectives, methods, and various problems highlighted by these distinct fields.

Furthermore, preservice early childhood education provides a dynamic platform for engaging with and navigating the complexity of exploring and addressing issues across various disciplines. This approach not only enables the discovery and enrichment of knowledge within the field but also cultivates a mindset that encourages exploration and intellectual pursuits. Problems in early childhood preservice education are dynamic and should be viewed as opportunities for discovery and inquiry. Their dynamic nature is influenced by the historical context in which they arise. Since a problem essentially involves formulating a question and is closely tied to the way we approach finding solutions and seeking information, I hope my approach to the problem in this dissertation can point to many other questions and problems for explorations in the field.

According to Walczak (2022), problems are often uncovered through inquiry. For my dissertation, this suggests that conceptual explorations must also address issues and questions tied to inherent established conditions. In the context of early childhood education, this implies that a careful and critical reading of preservice education needs to problematize issues that have historically impacted it. In this light, it is relevant for me to illuminate existing and perhaps often taken for granted challenges faced by educators and students, alongside their respective contexts, through meticulous analysis and critical evaluation. I am not implying that everything we have constructed in the field of early childhood education is problematic. I maintain that our inherited practices provide a vital sense of identity and continuity, which helps educators situate themselves within the broader landscape of the profession. Relevantly, in contrast to seeing problems as uncovered, the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995), in his work *Logic of Sense*, highlights how problems can create a realm of possibilities from which solutions may emerge (1993). He suggests that problems are both dynamic and productive, acting as catalysts

for invention and creativity. Thus, throughout this dissertation, I invite the reader to join me in uncovering problems not for the sake of mere critique but to productively activate possibilities potentially leading to the emergence of new areas for exploration and the identification of novel problems.

In brief, examining problems in early childhood preservice education from multiple perspectives, encompassing both those issues that need to be uncovered and those that arise from dynamic, interdisciplinary processes, can facilitate the discovery of additional issues, new lines of reasoning, and a deeper understanding of complex contexts and realities. I firmly believe that fostering invention in this field requires embracing a broad spectrum of creative and diverse ideas, particularly in questioning narrow normative modes of thinking.

The field of early childhood education presents numerous challenges and complex issues that are often perceived as unsolvable or having a single solution. Moss argues that the assumption is that “there are no alternatives” (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Moss, 2020, p. 99). Engaging with these interdisciplinary problems and embracing their apparent unsolvability can actually open up valuable opportunities and new pathways in the field. This approach allows for a deeper exploration of the problem areas rather than simply trying to find quick fixes. In fact, it might be beneficial to consider all challenges and issues (problems) in early childhood education as inherently unsolvable. By incorporating different perspectives and fostering dialogue, we can potentially generate new insights that lead to the identification of new problems, the development of agreements, new methodologies, and innovative directions for the field.

Within this dissertation, the term “preservice early childhood education” is utilized interchangeably with “preparatory programs” or “preparatory education”. These terms collectively encompass all activities involved in early childhood education programs, both within

the classroom and during field practicum. Essentially, these activities aim to equip future early childhood educators with the requisite skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary for their pedagogical work with children and families. It is important to note that the curriculum in all pre-service programs aligns with the standards set by various regulatory bodies.

The term “intellectual work,” as well as “intellectualism,” is loosely defined and utilized in this dissertation to encompass all activities related to engaging with theory, theoretical considerations, and critical analysis. This includes the desire to engage deeply with abstract concepts, openness to various perspectives, and an appreciation for generative tensions and insights. Following Biesta (2010), I interpret these concepts as representative of “how we come into presence in a world of plurality and difference” (p. 80).

Additionally, I use this term to refer to a specific disposition and modes of thinking, along with participation in activities designed to foster and cultivate such dispositions and the social actions associated with cultivating them. This is because individuals regarded as intellectuals often occupy a unique position in society, where their insights and expertise are valued in shaping public opinion, policy, and cultural norms. This prerogative carries with it a responsibility to use their knowledge ethically and to contribute to the common good. This perspective also applies to intellectuals who engage with the broader public to address societal issues. They leverage their dispositions and roles in society to influence public discourse, advocate for social change, and educate the public on complex issues.

Becoming with Pedagogy and Pedagogical Encounters

In this dissertation, I argue for a shift from viewing early childhood education as merely a service to conceptualizing it as a pedagogical project. Along these lines, I propose that preservice education and field practicums should be recognized as critical experiences that are

intellectually, ethically, and aesthetically enriching in the ongoing process of becoming an early childhood educator, rather than being seen as merely a training period. Ultimately, pedagogy can serve as a bridge between theory and practice, fostering a deeper engagement with preservice education as a pathway toward adopting a “responsive, generative, and collaborative practice of interpretation, ethical critique, and invention” (Vintimilla & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2020, p. 639). Following Vintimilla and Pacini-Ketchabaw (2020), I view pedagogy as a shifting and contested “body of knowledge that continuously shapes and is shaped by practice” (p. 630). This understanding positions preservice education as a site of inquiry into pedagogical problems and interdisciplinary engagement. It invites early childhood preservice educators to challenge normative assumptions and to explore situated responses that resonate with the complexities of their practice within the Canadian context. Through this perspective, my intention is to propose seeing preservice education not purely as a transformation of fixed knowledge but as a context for negotiation, reinterpretation and creation (Vintimilla & Kind, 2021) that can result in more ethical educational practices.

Pedagogy a Contested Concept in the Canadian Context

In the Canadian context, the term “pedagogy” as suggested in *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years* may be “unfamiliar to some in early years settings” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 16). The term only gained visibility in the field of early childhood education with the publication of this document. Based on my experience working with educators, the term is open to many interpretations and is often used to describe how children learn. This may be because the Ontario Ministry of Education (2014) defines pedagogy as “the understanding of how learning happens and the philosophy and practice that support that understanding of learning” (p. 16). The ministry further elaborates that pedagogy is interested in questions related to children’s daily activities, educators' practices, and

how those experiences and activities impact children and their families. By posing a question in the title of their document, the ministry emphasizes dialogue as the process for understanding “how learning happens” in early years settings. Similarly, the British Columbia Ministry of Education (2019) sees dialogue as an important component in the daily pedagogical practices of early childhood education. However, their definition of pedagogy focuses not on understanding but on exploration and creation in learning. According to their perspective, pedagogy is:

the method and practice of teaching by exploring ideas and issues and creating environments where learning and thinking can flourish. With this understanding, education and pedagogy are not about learning facts but are concerned with ethical questions of living in the world together. (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 13)

Also, both documents discuss the concept of “dialogue,” specifically referencing “collaborative dialogue” as a means of embracing diverse perspectives, exploring different understandings of pedagogical approaches and practices, challenging the status quo, and discovering new and innovative “ways of seeing, thinking, and practising” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 50). In these documents, pedagogy and dialogue are described as closely intertwined, playing an important role in revealing, generating, and innovating everyday experiences and life within early childhood education environments.

Vintimilla (2020), however, argues that pedagogy is more complex than the definitions mentioned above and, in fact, pedagogy should not be confined to a specific definition.

According to Vintimilla (2020), defining pedagogy can limit pedagogical practice from the beginning. Instead, Vintimilla (2020) suggests that pedagogy should be associated with “an indeterminate field of responsive, generative, and collaborative practices of interpretation, ethical

critique, and invention” (para. 3). Therefore, pedagogy is not merely about practicing what we already know, understand, or agree with in terms of standards and regulations. According to Vintimilla (2020), “pedagogy is that which thinks, studies, and orients education: its purposes, its protagonists, its histories, its relations and processes” (para. 5). On the other hand, Vintimilla (2020) clarifies that pedagogy involves an exploration of the tensions between theory and practice. She suggests that because of its complexity, pedagogy should be approached from an interdisciplinary perspective (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Vintimilla, 2020; Vintimilla, 2020).

Liselott Olsson (2023) further delves into these ideas in her latest book, *Becoming pedagogue*, highlighting that, in addition to practice, “pedagogy must also be considered as a long knowledge tradition and as a scientific discipline that has accumulated theoretical knowledge on pedagogy as practice over a very long period of time” (p. 175). In fact, Olsson (2023) suggests that pedagogy cannot be seen only as practice, as there are multiple ways of knowing. In her own words:

Theories from the science and knowledge tradition of pedagogy can therefore not be entirely separated from the practice of pedagogy, and [...] pedagogical problems are of both practical and theoretical character. These domains, then, even though we sometimes need to discern them, must at the same time constantly and consistently be kept together to account in a more full and complete way for the complexity of educational experiences and events. (p. 175)

Therefore, my intention is to delve deeper into the rich theoretical and practical dimensions of pedagogy in this dissertation. My hope is to move beyond the prevalent understanding of pedagogy in the Canadian context, which often emphasizes it as a framework for teaching and learning strategies. This approach involves asking educational questions that

interpret the meanings embedded in practices within distinct socio-historical contexts (Biesta, 2011).

Following the insights of Vintimilla and Pacini-Ketchabaw (2020), I wish to highlight the ethical and political significance of pedagogy as that which thinks education (Vintimilla, 2018). This endeavor necessitates conditions that encourage students and educators to engage with what Biesta (2011) describes as questions about how we might approach education, placing importance on the values and aims in educational theory and practice. Such a conceptualization of pedagogy is intertwined with transformative practices that empower a life-making curriculum, challenging dominant paradigms and creating opportunities for meaningful encounters and ethical actions (Vintimilla & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2020). This transformative aspect hinges on the autonomy of educational practices and the self-determination of learners, underscoring the transformative potential of education (Biesta, 2011).

Pedagogical Encounters

Before I proceed further, I want to emphasize the importance of positioning pedagogical encounters within this discussion.

In the heart of pedagogical practices are the encounters between educators, children, and the world around them. As Hickey and Riddle (2023) suggest:

It is the encounter between teachers, students and knowledge that is important, and from which the locus of educational enactment is found. Relational pedagogy emphasises the significance of the encounter and the relationships that are made possible in the moment of interaction (Hickey & Riddle 2022; Riddle & Hickey 2022). The relationship establishes the nature of the pedagogical encounter, and where opportunities for an inclusive education that values participatory and dialogic engagement gains form. The

encounter shapes what is ‘done’ in the name of education and is defined by the mediative effects of different formulations of the interactions that teachers and students negotiate in the daily life of the classroom. (p. 2)

In other words, the authors propose that when educators, children, and knowledge come together, it marks a significant pedagogical moment in education. This interaction shapes the discovery and creation of possibilities in the daily lives of everyone involved. Pedagogy focuses on the relational aspect, emphasizing the importance of these encounters and the relationships formed during them. These relationships impact how life unfolds in the classroom each day. Pedagogical encounters create opportunities for the development of new potentialities in early childhood education.

Pedagogical Problem

Aligning with the understanding of pedagogy as that which thinks from the intersection and symbiosis between theory and practice, Vintimilla and Pacini-Ketchabaw (2020) highlight the significance of an interdisciplinary approach as inviting diverse logics into pedagogical thoughts. Such an approach can foster conditions that promote creativity, inventive and responsive pedagogical thinking, and context-sensitive methods, encouraging educational experiences that go beyond standardization and dominant normative ideas. This perspective closely aligns with my dissertation, where I advocate for enhanced intellectual engagement between educators and students. Consequently, I seek to explore the insights that investigations into **pedagogical problems** in early childhood preservice education may provide, along with the opportunities they might reveal.

When I refer to the term “problem” here, I mean an area of interest that deserves exploration, uncovering, creation, pursuit and the formulation of new questions. This process has the potential to enhance the key dispositions essential for meaningful intellectual engagement.

Moreover, if pedagogy is about “being more attuned to the conditions of our times” and employing “its inventive force through the educational processes it activates” (Vintimilla & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2020, p. 636), the act of problematizing pedagogically can support educators in seeking opportunities to engage in transformative dialogues about their practices, while remaining connected to both inheritance and invention. Most critically, viewing early childhood education as a pedagogical project may foster a deeper understanding among educators and students of how they are active participants in creating early childhood education as “educational worlds” (Vintimilla, 2023, p. 16). This understanding can also be instrumental in policy and decision-making, enabling them to evaluate, advocate for, or critique the issues and solutions that limit “the power and freedom of children, pupils, students, and teachers to engage in the process of formulating questions and constituting problems” (Olsson, 2023, p. 2).

Some early childhood educators, students, and college professors may question the practice of framing pedagogical problems as an essential component of early childhood preservice education. They might also ponder the appropriate language to use when articulating these pedagogical questions to bring them to life. In this dissertation, my intention is not to delve into specific methodologies or advocate for a fixed method of defining and addressing knowledge to “solve” problems in pedagogy. Instead, I seek to highlight the wealth of opportunities that arise when we approach pedagogical problems in early childhood education. I propose that we view preservice education, similarly to our interactions with children and families, as a series of pedagogical encounters. In this context, interdisciplinary dialogue along with diverse methods and languages can facilitate our understanding and problematization of pedagogical issues. In early childhood preservice education, this perspective may create opportunities for learning and practicing how to pose questions that confront the normative status

quo and challenge practices that limit the growth and flourishing of the field. Enhancing the dispositions necessary to analyze and problematize within early childhood education can help us approach pedagogy as a means of raising thought-provoking questions. As Vintimilla (2023) notes, “These questions are never neutral; they emerge out of particular concerns” (p. 23).

Pedagogical Encounter with Interdisciplinary Studies

The methodology employed in this dissertation focuses on creating a space for crossing boundaries and fostering discussions between pedagogy, as an autonomous discipline in its own right, and various other disciplines and fields of study. The intention is to highlight how this interdisciplinary collaboration can integrate diverse perspectives and methodologies, resulting in more comprehensive and innovative solutions to educational and pedagogical questions.

If we accept that “pedagogical thought and its interpretive acts intersect with a multitude of disciplines” (Vintimilla & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2020), we must consider how pedagogy functions within interdisciplinary contexts.

In their work, Allen Repko and Rick Szostak (2020) explained that interdisciplinary studies can help tackle big questions, solve complex problems, or address broad topics that can’t be fully understood by one field of study. This approach involves using insights from different disciplines to gain a more comprehensive understanding. In early childhood education, embracing interdisciplinary approaches can benefit pedagogy in several ways. By incorporating and inviting interdisciplinary approaches into pedagogy and pedagogical encounters, educators can access a variety of theories and perspectives, providing a richer educational experience. It can also encourage the formulation of new questions and offer fresh perspectives on problem-deciding and interpreting approaches. However, I am particularly interested in pointing out to how learning from interdisciplinary dialogue among academic disciplines can create new

opportunities for educators and students to engage deeper into the complexities of pedagogical work. I believe that employing an interdisciplinary approach to pedagogy as an autonomous “body of knowledge” (Vintimilla & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2020, p. 630) may create conditions for students to begin engaging and becoming with dynamic processes of uncovering and creating knowledge, and exploring new possibilities and opportunities. This is because, as noted by Walczak (2022), interdisciplinary studies demand not only the ability and flexibility to apply various approaches and methods within specific contexts but also a commitment to continuously revising and refining the original questions. It opens the space for engaging with pedagogical practice through dynamic, complex, and ongoing exploration of multiple problems, questions, and methods. It’s not about borrowing, repeating, or transferring ideas from one discipline to another but about creating a dialogue between them that utilizes various ways of thinking and knowing and fosters invention.

Chapter 2: Professional Standards: Unintended Consequences in the Professional Preparation of Early Childhood Educators

The Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario (Association) states that “it was only with the professionalization of the sector that [early childhood education] became a true profession” (2011, para. 2). Coming from the advocacy-focused, member-driven organization with an elected voluntary board of directors and a mission to build a strong collective voice, this enthusiastic statement undoubtedly contributes to early childhood educators’ pride and sense of achievement. The professionalization of the field in Ontario is a testimony to the huge accomplishment of many advocates who have called for this recognition for more than 20 years (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2025c). Furthermore, there is a shared perception among educators that the College of Early Childhood Educators (the College), as the regulatory body for the field, not only prioritizes the protection of the public interest but also actively “supports the invaluable work of RECEs” (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2021a, p. 3). However, the Association’s statement is another invitation for the early childhood community to evaluate the actual influence of discourses of professionalization in the field. In particular, I suggest that educators should reflect on the unintended consequences of professionalization and standardization in the province of Ontario and, most importantly, how students are being prepared to become early childhood educators. My inquiries, therefore, are about how professionalization and standardization built on neoliberal ideology contribute to keeping the profession from advancing. What must be done to break through the barriers for preservice and new educators to enrich practices with their differences, creativity, and intellectual pursuits rather than giving up and turning their back on the field for good?

In today's world, there is much discussion about professionalization and standardization in early childhood education globally (Ade, 1982; Ahrenkiel et al., 2013; Grgic, 2020; Joyce et al., 2023; Martin et al., 2020; Osgood, 2010; Sajaniemi et al., 2018; Sims, 2017). In most of the literature, professionalization and standardization are seen as a way of increasing status (Bempreiksz-Luthardt & Walter-Laager, 2022; Koskela & Vehkalahti, 2017) or a process of positively influencing working conditions, such as professional learning expectations, call for an increase in pay, ethical standards, etc. (Dyer & McMahon, 2022; Netolicky, 2019). In this chapter, however, I would like to discuss professionalization and standardization as underpinned by certain discourses on professional values. The professional values communicated by the College contribute to preserving specific ways of understanding childhood and education, and how we prepare students for their future role as early childhood educators. The focus is on preparing skilled, adaptable workers who can provide high-quality and competitive service within a highly regulated and narrow understanding of the scope of the work. The premise seems to be that only students in controlled and regulated settings who learn the best practices, standards, and regulations will have an advantage in being best prepared for the ECE job shaped by economic agendas. That is the reason why the College elaborates, "All RECEs [including those who participate in preparing students for the role of ECEs] are legally required to adhere to By-law 39: Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice" (2017, p. 5) and must "recognize that their conduct as professionals contributes to the public's trust in the profession" (2017, p. 7). Some argue that it is crucial to have a common language for professional discourse (Fleming & Kleinhenz, 2007; Netolicky, 2019), which is referred to as the "common attributes of an effective and quality teacher" (Savage & Lingard, 2018, p. 78). However, professional standards can also function as a barrier to thinking outside the emerging singularities in practice, especially in

thinking and learning in early childhood education and the professional preparation of preservice educators. This is problematic because singularity contributes to the reduction of creativity, experimentation, curiosity, and motivation. By referring to singularity, I want to emphasize routine tasks and predictable problem-solving rather than situations of uncertainty and novelty where our creativity may thrive. Therefore, the implementation of standards appears to reduce the way we see early childhood educators and how they are prepared to work with children and their families.

Pamela Osmond-Johnson (2018) describes the influences of discourses of professionalism among Canadian teachers to show the important role language plays in preserving specific power structures. Building on Foucault's ideas, she suggests that "discourse is a mechanism of power, often reflecting the values and beliefs of privileged social groups" (p. 62). Dahlberg et al. (1999) explore the connection between knowledge and power more in their book *Beyond Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care*. They remind us that legitimation, seen as an objective truth, is always embedded in relation to power, and through language "it is possible to represent an objective truth accurately" (p. 25). Canadian scholars Eizadirad et al. (2023) argue that processes of professionalism are characterized by unequal power relations. They suggest that there is a need to decolonize these processes, as they are often accepted without critically examining whom they privilege and exclude, and in what ways. The scholars further elaborate that professionalism is connected to hegemony, which is socially and culturally constructed through a dynamic process that influences social relations by legitimizing a narrow set of ideologies often perpetuated by those in positions of power and authority.

The above perspectives are important and relevant in the early childhood education field. Most individuals in the field are women and are outside the privileged groups of our society. The

professional discourses our regulatory bodies create for the field are quite ambiguous. On the one hand, educators are pushed to assume the role of authentic leaders and claim their authority through “creating, coordinating and directing change through vision, inspiration, commitment and contribution” (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2017, p. 24). There is also discussion about the importance of “caring and responsive relationships,” the provision of “a sense of belonging,” as well as acknowledging educators as “competent and capable” and “reflective and intentional practitioners” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014; College of Early Childhood Educators, 2017). On the other hand, we hold firmly to the child-centred pedagogy, which positions educators as less important to the child (Langford, 2010a). Educators are the “party planners,” “photographers,” and “cleaners” and are barely invited to “the party” itself. As Rachel Langford suggests, the educators, who happen to be primarily women, through their “manual labour make intellectual play possible” (2010a, p. 115) for children but not for themselves. The manual labour in our neoliberal society translates to low salaries and the need for more regulations, measurements and assessments in the early childhood education field. The division between manual labour and intellectual work is a significant aspect. According to Michael Bray (2019), in capitalist development, there is a clear separation between mental (intellectual) labour and manual labour. This separation is a result of the pursuit of surplus value through efficiency improvements. Managers and technology contribute to this by sharing knowledge and taking control away from workers. The process also involves the creation and control of new knowledge, not just specialization but as a way of controlling the labour process. Ultimately, intellectual labour benefits capital, rather than people. In the words of Bray:

That separation, at least in its capitalist form, originates in capital’s drive for relative surplus value: ever-increasing increments of “surplus time” in the workday, eked out,

primarily, through increases in the efficiency and productivity of labor processes. The management practices and technological fixed capital that facilitate such “improvements” rest, at their base, on a process that Marx anatomized and Frederick Winslow Taylor raised to a “science”: the removal of the design and oversight of labor processes from the direct producers themselves and their operation, through the intermediation of managers, as a transformed, externalized knowledge. What is critical to see, and much of what follows will focus on its multiple implications, is that the generation and monopolization of these new forms of knowledge are not simply a matter of specialization, allowing for greater insight or refinement, but are also a mechanism for wresting control of the labor process from laborers themselves. Knowledge and power are linked within the relations of production, where mental labor performs the ideological and political functions, and borrows the power, of capital, not those of some autonomous, empowered mind. (2019, pp. 9-10)

This logic and practices further prevent diverse conceptualizations of who an early childhood educator can be and what might be necessary to recognize educators as intellectually curious knowledge creators and inquirers. In my experience, educators are often viewed primarily through a framework of conformity and regulation rather than as knowledgeable professionals whose insights and expertise are vital to pedagogy. The prevailing practices risk diminishing educators’ agency, positioning them as mere implementers of predetermined curricula instead of as thoughtful thinkers.

The guiding principle for preparing students for their future profession is the limited conceptualization of the early childhood educator’s role as a manual worker that enables favourable conditions for children’s intellectual play in healthy and safe environments. Students

do not learn how to enhance their creativity or intellectual capacity but how to recognize children's interests and level of development to cater to their needs through gaining command of information presented to them. A certain level of command of professional abilities and knowledge is required of the students to successfully complete their studies. The College of Early Childhood Educators clearly articulates this in their *Policy Statement Regarding Education for Entry to Practice* (2021c), which states:

RECEs need to have mastery of the core body of knowledge for the early childhood education profession, understand its history, consider its future trajectory and develop skills so they can successfully navigate and adapt to evolution in practice over time.
(2021c, p. 5)

There is no doubt that ECEs must focus on understanding knowledge and values, as well as their transformation. It is essential for preservice educators to have access to the "heritage" that the older generation can impart to the new generation of educators. However, the challenge we face is that we currently do not provide opportunities for students to develop the dispositions necessary for cultivating new perspectives and directions for the future of the field. Existing understandings and expectations of what it means to become an educator create barriers in how new knowledge is experienced and constructed during classes and field practicums.

This discussion echoes David Jardine's assertion that "the profession needs new blood" (2008). Jardine emphasizes the importance of interpretive inquiry in education, where new teachers bring fresh insights that challenge and rejuvenate established practices. New teachers are vital for the renewal and sustainability of the educational community, as they bring with them the potential for life-giving and rejuvenating aspects in their approach to the profession. What I am arguing

for is, that in order to be enriched by such possibilities, the conditions that are established need to be rethought.

Often, professors and educators embody the discourses of mastery and expertise that mark the systems of recognition framing educational practices. They take on the role of supervisors and evaluators and engage in documenting, correcting, and providing feedback for improvement. Such an approach reflects an understanding of teaching and learning as mastery rather than as experimentation, questioning, reflecting, or inquiry. For students, this contributes to the already ingrained neoliberal pressure to successfully perform for their professors and practicum supervisors. To better assess the student's performance, the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (2018) program standards document for the field breaks down vocational standards into "elements of the performance." This is very consistent with Stephen Ball's (2003) discussion on performativity as a culture of measurement of whether or not an individual or organization meets the expected level of quality established by standards in a particular field. Ball (2003) also cautions that such an approach of using standards is intended not only for an institution or organization to change but also "mechanisms for reforming teachers (scholars and researchers) and for changing what it means to be a teacher, the technologies of reform produce new kinds of teacher subjects" (p. 217).

Such a restrictive approach to becoming an educator in class and field practicum is extensively discussed and critiqued by Deborah Britzman (2003) in the revised version of her book *Practice Makes Practice: A Critical Study of Learning to Teach*. Drawing on students' experiences, Britzman highlights the array of emotions that students need to deal with during field practicum. As Britzman states, students are occupied with the "pressure to know and the

corresponding guilt in not knowing,” which further restricts them from exploring the possibilities in their environments (2003, p. 228). In Britzman’s words:

Many student teachers and the professionals who surround them, then, approach the problem of knowing not as an intellectual, emotional, and esthetic challenge, but as a function of accumulating classroom experience. The theory of knowledge asserted here depends upon stasis; knowledge is understood as unencumbered by values, interests, and ideology and is handled as if it were transcendent. Acquiring classroom experience and becoming an expert becomes the key to controlling knowledge and imposing it on students as a means of control. (2003, p. 229)

Britzman writes about a multifaceted challenge that requires our attention at different levels. She invites us to consider that the current ideology, presented to us as a rhetoric of freedom, actually undermines a democratic approach to education. The reason is that it promotes practices where people are afraid to act and create together, and so assume the stance of passive and weakened individuals.

Also, in her comprehensive research on preservice education for teachers within the Canadian school system, Anne Phelan discusses the various limitations that standardization and professionalization impose on the process of becoming a teacher. Phelan and Vintimilla (2020) argue that the promise of gaining autonomy by entering into a contract with society sets boundaries to autonomy, as it requires a commitment to limited approaches to teaching, behaving, and thinking. They emphasize that teachers’ actions must align with professional standards rather than their true and free engagement, thus restricting their autonomy and not truly implicating them with responsibilities. This situation leads to teachers being seen more as

instrumental and technical workers rather than as intellectuals, which poses problems, as Phelan and Vintimilla (2020) point out:

Understanding what to do and doing it cannot be anticipated in advance of the encounter with others; the particular must be prioritized – particular students and particular circumstances – if teaching is to be ethically and educationally responsive. Autonomy cannot be a commodity that is granted or withdrawn at the will of a sovereign state; it cannot be conditional if teachers are to exercise their ethical and educational responsibility. (p. 16)

Phelan (2020) argues that the role of a teacher is multifaceted; they are “interpreters of national cultures, protectors of forms of particularity within civic communities, and mediators between tradition (past) and innovation (future)” (2020, p. 2). According to Phelan, fulfilling this complex role demands not only the acquisition of historical knowledge but also a commitment to understanding and bringing historical knowledge to the forefront for discussion, while honoring, respecting, and responding to its significance. Furthermore, the focus on civic commitments necessitates a closer attention to the culture of living respectfully and responsively together, which includes active participation in the life of the community, getting to know and understand its members, and advocating for people.

The component of mediating between traditions and innovation, according to Phelan (2020), entails a responsibility to those who have influenced us in the past and those who continue to influence us in our role as educators. This comprehensive perspective on being and becoming a teacher not only prompts a critical examination of current approaches in the field but also resists standardization and professionalization that limit educators’ and students’ experiences to performance evaluation and teaching to specific outcomes. Phelan’s critique of

teacher professionalization centers on its effect in diminishing the time available for ethical and intellectual engagement, as well as the exploration of the rich experiences encountered in educational settings daily. By subjecting teachers to standardization and professionalization, and imposing norms on education, the areas Phelan identified as essential in educators' work become impassable. She contends that teachers are being instrumentalized to commercial ends, good teaching directed towards predetermined effects, as dictated by regulatory bodies (Phelan, 2022).

Neoliberalism and Early Childhood Education in Ontario

As we explore the professionalization of early childhood education in Ontario, it is essential to examine the broader ideological underpinnings that shape this evolution. The movement towards professionalization is not solely a reaction to changing educational standards or societal expectations; it is profoundly influenced by the invasive ideals of neoliberalism. This ideology, defined by a focus on market-driven principles and individualism, permeates the very fabric of preparatory programs for preservice educators. By scrutinizing these influences, we can reveal how they not only affect students' becoming but also perpetuate restrictive practices that stifle the potential for innovative and inclusive early childhood education. In the discussion below I seek to illuminate the implications of these neoliberal influences, paving the way for a critical examination of their effects on both educators and the students.

The influence of neoliberal discourses on today's world order in general is extensively discussed in the literature. For example, Noam Chomsky suggests that neoliberalism is "not new and not liberal" (Varoufakis & Chomsky, 2016) and is closely associated with preserving and protecting particular interests despite its huge impact on others (Chomsky, 2014). More specifically, Chomsky critiques this global political-economic agenda for benefiting a small number of private interests trapped in a race to maximize profits by controlling a vast amount of

everyone else's social and everyday lives (Chomsky, 1999). This, Chomsky suggests, is not due to the establishment of free markets but rather due to a few dominating corporations that dominate global policies related to markets (2014). For Wendy Brown (2015), such a social contract and approach to the social state become totalitarian, as it imposes the will of a few on everyone. Neoliberalism challenges democracy, as it is "a particular form of reason that configures all aspects of existence in economic terms" and focuses on a traditional form of morality as the only one that is not a product of social engineering (p. 17). Neoliberal order threatens democracy because it replaces democratic processes with market behaviours (Brown, 2015; Phelan & Janzen, 2024). This greatly affects relationships between people, as it promotes behaviours consistent with competitiveness rather than deliberation, compromise, and concentration on common interests (Brown, 2023).

The term "liberalism" has made us believe that the focus is on promoting choices through "individual liberties, property rights, and free markets" (Wilson, 2017, p. 2). On the contrary, such reasoning promotes seeing goods and services as valued and exchanged and creates a common and highly competitive culture associated with consumerism, efficiency, invention, and sales optimization (Wilson, 2017). It is important to add that the freedom for individuals in neoliberal thinking is focused on choices associated with an efficient and productive life (Bradley & Luxton, 2010). Consequently, neoliberal ideology is often linked to people finally discovering their choices are restrained, and there is nothing much they can do to change their lives (Roberts-Holmes & Moss, 2021; Wilson, 2017).

Some writers also discuss neoliberalism as a driving force in the early childhood education field (Land et al., 2022; Langford, 2010a, 2010b; Moss, 2014; Press et al., 2018; Ritchie, 2024; Roberts-Holmes & Moss, 2021; Xu & Ritchie, 2025). Neoliberalism is the reason

why educators normalize ideas like “‘outcomes’ and ‘quality’, ‘testing’ and ‘assessment’, ‘interventions’ and ‘programmes’, ‘evidence-based’ and ‘best practice’, ‘investment’ and ‘human capital’, ‘preparation’ and ‘readiness’, ‘markets and marketing’” (Roberts-Holmes & Moss, 2021, p. 1). Educators also reduce social relations to “act[s] of commerce” (Giroux, n. d., as cited in Sardoc, 2021, p. 224), where fun and happiness seem to be considered a sign and condition of a successful exchange (Vintimilla, 2014) in a quality service.

As Roberts-Holmes and Moss (2021) suggest, due to neoliberal logic, we approach childcare services and professional preparation programs as products for sale. Students, children and families are seen as clients who need a high-quality service. This way of thinking hugely contributes to the formation of educators’ professional identity (Moss, 2014) and reduces learning to economic values. In other words, this contributes to the way educators see themselves and their role in working with children and families. Therefore, children in today’s childcare programs are affected by educators striving to understand what it means to be a professional educator in a world of competing ideas, values and approaches (Khattar & Callaghan, 2016).

In addition, in Ontario, as in many other places in the world, neoliberal practices subject the field to numerous policies, measurements, and accreditation processes. Students wishing to pursue early childhood education studies may choose among various competing part-time, full-time, continuing education, online, in-person, flexible, college and university-level programs. All these programs must be accredited by the College (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2025b) under the *Early Childhood Educators Act* (2007). Those programs are also restricted to ensuring that students meet the vocational outcomes communicated by the *Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Early Childhood Education Program Standards* (2018). Furthermore, operations of early childhood programs, including hosting students during field

practicum, are regulated by the Ministry of Education under the *Early Years and Child Care Act* (2014). All these regulations are in addition to the array of municipal, provincial, and federal rules, regulations, and legislations that govern such programs. The overregulation of the field leads to educators' work being seriously restricted to ensuring that all standards and legislation are implemented and met. However, the working conditions of early childhood educators and their poor image have not changed much. This may be why the College's data suggest that there is a decline in the number of educators working in early childhood programs, an average educator stays in a field only for three years, and "licensed childcare has the lowest retention rate of any employment setting" (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2021b, n.p.). Based on my experience, many students also choose not to continue working in the field.

In light of these complexities, it is essential to examine diverse perspectives for reconceptualizing the professional preparation of educators. The professionalization and standardization within early childhood education may, paradoxically, create opportunities for inventive pedagogy and critical re-evaluation of practices. While stringent regulations can limit educators' autonomy, they also encourage resistance and exploration of alternative methodologies and ways of being. Ultimately, these unintended consequences may not only challenge conventional practices but also promote a deeper engagement with the educational and pedagogical process, fostering a more dynamic and responsive learning environment for both educators and children.

Complexity and Relational Learning in Field Practicum

In the context of the regulations and standards governing early childhood education programs, field practicum emerges as an essential space for students to navigate and confront these complexities. Field practicum holds the potential to create a space where students can focus

not only on critically examining standardization, professionalization, and neoliberal ideology but also on the importance of critically unsettling taken for granted discourses and practices. This perspective advocates for the importance of viewing students as active thinkers rather than mere passive recipients of knowledge (Berger, 2016; Chinnery, 2013, 2015, 2019; Nxumalo et al., 2018; Pinar, 2024; Todd, 2013b). Instead of simply absorbing information, students actively interpret and shape their experiences, influenced by their contexts, privileges, and cultural backgrounds. Such an engaged approach promotes the continuous becoming of students into intellectuals who critically engage with and interpret information through their unique experiences and cultural conceptualizations. By fostering critical participation, students are empowered to contribute to and affect their own learning journeys. Consequently, it is essential to re-evaluate the conditions that allow students to exercise their choices intentionality in navigating their complex and non-linear roles with children and families. Such a proposition may add to our understanding that there are varied pathways to becoming an early childhood educator, highlighting the multiple meaningful relationships that students can learn from throughout their educational experiences.

Early childhood educators and students are taught that the field is about “relationship-based practice” (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2019, para 2). The College even suggests that establishing relationships requires more than one way of doing things, and educators need to learn how to respond to competing values in their everyday practice (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2019). However, conceptualizing relationships as *responsive* and *mutual* in a neoliberal ideology is problematic. The reason is that neoliberal ideology focuses on “the re-forming of relationships and subjectivities” that requires forming new identities and accepting new values (Ball, 2003, p. 217). Our relationships are not authentic

but subordinated to and evaluated against professional standards and “the ethics of competition and performance” (Ball, 2003, p. 218).

The idea of conceptualizing learning as relational is also explored by Tim Ingold (2022). In fact, Ingold suggests that learning is a process by joining with the people and things with whom, and with which, we share our world, allowing knowledge to grow from these joinings, these observances, as part and parcel of our own growth as sentient and thoughtful beings. This is to lace curiosity with care, our own capacity to respond to things with responsibility for them. (p. 2)

Ingold uses the term “correspondence” to explain relationality (2017). He explains that, by sharing time and place with others, we learn through attentive responses to whatever is happening around us. Therefore, learning occurs through our relationships and interactions with each other, and how we influence (or “act” and undergo, in Ingold’s words) each other. As Ingold (2018) further suggests:

Knowledge grows along lines of correspondence: in commoning, wherein they join; and in variation, wherein each comes into its own. Every way of knowing, then, is a distinct life-line, a biographical trajectory. It follows that becoming knowledgeable is part and parcel of becoming the person you are. (p. 17)

I found Ingold’s explanation of the principles of correspondence very helpful in understanding the relational process of learning and becoming. Ingold highlights three principles of correspondence: “habit”, “agencing”, and “attentionality” (2017, p. 14). According to Ingold, habit is not just about mastering repeated tasks, but it’s “a life process” and “movement” of information that we and others can utilize and build upon in the future. For instance, as students learn about engaging with children, they do so by actively participating alongside educators and

children in a classroom setting. By attentively responding to their experiences, they absorb knowledge. Importantly, their learning is not merely a product of repeating the same actions but rather a result of engaging and adapting to the constantly evolving and interconnected nature of being together. Engaging with children leads to a transformative experience for students. In accordance with Ingold, all aspects of these experiences contribute to student learning. In the context of agencing, Ingold proposes that it is not the individual actions that matter but the interweaving of these actions, as if they form “binding of lines” (2017, p. 18). This implies that sustaining life is about active emergence and interconnected relationships rather than mere transfer. Ingold (2022) further suggests that things become active through their entanglement within life. When considering the example of students learning how to interact with children, it becomes evident that they learn not just from being told what to do but from actively engaging with educators and children. Moreover, this active engagement is based on relationships and depends on the responsiveness of those involved. In relation to attentiveness, Ingold (2017) describes:

It is worth remembering that the verb *attendre*, in French, means ‘to wait’, and that even in English, to attend to things or persons carries connotations of looking after them, abiding with them, and following what they do (Masschelein 2010: 282). That is to say, it is a practice of care. (p. 19)

Ingold suggests that paying attention to various aspects of our lives allows us to connect our perception of the world to our imagination. He defines imagination as “the impulse of a life that, in continually running ahead of itself or leading by submission, bodies forth as a question that does not already contain its answer” (2017, p. 23). Therefore, learning involves creating and innovating.

The insights from Ingold offer a perspective that encourages a deeper exploration of the pedagogical practices related to preservice education for early childhood educators. The focus on relational learning, especially in relation to the tension created by current accountability measures, may prompt a reconceptualization of how to foster authentic educational engagement.

As we navigate the complexities of preparing future educators, it may become increasingly evident that cultivating meaningful relationships should take precedence over a narrow emphasis on standardized outcomes. This multidimensional approach may challenge traditional paradigms of early childhood education, urging a re-evaluation of the way we define becoming and success in educator preparation. Ultimately, this shift may ensure that future educators are equipped to navigate and enhance the diverse realities of today's programs for young children. However, building on the principles of relational learning and the interconnected nature of experiences outlined by Ingold, it is crucial to understand how these ideas intersect with the professional standards set by educational institutions. Let's explore this further.

Professional Preparation of Preservice Early Childhood Educators

In their *Policy Statement Regarding Education for Entry to Practice*, the College (2021c) discusses how the professional preparation of preservice early childhood education teachers is distinct from other forms of education. The reason is that professional preparation programs must prepare students for “the full scope of practice of a profession” (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2021c, p. 2). The College states that students must be “well prepared to practise according to established standards for the profession” (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2021c, p. 3). Therefore, students must acquire theoretical knowledge related to the early childhood education field (in class) and knowledge understood as application (through field practicum). They also need to be taught by professors who are members of the profession who

will evaluate their readiness to practise within the framework of standards (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2021c). Some may argue that such an approach to preparing future early childhood educators is to ensure high quality care for all children because standards are created based on current research and in consultation with professionals (Bass, 2020) and academics. In addition, as in the case of the College, standards are used to enhance the leadership and advocacy skills of the educators. I am certain that many individuals familiar with the field will agree that leadership and advocacy skills can support educators with ongoing challenges associated with recognition of their work. However, learning leadership through standards is problematic, as they promote a certain way of restricted thinking and practice. The College's approach to leadership is a method of holding educators accountable for providing high-quality childcare services to families. In other words, by enforcing leadership on educators, the College requires a commitment to professional standards and values. Gert Biesta (2010) discusses this in his book *Good Education in an Age of Measurements: Ethics, Politics, Democracy*, explaining that today's "new managerialism" is driven by the efficient satisfaction of customer needs (2010, p. 52). These decisions are often made to save time, money, and to remain competitive. Biesta questions the relationship between the government and the citizen, suggesting that this relationship has become primarily economic,

...which positions the government as provider and the citizen as consumer (see Biesta 2004a; 2006a). Choice has become the key word in this discourse. Yet "choice" is about the behavior of consumers in a market where their aim is to satisfy their needs, and should not be conflated with democracy, which is about public deliberation and contestation about the common good and the just and equitable (re)distribution of public resources. (2010, p. 54)

In accordance with Biesta's logic, the dynamic between educators and the College requires them to assume leadership roles in the field, creating an economic relationship. Consequently, the focus is on fostering a culture of quality assurance, which is directly tied to the concept of accountability. This approach raises significant concerns in early childhood education, as it tends to commodify relationships and neglect ethical considerations. Biesta (2010) provides further insight into this complex issue. He writes:

The problem is that while many would want the culture of accountability to do the first (i.e., to be accountable to the public), it actually does the second (i.e., being accountable to the regulators) and thereby takes the real stakeholders out of the "accountability loop." In this respect the current technical-managerial approach to accountability produces economic relationships between people and makes democratic relationships difficult if not impossible. (p. 58)

Another restriction that preservice early childhood educators face is that they learn early childhood education at college and not university level. According to the College, 29,523 of their all members (55%) are working in licensed childcare programs in Ontario. Only 5% of those members have completed their bachelor's degree (College of Early Childhood Educator, 2021a). This may be that there are no incentives for early childhood educators to pursue higher qualifications than an ECE diploma. However, focusing on a diploma and a college-level education only offers certain types of learning experiences in the classroom and during field practicum relevant to becoming an educator.

Community colleges in particular are "focused on meeting the needs of the economy" (Cox & Sallee, 2018, p. 74). Due to the neoliberal approach underpinning their funding structures, students are seen as future workers. Students' professional preparation is focused on a

quick and efficient process of producing skilled workers for targeted work. As Dennison and Gallagher (2014) suggest, the College mandate is “the preparation of individuals to enter the workforce, with the training of both quality and relevance, to contribute to the province’s economic progress” (p. 95). Therefore, as opposed to university professors, college professors are expected to prepare students for their profession through whatever means it takes to succeed in their learning (Dennison & Gallagher, 2014. p. 77).

From my experience working with a faculty of more than 80 college professors, all the professors are very experienced in areas associated with the field, and they are familiar with the professional standards and practices promoted by the many regulatory bodies that govern the early childhood education field. Most college professors are employed on a contract basis, which contributes to them still working in various positions associated with the field. Research and academic advancement, however, are usually not common practices for college professors. Since college professors are not engaged with the process of being considered for tenure, as are their counterparts at universities, they do not prioritize the establishment of “truly free and innovative learning and research environments” (Gilligan-Hackett & Murray, 2016, p. 173). Even though today’s colleges also offer degree programs, the reduced emphasis on academic rigor results in faculty viewing themselves, and being perceived, more as technical or professional experts, experts who are deeply connected to a profession and community and teaching within already established vocational outcomes for students.

Learning early childhood education at the college level (not university) means learning through an employment-oriented curriculum and pedagogy with instructors that are true professionals. This means that early childhood education students learn about their future roles through approaches that risk making them obedient technicians, unquestioningly following

policy and masters of child-centred pedagogy. During their professional preparation they learn how to be, as Rachel Langford describes “facilitators” and “stage managers,” which further “limit the range of possible interactions between teachers and children” (Langford, 2010a, p. 113). Furthermore, because families are seen as clients, educators learn how to ensure that families are satisfied with the provision of their quality service. Therefore, preservice educators learn to provide children with age-appropriate and fun activities so families, seeing their children happy, will not contest a program’s quality (Vintimilla, 2014). Early childhood education students do not receive opportunities to freely and critically reflect and inquire about the practices in early childhood programs in order to be able to judge, understand, and justify their choices. Furthermore, they learn how to become “editor[s] of knowledge and culture in a way that can avoid processes of meaning and thinking that could be classified as “boring” or difficult” for children (Vintimilla, 2014, p. 83) and themselves. When students learn to avoid challenging ideas, they may become passive consumers of information rather than active participants in knowledge creation. This passive approach diminishes the value of intellectual engagement, which is essential for countering narrow viewpoints and dominant narratives. Consequently, students, under current conditions, are becoming more susceptible to oversimplified narratives and are less capable of critically evaluating the complexities of knowledge and culture. Thus, the connection to anti-intellectualism becomes clear: without encouragement for reflective and meaningful engagement with ideas, the field of early childhood education risks fostering a culture that devalues intellectual effort and critical discourse. The next section explores the connection between neoliberal ideology and the promotion of anti-intellectualism as the underlying foundation for field practicum in current practices.

Nurturing Anti-Intellectualism in Current Practices

Henry Giroux (2008) discusses how neoliberal ideology is not only manifested in regulations and standardization but also operates through what he calls “seductions” (p. 610). This implies that the implementation of this ideology entices individuals to willingly adopt its values. It involves influencing how people perceive themselves and what they aspire to. Neoliberalism promotes self-entrepreneurship and the pursuit of individual success. Giroux (2008) notes that certain pedagogical approaches, typically associated with teaching methods in schools, extend into broader aspects of our lives, including media, political agendas, and the promotion of particular lifestyle habits. Therefore, neoliberalism is both a cultural and political practice. Giroux (2008) further explains that, in this context, pedagogy becomes a tool for governmentality - a method of governing and shaping behaviour and mindset. Pedagogy underpins our relations by instilling neoliberal values, norms, and aspirations. It moulds how individuals understand their obligations, ambitions, and identities within the neoliberal framework. By emphasizing self-improvement, competition, and market-oriented thinking, pedagogy reinforces neoliberal governance. The interaction among neoliberalism, pedagogy, and governmentality is intricate, as Giroux (2008) articulates, and it is worth quoting at length:

Neoliberalism’s politics of disposability not only are maintained merely through disciplinary and regulatory powers, but also work primarily as a form of seduction, a pedagogy in which matters of subjectification, desire, and identities are central to neoliberalism’s mode of governing. Pedagogy functions as a form of cultural politics and governmentality understood as a moral and political practice that takes place in a variety of sites outside of schools. In this instance, pedagogy anchors governmentality in ‘domain of cognition’ functioning largely as ‘a grid of insistent calculation, experimentation, and

evaluation concerned with the conduct of conduct’ (Dillon, 1995, p. 330). But there is more at work here than the ‘domains of cognition’ that shape common sense, there is also a pedagogy of fantasy and desire producing a kind of ‘emotional habitus’ through the ever present landscapes of entertainment (Illouz, 2007). There is in this case a pedagogical apparatus and mode of seduction that in the name of entertainment invites spectators to watch an unfolding ‘theatre of cruelty’ expanding across the globe to laugh at exclusion and humiliation rather than be moved to challenge it. (pp. 610-611)

The quote highlights the pervasive influence of neoliberal agendas on discouraging critical and creative thinking and intellectual exploration and evaluation of information. According to Giroux (2008), neoliberalism aims to disempower individuals by preventing them from exercising their intellectual capacity to question economic relations and instead encourages them to conform to “best practices” in order to enhance productivity and efficiency. This was exemplified in one of my meetings where a manager of a childcare program emphasized the need for educators to cease thinking and discussing, and focus solely on performing assigned tasks rather than engaging in intellectual pursuit. She actually stated that “it is time for us [the field of early childhood education] to stop talking and start doing.”

The preference for “doing” over “thinking,” associated with neoliberal ideology, has led some scholars to discuss the pervasive encouragement of anti-intellectualism. For instance, Racine and Vandenberg (2021), in their work *A Philosophical Analysis of Anti-Intellectualism in Nursing*, examine how the current emphasis on unquestionably embracing quality assurance and business-support models, associated with neoliberalism, may be contributing to anti-intellectualism within the nursing profession. They argue that categorizing the field as a practice discipline or artful practice may further encourage the rejection of intellectual pursuits, resulting

in a gap between practical skills and critical thinking. They define anti-intellectualism as the dismissal of a positive attitude toward learning, critical thinking, and knowledge acquisition. Intellectuals value thoughtful consideration, ask questions, and embrace creative solutions. Racine and Vandenberg (2021) suggest that nurse scholars and educators should prioritize the cultivation of wisdom by reintroducing courses and activities that help students refine their intellectual capabilities to effectively address complex social and healthcare issues.

Similarly, in my experience, the influence of neoliberal logic on college education, its emphasis on students' employability, fosters anti-intellectualism among early childhood students and educators. I define anti-intellectualism, following Eigenberger and Sealander (2001), as an attitude that disregards "a preference for general learning, employing theories, examining hypotheses, conducting research, writing, and synthesizing diverse sources of knowledge" (p. 388). I believe that anti-intellectualism is primarily fostered in professional preparation programs through standardization and professionalization, which emphasize accepting the dominant ideology without questioning it. This reduces opportunities for early childhood education students to develop their inclinations toward intellectual pursuits. Students are not encouraged to understand context, cultural nuances, hidden meanings, and their lived conditions in relation to the information. They are also not encouraged to be creative but, as Deleuze states, to "reproduce the same" (Deleuze, 2001, p. 22). This is problematic because, as Deleuze explains,

We learn nothing from those who say: 'Do as I do'. Our only teachers are those who tell us to 'do with me', and are able to emit signs to be developed in heterogeneity rather than propose gestures for us to reproduce. (...) Learning takes place not in the relation between a representation and an action (reproduction of the Same) but in the relation between a sign and a response (encounter with the Other). (Deleuze, 2001, pp. 22-22)

According to Deleuze, learning is an intellectual pursuit that involves gaining insight into new perspectives and comprehending the world in a different light. This process entails continually exploring new directions, to formulate new questions and uncover distinct and inventive propositions. Consequently, learning and intellectual exploration can be perceived as the quest to generate inventive and original responses. I believe that fostering creativity through generating new and creative questions and responses requires exposure to a wide range of views and perspectives, found not only in practical applications but also in academic and intellectual work.

I learned, however, that the current learning environment often leads educators and students to express their disapproval of the benefits or values of studying, reading to enhance their understanding, discussing pedagogy with others, and critically reflecting or exploring theories in their practice. Often students, after spending their first days in practicum, make statements like “but the practice is so different from our learning in school,” or “this is great what we learn in class, but I will never be able to implement this in practicum,” or “my mentor said that there is no time for discussions, and I must concentrate on practice.” Such an approach of favouring practice over theory and research leads students to focus on grades, getting the diploma, and not enjoying learning. Every semester, I receive many queries from students about rubrics, my grading preferences, or assignment requirements. I have never received an email asking for more reading, discussion, or exploration of a topic because the idea is exciting or thought-provoking.

Many of my colleagues share the focus on favouring practice over theories or research. They express their perspectives on how we can alter our teaching to better prepare students for practice. I have even overheard statements that teaching can be “too theoretical or intellectual” for college students. Therefore, it seems that if colleges are to prepare students for the role of

early childhood educators, a positive attitude towards intellectual wonderings and pursuits, complex theoretical content and, therefore, the development of dispositions needed for lifelong learning (even though continuous professional learning is part of the College's requirements) are not part of currently used approaches in early childhood education programs.

This is consistent with the literature review and research conducted by Frunzaru et al. (2018) on students from different social studies programs in Europe. Their findings highlight that ...students rarely acknowledge the utility of soft skills in the labour market, lacking interest in generic skills, such as critical thinking, conceptual learning, solving problems, and communicating with others, and this attitude is projected and reified into anti-intellectual traits. (2018, p. 396)

Frunzaru et al. (2018) further explain that the nurturing of students' anti-intellectualism through concentration on employability pushes students to demand learning more practice in school and less theory.

In early childhood education in Canada, Vintimilla et al. (2023) suggest that the current state of anti-intellectualism in the field is associated with the "existing structures" of early childhood education in our context (2023, p. 2). The authors further point out that the roots of those structures are associated with the way our society sees early childhood educators and their work as associated with not very problematic or complex issues. Quoting Vintimilla et al., Bezaire and Johnston (2022) write about experiencing the practice of dismissing students' intellectuality in Canadian college settings due to a strong concentration on using the logic of developmentalism in practice and professional standards. Students learn to be objective by mastering practices underpinned by the psychological theories of child development. While resisting current understanding, all these scholars call for changes in practice. Bezaire and

Johnston (2022) propose consideration for critical thinking through complex readings with students. Professors must challenge the limitation of seeing practice and children through various lenses. Vintimilla et al. (2023), by contrast, offer a reconceptualization of pedagogical practice from current approaches, industry-like patterns of a preplanned sequence of similar transitions, routines and activities to cultivate “living knowledge” (p. 3). Drawing on the work of Stengers and Despret, Vintimilla et al. (2023) propose that the work of an early childhood educator is rather “pedagogical and curricular acts of creation, invention, and regeneration” (p. 3); such an approach, in contrast to current practices, demands “becoming studious of [life], being interested in its different forms and formations in what it does and what it invites and in how we become of it” (Vintimilla & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2020 p. 637).

Considering pedagogy as an approach to cultivating opportunities for creation, invention and regeneration definitively poses questions related to the role and responsibility of early childhood educators in their learning. Peter Moss and Pat Petrie (2002) elaborate on a conceptualization of pedagogical tradition and suggest that the role of a pedagogue is complex, and, in Europe, pedagogy is about “sharing daily life” (p.143). Moss and Petrie further elaborate that the core of its activity is “reflective practice,” and

In their training and ongoing professional development, pedagogues evaluate their work and any particular incident—learning point—that may occur. What is to be learned from a particular incident? Is there a body of theory that might help the pedagogue to understand it better? What are the implications for future work? In their face-to-face work with children, too, they model a reflective approach and encourage children to reflect on what is happening, and on the meanings of activities and events, meanings that children and pedagogues arrive at together: the pedagogue makes no claim to be a

repository of objects of knowledge that can be duplicated in the children with whom they share time and space. (2002, p. 145)

In short, according to the authors, pedagogy “is an ongoing process, encompassing learning about self in relation to others, about one’s talents and power, about creativity and about the physical world.” (Moss & Petrie, 2002, p. 144)

As Moss and Petrie point out, the professional preparation of preservice early childhood educators in many European countries involves opportunities for enhancing teamwork, ability to apply theories in practice, and being able to reflect on relationships and daily events and educators’ responses and decisions (Moss & Petrie, 2002). Moreover, Moss and Petrie highlight the importance of early childhood educators being able to learn from everyday situations and practices used in shared spaces of children’s programs. Reflective practice and application of theories to better understand what is going on and how to open possibilities for new inquiries require intellectual work. Theory, being able to engage in intellectual quest with others, requires professional preparation that helps students nurture their ability to “staying close to the interweaving of objects and thoughts, of doing and reflecting, theory and practice, emotions and knowledge” (Rinaldi, 2021, p. 104).

Some scholars may argue that early childhood educators’ intellectual work in the neoliberal education approach can be complex. For example, Lenz Taguchi (2010) suggests that many of the theories students learn in early childhood education strengthen the central position of Western approaches. This is an important area that should be explored in the preparation programs of preservice educators. In this research, however, I’m interested in arguing for seeing the importance of theories in creating pedagogical processes and conditions that incite early childhood educators to understand their profession as a rich engagement with what is possible in

the education of young children as they encounter the specificities of their present. I would argue that students need to cultivate their dispositions to engage in interpretive processes, fostering new understanding and sparking curiosity about alternative possibilities. As Moss and Petrie (2002) suggest, theories help us to explore a particular problem, seek specific solutions, and consider evidence that will help us make sense of what is going on. Suppose students have more opportunities to explore early childhood from various lenses, not only those embedded in the professional standards. In that case, they may challenge the professors to make their courses more relevant to their lives, as Bezaire and Johnston (2022) describe in their paper.

But students have challenged and called us out on this when critical theories have been taken up in a second-year course or late in a term: ‘This makes so much more sense. Why were we not given this last year?’ or ‘These readings are so much more relevant to my life; I wish I read it sooner’. Consulting with student advisory representatives and student researchers during college program review processes has also revealed students who value and are motivated by current issues and post-foundational theorists, recommending that their programs begin and continue within these frameworks – rather than assuming students need to ‘progress’ towards them. (p. 436)

Students may also challenge the current pedagogical practices that solidify the anti-intellectualism of educators. In the words of Donna Haraway, “sitting (sighting) boundaries is a risky practice” because “boundaries [may] shift from within” (1988, p. 596). In this statement, Haraway highlights the precarious nature of setting boundaries, emphasizing that they are not static but rather dynamic. Boundaries serve as temporary containers for meanings, yet they continue to generate new concepts and possibilities. Although mapping practices establish these

boundaries, they are always susceptible to internal changes. The essence of the risk lies in the understanding that boundaries are not fixed or absolute; they possess the capacity to transform, develop, and challenge established standards. In essence, Haraway urges us to acknowledge our unique perspectives, approach them critically, and embrace the unpredictability of boundary-shifting viewpoints. Such an approach in early childhood education has already started pushing scholars to point out the consequences of silencing educators' intellectual wonderings. Upon analyzing further Bezaire and Johnston's quote, it becomes evident that students begin to push the boundaries as they engage with knowledge that is more intellectually stimulating and relevant to their lives.

What Do We Lose in Practice Informed by Standards, Professionalization, and Neoliberalism?

As mentioned, the current professional preparation practices of preservice early childhood educators are built on the proposition that practice informed by standards is the way to quality childcare programs, elevation, and renewal of the profession. Despite the College's claim that professional and ethical standards "demonstrate a respect for diversity and a sensitivity to the multicultural character of the province" (ECE Act, 2007, as cited in College of Early Childhood Educators, 2017, p. 5), they contribute to the construction of an oppressive system. Standards silence alternative views and perspectives and terrorize educators for thinking and doing otherwise. The fear of being reported and investigated for misconduct in such a public way restricts educators' autonomy, freedom, and learning. For early childhood educators and students, this means they must learn how to function in a system that legitimates enactment of standards rather than authentic pedagogy. Because my dissertation is concerned with the preparation of preservice early childhood educators, I would like to further explore the idea of

learning in relation to what is missing if learning to standards is the focus of preparatory practices.

The agenda of the neoliberal ideology of efficiency, where we teach students to use the “cookie cutter” approach to pedagogy, serves well the practice of maximizing the satisfaction of clients and children being better prepared for school. However, there is a risk that the field may hinder invention and creativity in early childhood education. The Ontario Ministry of Education (2023) communicates that invention and creativity are imperative to making a difference in the world. The reason is that “these skills include the capacity to develop concepts, ideas, or products to contribute innovative solutions to economic, social, and environmental problems” (2023, para 1). In their curriculum for children in grades 1 through 12, the ministry elaborates on the importance of such capacities and what is involved in such learning. The ministry states: “Developing these skills involves a willingness to assume leadership roles, take risks, and engage in independent, unconventional thinking in the context of experimenting, conducting research, and exploring new strategies, techniques, and perspectives” (2023, para 1).

It might be worth then asking why we move to learning through standards and nurturing anti-intellectualism in the professional preparatory programs for preservice early childhood educators. Why are we afraid of having early childhood education students take risks in their learning through experimentation, unconventional thinking, and research? Isn’t this against the ministry’s values and hopes for the future of this country?

In Brief

The current practices of preparing students for their role as early childhood educators are deeply rooted in neoliberal ideology (Roberts-Holmes & Moss, 2021). The ideology pushes us to believe that standardization and professionalization are the only ways to deliver quality programs

for children and for the field to find a respectful place in our society. However, such an approach to the professional preparation of preservice educators leads not only to restricting learning experiences for students but also to strengthening the current view of educators as “undervalued and marginalized” (Richardson & Langford, 2018, p. 26). The reason is that current preservice educators are trapped in a very narrow space for exploring, transforming and wondering about other possibilities.

Taking into account the various perspectives on learning and knowledge that has been offered by a number of authors in this chapter, we are invited to rethink our practices. This encourages us to support students in becoming more attentive to their surroundings while recognizing the limitations of what we know. We value the idea that when we learn something new, it opens up new questions. As Ann Phelan (2022) suggests, engaging in dialogues about education presents new educators, and students alike with the opportunity to interrogate established practices and consider alternative ideas. This process of questioning and articulating thoughts can lead to a more nuanced understanding of pedagogical practices, concepts and experiences. Emphasizing the importance of envisioning innovative approaches allows for a reimagining of education that transcends conventional norms. Such creative engagement has the potential to cultivate a landscape of diverse educational practices, offering multiple pathways for exploration and understanding. In her own words:

One of the abiding challenges for teacher education is to create and sustain a sense of educational possibility. This means putting conditions in place that can help preserve the capacity of each new teacher to renew the educational conversation, that is, to question, to articulate what matters, and to imagine yet unthought educational purposes and practices. This means that teacher education programmes and policies not only welcome

but nourish the difference that each newcomer brings to the profession. Put simply, the challenge is how to keep the question of a future open. This is a perennial educational challenge of course but one currently haunted by neo-liberal learning utopias, on the one hand, and pandemic dystopias, on the other. (Phelan, 2022, p. 23)

The upcoming chapter 3 of this dissertation focuses on the theme of hospitality, emphasizing the importance of welcoming newcomers and maintaining an open perspective for the future. This section will explore the various dimensions of hospitality as the first concept examined in the study. By engaging with the idea of hospitality, this chapter aims to unravel the complexities of inviting the Other into a space that, while governed by standards and norms, must also resist totalization. This allows for a fluidity that acknowledges the ethical necessity inherent in such encounters.

Chapter 3: Hospitality

The *Policy Statement Regarding Practicum* by the College of Early Childhood Educators (2025a) states that students in early childhood education programs are “expected to learn and practice in accordance with the College’s *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* (2017; the Code).” (p. 10). This document, along with other guiding documents, outlines the support that students should receive through supervision, mentoring, and evaluation. The goal is for students to demonstrate, upon graduation, that they are qualified professionals who conduct themselves ethically and professionally by showing their understanding of the Code. In this context, ethics is simplified to a set of established standards of practice and behavior.

In this chapter I aim to critically engage with how ethics is taken up and considered in field practicum. Instead of viewing ethics as a set of rules or standards, I want to explore how we can envision more ethical approaches to “welcoming” new educators to the field. The section is divided into two main parts: the first part delves into Emmanuel Levinas’s ethics of encounter, and the second part explores Jacques Derrida’s concept of hospitality. I am particularly interested in demonstrating how a shift in ethical thinking can create conditions for a different form of subjectivity to emerge among educators. My focus is on fostering practices that support the becoming of educators as intellectuals rather than mere mechanical workers or obedient practitioners. To begin, I outline my concerns regarding current practices and then explore Levinas’s philosophy as an alternative approach to current ethical inquiry. In laying the foundation for recognizing students as individuals capable of challenging existing practices and reimagining the status quo, I explore Levinas’s ethical notion of the Other. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of how embracing hospitality in field practicum can keep the field open to evolution through our interpersonal relationships.

Challenging the Foundations

Considering the established policies, it can be assumed that students are responsible for understanding and following the Code. They are introduced to professional ethics as a form of personal self-regulation and a culture of accountability, which may limit their interactions during practicums. This emphasis can compel them to conform to clearly defined boundaries of uniformity, obedience, and efficiency. As students are told that developing ethical behavior is their duty, they may hold themselves accountable for not exercising enough effort to emulate their mentors. Acting ethically may necessitate navigating complex situations and making difficult decisions that might be in tension with those we admire or are perceived as experts. This suggests that, although learning from mentors can be invaluable, one must also be ready to carve out their own path when ethical considerations demand it. In light of the concerns mentioned above, I critically consider how might students' encounters with accountability and restricted autonomy, limited meaningful participation, and authenticity, as imposed by the Code and standards, restrict educators' abilities to engage actively with norms, prevailing truths, and narrow perspectives, and diminish their role as critical thinkers. Consequently, I propose alternative ethical possibilities for the education of future educators. Adhering to the Code diminishes the ethical aspect of pedagogical encounters to a single, restricted assumption that ethical practice is determined not by their actions, values, character, or pedagogical commitments, but rather by how well they understand the Code and how effectively they apply it in their decision-making. This limited image of the educator constrains and diminishes the vast potential that exists within the realm of early childhood education.

To critically address this concern, I reference the insights of Gert Biesta (2009), who emphasizes the need to thoroughly examine the implications of a culture of accountability

largely shaped by neoliberal regulatory frameworks and imposed standards. Biesta's analysis encourages a deeper investigation into how these accountability measures impact educational practices. He not only questions the implications of such an approach on relationships but also explores the kinds of relationships that become "difficult or even impossible as a result of the accountability regime" (Biesta, 2009, p. 650). Biesta (2009) suggests that a culture of accountability and standardization reduces people's relationships to economic ones and inhibits the establishment of democratic relationships. According to Biesta (2009), the focus on accountability as a central approach to practice leads to an obsession with measurements and processes of quality assurance, rather than personal responsibility. Just like in field practicum, where students are becoming accountable to regulations and the Code as customers of education, and where pedagogical decisions are reduced to meeting external standards.

As I reflect on my various encounters and experiences in educating future teachers over the years, I notice that the current conditions in early childhood education often restrict the relationships that students can build with their mentors. These relationships tend to be hierarchical, sometimes even oppressive, and conform to a predetermined mold. The mentor becomes merely a supervisor of adherence to the normative code, expected to closely monitor students' transition to 'ethical' practice. The mentor is already seen and clearly defined as a qualified professional who behaves ethically and professionally, leaving no room for growth and adaptation to the ever-changing world. This often limits the way students enter the profession and view their work. Their ethical character, shaped by their values and commitment to making a difference, is often overshadowed by the emphasis on predetermined knowledge. Students are steered away from becoming transformative, intellectually, and ethically grounded educators and are instead pushed toward a singular existence focused on rote memorization. This approach

hinders their growth as ethical educators and misses the opportunity for their preservice education, and the entire field, to become more critically aware of established norms and power structures. It restricts students from questioning and exploring, instead encouraging them to merely absorb information. Students often feel their growth, invention, and well-being are stifled due to the culture of accountability and measurement. They express feelings of not being trusted, respected, or valued.

In my classes, I often hear students making statements like, “my mentor has to approve all my plans,” “I’m afraid that if I don’t agree with what she is asking me to do, this will be reflected in my evaluation,” or even “I didn’t implement my activity because my mentor was very busy and I couldn’t get her permission.” From the mentors’ perspectives, I often hear, “she’s a good student, she knows what is expected, and you don’t have to tell her what to do.” This limited approach to the relationship between mentor and students creates barriers for students to imagine different ways of relating to others. Through these examples, I seek to underscore the insight how educators not only are trapped in processes of becoming obedient workers but also individuals who do not critically examine situations or assess them in relation to their ethical and pedagogical commitments. One concerning aspect here, among other issues, is that such conditions do not allow educators and students to navigate the tensions between established standards based on neoliberal principles and envision ethical practices in early childhood education in a more democratic way.

Levinas’ Ethics and the Early Childhood Educator

Emmanuel Levinas (1905–1995) was a prominent philosopher of Lithuanian origin who later became a significant figure in French philosophical thought. He is particularly renowned for his radical rethinking of ethics as the foundational aspect of philosophy. Levinas (1984) argues

that ethics revolves around “responsibility for the Other” and asserts that this responsibility is a fundamental condition of subjectivity (p. 194). According to Levinas (1984), our responsibility for the Other is “the essential, primary and fundamental structure of subjectivity” (p. 194), emphasizing that encounters with others, rather than predetermined codes or ethical systems, evoke a call for responsibility and mark the beginning of an ethical experience. Levinas (1984) states that individuals are bound by ethical responsibilities, and their actions and decisions are consistently shaped by a priory obligation to others. In Levinas own words:

Ethics [...] does not supplement a preceding existential base; the very node of the subjective is knotted in ethics understood as responsibility. I understand responsibility as responsibility for the Other, thus as responsibility for what is not my deed, or for what does not even matter to me, is met by me as face. (1984, p. 194)

Levinas (1985), therefore, suggests that ethics begins with encountering the alterity of the Other, or as he explains, with “a look turned toward the face” of the Other (p. 85). It is essential to highlight here that in Levinas’s philosophy, responsibility precedes the encounter with the Other. He contends that we are called to be responsible for the Other even before we meet the Other; as he elaborates “The face orders and ordains me” (Levinas, 1985, p. 97). This perspective arises from his belief that our ethical obligations are inherent, stemming from the very nature of human existence. In essence, our responsibility is not contingent upon an actual encounter; rather, it is a fundamental aspect of being human that informs our relationships and interactions with others (Levinas, 1985, p. 97). This pre-existing sense of responsibility is a cornerstone of his ethical views. An encounter with the Other makes us aware of our tendency to simplify, “grasp” and exhaust the alterity of the Other, placing us in a position of infinite

responsibility toward them. The interaction with the face prompts individuals to seek “*love*” and “*being-for-the-other*” (Levinas, 1985, p. 52). The face not only appeals and invites, but also commands individuals to establish a connection with it, leading them away from self-centeredness and encouraging them to respond and engage with the infinite nature of the face of the Other. This shared awakening experience leads to a transformation in their mindset, replacing a sense of superiority with humility, and fostering a willingness to relinquish control and embrace subordination to the Other.

Scholars suggest that Levinas’ philosophy requires a departure from traditional Western ethics (Biesta, 2003; Todd, 2003a). It shifts the focus from a human-centered egotistic perspective to one of interdependency and responsibility towards others (Zhao, 2016). Levinas emphasizes the importance of emotions, feelings, and perceptions in understanding and relating to the world, moving away from a purely rational approach (Bedzow, 2018). This philosophy encourages readers to shift their focus from “what” to “how” to think (Bedzow, 2018) and to suspend any predefined principles of right and good (Todd, 2003a). It also seems that Levinas’ philosophy encourages the reader to accompany him on a journey to explore ethics, not to define it, but by seeking and uncovering “its meaning” (Levinas, 1985, p. 90).

Considering ethics as a way of how we encounter and think within our responsibility for the Other has the potential to change the way mentors relate to early childhood education preservice students in field practicum. Valuing the encounter with the differences of students may change not only the way we define the role of mentors and students but also how ethics are navigated and conceptualized in ever-changing environments like early years programs for children. I am not suggesting that implementing Levinas’ ethics will solve all the issues of current culture of supervision, evaluation, and accountability present in the field of early

childhood education. However, I wonder how the experiences of students and mentors in field practicum may change if, instead of the predetermined code, they focus on situated responses to their encounters. Similar to scholars like Gert Biesta (2012, 2017), Anne Phelan (2022), and Cristina Vintimilla (2012, 2023), I ask: what can be ethically possible if pedagogical encounters are not limited to narrow adherence to the Code, but conditions of limitless actions and responses? Most importantly, how may the interactions, meetings, and relational spaces be enriched if we stop reducing individuals into predefined subjects of knowledge and start welcoming, respecting, and recognizing the differences and uniqueness of all who are part of an educational context.

I am also drawn to Levinas's (1985) emphasis on the significance of sensibility and vulnerability in ethical relationships. The existing Code does not adequately address the vulnerability inherent in uncertainty and the affective dimensions of human interactions, particularly in the context of field practicum. This oversight leaves little room for recognizing the importance of being open to the vulnerabilities of others and responding in situated, singular ways to specific interactions. Prioritizing the ethical relationship and infinite responsibility may prompt students and mentors to question the adequacy of traditional codes of ethics in fully capturing the depth and complexity of our moral obligations to others. This perspective advocates for a more personal, responsive, and compassionate approach to ethics. Before delving further into the topic, I would like to explore Levinas' (1985) conceptualization of the "Other" and how encountering alterity in field practicum is seen as an important component for students in early childhood education programs.

Encountering the Other

Biesta (2003) discusses how Levinas's philosophy can benefit education by suggesting that learning is not just about acquiring knowledge or truth, but also about how one responds. Biesta (2003) implies that Levinas's philosophy raises pedagogical questions, emphasizing that pedagogy is not about transmitting truths to the next generation but creating opportunities for students to respond and become "present" (p. 64). Similarly, Sharon Todd (2003a) further explains that Levinas's ethics do not consist of prescribed ideas or standards. Instead, they guide us in exploring the true meaning of ethical relationships and encourage "a mode of engagement" that allows us to interpret existing relationships in terms of their ethical impact (Todd, 2003a, p. 2-3). This condition involves "engaging with the limitations of intentionality" as well as the "limits of thought and being themselves" (Todd, 2003a, p. 2-3). I wonder then, how can the interaction between early childhood education students and their mentor during practical experience serve as the foundation for students to learn how to respond to current conditions? The student, seen as the Other, should not be pre-defined but always regarded in their alterity. This raises the question of what it means for students to learn how to ethically respond? Let's refer to Levinas again:

I am responsible for the Other, I vouch for the other, before having done anything. The principal theme, my fundamental definition, is that the other man, who, at first glance, is a part of a whole that is given to me like other objects, like the whole world, like the spectacle of the world, the other man stands out in a certain way from this whole precisely by his appearing as face [*comme visage*]. (as cited in Guwy et al., 1986, p. 472)

Furthermore, Levinas emphasizes that the encounter with "the face" is:

[...] a commitment, for me, a call to me, an order for me to find myself in its service, and not only this face but also to serve the other person who in this face appears to me at once in their nakedness, without means, without anything for protection, in their destitution, and, at the same time, like the place where I am commanded. (as cited in Guwy et al., 1986, p. 473)

As we can see, for Levinas, the encounter with the Other marks the beginning of an ethical experience. Rather than being based on a set of rules or standards, the personal encounter with another person compels us to acknowledge their humanity and vulnerability. Levinas further explains that the call to respond and take responsibility for the Other is deeply rooted in the Judaic tradition, associated with the principle of “thou shalt not kill” (as cited in Guwy et al., 1986, p. 473). This signifies the responsibility of preserving the uniqueness of the Other and their right to exist. According to Levinas, we all bear responsibility for one another, as our very existence is contingent on our boundless ethical responsibility toward each other. As Levinas puts it, “I become a subject in the physical sense of being hostage to the other” (Hand, 1989, p. 87), meaning that our identity is shaped in relation to the Other. We are not self-sufficient and should be regarded as equally significant individuals rather than as a collective. For Levinas, the emphasis is not on fulfilling our own needs, but on acknowledging the needs of the Other (Simmons, 2023). As Levinas writes:

Positively, we will say that since the Other looks at me, I am responsible for him, without even having taken on responsibilities in his regard; his responsibility is incumbent on me. It is responsibility that goes beyond what I do. (Levinas, 1985, p. 96)

Moreover, the ethical responsibility demands that our own actions take precedence. As Levinas puts it, “I am always summoned as if I were the only one who could do it” (as cited in Guwy et al., 1986, p. 474). In other words, our ethical response to the Other takes priority over our responsibility to ourselves. We have a greater responsibility towards others and the suffering they endure. According to Levinas, there is no expectation of reciprocity, as we do not seek anything in return (Guwy et al., 1986).

Consideration of ethical encounters with students as “the Others,” viewing them as individuals to be treated with the same care and respect as neighbors, can enhance the experience of field practicum as “a relation between human beings that is direct, open-ended, and unpredictable” (Todd et al., 2003, p. 20). Here, I find it important to recognize that students are not just expected to view themselves as independent, ‘self-directed learners’. Instead, they should see themselves in a relationship with their mentors, where they can explore who they aspire to become as educators. In this context, education is not merely a field for applying evidence-based practices and standardized approaches. Taking responsibility and being accountable for ethical and professional development can be seen as a collaborative process. The responsibilities involved in this ethical experience require both mentors and students to study, question, and engage in pedagogical practices, as outlined by Carlina Rinaldi (2021) in the concept of “formazione” (p. 100). This involves creating professional identities in relation to others. In Rinaldi’s (2021) own words:

Personal and professional development and education are something we construct ourselves in relation with others, based on values that are chosen, shared and constructed together. It means living and living ourselves in a permanent state of research. (p. 100)

And further,

When you consider others as part of your own identity, then their different, sometimes divergent, theories and opinions are seen as a resource. The awareness of the value of these differences and of having dialogue among them increases. (p. 157)

Acknowledging that we become subjects and acquire our subjectivity through encounters with students as “the Other,” we come to appreciate that students are an integral part of our identities as educators. This realization invites us to recognize that students and their viewpoints are crucial to our own sense of self. It is about seeing ourselves as connected to students rather than as separate. This perspective also demands that we view students’ differing opinions and ideas not as obstacles but as valuable contributions. These differences can provide new insights, challenge our thinking, and help us innovate by utilizing the diversity of thoughts and opinions around us, leading to richer and more meaningful interactions. In this light, we can begin to reimagine how we perceive students beyond the current limits of our understanding during their practicum. This shift in perspective can foster a deeper respect for students as individuals, rather than reducing them to predefined categories.

An ECE Student in Field Practicum as the Other

There is much that we can learn from Levinas’ ethics of alterity, which can help us to forge ethical relations in our encountering preservice early childhood educators. A deeper reflection may not only help us consider how our views contribute to their journey as educators, but also how the differences they each bring to the field are important. Reflecting on the current views of students in pre-service early childhood education, I am reminded of Shepherd’s (2014) discussion on the ‘Other’ in today’s societies:

Alternatively, with the contraction of the welfare state, and the accompanying emergence of specialized and “professionalized” caring agencies the Other is conceived as a

consumer/client, to whom professional carers, are duty-bound to provide quality care and service. On the other hand, at worst, the Other, is conceived according to the dictates of the respective discourses of paranoia and the market. The Other is thus the dangerous stranger, a potential terrorist or criminal who has come to harm, and thus not to be granted welcome, but best kept at a safe distance. (p. 12)

Perhaps we don't view students as "potential terrorists or criminals," but we have been instructed that during field practicum, they must be "supervised by an employee or home childcare provider at all times and are not permitted to be alone with any child who receives childcare at the child care centre" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2024, p. 83). Additionally, they must be "monitored for compliance and contraventions" of all policies, rules, and standards (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2024, p. 192). Such requirements present complex conditions for our interactions with students and ethical practice. Students are being treated as clients of education, with a focus on learning how to become efficient, competitive, and highly skilled workers. The current emphasis on surveillance and policing creates a culture of mistrust and fear. The overconcentration on children's safety further promotes narratives and discourses of threats, leading to the portrayal of students as dangerous and untrustworthy during the preparation period.

On the contrary, when seeing the student as the "Other" in practicum, as per Levinas' ethics, it is necessary to overcome the previously mentioned conceptualizations and respect the uniqueness of the student. This means not only concentrating on how well students follow the program's policies or meet the mentor's expectations but also paying attention to what students are revealing (making visible) to us. This condition can enrich the field of early childhood education, as focusing on what students reveal may "surprises us, and helps us to interrupt

predetermined meanings and totalising practices, totalising practices such as the concepts and classifications of developmental psychology which give us as teachers or researchers possibilities to possess and 'comprehend' the child" [or the student] (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p. 101). Such conditions may further help us recognize that positioning the mentor as a "knowledge holder and evaluator" restricts students' participation in engaging with and responding to the dynamic nature of early childhood programs. Therefore, rather than simply transferring knowledge or mastering the application of standards, ethical choices in the context of shared experiences between students and mentors can transform students' journey to becoming educators. Educators may wonder how to determine what to focus on when interacting with students in the field, or what responsibilities they have when engaging with students. In other words, what might early childhood pre-service education students express or give voice to during their practicum?

Students' Callings -Motivation and Invitation to Engage

As already mentioned early in this dissertation, Vintimilla (2014) had noticed that a significant group of students consistently describe that they choose the program of early childhood education because they "want to have fun experiences with children" or "because being with children is fun" (p. 81). Vintimilla (2014) effectively explores the connection of the current logic of conceptualizing meaningful activities with fun, suggested as "the creation of neoliberal subjectivities" (p. 82). Vintimilla (2014) further elaborates on the association of experiences underpinned with neoliberal philosophy, reducing exploration to superficial engagements. Most importantly, Vintimilla (2014) emphasizes that the negative effects of neoliberal principles are not only limited to our economic situation but also impact our social interactions. This places restrictions on the potential roles of early childhood educators.

Therefore, it is crucial to involve the early education community in continuous conversations about the impact of neoliberal ideology in order to promote a more critical examination of the limitations it imposes on the field.

In addition to Vintimilla's (2014) points, I would like to suggest that students may view the concept of "fun" as a chance to break away from the monotonous and purely functional approach to learning and working that they are typically expected to adhere to in educational and professional environments. From my experience, the terminology associated with fun often seems to be conceptualized by students as a form of resistance to current rigid conditions. I often hear students express that the reason why they chose or transferred from other programs to early childhood education is because they hope to be able to be creative, innovative, and have opportunities to freely explore the many experiences they encounter. They learn very quickly, however, that they will not be able to create anything new but rather they are expected to fit in an already established system, comprised of strict rules, regulations, and standards. They realize that they are not being welcomed, at least in the way the concept of hospitality might suggest, which I will further explore in this chapter.

Furthermore, for some, the struggles with fitting in and resisting continue after graduation as well. In *Early Childhood Educator, Critical Conversations in Feminist Theory*, Kylie Smith (2023), an associate professor at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, elaborates on her experience after graduation. She points out how her preservice education, which focused on developmental theories, the use of templates and tools for assessments and work with children, contributed to restricting her preparedness for being an educator. In her own words, Smith (2023) explains:

As a graduate early childhood teacher, entering the classroom for the first time I struggled to place children into developmental boxes and felt like I had missed something in my training to cause me to question how children were assessed, and how and why routines and programmes were constructed the way they were. I felt like I didn't fit into the model of early childhood teacher that everyone around me performed. (p.11)

Despite the fact that Smith is Australian and refers to the Australian model of early childhood education, which is often seen as exemplary for our context, what she says is something that I often hear in my work with students and educators. Even the pedagogical document that sets the foundation for pedagogical practice in early childhood education in Ontario, *How Does Learning Happen?* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014) is heavily influenced by discourses of developmentalism and neoliberalism and promotes a clearly defined view of the educator that restricts the possibility of different realities, ethics and relationships. I have noticed many educators and students expressing through their discussions and actions that they are not only able to find themselves in the field but, much like Smith, they see themselves as the “deficient early childhood teacher who is entangled in developmental and neoliberal discourses that privilege specific knowledge and understandings of the world and teaching” (Smith, 2023, p. 12). I am curious about how being aware and critically engaging with these issues during our interactions with students might influence how we motivate ourselves to engage and consider responding in a way that nurtures students' *souls*.

The Face of Students' Soul

Levinas' ethics of encounter invites us to consider that our conceptualization of the thoughts we face while encountering the Other is always inseparable from our own experiences, emotions, and judgments (Guwy et al., 1986). Therefore, such an invitation during an encounter

with students may open a door not only for opportunities to revisit our own assumptions, views, and understandings that influence our perceptions of a given experience but also our responsibility for and to the students during their response to the structures, policies, and practices we have currently put in place that allow or restrict them in the establishment of ethical relations and pursuit of their intellectual wonderings and explorations. In other words, the encounters with students may call us to respond to how the space we are inviting the students to, needs to be rethought in order to nurture what Mario Di Paolantonio (2019a) refers to as “soul.” In this case, the students’ soul.

Di Paolantonio (2019a), drawing on the ideas of Italian philosopher Franco Berardi, explains that the soul represents “a potentiality that [both] animates and that itself can be animated to move the body” (p. 605). In essence, the soul is the driving force behind the body, serving as “the activating force of certain existential quality,” which is influenced by politics and the governance of individuals (Di Paolantonio, 2019a, p. 605). Expanding on Berardi’s concepts, Di Paolantonio (2019a) suggests that the soul is nourished by actions and ways of being that enable the expression of our creative and connective potentials. In the modern world, these opportunities are closely intertwined with the professional tasks and work that we engage in. Consequently, the challenge lies in understanding how the soul is “put to work” within our professional selves. The problem is, as Di Paolantonio (2019a) proposes, that even creativity, which seems inherent to our own most singular way of being, is often leveraged to align with today’s political and neoliberal agendas. Individuals are expected to channel their creativity into problem-solving strategies or the development of new products and services. This approach utilizes the soul to perform for the purpose of better fitting into “whatever the economy might require one to be” (Di Paolantonio, 2019a, p. 613).

If we pay closer attention to what some students give voice to, calling us to respond to, we can see their struggle with making sense of the many conflicting moments where they need to choose between nurturing or neglecting their souls. From my experience, students often speak about how they are being corrected if they spend more time sitting quietly next to a child or a small group of children. Not initiating conversations, which is often translated to not “getting involved in play with children to support development, challenge thinking, and extend learning,” is considered as an undesirable practice (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014, p.19). Constant hijacking and dominating of the space and time during interactions between students and children is seen as a sign of the students’ ability for creativity, invention, and quick learning. The behavior described above is strongly influenced by neoliberal ideology, which emphasizes individual responsibility, self-optimization. These ideas significantly shape our perceptions of how every experience is an opportunity for personal growth, creativity, and invention. According to this ideology, individuals must continually work on improving themselves to stay competitive in the market. Creativity, even during interactions with children, is often seen as a valuable asset that can be used for economic gain, while invention is fueled by the need to stay ahead in a competitive economy.

Such demands, however, are not without effects on their soul. As Di Paolantonio (2019a) suggests,

The demands on learners to be always curious, innovative, open to discovery and ready to reinvent themselves according to the imperative of the new, over and over again, brings about an intense and frantic feeling of being overwhelmed. (p. 614)

The early childhood education students in my classes often express feeling constrained by the lack of time to fully engage with and understand the lives and perspectives of children. They

frequently find themselves occupied with tasks often revolving around housekeeping duties and the pressure to constantly engage and entertain the children. When the children do not respond in a way deemed as “engaged,” students are urged to do more, faster, and be more creative. In my experience, this approach can lead some early childhood education students to feel guilty, uneasy, or inclined to seek a change in their placement setting. When given the opportunity to slow down, wonder with the children, or simply observe the classroom dynamics, they can feel unsure or unwelcome. Last semester, three of my students sought advice as they felt “bored and not learning anything” because the placement site suggested they take their time in figuring out how to integrate. This opportunity to nourish their own well-being (the soul), though not explicitly articulated in their and the site’s vocabulary, became so removed from their reality that they felt conflicted about it.

Derrida and Hospitality

Levinas (1985) emphasizes the encounter with the Other as the foundation for ethics. His philosophy helps us understand that our infinite responsibility to respond to the Other takes precedence over our own needs, creating an asymmetrical relationship. Face-to-face encounters push us to consider the world outside of our own understanding and open up endless possibilities. All these perspectives, if applied to relationships between students and mentors, may help us understand that our ethical responsibility towards students could challenge and disrupt our thinking about the ways we engage with others who are different from us.

In the following discussion, I will explore how the existing conditions and considerations in the field of early childhood education and field practicum influence the potential for ethical relationships and responsibility. To do this, I will draw upon the concept of hospitality introduced by the poststructuralist philosopher, Jacques Derrida (1930-2004). In his work on

Introducing Derrida, Peter Salmon (2023) explains Derrida's concept of deconstruction.

According to Salmon, deconstruction for Derrida is not about uncovering an ultimate truth or finding an answer, but rather about the effort exerted to create the appearance of making sense of opposing ideas. Salmon (2023) also points out that Derrida's deconstruction involves identifying this effort and what it reveals about the subject. Derrida referred to this appearance of coherence as "the metaphysics of presence," arguing that philosophy, as a whole, has maintained an unacknowledged assumption of stability in both ourselves and the world we depict. In this view, we are conscious beings surrounded by objects that we can describe, manipulate, and theorize about (Salmon, 2023). Keeping this in mind may help us better understand Derrida's concept of hospitality.

Welcoming the Other In (Crossing Boundaries)

Levinas (1987a) suggests that we have an ethical responsibility as humans to welcome the Other, as well as hold the responsibilities for the Other during our face-to-face encounters.. He highlights the importance of acknowledging the differences of the Other. Our ethical responsibility requires us to open ourselves to the Other with the intention of preserving the alterity of the Other (Levinas, 1987a, 1987b, 1987c). Drawing on the work of Levinas, Derrida (2005) further opens a space for us to consider hospitality as an invitation we extend to others when we open the door to our "homes." In the words of Judith Still (2010), Derrida's understanding of hospitality is an invitation to "crossing boundaries ('Come in, come in') or thresholds, including those between self and other, private and public, inside and outside, individual and collective, personal and political, emotional and rational, generous and economic" (p. 4). Still points out the importance of paying attention to the lines we draw and cross between

opposite terms. She invites us to consider that the line movement is in our control and often has a serious consequence on the way we welcome each other.

Who is the Foreigner or Stranger, and who is the Host?

Derrida invites us to consider the concept of hospitality in terms of welcoming strangers or foreigners. In his discussions with Anne Dufourmantelle (1964-2017) a French philosopher and practicing psychoanalyst, Derrida and Dufourmantelle (2000) begins with what Derrida refers to as a “foreigner question,” and the book *Of Hospitality* opens with:

Isn't the question of the foreigner a foreigner's question? Coming from the foreigner, from abroad? Before saying the question of the foreigner, perhaps we should also specify; question of the foreigner. How should we understand the difference of accent? (p. 3)

And later he continues,

As though the foreigner were first of all the one who puts the first question or the one to whom you address the first question. As though the foreigner were being-in-question, the very question of being-in-question, the question-being or being-in-question of the question. (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000, p.3)

In the translator's note, it is emphasized that the term “foreigner” is used interchangeably with “stranger” in the book (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000, p. ix). The question arises: Who is the foreigner or stranger, and who is the host? What is the foreigner's question? According to Dufourmantelle (2011), Derrida suggests that we are all foreigners and strangers, as we are on earth for only a limited time. Consequently, being a visitor, always passing through a certain time and space, is inherent to the human condition (Dufourmantelle, 2011). In essence, we are all strangers and foreigners. Welcoming one another is an essential aspect of our humanity and longstanding practices. Dufourmantelle (2011) emphasizes the need to open the door of our

“homes” to each other in welcoming ways, as we never know when we might be in need of similar hospitality in the future. Our lives are not stable and can change quickly, reminding us of the potential transition from being able to offer hospitality to being in need of receiving it (Dufourmantelle, 2011). This perspective suggests that by welcoming the changes others bring to our existence (home), we may find ourselves in a position to be the change for others in the future.

Hospitality as In Between Double Bind

Derrida (2000) also suggests that hospitality must be experienced and conceptualized as situated in “an aporetic crossroads, or a sort of double postulation, contradictory double movement, double constraint, or double bind” (p. 12). This is because “we do not know (not yet, but always not yet) what hospitality is” (Derrida, 2000, p. 14). According to Derrida (2000), aporetic thinking opens a space for us to consider hospitality as an emerging and unfolding experience. In her 2004 entry, Niall Lucy explains Derrida’s concept of “aporia,” which refers to the essential “blind spots” in metaphysical arguments. According to Derrida, aporia, or the “aporetic” moment, indicates elements that resist easy explanation within conventional logic. Derrida argues that deconstruction cannot be confined to a specific set of discursive procedures and should not be dismissed as “anti-methodological” (Lucy, 2004, p. 1). For Derrida, deconstruction offers a means of taking a stance on the political and institutional frameworks that govern our actions, abilities, and behaviors. What distinguishes deconstructive analysis is its starting point, which entails addressing the blind spots typically disregarded to uphold the illusion of an unassailable presence (Lucy, 2004). Therefore, according to Derrida’s concept of aporia, hospitality involves navigating between conditional and unconditional law without favoring one over the other or merging both (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000).

Derrida argues that it is essential to confront the impossible in order to achieve hospitality (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000). He states, “it is the impossibility which must be overcome where it is possible to become impossible. It is necessary to do the impossible. If there is hospitality, the impossible must be done; this ‘is’ being in order that, beyond hospitality, hospitality may come to pass” ((Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000, p. 14). In this quote, Derrida suggests that the concept of hospitality requires a continuous process of challenging contradictions and destabilizing established ideas to create room for new perspectives (Dufourmantelle, 2011). When individuals encounter contradictions, they are prompted to reassess their views and assumptions, leading to deeper reflection and an increased awareness of the complexities of issues. Recognizing their own limitations may also foster receptiveness to new ideas and actions. This is because, as Derrida suggests, genuine engagement with the Other transcends mere accommodation within familiar or comfortable boundaries (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000). Instead, it involves an active endeavor to push beyond these confines, embracing the unpredictability and uncertainty that comes with true interaction. This paradox of hospitality underscores the limitations of conventional interpretations that view it as a static or fixed state. Rather, Derrida advocates for a dynamic understanding of hospitality as an ongoing process, one that necessitates continual effort, reflection, and re-evaluation (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000). Such a commitment to hospitality can open opportunities for students and their mentors to actively and critically engage with standards and regulations, as well as their preconceptions, noticing where they fail, thereby creating a space that is not only inclusive but also responsive to the needs and identities of the Other. Moreover, Derrida’s perspective implies that hospitality is an ontological commitment, a foundational engagement with the essence of being in relation to the Other (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000). This means that to be

hospitable is not merely an act of kindness or generosity; it is a profound ethical stance that recognizes the inherent dignity and alterity of another. By creating space for the Other, mentors and students will be in the position to confront their own limitations and the inherent risks of vulnerability that accompany genuine engagement.

The aporetic condition can further help us understand what offering hospitality truly enables. Dufourmantelle (2011) elaborates that the space created through hospitality and the encounter with the Other is a beginning of something new. This suggests that welcoming the Other without any preconceived expectations or conditions can lead to a transformative experience, allowing for new possibilities to emerge in the face of the unexpected. However, the tensions that arise between unconditional hospitality and the moments when a host sets boundaries around welcoming the Other create a powerful space for ethical reflection. Striving for unlimited hospitality within the confines of conditional hospitality necessitates pushing the boundaries of the established in order to explore new possibilities and ways of thinking and behaving. This does not merely continue the history of the host or the guest; rather, it offers an opportunity to chart an entirely new direction (Dufourmantelle, 2011). This condition highlights the potential for transformation and change, enabling individuals to redefine themselves without being confined by their past experiences, mistakes, or identity. Hospitality, therefore, empowers individuals to realize that they are not bound by their past actions, decisions, or circumstances. They have the freedom to forge a new path and identity, irrespective of their prior experiences. This realization can lead educators to recognize they are in a process of continuous becoming, where a new sense of self, values, purposes, etc., can emerge.

These ideas, I argue, are crucial in the study of preservice early childhood education, as they have the potential to offer new perspectives and possibilities for the interactions and

encounters between students and their mentors. Thinking about the unfamiliarity, typical of a practicum beginning can create opportunities to reconsider how the conditional power dynamics restrict our ability to innovate and explore new pedagogical possibilities. By reshaping power dynamics to welcome students, we can encourage questioning and transforming established norms, practices, and oppressive systems discussed earlier in this chapter. This has the potential to create an educational context that welcomes and enables students to bring fresh perspectives to the field. I also believe that this approach can prompt a deeper examination of prevailing truths that influence our practices. Embracing hospitality, in more ethical terms, during field practicum can further open up possibilities for collectively embracing processes that might bring about a difference or even radical change.

Furthermore, engaging critically with Levinas' asymmetrical alongside Derrida's reciprocal approach to responsibilities and relationships can highlight the complexities of interactions between students and mentors.¹ This duality may enhance the understanding of ethical engagement, underscoring the significance of individual responsibilities while recognizing the interconnected nature of the field. It is important to note that Derrida is not simply advocating for a reciprocal encounter. He maintains an asymmetrical understanding of the Other, beyond the confines of knowledge, limits, or presence, while also recognizing that this asymmetrical (unconditional hospitality) can only be experienced through symmetrical (conditional hospitality) frameworks of welcome, which inevitably compromise the

¹ Levinas views the relation as asymmetrical, emphasizing the need to become hostage to the difference of the Other. In contrast, Derrida argues that the encounter must be reciprocal (European Graduate School Video Lectures, 2011). Exploring both of these perspectives is crucial in this dissertation as it can provide further insights into the potential that arises from both types of relationships. For instance, examining the mentor-student relationship from Levinas's perspective would necessitate consistently prioritizing the students' needs over the mentors' own, which is still characteristic of the hierarchical framework prevalent in early childhood education. On the other hand, placing the Other at the heart of ethical inquiry can challenge our existing practices of engaging with the Code. Derrida's concept of reciprocity, however, can pave the way for considering ethics in early childhood education as a dynamic relationship where both parties are responsible for each other. Reciprocity can facilitate the establishment of conditions where the boundaries between mentors and students are constantly negotiated.

unconditional aspect. In Derrida's work, the relationship between asymmetry and reciprocity simultaneously acknowledges an asymmetrical ideal while also understanding that its manifestation in our institutions and politics is inherently reciprocal (conditional). Thus, although Derrida's (2005) vision of hospitality strives for an unconditional embrace, the reality often imposes conditions and agreements, highlighting a tension between the ideal and the practical.

Laws of Hospitality: Some Implications for Early Childhood Educators

As mentioned previously, Derrida declares that there are two laws of hospitality. The first one is the concept of "absolute" and "unconditional" hospitality (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000, p. 75). Derrida explains that this set of laws surpasses all others.

...as though the categorical imperative of hospitality commanded that we transgress all the laws (in the plural) of hospitality, namely, the conditions, the norms, the rights and the duties that are imposed to hosts and hostesses, on the men or women who give a welcome as well as the men and women who receive it. (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000, pp. 75, 77)

In the same text, Derrida points out the "plural" laws of hospitality, which restrict and limit hospitality. He refers to the laws of "powers, rights, and duties" of places that define who and how hospitality can be offered (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000, p. 77). Under absolute and unconditional laws, hospitality becomes an experience of attempts that are never completed and never fully explored (Dufourmantelle, 2011). In other words, hospitality can never be fully defined or described because it is limitless and unconditional, and we will never fully grasp what hospitality is or can be. Furthermore, under such conditions, hospitality requires breaking all the

laws, all conditions (Dufourmantelle, 2011). This means that hospitality needs to be thought of outside of already predetermined conditional ideas of what hospitality is.

Derrida (2002) outlines hospitality as an opportunity for the deconstruction of laws:

... hospitality, the experience, the apprehension, the exercise of impossible hospitality, of hospitality as the possibility of impossibility (to receive another guest whom I am incapable of welcoming, to become capable of that which I am incapable of) this is the exemplary experience of deconstruction itself, when it is or does what it has to do or to be, that is, the experience of the impossible. Hospitality-this is a name or an example of deconstruction. Of the deconstruction of the concept, of the concept of concept, as well as of its construction, its home, its “at-home” [son chez-soi]. (p. 364)

Derrida emphasizes that the deconstructive or aporetic condition within hospitality always underscores the interplay of tensions, forces, and relationships, and the constant need to be responsive. Such conditions cause doubt, uncertainty, and discomfort. Importantly, these tensions (between the unconditional and conditional) present opportunities to recognize the limits of our existing knowledge, understanding and the operative economies of our institutions. This condition could foster invention and the emergence of new realities in the field of early childhood education. Welcoming students who are in the process of becoming educators and are considered “incapable of welcoming yet” compels us to surpass standards, regulations, limits, and capabilities. The act of welcoming someone who is *becoming an educator*, but cannot yet welcome, deconstructs the very concept of hospitality, laying out its complexities, intricacies and contradictions. In essence, this way of thinking can deepen our understanding of what we perceive as stable, safe, and secure in our field, and compel us to embrace the idea that a student may disrupt our familiar knowledge. I would also like to emphasize that, while we embrace the

complexities and tensions that come with welcoming those on the journey to becoming educators, I want to clarify that this approach does not aim to undermine core values. Rather, it invites us to critically engage with and expand upon these values, fostering an environment that is both reflective and transformative. By acknowledging the nuances of hospitality and the potential disruptions it brings, we can cultivate a deeper, more inclusive understanding of education that honors our foundational principles while also encouraging invention and growth. Ultimately, this balance between our established values and the dynamic nature of learning can enrich pedagogical practices, promoting a more responsive and flexible approach to early childhood education.

Tensions between Absolute (unconditional) and Restricted (conditional) Hospitality in Field Practicums

Considering Derrida's concept of hospitality can help us open up possibilities and opportunities for the field of preservice education to create conditions for reconceptualizing taken-for-granted practices and discourses. For instance, students and mentors collectively questioning and challenging the strong influence of neoliberalism on the practices of educators and students in early childhood education. Neoliberalism in early childhood education has shifted away from promoting democracy and activities linked to educators' intellectual work. Instead, it emphasizes standardizing practices and behaviors and holding everyone to the same strict standards. This often highlights the shortcomings of students and mentors rather than their strengths. Welcoming students in a way that aligns with Derrida's hospitality can highlight the importance of recognizing and valuing the dissonances that emerge in the encounter between established knowledge and discourses and knowledge that comes from students' questions that invite us to consider other ways of thinking and doing. This approach can establish the

groundwork for mutual empowerment, collective wondering, and imagining. This, however, seems to require extending absolute, unconditional hospitality in field practicum that entails a complete opening to what students may bring to the field, their doubts, inquiries, puzzlements, difficulties or desires to explore new practices.

In contrast, the current limited or conditional hospitality is bound by the Code and duties. Educators and mentors are in a position to constantly measure and evaluate students against established knowledge, standards, tasks, and outcomes, rather than creating a space for co-reflecting, inquiring, experimenting, and situated pondering. This practice limits mentors from welcoming the new perspectives that students can bring to the field. In line with Derrida's logic, there is no need for us to choose one over the other, but to consider them as two equally essential 'laws' involved in the concept of hospitality, to experience its tensions and work through them, which are not in opposition but in a differential relation. Together, they create ethical conditions for exploring what is already in place and what can be possible.

When considering provincial licensing guidelines and regulations governing programs for young children, the rules regarding accepting students into practicums limit the potential for integrating an individual's contribution to the profession. These regulations control and impose various restrictions on students' interactions and thoughts during their practicum, including the duration of their stay and their permitted activities. On the other hand, absolute hospitality or justice requires embracing and working through the tensions between duty and responsibilities, knowing and not knowing, established practices and trying something new. This creates an opportunity to explore how the limitations imposed by regulations can re-define the conditions for supporting a new way of thinking and doing. Absolute hospitality necessitates welcoming what the students bring, welcoming other conditions, and creating new possibilities while

thinking outside the limitations in relation to provincial regulations (Phelan & Vintimilla, 2020; Ruitenberg, 2018).

I understand that many educators may have reservations and many questions about how the conditional and unconditional aspects of welcoming students into their learning environments can become possible. I would like to create a space here for thoughtful consideration and dialogue about how educators can embody the role of a host when inviting students into their “home” (educational spaces), while wrestling with the responsibility that comes with helping students inherit and become part of a teaching body, which means being part of a set of expectations and webs of recognition. Similar to the scholars discussed earlier in this dissertation, such as Phelan (2022), Ruitenberg (2018), and Vintimilla (2012), I am reflecting on the concept of educators extending an unconditional welcome while concurrently acknowledging the conditional elements, and how this duality may be inhibiting our capacity to be truly hospitable. It is crucial to understand that every act of welcoming involves both inclusions and exclusions. It is important to navigate these complexities thoughtfully. By recognizing the tensions and complexities between inclusion and exclusion, and by making them work together to reveal their instability and interdependence, we can create a space for exploring a more ethical response towards others. Embracing this logic may lead mentors in field practicum to reconsider what it takes to cultivate environments where students are not merely tolerated, but genuinely welcomed. These environments should be inclusive and less hierarchical. However, the challenge lies in how to begin and how to determine what to appreciate in what remains from the inclusion/exclusion already in place and play.

In his contribution to the book *Derrida and Education* edited by Biesta and Egea-Kuehne, Michael Peters (2001) elaborates on some of Derrida’s views on “new humanism” and

its connection to education. Peters' insights offer a valuable perspective for exploring my question. He suggests that Derrida's approach involves "an active interpretation, resistance, and re-evaluation of humanist pedagogy, particularly the prevalent forms of pedagogy that currently shape our educational institutions, theories, and practices" (Peters, 2001, p. 219). Simply, it is important to question the established principles and standards in relation to their effectiveness and relevance. Peters' ideas prompt me to consider the educator's role in navigating between conditional and unconditional hospitality as an opportunity to challenge oppressive structures, explore new possibilities, and continually reassess early childhood education pedagogy in terms of what is worth preserving in the field.

Recognizing our responsibilities to and for the students, as well as their questioning and positioning within existing structures in relation to their histories and identities, allows us to reimagine our responsibilities towards the students as "an affirmation of an other (the student) that is always to come" (Biesta, 2001, p. 56). In essence, it entails being open to the unforeseeable and seeing students not only as they are now but also as they are becoming and might become in the future. This means that mentors should not only pay attention to what students learn and how they are able to apply things in their practice, but also to be open to the ways they grow and transform. This requires creating spaces for what students bring and contribute to their own and others' change, as these could help us question the status quos and dominant truths.

Biesta's ideas point to our ethical responsibilities for the students closely entangled in respecting students as they are and the ways they are opening for themselves and for the early childhood education field's future possibilities. However, this requires mentors to adopt a more flexible, responsive, and ethical approach to supporting students. It should also challenge

mentors to create opportunities and conditions for students that are open to the unexpected and that support the continuous becoming of students. In turn, this requires mentors to give themselves permission to be changed by students.

Giving Ourselves Permissions to be Changed by Students

Derrida suggests that hospitality involves giving oneself permission to be transformed by the arrival of a stranger (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000). By extending hospitality, we engage in an experience that allows us to embrace the Other (Derrida, 2000). Our subjectivity is shaped by the interconnected forces we encounter through our interactions with others (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000). However, as Biesta (2001) reminds us, “The road toward the other is not an easy road. As a matter of fact, it is an impossible road” (p. 33). Opening the door to the Other creates the potential for what is possible but outside the established status quo, for what is yet to unfold. Embracing hospitality in field practicum may challenge and transform the way we perceive how educators engage in learning with students during practicum. Adopting the role of a host, rather than a supervisor or evaluator, requires a shift in how students and mentors perceive the need to protect and safeguard their “possessions.” The notion of Possession for Levinas involves *a being* being “partially denied” (Peperzak et al., 1996, p. 9). This refers to how we comprehend or grasp the understanding of the Other.

This understanding may significantly influence how mentors approach their work with students and their perceptions of students. Instead of considering students as additional responsibilities, they may regard students as honored guests. These guests bring different views, questions about what they are encountering, doubts emerging from their experiences, vulnerabilities and hesitations, as well as excitement and novel understandings. Embracing hospitality toward students means being open to being transformed by the diversity they bring to

the programs. Encountering the new perspectives students bring can lead to embracing ambiguity and uncertainty, and may set conditions for fostering curiosity, critical engagements, exploring underlying assumptions, and a flexible approach to knowledge rather than simply participating in fixed meanings and structures. Furthermore, welcoming diverse perspectives and interpretations and creating a space for radical dialogue may help educators to acknowledge the limits of single, definite answers.

However, offering such a welcome to students necessitates a sense of hospitality that:

“...consists in welcoming whoever arrives before imposing any conditions on him, before knowing and asking anything at all, be it a name or an identity ‘paper’” (Derrida, 2005, p.7).

The concept of “welcoming whoever arrives” urges us to embrace the idea that in order to genuinely be open to fostering new beginnings by welcoming students, we must free ourselves from preconceived notions and assumptions about them. We need to shed the meanings we attach to the roles of early childhood education student and mentor. Extending hospitality within early childhood education may open the possibility to introduce a distinct dynamic, as established networks and systems of recognition already exist. Newcomer-students seeking to enter the field must navigate these existing structures while striving for acknowledgment and acceptance. However, for an individual to genuinely integrate into this teaching community, it is essential to engage with the intricate webs of recognition that define the profession. This requires an understanding of the norms, values, and expectations that permeate the community. Students must demonstrate their expertise, cultivate relationships, and actively participate in dialogues to gain visibility and credibility among their peers. Our existing perceptions and assumptions are the primary obstacles to embracing the potential for what an early childhood educator can be. Just anticipating the arrival of an early childhood education student for their practicum can lead

to specific perceptions and conditions about the “future and the foreigner” (Derrida, 2005, p.6). In short, letting our perceptions and established discourses guide our hospitality will limit what unfolds, what is possible, and all our explorations for other possibilities. In my experience, this issue is frequently discussed among students, who often express feeling pressured to adapt quickly to predefined expectations. They are expected to both learn and “unlearn”, and their progress is meticulously monitored to ensure adherence to program guidelines and regulations. If educators approached student field practicums as opportunities for encountering the undefinable, it could lead to unforeseen possibilities and reinventions. Di Paolantonio (2019b) also delves into this concept.

In his article titled *Wonder: Guarding Against Thoughtlessness in Education*, Di Paolantonio refers to Claudia Ruitenberg’s idea that educators have a vital role in embracing the unforeseen and the “unexpected”. Di Paolantonio (2019b) discusses the significance of teachers preparing for their classes each year, opening the classroom doors, and being prepared to adapt to the “unpredictable” by approaching students and course materials with fresh perspectives. There exists an element of uncertainty, as the teacher cannot be entirely certain who will enter the classroom. Embracing the unexpected is a foundational aspect of education if we aim to undergo transformation and be changed through our interactions with the material and each other (Di Paolantonio, 2019b). Relevantly, Di Paolantonio elaborates:

Without wonder and attentiveness to the depth, complexity, and inevitable ways in which the student’s interiority (thankfully) resists and pushes back against our assessments and understandings of their particularity, we run the risk of concluding that we can indeed know and actualize our students. That is, we are always susceptible of subsuming our students according to assessment models, general rules, theories, and predefined

caricatures that serve the forgone conclusions and function of a certain apparatus that can make us believe that we know them. The foreclosing of the unexpected possibility for a student and disregard for their unknowable “interiority” is grotesquely at play when a teacher thinks or claims, for example: “I know what type of student you are;” or “I know what so and so is capable of.” (p. 224)

Di Paolantonio’s discussions could serve as a substantial call to action for the early childhood education community to reconsider how students are welcomed in the field. By reconceptualizing the narrow and rigid definitions of who students are and how they are to become educators, we can foster a more important dialogue about what can be relevant and possible within field practicum. As noted in this chapter, students bring diverse perspectives, assumptions, and experiences, and, in many cases, they choose this field to express their desires and passions, seeking to collaborate with others to ethically and politically envision new possibilities for early childhood education. Extending hospitality to students in field practicums or classrooms can create opportunities for enriching our own ways of being, become whoever we wish to become. However, this necessitates first welcoming the Other.

According to Diane Davis (2011), and in a manner that connects Levinas with Derrida, Derrida proposes that since we are unable to see our own faces, we come to comprehend ourselves through the faces of others. In this context, the face symbolizes what we give expression to (give a voice to). This perspective provides an intriguing way of understanding that the calling we perceive through the faces of others presents opportunities for multiple becomings. It’s not solely about what we individually deem important, but rather about what challenges us through the things that hold significance to others in the process of becoming an early childhood educator and entering the field. Furthermore, by embracing and responding to

the Other, we grant ourselves permission to undergo transformation. We affirm a different way of being and in doing so, acknowledge “the condition for the possibility of all conceptuality” (Biesta & Stams, 2001, p. 67). This concept alludes to the fundamental prerequisites necessary for any conceptual thinking or understanding to occur. It implies that our capacity to form concepts and make sense of the world isn’t automatic but is rooted in certain essential conditions. These conditions constitute the fundamental frameworks that render any experience or conceptual thought feasible. Essentially, our interactions with students and their differences serve as the “condition for the possibility of all conceptuality” when we extend hospitality. Without these conditions, our minds would be unable to envisage or conceive of an alternative reality in the realm of early childhood education.

Justice

Before concluding this chapter, I would like to briefly delve into the nuanced yet intricate relationship between hospitality and justice. This connection emerged through my readings of Derrida, who encourages us to consider the profound ways in which these concepts interweave. I believe that Derrida’s insights may invite those of us in the field of early childhood education to reflect on the inherent tensions surrounding hospitality in field practicum. For instance, while we aim to be welcoming with students, we encounter existing discourses that complicate this ideal. The obligation to foster an environment of hospitality can frequently clash with the realities of exclusion and injustice. Thus, the interplay between hospitality and justice may offer a lens through which we can critically assess our ethical responsibilities toward students. In this context, hospitality may transcend mere kindness; it may become a fundamental element of justice during field practicum. This is just a brief introduction to a topic that is often overlooked

in our work with students, and an invitation to the early childhood community to explore other justice-related issues, which could open up new possibilities for the field.

In line with Derrida's idea that justice is both unattainable and connected to deconstruction (Derrida & Caputo, 2021), I view justice as both a theoretical concept and a practice. This perspective emphasizes the effort to create conditions that allow everyone to lead more meaningful lives. To me, justice is an ideal we strive to achieve. By critically questioning and adapting our laws, practices, and ways of thinking, we can get closer to realizing justice, even if we recognize that perfect justice may never be fully attained. Before delving into some of the issues related to justice in field practicum and the limitations of current regulations and guidelines that prioritize mastery of skills over meaningful participation, I will begin by examining Derrida's perspectives on hospitality to provide some guidance for addressing justice. In discussing hospitality and justice, Derrida (2000) highlights the distinction between the idea itself and its conceptualization, emphasizing that:

The law of absolute hospitality commands a break with hospitality by right, with law or justice as rights. Just hospitality breaks with hospitality by right; not that it condemns or is opposed to it, and it can on the contrary set and maintain it in a perpetual progressive movement; but it is as strangely heterogeneous to it as justice is heterogeneous to the law to which it is yet so close, from which in truth it is indissociable. (p. 25 & 27)

This quote from Derrida suggests that our obligation under unconditional hospitality is limitless because it exceeds all laws. What gives meaning to hospitality is the ongoing exploration and experience of unlimited possibilities in the tensions between conditional and unconditional hospitality. It's a dynamic process and a continuously evolving concept. However, there are a few premises that need to be in place in order to be able to respond and offer hospitality. The

starting point is always unconditional hospitality, the ability to say “yes” to whoever arrives at our door, as Derrida (2000) explains.

Let us say yes to who or what turns up, before any determination, before any anticipation, before any identification, whether or not it has to do with a foreigner, an immigrant, an invited guest, or an unexpected visitor, whether or not the new arrival is the citizen of another country, a human, animal, or divine creature, a living or dead thing, male or female. (p. 77)

In this quote, Derrida suggests that before taking any further actions, we must first open the door to our homes with an unconditional “yes” to welcome others. This initial act of welcoming should not be bound by established rules or regulations. By saying “yes” and opening the door, the existing conditions in a place lose their significance. Derrida (2000) emphasizes that crossing the threshold is always a transgressive act; “the crossing of the threshold always remains a transgressive step” and “hospitality commend[s] that we transgress all the laws” (p. 75).

However, for Derrida to respond ethically, there must always be a “double yes” (Vintimilla, 2012, p. 130). As Vintimilla (2012) suggests, the initial “yes” is always present due to the encounter with the Other, which can be referred to as the initial “yes.” This affirmation needs to be validated through a repetition that reaffirms its commitment (every yes carries traces of previous commitment). The “yes, yes” – the dual affirmation – reiterated, for example, by a teacher as a thinking individual, is not authoritative; it only asserts itself in the realm of “perhaps” thinking. For me, the double yes is also a new way to think about our commitments and responsibilities captured between both and always together, the unconditional and conditional hospitalities. In simple words, every encounter with the Other is the beginning of a bigger and more complex conversation.

This means that in preservice education, when welcoming students for their field practicum, before agreeing to certain rules and regulations guiding the field practicum experiences, we need to suspend all the rules and regulations unconditionally (unconditional hospitality). According to Derrida (2000), we need “to give the new arrival all of one’s home and oneself” (p. 77). However, the next decision involves navigating the complexities that arise from the interplay of different regulations or laws. Here, we encounter what Derrida (2000) refers to as “the collision” between unconditional and conditional laws (p. 77). It is essential to recognize that these two types of laws are not mutually exclusive; rather, they exist in a relational dynamic that allows each to inform and give meaning to the other (Vintimilla, 2012). This nuanced understanding is crucial in preservice education, where the goal is not only to adhere to established norms but also to cultivate a rich, dialogical life. In other words, the relation between the indefinable and the definable contributes to making meaning. In the case of justice, some may argue that its meaning depends on its relation to law, and each time a decision or meaning is made, a certain action follows. However, the idea of justice cannot be defined, captured, or limited by the boundaries of law, as it gives meaning to law.

The second premise is that in order to offer hospitality, one needs to own a “home” and be in a position to proclaim “to be master at home ... to be able to receive whomever [they] like there” (Derrida, 2000, p. 53). However, it is important to notice that:

In order to constitute the space of a habitable house or home, you also need an opening, a door and windows, you have to give up a passage to the outside world. There is no house or interior without a door or windows. The monad of home has to be hospitable in order to be ipse, itself at home, habitable at-home in the relation of the self to itself. (Derrida, 2000, p. 61)

From the quote, Derrida suggests that the openings to the outside, the doors through which the guest is invited, and what makes the home hospitable, also make the home vulnerable. The act of opening the home to others means the host's authority (translated into discourses of mastery and expertise in education) can never be completely secure. When there is an opening, there is no security; anyone can come in. As Diane Davis (2011) explains, "without an opening, hospitality is impossible, but with an opening, sovereignty is compromised." Therefore, there must be openings (such as doors and windows) so the host can invite whomever they choose, but by doing so, they become vulnerable to change. In short, when anyone enters, all the rules of hospitality are disrupted.

The idea presented in the proposition above could have a significant impact on student practicum. Derrida's insights into the notion of hospitable opening provide mentors with an opportunity to deeply explore the ethical responsibilities involved in welcoming students into their spaces and the dynamics that come into play. This prompts a thorough examination of a more authentic and broad form of hospitality, while also recognizing the inherent complexities. In line with Derrida's perspective, genuine hospitality requires a thoughtful recognition and negotiation of these ethical and power dynamics. It requires a situation in which the host is mindful of relations and strives to create a hospitable space while understanding the challenges associated with achieving unconditional hospitality. As a result, the way mentors welcome students into their spaces might encompass not only ethical considerations but also political stance in our interactions with others.

Therefore, when considering justice issues from the perspective of hospitality, it is essential to recognize the persistent struggles and tensions between justice and established norms. These challenges are integral to our journey towards living well with others (Vintimilla,

2012; Vintimilla & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2020). Furthermore, it is vital to prioritize the conditions that enable both students and mentors to embrace the possibilities stemming from their shared struggles and vision for an educational space. This empowerment allows them to cultivate hospitable environments where they can welcome and be profoundly influenced by the diversity of individuals they host.

The current conditions of mentoring students in field practicum are subject to specific regulations and discourses within the realm of early childhood education. Professional standards established by the College and Ministry of Education, mastery of particular skill sets outlined in early childhood education programs, and methods for assessing student progress and learning all play a role in shaping the way mentors and students relate to each other. Inviting hospitality can help us recognize that the contractual logic of field practicum is consistently challenged and influenced by laws, regulations, and unforeseen occurrences inherent in the daily experiences of childcare programs. These conflicting forces between conditional and unconditional laws constitute an ongoing and dynamic interplay that shapes what is achievable and unachievable. Embracing unconditional hospitality may challenge existing power structures and legal frameworks, fostering a more inclusive and equitable society. Embracing Derridean hospitality in the context of field practicum has the potential to transform it into an act of “critical resistance” and “a form of dissidence,” where the intermingling of “strength” and “vulnerability” can open up new possibilities (Peters, 2001, p. 223). What are the initial conditions for mentors in becoming the owners of their homes?

Field Practicum as Pedagogical practice to Restore Justice

In conclusion, the prevailing culture of accountability and adherence to the Code in early childhood education made visible a complex and tight boundary that constrains both students and

educators-mentors alike. While the intent is to cultivate dispositions needed to become ethical educators, the current method often sidelines the essential elements of critical engagement and authentic relationships. By prioritizing compliance over creativity and intellectual pursuits, the early childhood education field risks transforming potential educators into mere mechanical beings, focused more on meeting external standards than on ethical and intellectual individuals.

Reconceptualizing the current ethical framework within which mentors engage with preservice students in field practicum necessitates a profound shift toward recognizing the Other in all its complexity and uniqueness. By embracing Levinas's emphasis on vulnerability (being open to the needs and presence of others, which creates a sense of responsibility) and sensibility (our capacity to be affected by the Other), we can cultivate a relational dynamic that prioritizes genuine encounters over mere compliance with established codes of conduct. This approach invites mentors and students alike to navigate their experiences in field practicum with an openness that values situational responses, fostering a deeper understanding of the ethical dimensions of their interactions.

Furthermore, by embracing an aporetic condition that encourages the welcoming of the Other, we can pave the way for transformative experiences that challenge established norms and stimulate innovative thinking. This approach not only promotes a deeper understanding of ethical engagement, drawing from the complexities of Levinas' and Derrida's philosophies, but also highlights the importance of reshaping all the current dynamics to foster an environment where fresh perspectives thrive.

The early childhood education field can become enriched when we allow for the acknowledgment of differences and the potential for transformative relationships. Ultimately, by fostering a culture of responsiveness and respect, we can not only enhance the ethical practice in

early childhood education but also redefine the very essence of becoming educators as a collaborative journey toward shared understanding and responsibility. This, however, for me, also includes a discussion on cultivating students' sensitivity to the creation of just spaces during the same time where students learn pedagogical practices through interactions with others. Therefore, I propose starting with the idea that pedagogical practices rely closely on hospitality to become the avenue where justice can play a role in shaping, rethinking, and questioning the "laws" in early childhood education. I encourage mentors to view pedagogical encounters with students, as Derrida (2000) - hospitality, not only as "coextensive with ethics itself", but also as something that can place the law of hospitality (in our case, pedagogy) above constraints of certain "ethics" (p. 151). This encourages us to recognize that pedagogical practices are deeply connected to the essence of ethics. Drawing from Derrida, the act of welcoming and being open to the Other is not just an aspect of ethical behavior; it is fundamental to the very concept of being ethical. Therefore, pedagogical encounters can and should transcend the limitations imposed by specific ethical systems or rules. This is because in a pedagogical encounter, the concept of unconditional hospitality urges educators to welcome the student without any expectations or prerequisites. This encounter challenges educators to reconsider their identity and responsibilities. It represents an ethical requirement that demands openness and vulnerability. By embracing the student as the Other, educators expose themselves to the unknown and the unpredictable, which is crucial for ethical living. However, the practical necessity for rules and structures, reflecting conditional hospitality, often leads educators to adhere to guidelines that promote a "productive" learning environment. This creates a tension between the ideal of unconditional welcome and the realities of practical requirements. To navigate this complexity, educators can strive to embody the spirit of unconditional hospitality by actively listening to

students and validating their experiences while remaining mindful of the necessary boundaries that facilitate learning. By reflecting on their pedagogical practices in light of their engagement with the Other, educators can foster a community that values both inclusivity and innovation while also respecting the fundamental frameworks that maintain established boundaries.

Consequently, I conclude this chapter by proposing to consider field practicum as a pedagogical encounter. I draw on Vintimilla and Pacini-Ketchabaw's (2020) discussion of pedagogy. According to them, "pedagogy engages in knowledge creation" (p. 630) and explores "how we might live well at this time and in this place", and "open[s] up possibilities for otherwise subjectivities and modes of relation" (p. 632). They propose that pedagogy is always focused on responding to "the conditions of our times" (p. 630). While sharing their pedagogical concepts and experiences of discussing pedagogy with educators in Canada, both authors point out how early childhood educators are heavily influenced by specific conceptualizations and regulations governing pedagogical thinking. In my view, these experiences may indicate a clash between the singular and plural laws governing the diverse identities existing within and alongside pedagogical practices. The authors also argue that "pedagogy's avatar is the ethical subject, or that by which worlds transform and remake themselves" (Vintimilla & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2020, p. 632). The emphasis on the transformative and responsive aspects of pedagogy may not be so much about structures and methods, but rather, as Donna Haraway, the American philosopher, suggests, about being "called to do." As Haraway puts it,

I don't think for the most part we actually choose what matters to us as intellectual workers. I think we somehow come to terms with what we are called to do. There is some kind of sense of ethical, intellectual, physical calling to respond to what we find ourselves to be, where we find ourselves to be, and with whom we find ourselves to be. I think this

is a kind of ethical question of responsiveness rather than about choice. It's not so much about choice. (As cited in Gane, 2006, p. 155)

Haraway's quote, in relation to Vintimilla & Pacini-Ketchabaw's (2020) conceptualization of pedagogy, invites us to an interesting discussion about viewing the encounter with pedagogical thought as endless and closely linked to our responsibility to and for the Other. When considering extending hospitality to the Other as an ethical and pedagogical encounter, we must relate it to our experiences of being unable to fully address the numerous issues related to social justice that demand our response.

As a way of closing this chapter, let's explore this a little bit further. The home that we own and guard all the possessions in, also includes all the pedagogical discourses we hold so tightly to, all the conceptualizations, values, and interpretations of the rules and regulations present in the field of early childhood education. By opening the door to students and allowing them to cross the threshold, we are not only facing the interrogation of our homes but also assuming the position of needing to respond. In line with Derrida's logic, the student becomes the "prosecutor" and the best that we can do is only to respond. This is important, as being in the response mode is for us to realize that we are subjected not only to things like culture or language but also to others (Davis, 2011). We are not self-sufficient in pursuing pedagogical thought but always in relation to others. Through our relation to difference, we can further define ourselves and, therefore, open possibilities for "otherwise subjectivities and modes of relation." (Vintimilla & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2020, p. 632). If we accept this proposition, we may start seeing students-guests not as a burden and extra responsibilities but, as Derrida (2000) implies, guests - "liberators" and "emancipators." I wonder what opportunities and possibilities we may open when considering field practicum sites as places for pedagogical hospitality where the

educator as “the master of the house” waits anxiously on the threshold of his home for the stranger he will see coming into view on the horizon as a liberator (p. 121).

The next two chapters of this dissertation on time and dialogue are dedicated to exploring some of the richness and uniqueness that students bring to their field practicum and who in so doing contribute to the liberation of the host-mentor.

Chapter 4: Time

The concept of hospitality, as explored in chapter 3, prompts me to reflect on our responsibility to engage with others in meaningful and ethical ways. This idea becomes especially significant in the context of field practicums, where the interactions between students and educators are essential for navigating the complexities of pedagogy while embracing complexity and diversity. By aligning our approach with the philosophies of Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida, we can cultivate a relational and ethical dynamic that prioritizes authentic encounters over strict adherence to traditional norms. Chapter 3 argues that by embracing hospitality, we can further facilitate transformative experiences that challenge established conventions and encourage innovative thinking. Such an approach in field practicums not only may deepen our understanding of ethical engagement but also may create an environment where diverse perspectives can thrive.

To further enrich our exploration, I will now introduce various conceptions of time², illustrating how a multiplicity of temporal perspectives related to receptivity toward the arrival of the Other can transform our understanding of these interactions. When we acknowledge the historical and temporal contexts of both host and guest, we begin to view hospitality as an ongoing process rather than a singular event. In this chapter, I will therefore investigate how differing interpretations of time can challenge the prevailing attitudes of a “fast-paced” environment and the notion of “no time” prevalent in early childhood preservice education. My

² In this dissertation, I draw upon multiple philosophical traditions to engage with the concept of time. I am aware that these traditions may be in tension with one another. However, while it could be a valuable project, the purpose of the dissertation is not to resolve or reconcile these differences. Rather than demonstrating how these traditions might cohere, my intention is to highlight the multiplicity of temporal imaginaries available to early childhood education. I invite an openness to richer and more inventive ways of conceptualizing time, in contrast to the narrowing, linear, and efficiency-driven temporalities that dominate under neoliberal logics.

aim is to encourage critical reflection on current practices in the field. This exploration may create opportunities for inquiry and foster a deeper understanding of the relationship between hospitality and time within the context of field practicums. Ultimately, this chapter seeks to interrogate the dominance of *chronocratic* neoliberal approaches, providing a chance to consider alternative perspectives on being, understanding, and engaging with early childhood preservice education.

Chronocracy

In their introduction to *Time of Anthropology: Studies of Contemporary Chronopolitics*, Elisabeth Kirtsoglou and Bob Simpson (2020) discuss time in relation to politics and how time is used as a method of governing, which affects how individuals and organizations interact, often leading to exclusion and domination. Stemming from the idea that time is “an entity which is fundamentally social and relational in character”, the authors point out that the use of various time regimes becomes a part of our daily lives (Kirtsoglou & Simpson, 2020, p. 3). They refer to this phenomenon as “chronocracy” and define it as:

...the discursive and practical ways in which temporal regimes are used in order to deny coevalness and thereby create deeply asymmetrical relationships of exclusion and domination either between humans (in diverse contexts) or between humans and other organisms and our ecologies. (2020, p. 3)

In the quote, the authors argue that chronocratic domination, which involves the manipulation of temporal frameworks, disrupts and violently impacts the daily lives of both human and non-human beings, as well as ecological systems. They suggest that this chronocratic influence becomes deeply ingrained in our everyday experiences, shaping our perception of time and saturating it with its effects. Consequently, the authors emphasize the need for active efforts to

minimize and counteract these influences (Kirtsoglou & Simpson, 2020). Some of the counteractions to chronocracy suggested in the book involve alternative temporalities, which include different ways of experiencing and organizing time. These alternatives may draw on cyclical, seasonal, or even event-based temporalities that can challenge the dominance of current systems. Other ideas advocate for more flexible and self-determined organizations of time, emphasizing the need for reflection and actions such as policy changes that prioritize equitable access to time resources. All these suggestions aim to challenge the pressures and constraints imposed by existing chronocratic systems.

In early childhood preservice education, the idea of chronocracy sheds light on the widespread forms of domination present in current practices. Different groups involved, such as students, educators, college instructors, and organizations like the Ministry of Education or the College of Early Childhood Educators, experience time differently. Each group brings its own values, which heavily influence how legitimate and authoritative they are seen within the educational system. Temporalities that are viewed as more advanced or modern often dominate the discourses, pushing other perspectives to the sidelines. This power structure not only affects how knowledge and expertise are viewed but also creates an environment where some voices are highlighted while others are ignored. For example, modern educational practices, based on scientific research about child development, are usually prioritized over traditional methods or alternative viewpoints that could provide important insights. Additionally, the authority of educators is often viewed as greater than that of students because they are perceived to have a better understanding of prevailing ideas and, are accountable to the public.

As a result, those whose experiences align with the dominant viewpoints gain more power and influence, while those who do not conform are marginalized. This situation fosters a culture of

exclusion, where the push for conformity to established norms is framed as an urgent necessity, pressuring individuals to conform to mainstream ideas.

Consequently, educators and students who question the established norms may be dismissed or undervalued, continuing a cycle of domination that stifles a variety of perspectives and reinforces existing power dynamics in the field of early childhood education.

All of these factors create challenges in “living well together” (Vintimilla, 2012), as they manifest through practical, ethical, and discursive ways of being where some individuals or entities are excluded (temporal injustice). Furthermore, the temporal hierarchy and asymmetries “force people to live in the timelines of others, or worse, to inhabit various appendices of time, locked in structures of waiting for, and in postponed presents” (Kirtsoglou & Simpson, 2020, p. 24).

In addition, chronocracy in early childhood preservice education heavily reflects neoliberal values. The system places great emphasis on efficiency, productivity, priorities, and standardization, and therefore often neglects opportunities for invention, creativity, and exploration. As a result, the preparatory time is seen as a privileged resource that should be optimized and utilized to access predetermined experiences to prepare individuals for their future roles as educators by modernizing them through ingrainning the evidence-based practice. Consequently, the hierarchical nature of time allocation not only impacts the relationships between students, educators, and college instructors but also applies pressure to constantly seek new strategies to maximize time efficiency and avoid “wasting time.”

Defining Time

It is hard to imagine our lives without time. In fact, it has been suggested that all of our experiences can be described through temporal characteristics associated with the way we

perceive the processes of change (Dyke, 2021). Time is often conceptualized as being outside of our control, and from the evolutionary lens, humans see it as a particular order and necessary condition for adaptation (Dyke, 2021). On the other hand, Brian Greene claims that, although many scientists and thinkers have been exploring and describing specific characteristics of the concept of time, no one really can fully define it (Science Time, 2022). Despite this disagreement, many scientists agree that time is essential in understanding structures, irreversibility, organizations, or patterns of the universe (Science Time, 2022). This may explain why Greene proposes that time may be our most valuable resource, as we have been experiencing it as limited (Science Time, 2022).

In early childhood education programs, in addition to the experience of fast-paced, and as Clark (2023) suggests, a fast-food culture like “take-away pedagogies” (p. 37), we concentrate on the objective time: time associated with educators’ schedules, the length of activities, routines, and transitions from one experience to another. In programs for young children, time is utilized as “the limits of the school or nursery day” (Clark, 2023, p. 125). We use clocks to help us keep track of time and various time-management techniques, only to determine that there is not enough time to fulfill all the tasks and duties that comprise the programs of our daily lives. Such conceptualization of time in early childhood education reflects a broader neoliberal ideology that prioritizes efficiency and productivity over meaningful engagements. This focus on structured schedules and measurable outcomes often leads to a constrained educational environment where the richness of exploration is overshadowed by the demands of keeping pace with an ever-increasing agenda. As we navigate this fast-paced culture, it is crucial to recognize the implications of these practices on both educators and young children, advocating for a more

balanced approach that honors the complexities of the learning process and acknowledges the importance of time that allows for meaningful engagement and becoming.

Therefore, in this chapter, I'm interested in the roots and neoliberal underpinning of current educators' practices in relation to time. I will further provide a few conceptualizations of time from philosophical perspectives, to invite educators to explore other possibilities and opportunities to rethink the idea of time in the field. Before I dive into that, I want to start by emphasizing students' understanding of time management. This is crucial because this understanding affects many aspects of their lives, influencing how they perceive situations, make choices, and interact with both children and educators. In the words of Donna Haraway (2016), I will attempt "to cultivate the wild virtue of curiosity" and to adjust one's capacity to sense and respond to the complex dynamics of preservice education practices (p.144). This endeavor will focus on how the deliberate slowing of time can facilitate a critical interrogation of these current practices.

Students' Understanding of Time Management

As previously stated, the governance and regulation of time in early childhood education deeply affect the daily practices and learning experiences of students in preservice education. This may be because, as argued by Kirtsoglou & Simpson (2020),

The world, we have claimed, has become a fragmented place; not only in historical, economic, political and geopolitical ways but also, perhaps more crucially, in a temporal sense. Temporal incongruence is a central problem of our time as it creates multiple tensions and asynchronicities between open-ended and circumscribed views of the world. In all of its political, epistemic and moral manifestations and in its discursive, practical, affective and material facets, chronocracy produces and underpins the diverse non-coeval

timescapes we inhabit. Spatiotemporal asymmetries between these timescapes force people to live in the timelines of others, or worse, to inhabit various appendices of time, locked in structures of waiting for, and in postponed presents. (p. 24)

The quote encourages us to recognize that time governance affects many aspects of our lives, impacting how we see things, make choices, and interact with others while also posing challenges when trying to juggle different time-related responsibilities. From my work with students, I've noticed that they not only find it hard to balance their academic workload, social life, and job commitments, but also struggle with different ideas about how time should be spent on activities like spending time with children, seeking guidance from mentors, and sticking to schedules. As a result, this leads to high levels of stress, competition, and pressure among students, calling for adaptability, a positive attitude, and a constant drive to improve.

In fact, in my field practicum seminars, students often discuss how they must improve their time-management strategies to complete their practicum successfully. Therefore, they often include time management as one of their professional learning goals. Semester after semester, students share how effective time-management strategies are an important part of the role of early childhood educators. According to many of my students, educators refer to a tight schedule for completing daily housekeeping tasks associated with health and safety requirements and keeping 'clients' happy as being effective at multitasking, being flexible, being a team player, and a quick learner. Such logic means prioritizing activities like disinfecting toys, organizing materials, completing reports, taking pictures, and sharing information with parents via apps. This approach to time management barely leaves time for inquiring and creating with children and students in field practicums. My students speak about how many of their mentors say that they don't have time to discuss pedagogical decisions and commitments, collaborate, or provide student

feedback. Time management seems to be an urgent issue in the field, so much so that one of my students suggested that she work faster and take on more responsibilities in field practicum so she can spend time with her mentor.

One important factor for me is the potential impact of taking language for granted and the normalization of language use when discussing time in early childhood education practices. This could influence the way students perceive their future pedagogical approaches, as language, in particular, is a crucial tool for shaping the speaker's minds and thoughts (Boroditsky, 2001, 2020). People conceptualize abstract ideas like time in relation to their experiences in particular spaces (Boroditsky & Ramscar, 2002). For early childhood education students, the conceptualization of time as limited and having to be carefully managed in order to fulfill housekeeping duties rather than the exploration of pedagogy may be ingrained in students' conceptualization of their work with children and their families.

The conceptualization of time by educators and students as something that must be carefully managed to optimize productivity is closely associated with neoliberal logic. As Sugarman and Thrift (2020) elaborate, due to the market rationality we inherit, we feel pressured to complete more within a shorter time. Efficiency, acceleration, and flexibility shape our thoughts and behaviours (Sugarman & Thrift, 2020). In early childhood education, we experience this through frequently updated rules, standards, and procedures that require educators to maintain a stable position of constant need to adjust quickly, multitask, and upgrade their skills in a way that pleases the clients. Educators face not only the need for, as Rosa and Trejo-Mathys (2013) suggest, shortening the duration of activities but also the need to constantly innovate strategies for managing time and schedules. As we can see from the discussions with my students, even preservice educators acknowledge that they need to start developing and

innovating time-management strategies to be successful in the field. Students often speak about how they need to be always in motion and balance children's supervision with observations, interactions, problem-solving, managing behaviour, predicting conflicts, modelling, responding to children's questions, providing stimulating activities, and meeting children's needs. Many students point out that they are often being reprimanded when they spend longer time with a child. In such an accelerated culture, students are told that they must learn quickly how to keep pace with all the tasks while exercising their choices. They also learn that their choices are associated not with freedom and autonomy but with responsibilities and risks, as Sugarman and Thrift (2020) suggest. The students' risks are limited to constantly being evaluated against how well they are able to enact their mentors' housekeeping duties. As we can see, the responsibility for learning is transferred from the colleges and field placement sites to the individual students. Such neoliberal practices of creating the illusion of choices are eloquently captured by Sugarman and Thrift (2020) who write,

...we not only have more choices to make with respect to the weighty matters of health, the care and education of our families, employment, and retirement but we also have greater risk and responsibility. Increased choice and responsibility do not necessarily mean more freedom, as the impingement on our time evinces. And, in a world of unrelenting accelerated change, it is hard to tell which from among our options are most likely to turn out well. So we fret and ruminate. We not only are saddled with the responsibility of making more choices but also for a seemingly endless array of new tasks encroaching on our time which, not long ago, were performed by others, from inputting our own data to obtain institutional services (e.g., governmental, banking) to checking ourselves in for air travel and filling our own gas tanks. (p. 817)

The authors further explain that such neoliberal underpinning of our practices leads to instrumental thinking and acting, as we simply don't have time for reflections and meaningful decisions. This certainly has to influence the way students learn how to establish relationships with children and families. The fast-changing environments and the pressing need for adaptation, frequent quick and multiple decisions do not allow for continuity, perseverance, or commitments (Rosa & Trejo-Mathys, 2013). Even though students are taught about the importance of relationships in children's lives, they learn a new meaning of relationships in their work with children. Students learn that relationships quickly build quasi-connections when educators become entertainers of repeated fun activities (Vintimilla, 2014). As such, students are learning not about meaningful relationships in field practicum but pedagogical practices rooted in "clear, simple, quick, recognizable, and 'easy to take' characteristics" (Vintimilla, 2014, p. 83).

Ironically, meaningful relationships are highlighted frequently in the *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years* document that implementation is mandatory in all programs for young children in Ontario under the licensing requirements (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014). The document, heavily underpinned by the literature of the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child at Harvard University, brings educators' attention to the benefits of relationships built over more extended meaningfully invested time. The Ministry (2014) often uses the descriptions like "ample," "large," "long," "prolonged," or "over a period" to describe the responsive, supportive interactions as a condition for the well-being of all. Why, therefore, is the normalization of practices of managing time with the focus of completing housekeeping duties and creating quick, entertaining, and fun activities for children promoted by educators and accepted through licensing processes and even carried on from one generation of

early childhood educators to the next? Why are the practices of urgencies, rushes, and accelerations taking over educators' and students' daily activities without much resistance?

I believe that finding answers to these questions may not be easy. However, as time is often linked with travel and the exploration of new places, I'd like to highlight several destinations that symbolize different interpretations of time. The aim is to motivate the early childhood education community to pursue new opportunities. When selecting these destinations, I encourage the community to consider not only the present and future of the field but also how the choice of destination and travel direction is closely tied to inclusion and exclusion. Therefore, I propose that the field should prioritize considering who will join them on this journey and who may be left behind.

Various Conceptualizations of Time

In the following discussion, I explore a range of perspectives on the concept of time, with the specific goal of challenging the established notion within neoliberalism that time should be treated simply as a resource to be optimized. This dominant view often emphasizes a narrow focus on planning for future success and the optimization of productivity through planned and restricted activities. By analyzing the different ways in which time is conceptualized, particularly within the context of pre-service early childhood education, my intention is to initiate a dialogue aimed at re-evaluating the current learning conditions provided to students as they prepare to enter the field of education.

Time Without Scent

The work of contemporary philosopher Byung-Chul Han (2018) offers a perspective on understanding why we may dismiss the prioritization of creating meaningful time in interaction with children and families and establishing relationships. Han (2018) suggests that our

relationships are affected today by the way we see the differences or, to some extent, the negativity of the Other. He explains that we have become obsessed with creating a world where there is an excess of positivity, and we focus on eliminating everything associated with what we consider negative or different. Differences (negativity) we see in other people are being replaced with “the positivity of the Same” (Han, 2015, p. 1). The reason is that, in today’s world, we see the Other as not a foreigner anymore but rather a customer (Han, 2015). In other words, we have replaced the fear of the outside difference with focusing on the harmony of the positivity within. We continuously seek to flatter and complement our sense of self and avoid any actions associated with resistance or competition with the differences represented by others. The pressure to achieve, produce, and consume further distances us from a balanced and reflective life, leading to what Han (2017a) describes as “self-exploitation” and a world where there’s no time for pause or contemplation (p. 30).

Han (2015) explains that the neoliberal logic pushes us further to become obsessed with self-production and entrepreneurs of ourselves. Through such an approach, we work with standards that we set for ourselves that will never be satisfied. Universal values like hospitality or freedom are redefined to make a space to promote their neoliberal ideology and specific outcomes. We experience anxiety and fear because we are always concerned about how others see us, and we compare ourselves to others (Han, 2018). He explains:

Today, many people are plagued with diffuse fears: fear of failure, fear of falling behind, fear of making a mistake or a wrong decision, fear of not meeting one’s own standards.

This anxiety is reinforced by a constant comparison with others. (p. 32)

As Han (2018) elaborates, the fears and anxiety that govern our lives are created, purposefully so we can increase productivity. Our lives are isolated and fragmented by chunks of time, to

stabilize the logic. The meaningful time spent with Others is limited, as it is considered “unproductive time” (p. 78), in the words of Han:

The totalization of the time of the self goes hand in hand with the totalization of production, which affects all areas of contemporary life and leads to the total exploitation of humans. The neoliberal politics of time also does away with the time of celebration, the time of joyful bloom, which evades the logic of production. [...] Unlike the time of the self, which isolates and separates us, the time of the Other creates a community. (p. 78)

Han (2017b) speaks about how time is used in today’s world to sustain neoliberal ideology and how such organization of time leads to isolation and anxiety and not to meaningful relationships and the establishment of communities. Han (2017b) calls the fragmentation of time we have created in today’s practices as making us experience time as lacking order or direction. This is what Han calls “time without a scent” (p. 12). When we focus on completing tasks quickly and efficiently, we often fail to fully explore or pay attention to them, as our primary goal is to move them into the past as swiftly as possible. Consequently, we create empty spaces (non-time) that lose connectivity and are not lasting. The experiences become meaningless. Time seems to pass faster, and even though we have progressively become more skillful in managing it, we feel we have less and less of it. According to Han (2017b), our lives become hectic with fewer spaces for meaningful encounters. We don’t have time for lingering, contemplation, or exploring the various connections of knowledge in the world. We have lost the capacity to enjoy lingering, time as scent.

Following Han (2017b), students choosing to work in their field practicum on enhancing time-management strategies are an example of “self-exploitation,” striving for positivity and

time spent without scent. The concept of associating time with scent dates to ancient times when incense or fire were used to measure time, creating a feeling of time passing slowly. When we take things slowly, we have more opportunities to engage deeply and meaningfully with the world. Han (2017b) suggests that events are all interconnected and form important chains. When we race through time, we miss out on appreciating those connections, beauty, and truth because we are constantly in a rush, leaving little time for thinking and reflection. It is only through contemplation that we can truly understand the essence of things - their appeal and fragrance. Slowing down, avoiding rushing, and allowing ourselves to take our time enables us to establish a stronger connection with the world. By suggesting that we spend time without the scent, we are encouraged to reclaim time from the frenzy of constant activity and rediscover its delightful aroma through thoughtful reflection.

Therefore, students' idea of managing and optimizing their time is like time without scent due to not being able to meaningfully engage but rather fitting more tasks into their schedule. This logic is not related to the influence of the mentor's power on students' learning and behaviour or ensuring that those who are not going to follow the rules are not going to become educators (as in Foucault's concept of governmentality) but rather to achieve recognition, appraisal, or higher grades (compulsive achievement). Students offer to stay longer, complete more tasks, or work harder, and see their evaluation as a reflection of how busy they are. Students often say, "I don't understand why I received such a low mark, as I worked very hard and completed everything they asked me to do." Therefore, students often overlook the potential for their experiences to serve as opportunities for deep exploration, analysis, research, and conceptualization, which may lead to new insights, inventions, and understanding. Instead, they tend to focus on the practical aspects of completing assigned tasks efficiently and correctly,

following established procedures with clearly defined endpoints. In essence, they may not view their work as intellectual pursuits, but rather as instrumental tasks.

For students in field practicum, current practices of repeating the same actions contribute to being in a constant state of addressing many “small tasks” to check them off on their evaluation checklist. The non-time undertakings are never truly completed, as students don’t have opportunities to engage more deeply in their meaning and experience a sense of closure. In fact, students often acknowledge and name certain activities as “meaningless”, as they don’t see any connection to their learning, and they feel that they contribute to the fragmentation of the time spent in field practicum. Therefore, they express their feeling that many “tasks” are not connected to each other. The intervals between activities or times when students are not asked to do any jobs often feel like a waste of time or boredom, and they contribute to students’ negative feelings about their learning. This may contribute to the fear and anxiety of not being liked by their mentors and professors. Students become obsessed with achievement and productivity to the extent that they often are not able to see the way out. Also, it is important to note that the commonly used term “task” tends to devalue an experience by introducing a managerial perspective. It is associated with a neoliberal ideology that emphasizes efficiency, productivity, and goal-oriented behavior. Within this framework, tasks are seen as mere means to an end without intrinsic value or significance.

The current structure of practicum experiences limits the chances for students to fully engage with and savor the moments spent with children, families, and educators. As a result, these encounters become fleeting and lack significance, failing to leave a lasting impression on the students. Such missed opportunities mean that valuable lessons and insights are not carried forward into their future interactions and practices with children and families, diminishing the

potential for meaningful connections and impactful learning. In other word, students don't have opportunities to, what Han (2017b) calls, engage in "temporal gathering," (p. 49) where the experience is associated with a deeper exploration of linking the past and the future. According to Han (2017b), the present is only "a transitional point. Nothing is. Everything becomes. Everything changes" (p. 13), and immersion in those changes and differences makes our experiences meaningful. Students' becoming requires slowing down and not just focusing on "completing tasks" but being able to actively engage with the changes and differences in the ever-evolving, ever-changing world. As they prepare for their future roles as early childhood educators, students need to immerse themselves in contemplating the various processes of differences. This is important because, as described by Liselott Olsson (2023):

Becoming pedagogue [educator] is about appreciating and enjoying change in life. It is about paying attention to qualitative nuances, transformations and transitions in ourselves, in others and other things in the world. Change is what marks the evolution of life on the planet, it is what colours our actions and memories, and it is within it that our acts, thoughts and will join in the invention of new things. (p. 225)

Olsson (2023) further speaks about how such a process of becoming and changing applies to everything, including the becoming of educators. Therefore, it is crucial for students in preparatory programs to cultivate the mindset necessary to view themselves as actively engaged in dynamic and continuous interactions with the world, rather than simply gathering checkmarks for completed tasks.

In the discussion above, I referred to Byung-Chul Han's philosophy on time and temporality. Han (2017b) argues that our current lifestyle, which involves constantly rushing from one activity to the next, reflects a crisis in our perception of time. He points out that our

focus on productivity and hyperactivity has turned us into “animal laborans” (p. 92) without the ability to pause and reflect. Han (2017b) suggests that it’s crucial to adopt a slower pace and take time to contemplate the world around us. According to Han (2017b), we can only engage meaningfully with the passage of time and broaden our existence by relearning the art of slowing down and contemplation. This perspective invites a reevaluation of current practices, with the goal of creating more opportunities for preservice educators to prioritize their well-being and meaningful work.

The existing neoliberal ideology has significantly shaped the discourse surrounding early childhood education. This ideology also influences how we communicate in the field and impacts the way we perceive and engage with early childhood education spaces. Neoliberal values have molded the professional culture in this field, emphasizing aspects such as clocks, punctuality, efficiency, productivity, and the continuous transitioning between tasks and activities. Since language is a means of articulating thoughts and shaping cognitive abilities, the topics we discuss and direct our attention to become significant in our lives. They become ingrained in the way we think and consequently influence our actions and interactions with the world. For instance, students in my seminars often express concerns about not having enough time to complete their required tasks for evaluations due to the emphasis on schedules and deadlines. Similarly, educators-mentors say they lack time to speak to the students, as their days are too busy. I have also witnessed students being told that, because there is not enough time for discussions, they need to quickly learn from observing and repeating their mentors’ approaches and not question any discrepancies between the practices they observe and what they learn in their learning institutions. The language that students learn in field practicums is that of time, seen as a limited commodity that needs to be carefully spent on learning compliance with the

overwhelming number of standards, rules, and regulations. The language further translates to physical experiences and work with children and families.

The practicum language creates the reality of fast-paced encounters, a mentally demanding culture of students feeling worried about making any errors, as this could have serious consequences. When I visit students in their practicum, I often experience their fear not only because of needing to go through one more evaluation but to ensure that they are going to be observed being busy and successful in performing many tasks simultaneously. Students learn the meaning of quality in programs for young children as well organized and structured flow, the culture of fast learning without possibilities for inquiries and collaborative exploration of pedagogical practices.

The way they speak of time is to preserve and stabilize neoliberal values. This is similar to Roberts-Holmes and Moss's (2021) invitation to whether or not to promote neoliberal logic; as he stated, this is "a political choice, not necessity" (p. 150). Therefore:

Language matters. We should pick our words carefully, being self-conscious about meaning. So before starting on the story of democracy, experimentation and potentiality, I want to highlight the importance of language in story-telling in general and in early childhood education stories in particular. (Moss, 2014, p. 76)

Moss (2014) further elaborates that he deliberately uses words like "possibilities," "potentiality," "wonder," "in-between," "lines of flight," and "rhizomes"; "images," "interpretations," and "meaning-making"; "democracy" and "experimentation," rather than "investments," "outcomes," or "consumer" (p. 76).

It is important to be mindful of the language and choices we use in children's programs and when teaching future educators. The reason is that students not only learn the language but also create their reality, which can influence their habits and behaviours. Students, in the near future, will be the ones who will make choices in their work with children, families, colleagues, and communities.

Time as Possibilities

In the previous section, I illustrated how Byung-Chul Han invites us to examine our current lifestyle, characterized by a relentless rush from one activity to another, as indicative of a crisis in our perception of time. He observes that our preoccupation with productivity and hyperactivity has transformed us into "animal laborans." This notion is closely tied to the influences of neoliberal principles, which are also evident in how students conceptualize and communicate about time. I will now explore the concept of time as a realm of possibilities, drawing on the philosophy of the German philosopher, Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). Heidegger's views have significantly influenced the work on time and temporality of numerous philosophers and scholars, including the previously mentioned Han. Heidegger (2021), in his seminal and most influential book, *Being and Time*, invites us to consider that humans are temporal beings and experience the world through being able to picture themselves in the future and past as unified experience.

Heidegger (2021) explains that, while looking into the future, we recognize our temporality and progression to the unavoidable moment of death, which further leads to the experience of worries about our limitations. While looking into the past, we experience a sense of anxiety about what we could be and what we are not. The present is the meeting point of the worries of the past and the future. We are facing decisions that are not so easy to make, as we

know that our time is limited, and we will never be able to realize ourselves fully. We must understand that our choices are closely associated with only some of the possibilities but not all of them. This places us in the position of having the capacity of choosing and shaping our lives and, therefore, creating who we are. As we shape our existence, we are bound to encounter numerous uncertainties and questions that may never be answered. According to Heidegger (2021), our primary responsibility is to remain true to ourselves and show compassion toward the world we inhabit, as our existence is intertwined with that of others. It is crucial to acknowledge that we can't accomplish everything, so we must focus on how we do the things we can. Despite the fact that we are in a specific time and context, we should have a future-oriented perspective and always project ourselves to the future. In other words, for Heidegger (2021), the past, present, and future are always together. However, the future has priority. The orientation to the future presents itself in the present. The thinking of the future is the core of everything we do, as it is entangled in possibilities.

In his work, Heidegger (2021) highlights the importance of “care” as a fundamental aspect of human existence in relation to the world. As humans, we can project ourselves to the future by making choices in our daily activities and finding meaning in our present while waiting for something more significant to come. From this perspective, care is embedded or grounded in temporality. Stephen Mulhall (2005) explains:

Heidegger's idea is not that human beings necessarily exist in time, but rather that they exist as temporality, that human existence most fundamentally is temporality. (p. 161)

And further:

For Heidegger, temporality is not an entity, not a sequence of self-contained moments that move from future to present to past, and not a property or feature of something, but

is, rather, akin to a self-generating and self-transcending process. And, since that process underpins the Being of Dasein, it must be the condition for the possibility of its ecstatic quality—the distinctively human capacity to be at once ahead, behind and alongside oneself, to stand outside oneself, to exist (in grasping the Being of other present beings—its inherent worldliness—and in its self-projective thrownness). (p. 161)

From this quote, we can see that, for Heidegger, temporality is an active agent in our existence, a competent process of doing and creating something. Temporality underpins everything we do in our daily life (care), and it is the condition for unfolding the possibility of our existence. We are taking care of and curating things through temporality. Temporality is a process of actualization; temporality is what we are. As eloquently stated by Korab-Karpowicz (n.d.), for Heidegger, human existence is embedded, “it is a movement of through a world as a pace of possibilities (para 17). Furthermore, temporality is a condition not only to unfold our options but also to contribute to and be influenced by the temporality of others (being in the world). Therefore, care is also extended to things we do for others.

Heidegger (2021) also speaks about repetition; for him, repetition means re-experience. Coming into ways of being thrown into particular times and places and through daily activities, we are bringing forward the possibility of repletion and through repetition, we purify and optimize possibilities and opportunities.

In line with Heidegger’s philosophy, the current processes of becoming educators in field practicum are about moving through a particularly orchestrated time of predetermined tasks and repetition of behaviour that leads to learning rules and standards. The attention to those tasks is the care students are being told to apply in order to produce specific evidence of their potentiality. Their time in field practicum is occupied with the standardized temporality of fast

pace and outcome-measuring approaches. Students' time in practicum becomes nothing more than an opportunity for obtaining additional labour from the students, as often they refer to it. Students are becoming lost in meaningless experiences of repetitive practices that are not helpful to their continuous becoming. This produces for them environments of disconnectedness from themselves and feelings of isolation and anxiety. Such conditions contribute to students' feelings of inability to find themselves in the world. In line with Heidegger, this may be that they do not rely on intuition. Students do not learn from projecting possibilities of what the richness of the world unfolds for them. On the contrary, they learn from repeating actions and mastering skills without nurturing predispositions for exploration, responding to what is present in their world, or following intuitions. The mastery of standards, rules, and cookie-cutter approaches in field practicum contributes to students' detachment from themselves and training themselves with instrumental-like techniques for their work with children and families.

Through Heidegger's views, field practicum should be about nurturing an 'authentic' temporality. This means that students should resist time-management practices to do more tasks but rather learn by cultivating intuitive dispositions to respond to their surroundings at a given moment. Imposing structures and standards on field practicum learning may restrict the field's potential. By doing so, we limit students' interpretations and choices, affecting their ability to project their possibilities for the future. Students need to learn in an environment where they can ask questions and make decisions without setting limits. In other words, by imposing predetermined tasks and objectives for students to meet, we are denying students the essence of humanity. This is because time depends on our existence and arises from our lived experiences and interactions with the world. For Heidegger (2021), temporality is "the condition for the possibility" (p. 471) of self-projecting. Similarly, field practicum is the condition for students to

explore the possibilities for becoming educators. We need to think very carefully about whether we want future educators to become masters of managing their time so they can be occupied with completing more tasks in a shorter time or shape their professional identities by exploring many possibilities. For Heidegger (2021), things in the world show themselves to us, and by deciding to accept their invitations, we create possibilities for ourselves and become enriched. Temporality provides the condition for transformation and difference, which comes from our more profound engagement with culturally established actions and rituals.

Introducing a discussion on considering time and temporality as processes for change and potentiality in preservice education could add a new direction on how we see educators, students and early childhood education. To expand on this idea, in the final section, I would like to explore the topic of change and difference in a bit more detail. To do this, I'm going to examine the work of Gilles Deleuze.

Time as Repetition of Differences

Both, Deleuze and Heidegger talk about difference and change. For Heidegger, change can be found in deeper exploration and the purifying of a culturally established phenomenon (Gilliland, 2005). The depth-ness in the process of repetition is difference and change (Gilliland, 2005). In other words, by repeating the exploration of already established entities, we transform ourselves through a deeper understanding and removal of what is not relevant. For students in field practicum, this may be connected to revisiting and repeating the many tasks they are asked to perform. Following Heidegger's logic, though, the problem is in the organization of the field practicum time, which does not allow students to choose what to attend to and, most importantly, for a deeper exploration of any of their experiences and encounters. Some may argue here that such an approach to change in field practicum is appropriate, as it helps us to strengthen the

professional values built on practices of already deeply refined understandings. We often hear “we are standing on the shoulders of the giants” in the field. However, others may see this, like Gilliland (2005), as preserving practices and core values that privilege only certain views and therefore certain groups of people. This is not to suggest that prior knowledge and values should be disregarded; rather, they should be employed in a way that encourages the reconsideration of what we already understand and highlights new areas for exploration and invention.

In opposition to Heidegger’s singular transformation of always within previously established possessions and understandings, Deleuze suggests that differences are present, not in the deeper exploration of the same ideas but in the plurality of relationships and the unpredictability of our encounters (Gilliland, 2005). For Deleuze (1994), differences provide opportunities for newness and the production of new views and perspectives. For example:

Take the example of a rhyme: it is indeed verbal repetition, but repetition which includes the difference between two words and inscribes that difference at the heart of a poetic Idea, in a space which it determines. Nor does its meaning lie in marking equal intervals, but rather, as we see in a notion of strong rhyme, in putting tonal values in the service of tonic rhythm, and contributing to the independence of tonic rhythms from arithmetic rhythms. (p. 20)

As we can see, for Deleuze, even in repetitive actions in rhymes, there is a difference, as differences are everywhere, and there are no two moments alike. This is why repetition is defined by Deleuze (1994) as something more than generality:

In its essence, repetition refers to a singular power which differs in kind from generality, even when, in order to appear, it takes advantage of the artificial passage from one order of generality to another. (p. 3)

The quote emphasizes that repetition has a unique power that is different from generality. This singular power is evident in how we, as human beings, engage with our environment. Through repeated actions, we create patterns and establish control, showcasing our ability to influence outcomes. This perspective links to the idea that the transition from one order of generality to another is deeply intertwined with the intentional actions of agents. Following this logic, field placements create opportunities for students to experience the transformative power of repetition. Each action and interaction they engage in goes beyond merely following procedures; it contributes to a larger process in which they build upon their new experiences. Through repetitions, students gain fresh insights that enable them to respond differently and creatively to real-world challenges. Rather than just absorbing information, they actively shape their understanding and competencies, forging unique relationships and perspectives within their field. By reflecting on their repeated experiences, students can deepen their understanding of how their actions relate to the broader context of their learning and becoming. From this perspective, repetition takes on a new significance, it is not merely about doing things over but about recognizing the differences that arise and prioritizing them in the process of identity formation (May, 2019a, 2019b). According to Todd May (2019a, 2019b), Deleuze invites us here to think about identities as not forming in one direction or a choice out of many possibilities (like Heidegger) but rather a constant process of becoming while encountering differences. The becoming of identities is a creative process that requires continuous investigation of what is generating what appears to us. According to Deleuze (1994), the understanding that all is what

appears to us is false logic, as there is always more, and we need to engage in an ongoing exploration of differences active within what comes forward as stable identities. In other words, our lives are in an ongoing process of becoming and in such processes of differentiation and becoming, time is not a single linear sequence but a complex interplay of past, present and future (Deleuze 1994).

In line with Deleuze, revisiting the experiences of field practicum students, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, represents for me a repetition that holds and opens differences. These differences extend beyond just recognizing new aspects during the revisit; instead, they represent an independent force that creates opportunities and possibilities for becoming (Deleuze, 1994). The concept of field practicum I encountered while learning from students has already transformed since my initial mention. Encountering these differences fosters my creativity and shapes my identity as difference is a dynamic force that drives change. As Deleuze (1994) suggests, the concepts of repetition and encounters with difference extend beyond the mere recollection of past events; they encompass a complex interaction that transforms our perceptions and understanding. In this context, I consider the three temporal dimensions described by Deleuze. The first is the living present, where my immediate experiences reveal a continuous flow of becoming (Deleuze, 1994). Each moment in the field practicum is infused with memories and anticipations, forming a dynamic synthesis that affects not only my understanding of the students' experiences but also how they might be interpreted in future contexts.

Next is the pure past, which exists as a separate dimension alongside my present reflections (Deleuze, 1994). This past does not simply fade away as I move forward; rather, it remains a virtual influence that subtly colors my current understanding of field practicums. Its impact is

felt in how I engage with the present, even when the experiences from those students are not directly accessible. Finally, according to Deleuze (1994), the future is woven into my present interactions and thoughts, an ever-unfolding potential that shapes my engagement with the field practicum. My hopes for what these experiences could signify are essential for understanding the creative possibilities that lie ahead.

As I navigate the familiar narrative of student placements, I am challenged to break away from conventional ways of thinking. Instead, I aim to embrace the creative potential of repetition, understanding that each encounter with these ideas is an opportunity to generate something new and different. In this way, the process is not merely about recounting stories but about shaping an ongoing narrative that reflects my evolving identity and conception of existence. This creative experimentation invites me to engage with the questions of pedagogy as a dynamic process of encountering and creation, reflecting the very essence of life itself. It invites me to consider how students can view their field practicum as a journey of becoming, prompting inquiries not only about what they learn but also about how they create their professional identities through the narratives they weave. How do they inhabit learning spaces, fostering a sense of being together? In what ways can they navigate the interplay of reshaping their stories, ensuring that these narratives resonate and evolve in a manner that honors their unique journeys? How can they utilize pedagogical approaches to actively establish connections, reconfigure their realities, and discover new ways of being in the world?

From the students' perspectives, the repetition of their tasks cannot be structured and oriented on one outcome. Childcare programs are dynamic and constantly evolving, allowing for the emergence of innovative responses when faced with challenges. Having one template for practices and pedagogical encounters prevents change. Such an approach limits opportunities for

students to create their own stories of participating in shaping the early childhood education identity. The field remains unchanged with limited opportunities for flourishing, creating, innovating, or simply becoming. In line with Deleuze, students must be concerned with the creation, not just writing observations (describing what they see). They need to have the opportunity to learn and be allowed to formulate questions and construct problems rather than cement the already created knowledge “knowing.” As Deleuze (1994) explains:

Learning is the appropriate name for the subjective act carried out when one is confronted with the objectivity of the problem (Idea), whereas knowledge designates only the generality of a concept or the calm position of a rule enabling solutions. (p. 164)

Students’ experiences of everyday practices are encounters with many identities, including concepts, questions and problems related to working with children, and this is not only to be described and represented but approached as a creative opportunity to explore “the essence of repetition [and] the idea of difference” (Deleuze, 1994, p. 27). The learning process for students is a form of the everyday practice of becoming early childhood educators.

Furthermore, for students, bringing practices into ongoing discussions with the current perspective is to enhance the temporal process of becoming early childhood educators. Discussing multiple perspectives would be a Deleuzian approach to creating life in early childhood education. Robert Luzecky and Daniel Smith (2023) nicely summarize a similar approach in their book, in which they engage several thinkers and scholars in discussing Deleuze’s concept of time. To summarize their discussion on how his philosophy can help with their wondering, they highlight the following:

...Deleuze conceived of time as a complex dynamic multiplicity composed of a manifold of irreducible, mutually implicated, ontological and axiological processes. It might

further be observed that this multiplicity is explicitly transformative, in the sense that it involves modifications of each of its elements as well as a transformation of the whole.

(p. 5)

If we consider pedagogical work in a similar conceptualization to Deleuze's conceptualization of time and as an opportunity for "life-making," as suggested by Cristina D. Vintimilla (n.d.), the current conceptualization of students has to be seriously questioned. It is not the objective evaluations or lists of tasks associated with predetermined objectives that will help the students learn but "the contingency of an encounter with that which forces thought to rise and educate the absolute necessity of an act of thought or a passion to think" (Deleuze, 1994, p. 139). Students will be able to sense the difference that requires further exploration, not that the knowledge needs to be given or discovered by observing their mentors. When students are given the opportunity, through sensation, they will be forced to think by the forces that move the ideas through what Deleuze (1994) calls "faculties" (perception, memory, imagination, and understanding) p. 133). All the faculties work interdependently by activating each other . All this requires time and attention to providing a placement environment where students can enhance their dispositions to think with differences. However, the creation of such an environment seems to demand more than one single method. As Deleuze (1994) explains:

Method is the means of that knowledge which regulates the collaboration of all the faculties. It is therefore the manifestation of a common sense of the realization of a *Cogitatio nature*, and presupposes a good will as though this were a "premeditated decision" of the thinker. Culture, however, in an involuntary adventure, the movement of learning which links a sensibility, a memory and then a thought, with all the cruelties and

violence necessary, as Nietzsche said, precisely in order “train a ‘nation of thinkers’” or to “provide a training for the mind.” (pp. 165–166)

While Deleuze (1994), in his work *Difference and Repetition*, critiques the reliance on common sense and structured techniques, he promotes a more dynamic engagement with pure difference to break away from established norms and encourage genuine creativity and invention in thought. In the quote, however, he illustrates the contrast between the structured, intentional method of acquiring knowledge and the more chaotic, experiential nature of cultural learning. From Deleuze’s perspective, it matters to view preservice education as a time for preparing students to engage with the complex and multifaceted realities of early childhood. This preparation involves establishing an environment that promotes exploration and intellectual engagement, emphasizing not merely the transfer of knowledge, but also the cultivation of sensitivity to think deeply and differently. How can educators design spaces where students feel empowered to embark on their learning journeys, embracing and confronting complexity and discomfort as they navigate their intellectual landscapes?

Deleuze (1994) also alludes to the concept of culture as an “involuntary adventure.” This idea underscores that culture is shaped by unexpected encounters and events that also disrupt the status quo, highlighting the need for sensitivity to the unpredictable nature of learning. These involuntary adventures lead to transformations in thought and behavior, creating new possibilities and ways of understanding the world. However, these cultural transformations often involve struggle and conflict. If we align with Deleuze, we are invited to emphasize the immanent nature of early childhood education’s cultural processes, recognizing that they arise from within existing conditions and experiences rather than being externally imposed. Therefore, I wonder, in what ways can educators embrace the inherent challenges and contradictions present

in the learning process to foster a classroom environment that encourages critical thinking and the exploration of new perspectives? How can we create conditions that invite students to push boundaries, fostering resilience and adaptability throughout this dynamic interplay?

In Brief

The current practices promoted for preservice early childhood educators in field practicum are temporal processes underpinned by a linear and hierarchical comprehension of time. They are deeply rooted in neoliberal values, emphasizing productivity, pseudo-connectivity between people, and preserving sameness through standards and cookie-cutter approaches to pedagogy. Consequently, the mosaic of conceptualization of time and temporality explored in this chapter is intended to open spaces for early childhood educators in Canada to interrogate current practices. They are to serve as an invitation to consider other ways of being, knowing, and doing field practicum in early childhood education.

Inviting Han to the discussion, I tried to lay the foundation for attempts to unsettle the current practices, standards, and approaches that add to students' self-visualization of how they may fit in this already established static system we call early childhood education. Heidegger and Deleuze take us to possibilities and opportunities that can open a new chapter for the field associated with the returns of differences that will be created by students in field practicums when they will start becoming with concepts like:

- Time as scent, and
- Time as possibilities, and
- Time as repetition of differences, and...

The notion of “becoming”, particularly in the context of becoming an educator, as articulated by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) offers a compelling framework for understanding the transformative potential of preservice educators’ experiences. The idea that “becoming is not to imitate or identify with something or someone” (as seen in the case of identity) highlights the importance of multiplicity, fluidity, search, and the existential complexity that must be considered in professional preparation (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pp. 272 and 294). Instead of simply assimilating existing pedagogical models, preservice educators are invited to engage in “the process of desire,” which encourages exploration and creativity in their practice (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pp. 272 and 294). In this context, the concept of the rhizome becomes particularly relevant. A rhizomatic approach, as opposed to a more traditional arborescent (tree-like) structure, suggests an interconnected and non-hierarchical way of thinking (Deleuze and Guattari., 1987, pp. 272 and 294). This allows educators to break away from rigid frameworks that often dominate educational discourse, fostering an environment where there is openness to response and creation. Education demands that we maintain this space. By freeing themselves from fixed identities as educators, preservice teachers can become part of a dynamic network of ideas, experiences, and practices that continuously evolve.

The question, then, is how preservice educators can navigate and embrace the “spaces in between” as they embark on their journey in education. These transitional spaces may represent the uncertainties, challenges, and complexities of pedagogical encounters. Embracing these ambiguities can lead to a deeper understanding of their own identities as educators and their relationships with students, colleagues, and communities.

To “transform [themselves] into a string of other multiplicities” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 249) means recognizing that their identity as educators is not static. It is an ongoing process that

allows them to embody various roles, perspectives, and approaches. This transformative work requires a willingness to engage in self-reflection and critical thinking, encouraging preservice educators to adapt to various contexts and continuously redefine their practice.

Therefore, I see in Deleuze and Guattari's theories an invitation to create a perspective through which preservice educators might explore their professional identities and pedagogical practices. By conceptualizing themselves not as singular entities molded by traditional paradigms, but as dynamic contributors to a network of educational possibilities, they can foster a more inclusive, responsive, and innovative teaching approach. In doing so, preservice educators may not only enrich their own learning experiences but also enhance the educational experiences of their future students.

In other words, the interplay between the various concepts of time, subjectivity, and educator identities may invite a myriad of connections and questions. As preservice educators engage with the idea of becoming, we must consider how their experiences and interpretations can disrupt established norms and foster a multiplicity of perspectives. What new relationships can emerge when we embrace the fluidity of identity and knowledge? How might the rhizomatic nature of learning encourage educators to resist linear narratives and instead cultivate a space for diverse voices and experiences? By questioning traditional frameworks and standards we open avenues for transformation that resonate far beyond the confines of early childhood education, inviting ongoing dialogues about identity, difference, and the potential for collective becoming in our preservice practices.

Chapter 5: Dialogue

Introduction to Dialogue

The previous two chapters may prompt a deeper exploration of the interplay between time and hospitality concerning the ethical responsibilities we have toward students and educators in early childhood education. However, this inquiry must acknowledge that there is no hospitality in education without dialogue, and there is no dialogue without the temporal conditions necessary for an ethical encounter. Hospitality requires engagement and interaction. Dialogue serves as the channel through which diverse voices and experiences intersect, enabling a more profound understanding of one another. In this sense, hospitality is not only about welcoming others; it entails a commitment to listening, interpreting, and responding to the multiplicity of perspectives. Moreover, dialogue underscores the significance of context and timing in an encounter. Accepting a poststructuralist view that meaning is contingent and situated highlights how the conditions surrounding any dialogue, including historical, cultural, and political factors, shape individual relationships. For dialogue to emerge, there must be a recognition of the present temporal conditions that facilitate or hinder encounters, as I argue here in connection with neoliberal ideology. This interplay suggests that both hospitality and dialogue are not static entities; rather, they are dynamic processes influenced by the ongoing flow of time and the specificities of the moment.

Consequently, this chapter focuses on dialogue as it adds depth and becomes equitable with hospitality and time in this dissertation. I believe that intersecting hospitality, time, and dialogue can create opportunities to reflect on the complex interplay of context, power, and meaning, revealing insights that may otherwise remain hidden. All three concepts are contingent upon relational dynamics that call for ongoing engagement, challenging fixed interpretations and

inviting a more inclusive understanding of encounters. I further seek to foster a scholarly discussion on the necessary conditions for envisioning dialogue as a transformative process for establishing relationships and embracing differences. I start the chapter by delving into Platonic dialogue as a form of logical (philosophical) inquiry and to challenge prevailing limited perspectives within the field. Furthermore, I discuss the concept of a dialogical encounter, emphasizing the import of listening and silence, and highlighting the richness and vast possibilities inherent in viewing dialogue as more than mere communication. My intention is to underscore the potential transformative impact of these perspectives on our current understanding of relationships and pedagogy. By structuring this chapter into two distinct sections, dialogue and listening (with an emphasis on the concept of silence), I aim to highlight the need for responsive and adaptable practicum practices, emphasizing the interconnectedness and complexity of the daily work of educators.

Defining Dialogue

In her work, Maria Guajardo (2023) emphasizes the essential connection between dialogue and the process of learning. She suggests that transformative learning occurs through meaningful relationships and dialogue with others. Therefore, Guajardo (2023) defines dialogue as a transformative experience involving active engagement with encounters of differences in others. She views it as a process that fosters relationship building, discovery, curiosity, and the open acknowledgment of one's own knowledge and areas of unknown. Importantly, Guajardo (2023) stresses that dialogue enables individuals to create new meanings through their interactions. Furthermore, Guajardo (2023) claims that dialogue encourages individuals to bring forth their best selves and embrace their humanity. Through dialogue, people can gain insight

into their own perspectives by seeing themselves through the lens of others and by forming meaningful connections with them.

Similarly, Paulo Freire (2021) elaborates on the vital role dialogue plays in his pedagogy of the oppressed. Through dialogue, he suggests, we are being called to understand and change the world. Dialogue is one of the pedagogical approaches associated with learning, hope, and critical thinking (Vandenbroeck, 2021). Through dialogue, we come to understand that “the future [is not] a repetition of the present” (Freire, 2021, p. 105). Furthermore, for Freire, dialogue is a collaborative endeavour that can foster community action and community building (Peters & Besley, 2021). For Freire, dialogue is more than just exchanging words; it involves creating a space where participants can thoughtfully examine their beliefs, values, and experiences. This process is dialectical, meaning it engages with opposing ideas and perspectives, which leads to a deeper understanding and personal transformation. Through dialogue, learners become active participants in their education rather than passive recipients of information. In his own words:

In the dialectical perception, the future of which we dream is not inexorable. We have to make it, produce it, else it will not come in the form that we would more or less wish it to. True, of course, we have to make it not arbitrarily, but with the materials, with the concrete reality, of which we dispose, and more as a project, a dream, for which we struggle. (Freire, 2021, p. 105)

From the perspectives outlined above, dialogue is highly interactive and closely connected to creating and shaping the future. Such interpretation is important for the field of early childhood education because it reminds us that the future is not predetermined or guaranteed, but rather needs to be brought to life through intentional actions of being together. These perspectives underscore the importance of grounding our dreams in reality. We can’t simply wish for a better

future; we must work with the rich resources, including the differences that students bring to the field, and circumstances such as preservice education, available to us. It's a collaborative effort, a project we engage in, fueled by our determination and perseverance. Dialogue may open opportunities for the future of the field to flourish and cultivate vibrant conditions for ongoing inventions and interactions during encounters with the differences of pre-service education students.

To further deepen my understanding of dialogue, I draw upon the insights of Plato. He perceived dialogue not merely as an exchange of ideas but as a process that emphasizes a mode of questioning designed to encourage deeper inquiry and exploration. By integrating Plato's perspectives with contemporary views from scholars such as Guajardo and Freire, we can observe how dialogue can facilitate transformative encounters. Examining Platonic dialogue may allow us to recognize the dynamic nature of engagement, where participants actively challenge and refine one another's thoughts. This approach underscores the potential of dialogue to promote deeper understanding and insight in preservice early childhood education.

Platonic Dialogue: Questioning Early Childhood Preservice Education's Reality

Socrates (470-399 BCE), the Greek philosopher, is well-known for his dialectical method, commonly called the Socratic method. He engaged with others in discussions, challenging their beliefs and encouraging them to examine the contradictions in their thinking. Unlike many philosophers, Socrates did not write down his ideas; instead, his philosophy was shared through spoken dialogue. In opposite, Plato (428-348 BCE), a student of Socrates, documented these conversations and created his own philosophical ideas. His writings are more structured and systematic, covering various subjects like ethics, politics, and metaphysics. The

complexity arises because Plato's works often feature Socrates as a character, which can blur the lines between Socrates' views and Plato's own philosophy. While Socrates focused on questioning and seeking wisdom through dialogue, Plato sought to develop a more comprehensive philosophical framework to explain reality and knowledge. Plato's dialogues preserve Socratic questioning while also integrating many of Plato's original ideas.

Gregory Sadler (2019) emphasizes that when studying Plato's philosophy, it's important to pay attention to the specific style of dialogue he employs. This style is key to understanding how he explores the complex relationships involved in questioning the nature of our reality. He elaborates on those Platonic dialogues (also referred to as Socratic dialogues) as creating a particular way of engagement and exchange between everyone involved in them, including the writer, Plato himself, his characters, and the reader. Sadler (2019) claims that even though they are systematically structured as philosophical discussions, dialogues are particular conversations between people. Those conversations are mediums for uncovering the truth through the use of particularly posed questions, arguments, disagreements, and tensions between the conceptualization of ideas. According to Sadler (2019), Plato's use of dialogue in his writing requires the reader not only to comprehend the discussions of others but to think for themselves. This involves carefully analyzing the different speakers (characters) and their points of view as they represent various and differentiated understandings.

Sadler (2019) points out that sometimes a speaker, in Plato's writing, purposefully makes a weak argument or does not necessarily finish their thoughts or present a defined conclusion. The reason for this is so the reader can reflect on the person to whom the argument is made and what is happening in the dialogue itself; is the person capable or not of recognizing a solid argument? If yes, why yes? If not, why not? Therefore, in Platonic dialogues, it is essential to

understand who the characters are. According to Sadler (2019), Plato's characters are real people situated in particular times and places, and considering their backgrounds improves comprehension of their views and positions. Platonic dialogues also include a certain level of generalization, as they represent various types of people, such as those who don't listen to others but focus on convincing others about the importance of their own story only.

Sandler (2019) suggests that the form of dialogue is structured in a way that a person who is listening, the reader, from outside becomes a part of the dialogue/conversation. Platonic dialogue is an invitation to enter the discussions and connect with various ideas, not just passively observe other people's argumentations (Sadler, 2019).

As we can see for Plato, dialogues create rich opportunities. They can open spaces for people involved in them to do the particular work of putting many of the components associated with questioning, seeking information, and analyzing together to enrich the exchange. Furthermore, Plato didn't simply lay out his philosophy or set the foundation for readers to enter conversation but, as suggested by the German philosopher of continental tradition, Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002), "provides the model for a way of understanding that is open to the matter at issue through bringing oneself into question along with the matter itself" (cited in Malpas, 2022, para 8). In Plato, since the aim of philosophy is to lead us to understanding the Good, dialogue is the perfect tool to assist us with the task (Kahn, 1997). However, Plato doesn't assume that his readers are familiar with the dialectic method; therefore, he progressively and carefully prepares them through his writings (Kahn, 1997). Only in his later work, *The Republic*, does Plato define dialogue and engage the reader in its complexity as "higher study" (Kahn, 1997, p. 296). Therefore, this is not about simple conversations between people, as suggested by

Sandler, but rather “the art of philosophical analysis and explanation by means of discussion” (Kahn, 1997, p. 327).

Platonic dialogue is an invaluable method of engaging with the world, especially in the context of preservice education. It may encourage students to move beyond accepting information at face value and instead prompts them to delve deeper into the subject matter. This is particularly essential when working with children and their families, considering the complex issues that our world is currently grappling with.

Also, in Plato’s dialogues, characters express various opinions, enabling readers to consider different perspectives. Embracing this approach to discussions can help students broaden their understanding and be more open to new ideas. Engaging with Plato’s dialogues encourages us to seek wisdom and insight, offering an opportunity for students and educators to reflect on their experiences, principles, and decisions, and pursue new knowledge. However, the most compelling invitation from the Platonic dialogues for preservice education students is to shift their perspective of the world. Instead of viewing the world only as a place to solve problems, students and educators are invited to approach it with curiosity and openness. They can learn to appreciate the richness and complexity of the world beyond its practical utility. Rather than solely as a means to an end, they can recognize the world’s intrinsic value and appreciate it for its own sake. This perspective cultivates wonder and awe, fostering a view that inclines us to approach the world as more than just a resource for problem-solving activities, as discussed by Di Paolantonio (2019b). In his own words, Platonic dialogues encourage us to: “foster a thinking initiated from the pathos of wonderment that inclines us to approach the world as something more than a resource for our problem-solving activity” (Di Paolantonio, 2019b, p. 223). The reason for this, as suggested by Di Paolantonio (2019b), is that such dialogues are not about

already established tasks or outcomes or not about convincing the other person to accept a particular view or understanding but rather a specific form of exchange. Opportunities for such dialogues can help us to focus on environments needed to nurture students' and educators' dispositions of philosophical wondering during encounters with others. As Di Paolantonio (2019b) elaborates:

Rather, what we see happening in the twists and turns and aporetic impasses exposed through the Socratic dialogue is *thought in the making*, through which, if we endure our exposure, we come to consciously sense that we really don't know what we assumed we knew for certain, and so we start to turn away from the prejudices of our convictions, clearing the way for a thinking that can be attentive and admiring (rather than merely discerning) of the always more of the world. (p. 223)

Di Paolantonio encourages us to consider the process of thought occurring (making) when we find ourselves in a state of uncertainty or indecision during an inquiry. This state arises from conflicting lines of reasoning, resulting in a problem or challenge that we must grapple with. Essentially, it occurs when we are confronted with a paradox or deadlock that challenges our understanding of a situation. If we accept that dialogues occur within these uncertain situations, then it follows that dialogue is receptive to uncertainty, indecisiveness, and unresolved issues, all of which are commonly encountered by preservice educators. However, present-day preservice education often fails to allow students to engage deeply with these challenges in order to explore, reflect, innovate, and cultivate the necessary qualities to become intellectual and ethical educators. Instead, their learning primarily consists of rote memorization and the application of standardized concepts. Thus, studying Platonic dialogues can offer numerous opportunities for investigation in preservice education. Additionally, it can foster an environment that promotes

rich opportunities for wondering, gives a condition to slow down and actually think rather than unquestioningly accept a view or proposition and not understand it (Di Paolantonio, 2019b).

As mentioned, the reader (interlocutor) is critical for Plato not as a passive observer but rather someone invited into the conversation. The reader is often a person who can see the weak argumentations and unfinished thoughts, or the one who is learning to ask questions. If we consider students in field practicums as the readers (interlocutors) of an already established dialogue, the current dialogue of ECE, how can they assist us in reevaluating our arguments?

As previously stated, in addition to being multifaceted, Plato's dialogues gain strength not only from deductive reasoning but also from their capacity to provoke thought and discussions. What possibilities could open up if we participate in dialogue as an aporetic space? What dialogue-related circumstances would be required to encourage "thought in the making" during field practicum? Also, is knowing or becoming familiar with students' culture necessary to make sense of their arguments, ways of being, and making sense of the world? How will tensions and disagreements contribute to the entanglement in students' learning from dialogues? What it would take for us to use those questions instead of continuing "subsuming our students according to assessment models, general rules, theories, and predefined caricatures that serve the forgone conclusions and function of a certain apparatus that can make us believe that we know them" (Di Paolantonio, 2019b, p. 224).

Listening and Dialogue: Collective Performances

In the previous section, I discussed Plato's philosophy and how it highlights the possibilities of dialogue for inciting further thinking. Now as I transition to the next section, I explore the communal endeavors and innovative practices that underpin dialogue. In this section, therefore, I aim to emphasize the importance of listening as a prerequisite for collective

exchange of rituals, meanings, interactions, and more. My objective is to underline that diversity in thought and action is what may facilitate a more cohesive and dynamic integration of early childhood preservice education, rather than uniform actions. To illustrate this point, I will draw insights from the field of music. This is because, listening in music is discussed as deeply involving not only the mind but also the whole body (Cobussen, 2020). This section will, therefore, highlight valuable lessons about dialogue and listening that can be learned from musicians and academics. I hope that this will prompt a reevaluation of the ways in which early childhood education students are prepared, highlighting the importance of developing the dispositions and qualities required for engaging in the dynamic creation and exchange of thoughts through active listening.

Music is defined as a phenomenon that follows particular dynamics and progression (Margulis, 2018). In other words, it is an experience of gradually unfolding composition or information for a specific duration. Margulis (2018) suggests that our perceptions of music are complex, temporal, and closely connected to synchronization and utilization of our memory of the sounds we've just heard, perception of present sounds, and prediction of the next ones. How we experience music depends on the intersection of the intentions and creativity of the composer and our participation in listening to the "beat, rhythm, beginning, or ending" of the piece (Margulis, 2018, p. 49). Listening to music for Margulis (2018) is about "listening in time" (p. 49). The temporal characteristics, in particular, or ways we organize and group sounds in music compositions and later perceive and remember them through listening, contribute to the way we understand the role of music experiences in our lives. Del Nevo (2017) explains that as:

Time matters in listening. Music takes up time and takes its own time. Not just its rhythm, or the “time it takes” to play, but its own inner time: the time of sensibility—of our sensibility. Pieces of music stay with us over time, lingering like an aftertaste. (p. 97)

In this quote, the author refers to the capacity of music to capture and carry on certain ideas, views, perspectives, and the influences of events and dominant thoughts throughout history. Such an approach points out the phenomenon of music as not only about simply listening and enjoying a composer’s intentions in the moment of listening to the piece but also about listening as an opportunity for us to stay longer with certain ideas, sounds, or harmony. This is an invitation to reflect on how our interaction with music can influence our reality. Therefore, this is about creativity and critical thinking as an artistic exchange. To explore this further, we can follow musicians who suggest that “listening to music is an art” that requires intensive training and preparation (Wright, 2004, p. 2). Craig Wright (2004) implies that learning to listen to music must include getting familiar with standard music processes and understanding a composer’s work, especially becoming sensitive to exploring the composer’s way of expressing the intentions. This requires full attention; therefore, it is suggested that to understand and immerse ourselves in the rich and powerful experience that music offers, we can not listen to music as part of doing other activities (Wright, 2004).

Furthermore, the practice and training of listening in music is not a simple one (Watkins & Scott, 2012). The idea is that musicians progressively expand and develop a specific sensibility to recognize the organization of sounds within environments of other sounds, looking not only for already established processes but also particular combinations and surprises (Watkins & Scott, 2012). In other words, listening to music requires a certain level of

understanding of the predetermined and previously established ways of composing music as well as identifying opportunities for interpretation in, as suggested by Watkins and Scott (2012),

...creating colors through combinations of instrumental voices, while merging those voices with their compositional skills to convey mood and character. These musicians can often work in isolation, “hearing” in their minds the sounds that are yet to be realized.” (p. 29)

The authors further imply that such an approach to listening requires years to cultivate the many dispositions needed for explorations in the spaces between what a composer produces and what the composer wants to create. However, the process is slightly different for composers and performers. Composers start the process by “listening to the music inside and writing it down” (Watkins & Scott, 2012, p. 32). In contrast, performers start by carefully studying the composer’s views and perceptions and then translate or interpret their understanding (Glennie, 2007). In both cases, the aim of listening is to focus on the sound produced or created. This makes me wonder about the roles of mentors and students in field practicum. Who is the composer, and who is the performer then? Asking these types of questions in early childhood education could encourage important discussions about embracing improvisation, creativity, and attentive listening, all of which are crucial in pedagogical practice. It could also create opportunities for exploring the complexity of developing and nurturing the sensitivities and dispositions associated with improvisation, creativity, and active listening during pedagogical encounters.

Further examination of music reveals that, listening to and listening in music are not only related in many ways, but it is also suggested that there are many ways of listening, which musicians must cultivate to build sensitivity or awareness of important things (Watkins & Scott,

2012). That is why there is also a discussion among scholars and musicians about how to prepare students to become musicians who listen well. For example, Peterson (2006) suggests that students cannot learn about listening to music only by describing it but rather by immersing themselves in it, because listening is a creative process. It is not only about the accuracy that music education should concentrate on but, more importantly, on “the flexibility and potential creativity of listening” (Paterson, 2006, p. 15). The author further suggests that the variation between musicians should not be judged as better or more skillful but as different. The reason is that music as a creative activity also requires listening to music to be a creative process. Drawing on various literature, Paterson (2006) explains that listening is very similar to other creative processes, as while listening to music, we construct mental images and:

In accordance with the skills, background knowledge, attitudes, and goals of the listener, and through a process that can involve creative musical decisions on the part of the listener, these aural mental objects are selected, categorized, organized, related to other memory objects, transformed in various ways in combination with those memory objects, and incorporated into a mental model that becomes the listener’s unique perception of that musical work. The thinking in and with sound that generates such a mental model is the music making carried out by listeners, just as the thinking in and with sound that generates a composition is the music making carried out by composers. This mental model persists in memory and can be further elaborated during subsequent hearings of the same work or even possibly through externally silent cognitive activity between hearings, cumulatively gaining coherence, complexity, and stability. (p. 18)

The author further adds that, because of the complexity that music creates,

a listener's attention can be divided and redirected at anytime, resulting in what could be described as a constellation of simultaneous process cycles, each contributing to the whole experience.” (2006, p.18)

This description of what Paterson (2006) calls creative listening helps us to see musicians not only as translators of a piece created by others but, as in line with Reimer (2003), composers of their music while participating in shared experiences with others. I find Paterson's concluding argument particularly compelling: that teaching practices must be guided by the understanding that students continually create new music through their listening experiences. This sheds a unique perspective on the relevance of learning from listening to older pieces. Such an approach can definitely help us see how preview musical compositions can open possibilities for invention and newness in today's times.

Evelyn Glennie offers another intriguing perspective on listening and teaching listening to music. As a profoundly deaf professional musician (Fellows & Glennie, 2008), Glennie's perspective on listening proposes completely different and unique possibilities. Glennie describes her approach to listening as through her entire body (Glennie et al. 2018). She explains that she can listen to music by experiencing the vibration sound creates. This is done not only by feeling it physically but also by perception caused by visual input. In her words,

...if I see the branches of a tree move I assume the branches, leaves, birds, wind, and the immediate environment are creating sound regardless. My senses are triggered by what my eyes see. The ripples from my visual experience are what my imagination is using as a basis for assumption.” (p. 322)

And as she later adds, she feels the vibration throughout her body. Glennie suggests that everyone can learn such listening through careful observations of what is happening around us as well as through training ourselves to connect the sounds we hear with sensations we experience in our bodies. By using the sense of touch, we should be able to feel the sound and the direction it is coming from. This, however, requires time and practice so the body can be trained in producing sensations in, for example, “the hand, face, or other parts of the body” (Glennie et al., 2018, p. 323). Such training also involves preparation of the surroundings and environments by removing unnecessary sounds to be able to make the interesting sounds and those that sound curious to us more explicit. This will allow you to stay longer with various sounds and explore them more deeply. Talking about metal detectors, she speaks about patience and peace of paying attention only to one thing (Hunter-Tilney, 2017). From that perspective, Glennie et al. (2018) invites us to think about listening as “a living experience” (p. 323). As she elaborates, when she plays music, her body becomes the instrument’s extension and starts co-creating the piece.

Glennie’s perspective on listening during a performance with other players is equally intriguing. She claims that exchange and collaboration require paying more attention to each other and providing respect and space for individual members’ interpretation of the music. The differences of each musician playing in the collaborative experience with others must be closely listened to. Furthermore, playing music with others requires careful interaction with the space and audience. All musicians and identities contribute to the harmony and creativity of a performance piece (Glennie et al., 2018). Playing music with others relies not only on producing harmonious sounds but also on periods of silence. Glennie et al. (2018) proposes that silence in music is a special way of listening because:

Silence in music has the potential to be the most profound sound of all that binds us together. I believe we listen to silence differently—the attention is more personal and yet binding, whereby both audience and performer change physically and mentally. Silence is the sound of the environment we are in, the canvas we are painting other sounds on. Silence engulfs the whole being. The body can present any stance whilst respecting silence as a sound, and the audience will accept the chosen stance. (p. 327)

As we can see, for Glennie et al. (2018), silence is not about absence but is a significant part of bringing to life, creating, and listening to music. I elaborate on silence in the last section of this chapter.

Both Paterson's and Glennie's perspectives on our experience and creation of music serve as wonderful reminders that learning in early childhood education, much like music, is a complex and dynamic process. It offers rich experiences and ideas for various listening processes associated with interaction, exploration, interpretation, improvisation, composition, and creation. It's interesting to consider what we could learn if the learning environments for students were designed to encourage them to immerse themselves not only in the sounds and established practices (already established compositions), but most importantly, to fully engage in the everyday life and activities (performances) of early childhood education programs.

Glennie's example helps me understand that music can be experienced and produced outside of ear-centric perspectives. We can experience and create music not only by hearing but also by reading vibrations through our other senses. By carefully sensing and listening to the vibrations created by various sources and identities, we can participate in the performance of the many actors present in educational environments. Students can learn not only by listening to

their mentors but also by reading, interpreting, and creating the “music” that is continuously performed in collaboration with children, educators, families, and the world.

Considering music as vibration, it’s important to note that the human body also vibrates during a musical experience (Eidsheim, 2015). Therefore, human bodies equally read and participate in the overall performance (Eidsheim, 2015). By viewing pre-service education as spaces of performance with many identities, we can create conditions for students to be more sensitive to the way their bodies vibrate in harmony with others and to changes in vibrational patterns. This way, they can realize that they are essentially the vibrations, not just separate from them. In other words, instead of seeing themselves as external to making meaning in the classroom, students can learn about their own various vibrational states that help to transmit and absorb, interpret, and imbue with meaning.

If we focus more on the idea that participating in the performance of daily life created in classrooms is a learning process itself, we can engage in deeper exploration of how being a part of the performance as vibrating bodies contributes to the transformation and becoming early childhood educators. Furthermore, this understanding may encourage students and educators to explore the conceptualization of collaboration in the field. If we agree with Glennie that exchange and collaboration require paying more attention to each other and providing respect and space for individual members’ interpretation of the music, this may spark further discussions on how this may look in pre-service education and what conditions need to be rethought to support students’ learning.

Listening and Postmodernism

I have explored a few perspectives on listening to and in music and the importance of prolonging training and sharpening senses to pay attention to certain components and identities

of music composition and music performance. These views are not separate from challenges associated with the hierarchical roles of music education and educators and music critique. That is why there are musicians and scholars whose work attempts to shift the current views on a more inclusive approach to how we understand the creation of music. For example, Kramer (2020), building on the French essayist, Roland Barthes's (1915-1980) idea that the creation of music doesn't solely belong to a composer, proposes that "every person creates, and is entitled to, his or her mental version of a text, based on the backlog of his or her own experiences" (p. 118). The author further adds that music creation is not an act that happens in isolation. This is a collaboration during a meeting and exchange of the previously created piece of music with the way it is performed with the knowledge and experiences of the listener as well as with everything happening in the listener's mind during the performance (Kramer, 2020). From this perspective, we are being redirected to the idea that a music piece is very different in the minds of each listener. Such postmodernist thought, or as Kramer (2020) refers to it, "postmodern musical attitude," opens a possibility of seeing and experiencing a piece like Beethoven's, composed a long time ago, as contributing to the creation of new music by being shared and understood in different times (p. 139). The creation of listening is subjected to the listener's previous experiences, memories, and emotional state or mood. As we can see, the listener is exposed to many webs of relations, possibilities, and associations they may choose or react to. In Kramer's (2020) words, listening is a complex act, and as he explains:

Postmodern thinking teaches us that we do not simply, passively receive communications. We construct the message (and even the sender!) for ourselves, using a mix of what we have heard, what we think we have heard, what we want to have heard, what we hope we did not hear, who we are, who we think the message sender is, what our

values and expectations are, what our moods and contexts are, our memories of previous interactions, etc. So, misunderstanding between two people is inevitable, no matter how clearly and painstakingly they try to communicate, no matter who they are, no matter what their relationship. This situation is unavoidable. (p. 124)

If the listener is a co-constructor or composer of music who can be affected by the multiplicity and no linearity of the moment, how can the listener be prepared for such a task? In line with Kramer (2020), the “ideal listener” must learn that they are not simply the transmitters in the chain of experiencing music. They are actually the “communicators” who must decide which traces they want to carry on to the future (p. 132).

What spaces can the various perspectives of listening to music open for preservice education in field practicums? Field practicum, similar to music, is a temporal experience when students bring their knowledge and previous experiences and synchronize them with what is unfolding in daily practices and interactions with children and educators in order to anticipate the next steps. Their experiences of meeting the intentions of educators and children are to help them to get familiar with the rhythm and beat of daily life in childcare programs. Considering that students listen in time, and their understanding takes its own time and stays with them for a longer duration, invites us to consider how students are being given opportunities for exploration, listening to, and enjoying the music created by many components and actors in their field practicum.

Field practicum’s temporal characteristics are particularly important when students learn to listen to their mentors’ intentions. Ensuring time for dialogue where listening to each other is prioritized may open possibilities for students and mentors to cultivate their sensitivity to look

for the options captured in daily childcare events, traces of previous moments, and opportunities rather than mastering simple lists of tasks and responsibilities. Even if we assume that students are the performers of their mentors' and college professors' compositions, providing the space and time where they construct in the spaces between may help us acknowledge the differences in their interpretation. However, such practice, suggested by Olsson (2023), requires "contemplation" (p. 250). Drawing on the ideas of Manning, Olsson elaborates that taking a longer time to listen carefully to children's intentions and exploration while considering responses is not only learning but also "becoming with practice" (as cited in Olsson, 2023, p. 251). She describes how, in one of the projects, educators took months to understand children's pursuits and, at the same time, gain more knowledge through study to make a decision about how children's learning can be supported. In field practicum, these practices may be promoted by students studying through careful listening to the mentors' pedagogical intentions and further contemplating their influences on children's lives.

Crossing Olsson's and Craig Wright's logic into field practicum experiences as a thought experiment will require us to start with exploring further ways students learn about the work of their mentors. From my experience, the current practices are about students observing their mentors' work and repeating it in their interactions with children. I wonder how the patterns may change if students were given the opportunity to listen carefully to the sounds present in children's environments and contemplate them for longer. What kind of music are the sounds of pedagogical intentions being created in programs for children? Are they in harmony with the surrounding physical spaces? What traces and dominant ideas are being carried to the future? What colours are being created, and what mood and character do they create? What practices are needed to help students start hearing "the sounds that are yet to be realized" (Watkins & Scott,

2012, p. 29) and present in their field practicums? How can students develop dispositions to wonder in spaces between what they create and what they want to create? How may all this look in daily practice?

Undoubtedly, all these questions may open intriguing new fields for exploration in the field practicum. This may even contribute to our thinking about pedagogy as listening to living experiences. However, listening through our own body and seeing it as one of the instruments in the performance of pedagogical music is, in particular, a view-changing idea that may shift how we see students' agency in creating everyday life in childcare programs. Such an invitation to engage students in preparation for the surroundings and environments by removing unnecessary sounds requires complete immersion through all senses in daily practices of childcare programs. Furthermore, the quest for exciting sounds may allow students to practice dispositions needed to stay longer with various sounds, including curiosity, patience and invention.

If we agree that listening takes many forms, we cannot ask students to learn only by following the mentor's interpretation as preparation for becoming sensitive to the creative processes of their future pedagogical practice. By focusing on mastering pedagogical approaches, students' learning is limited to becoming with one way of being. Students will not have opportunities to build sensitivity and curiosity to explore the multiplicity and richness of our surroundings. Furthermore, as Paterson (2006) suggests, for students in music not to learn by only describing what they see and by instrumentally mastering practices and standards, ECE students in field practicum must thoroughly lose themselves in the creative processes present in daily practices. Further following Paterson, it is not about the preciseness or mastery of the same actions but rather the development of dispositions needed to function in environments of flexibility and creativity that careful listening may provide. If we agree with Paterson that

listening is a creative process, encouraging students to reflect on their listening ability would be crucial. Like music, listening may help students identify and encounter the multiplicity of possibilities that can further be connected to students' previous experiences and knowledge gained in class and further transformed into a new combination that will be unique only to the listener. Finding a way to pay attention will not be limited, as students can divide and redirect it at any time. Through such an approach, students will not only be translators of their mentors' practices. They will have the opportunity to create and to contribute to the life that is continually taking shape in the daily classroom (Vintimilla & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2020).. If music students are recognized as creators of their own compositions through attentive listening, why are we confining early childhood education students to the repetition of established practices? This process entails navigating the tensions and insights that unfold from the intersection of mentors' ideas and the students' perspectives. It is through this interplay that possibilities arise, putting into conversations established frameworks with contemporary dispositions to foster innovation in the field. Inspired by the world of music, early childhood education could enhance and prioritize the art of listening, not just as a passive act, but as a dynamic creative process in dialogue. In doing so, the development of pedagogical practices transforms into a continuous journey, a way of being that reflects both the richness of past experiences and the vibrancy of new insights.

Preparing students for creative listening in field practicum can be easily connected to the many lessons learned from music mentioned in this chapter, especially those that generate even more questions. How can the experience of various vibrations of sounds in the classroom help students learn about pedagogical practice? How can their perceptions of the movements of daily life in the classroom help with imagining what can be possible? I'm not sure if I will be able to answer those questions. Still, it is intriguing to consider how students' learning may change if

they pay more attention to observing those movements and their directions and reflecting on their own body sensations caused by partaking in field practicum experiences. Providing students with opportunities to think with music, sounds, listening, creating, and performing may open the possibility for students to think about learning environments differently. Will such approaches help students only to develop dispositions of staying longer with ideas? Or will this create conditions for acknowledging that patience and prolonged attention to what is happening can support students in seeing “listening as a living experience”? This may be one of the conditions needed for what Cristina D. Vintimilla (2023) refers to as being able to “activate what pedagogy does” (p. 23), being able to notice moments when students and educators can bring forward their concerns in order to question practices. Listening not only to our own but also to others’ experiences may help students to focus on the role of pedagogy and its questions, which Vintimilla (2023) reminds us of:

What kind of educational worlds are being sustained? What relations are being reproduced? What subjective processes are possible and what are impossible to imagine? What inheritances and histories does early childhood education engage with? And what possibilities are available, or not, to reconfigure life’s configurations? (p. 23)

Vintimilla (2023) further elaborates that these questions stem from our relationship with the world. In my perspective, how students construct and uncover their understandings of their relations with the world requires them to gain particular sensitivities to sounds that overpower other logic.

Seeing the collaboration of mentors, students, and children similar to the performance of an orchestra may help us revisit how we collaborate and interact with each other. Instead of seeing students as less knowledgeable and needing their practices to be evaluated against

standards, this may help us pay more attention to how educators and students support each other with the processes of interpretation, experimentation, and invention of their interactions with children and their families. Furthermore, the idea that music is created in the minds of the listener can help us develop conditions for seeing students' performances as contributing to our understanding and moments of provocation. This may further invite us to explore the role of silence in field practicum. How is silence used in students' learning? Is this only about seeing and listening to moments of withdrawal, or as students often describe, lack of initiative; or is student silence seen as a unique approach to listening? How do mentors listen to a student's silence? What sounds does silence make in the experiences of field practicum? How much of silence is a choice of a student, and how much of this is stance?

Olsson (2023) reminds us that listening, or rather the pedagogy of listening as described by Carlina Rinaldi (2001), is a very familiar practice to early childhood educators. The underpinning roots of the practice are associated with the attempt to include children's voices in the pedagogical discussions of things that affect them directly . She also points out that the art of listening in ECE is "the very starting point of the educational endeavour, and yet adults are often quite bad at it" (2023, p. 229). Therefore, I hope my provocations inspired by musicians and scholars interested in music can open further discussions about how listening is closely related to creating pedagogy in field practicum or, instead, how students are being prepared for creating pedagogy in field practicum.

Kramer's (2020) suggestion that music is not created in isolation helps me think of how students may see themselves and how we see them while creating pedagogy. Let's consider field practicum the meeting place of educators' previously created approaches. The educators' responses and everything that students bring can make us think that each student's differences

require different responses. This also calls for encouraging students to reflect on their previously gained experiences, memories, and emotional states while exploring the various associations between ideas and events happening daily with children. Suppose students can be challenged with the idea that they are not simply the receivers of knowledge and information but need to construct it through active listening. In that case, we may open a condition for students not only to check what they learn but also to point to directions for further exploration. This may be particularly important in early childhood education, as pedagogy introduced in the Canadian context is associated with certain historical connotations that must be deconstructed to motivate constant revisitation, undoing, and creating (Vintimilla & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2020).

Silence: Giving Voice to Multiple Meaning

Exploring the various roles and connections that listening plays in our lives has deepened my understanding of the complex dynamics of dialogue. As discussed earlier, the collective spaces that dialogue creates allow for a deeper exploration of our relationships, which can significantly impact and shape the conditions within the field of early childhood education. By incorporating the processes of listening into preservice education, we can uncover many unexplored areas related to rich encounters and collective experiences, including differences, uncertainties, improvisations, and creativity that work together as a unified whole. In this section, I delve into another crucial aspect of dialogue, silence. Often overlooked in a neoliberal context and associated with the interruption of productive sounds, silence can also be viewed as a form of resistance. This is because silence has the power to give voice and change meanings.

As already mentioned in this dissertation, silence is a unique way of listening and an essential ingredient of dialogue. Bernard Dauenhauer (1980), in his book *Silence: The Phenomenon and Its Ontological Significance*, argues that silence is a complex experience that

requires a careful approach to what can be noticed and the hidden meanings it may represent. He invites us to consider silence not as the absence of sound, voice, or any other being but rather as a presence or time for establishing an identity. For the author, silence is always associated with a discourse. The use of silence plays a crucial role in any speech, as it adds depth and meaning to it. It serves as a natural break between words, phrases, and sentences and helps to demarcate the boundaries of a conversation. This, in turn, gives a clear identity to the exchange and allows for effective communication. The periods of silence are necessary for speech and dialogue, to ensure rhythm and flow. Dauenhauer (1980) proposes a few ways of connecting silence and discourse: intervening, before and after, and deep silence. Intervening silence is “the occurrence of silence or sequence occurrence or sequence of occurrences of silence” that bring meaning to our discussions, and as he further explains,

...intervening silences punctuate those components—word phrases, musical notes, gestures, painted or sculpted shapes, etc.—which belong to an utterance taken as a whole.
(n.p.)

In other words, intervening silences are about organizational spaces necessary for identity to become explicit, visible, and intelligible. Dauenhauer (1980) suggests that the placement, duration, and frequency of intervening silences are “just as important to the dramatic, if not to the lexical, sense of a story as the appropriately proportioned length, internal balance, etc., of the sound phrases” (n.p.). This points out the significance of paying attention to silences in the overall experiences of interactions between identities.

Silence also gives a way to presence in a discourse through the intervals of “before and after silence” (Dauenhauer, 1980, n.p.). As the name suggests, there are all the occurrences that happen just before and after the quiet periods: the pauses that open or give ways to or close

words, sentences, and dialogues. According to the author, these periods of before and after have similar functions to intervening silences between sounds and voices. They give meaning and create the urgency that they need to be listened to. Therefore, they constitute discourses (provide boundaries for meaning) in the same way as the intervening silences that give the identity and forms to words, syllabi, and sentences. In the discourse about the phenomenon known as “deep silence,” Dauenhauer (1980) proposes that these exceptional instances, be they during spiritual contemplation or intimate connections, can foster fresh encounters and prospects in our existence. They offer us the chance to keenly await a novel arrival or presence.

For me, Dauenhauer’s discussion about the characteristics of silence, in particular, is interesting and quite relevant to the early childhood education field. He proposes that silence is often not a matter of choice but rather a force beyond our control that we have little power over. This may be the reason why he highlights words like “performance,” “mitigated autonomy,” or “yielding,” and he describes the characteristics as follows:

- (1) silence is an active human performance which always appears in connection with an utterance,
- (2) silence is never an act of unmitigated autonomy. Rather,
- (3) silence involves a yielding following upon an awareness of finitude and awe. The yielding involved in silence is peculiar inasmuch as
- (4) it is a yielding which binds and joins. (1980, n.p.)

As we can see from Dauenhauer, silence is like speaking alive, an activity that falls under cultural influences. Furthermore, the characteristics suggest that silence is an opportunity for us to work through these deeply embedded influences and open ourselves to other logic, other

significance and something outside our comprehension, something that helps us to look to other possibilities. The term “yielding” made me think that accepting silence is a form of compliance within active participation. In the words of Dauenhauer (1980),

It is a yielding which is experienced as motivated by finitude and awe. In performing silence one acknowledges some center of significance of which he is not the source, a center to be wondered at, to be in awe of. The very doing of silence is the acknowledgment of the agent's finitude and of the awesomeness of that of which he is not the source. But correlatively, the agent is aware that the doing of silence opens him to meet that which lies beyond his control. This other reaches the agent only through the agent's yielding. (n.p.)

Even though such description is associated with religious or deeply spiritual traditions, I believe that it opens a space for us to think about how silence may help with making sense of things we are often not able to express in words, things that are indescribable or unspeakable. In other words, this is a space for us to engage in ‘dialogue without language’ or ‘dialogue outside of our language’.

What can we learn about field practicum when concentrating on silence? How is silence represented, and what can silence represent in students' learning? What silence brings to existence when students are asked to fulfill duties without verbal interactions, sit quietly with children and mentors who don't have an answer during dialogue, or submit empty spaces in a journal, missing parts on their assignments. Do their planning notes, intentions, or reflections that include gaps constitute forms of silence? If silence is a complex phenomenon that brings meaning to discourses, those frequent moments mentioned above should be seen as overall experiences in field practicum and included in the processes of creating meaning or questioning

practices as they represent deeper exploration or wonderings in new possibilities. Especially the capturing of silence in writing students' reflections should be further researched and explored due to our focus on what students make visible through writing or discussions.

I wonder how our practices will change if, instead of seeing students as purposefully omitting writing about certain situations in their journal (moments of silence) due to a fear of being misunderstood, we invite the opportunity to further discuss what this may help us to understand. If intervening silences are equally important to the overall experience, seeing them as part of learning processes may help students and mentors bring to presence the most important identities, like values, relationships, subjectivity, and so on. Considering and providing support to students, especially before and after the moments of silence, may open further possibilities of exploring and maybe pushing the boundaries of some of the already established meanings and discourses.

Dauenhauer's (1980) characteristics of silence are another invitation for us to rethink how students may write and discuss and further develop dispositions needed to utilize silence to strengthen their understandings and pedagogical relationships. Being able to actively participate in the processes of silence entangled in otherness that requires wonderings may help us to break through some of the already established limitations to learning and pedagogy in early childhood education. Most importantly, this may help us rethink relationships with children and families built on notions of human-centric conceptualizations, power relations, or neoliberal ideologies (Vintimilla, 2023). Would silence be the space for students to explore what Vintimilla (2023) refers to as "speculative envisioning" (p. 23)? The moments of being able to explore the presence of what can be possible in pedagogical practices of early childhood educators. Drawing on the work of Badiou, Vintimilla (2023) describes her work with educators as attempts "to insert

something into the present (and its ongoingness)—in between what is and what might be” (p. 23) in order to shift the present limitation of commonly used discourses in early childhood education. Would silence, therefore, be a part of the processes that enable educators and students to create and act in educational worlds?

If we agree with Dauenhauer and Vintimilla, the carefully intervening silences may help create conditions to give new meaning, interrupt discourses, or help bring attention to things that we need to start listening to. As Dauenhauer (1980) points out, “silence is that on which all discourse depends for its very being as discourse” (n.p).

Thinking about the concept of silence through Dauenhauer’s perspective, I was also reminded of the work of Spyros Spyrou on researching children’s silences. Spyrou (2016) describes that their lessons about silence were captured within the research processes. In the author's own words:

What gets said in research, what remains silent and why? How do particular institutional contexts help produce particular silences in children’s voices? What discourses inform children’s voiced utterances and silences? And, how are we, as researchers, implicated in the production of children’s silences directly during the research encounter and indirectly through our interpretation and reporting of children’s voices? (pp. 18–19)

The same questions can be posed in field practicum in our work with students and mentors. I’m also optimistic they will become an excellent point of further discourse and dialogues. However, following Dauenhauer’s logic, the idea here is not only to be implicated in the interpretation and reporting of children’s or students’ voices captured in their silences but also to approach field practicum as being on one of the pathways to becoming an early childhood educator; and further

to be *en route* is not to have a clear cut destination that one might miss or attain. To be *en route* is to dwell in and tend the path itself. The only way to fail to be *en route*, a way that itself entails a recognition of being *en route*, is to insist upon having a destination. (Dauenhauer, 1980, n.p.)

Similarities and Differences or Conditions Dialogue may Create in Preservice Early Childhood Education

I have explored in this chapter propositions of dialogue that may inform our decisions and policies related to preservice educators learning in field practicum. This section draws on the work of many thinkers and scholars, including Plato, Evelyn Glennie, Jonathan D. Kramer and Bernard Dauenhauer. In this chapter, Platonic dialogue serves as a reminder that dialogues in field practicums may help students and mentors engage deeper in an exploration of pedagogy. Discussions, analysis, and questioning practices may help students and mentors wonder and innovate with new possibilities. If we agree that dialogue is a form of “higher study,” introducing it in field practicum may help the field to recognize that becoming an educator is also about participating in intellectual journeys with others.

Learning from music points out to considering communication and listening as the creative processes of those who listen. Acknowledging the complexity and relationships between the web of identities that influence how we think creates an open space for rethinking the richness captured in the experiences and environments available to us. Lastly, Dauenhauer’s (1980) conceptualization of silence emphasizes the significance of pausing, listening, and reflecting, to challenge the limitations imposed by certain discourses.

In conclusion, I’m not looking into replacing current practices and definitions of dialogue with new ideas and perspectives but rather to start a conversation on the multiplicity of conditions we

can choose from when organizing and supporting students in their journey of becoming early childhood educators.

Chapter 6: Lingering Insights: Addressing Research Questions and Propositions

In the previous chapters, I have explored various neoliberal narratives that influence preservice early childhood education, particularly emphasizing the significant shift towards standardization and professionalization. This dominant paradigm often restricts students to the role of efficient practitioners, thereby limiting their becoming into educators capable of re-examining and confronting the intricate complexities inherent in the diverse needs and contexts of both educators and students, as well as the complex nature of early childhood education. I have argued that an emphasis on instrumental skills and uniformity within current preservice programs risks limiting creativity and intellectual exploration, ultimately undermining the depth of pedagogical quests and pursuits and constraining the formation of professional identity among future educators.

To counter these detrimental discourses, I advocate for a reconceptualization of the field practicum education. Specifically, I propose the creation of a practicum that emphasizes the interplay of three dimensions: hospitality, time, and dialogue. My research underscores how this interplay can serve as a vital arena for fostering vibrant intellectual encounters among educators, ultimately leading to a more profound engagement with the complexities inherent in pedagogical encounters. By fostering a radical dialogue surrounding these critical elements, I seek to inspire multiple pathways for preservice education that actively and critically challenge established practices, paving the way for new opportunities for exploration and creativity. This work not only seeks to challenge the prevailing narrative of standardization and professionalization but also underscores the rich potential embedded in relational, dialogical, and temporal dimensions in shaping the next generation of early childhood educators.

In concluding this dissertation, I engage with the key themes that have emerged from my exploration of field practicum, presenting this final chapter as both a summary and a call to critically reconsider the prevailing narratives that shape these experiences.

My reflections in this chapter are organized around two movements: One considers the **conditions** for creating engaging pedagogical encounters and the other offers **propositions** as invitations for continue thinking about practicum and the education of future educators.

I articulate the fundamental conditions necessary to foster an environment that encourages dynamic and enriching experiences for educators, as these are crucial not only for the flourishing of early childhood education but also for cultivating a sensitivity to intellectual exploration. By outlining these conditions, I lay the groundwork for reimagining the landscape of practicum experiences.

Furthermore, I introduce several propositions aimed at stimulating conversation about the future of preservice education and field practicums for early childhood education students in Canada.

Through this elaboration on the necessary conditions that can enhance field practicum experiences, I prepare readers to envision a more promising future for the field, advocating for a collective embrace of a paradigm shift in our perception of field practicum.

This shift requires moving beyond the reductive view of early childhood education as merely a service and recognizing it instead as a rich and intricate tapestry that warrants serious engagement and thoughtful consideration. Ultimately, I emphasize the significance of understanding the journey of becoming an educator as a dynamic and multifaceted experience, one that is intellectually stimulating, ethically resonant, and aesthetically enriching.

Since I propose conceptualizing field practicum as a pedagogical encounter, it's crucial to acknowledge that within the Canadian landscape, the concept of "pedagogy" remains a contested

and evolving notion. The Ontario Ministry of Education (2014) frames it as an inquiry into learning dynamics and teaching philosophies, while the British Columbia Ministry (2019) emphasizes exploration and creativity as foundational to pedagogical practice. Both perspectives acknowledge dialogue as a critical thread, interweaving diverse voices and perspectives to challenge established norms and envision new pedagogical spaces for exploration. Vintimilla (2020) critiques the confinement of pedagogy to a singular definition, advocating for its embrace as a complex, indeterminate field of inquiry. This perspective encourages me to extend an invitation to educators and students to cultivate a responsive, generative, and collaborative approach, one that goes beyond standardization and embraces the intricate interplay between theory and practice. In this dissertation, therefore, I adopt this multifaceted understanding of pedagogy to promote a more ethical and innovative approach to early childhood education that aligns with the complexities involved in preparing future educators.

Conditions

In my exploration of the concepts and ideas presented in the previous chapters, I have identified several interconnected conditions that are necessary for fostering environments favourable to engaging and intellectually vibrant interactions among educators. As previously noted, these conditions draw on the potential woven within the relational, dialogical, and temporal dimensions, thereby resonating with my research questions 1 and 3. The first of these conditions is rooted in the philosophies of Levinas and Derrida, as discussed in Chapter 3. Their ideas have prompted me to emphasize the significance of an **ethical obligation to acknowledge and embrace the alterity of the Other**, recognizing the inherent unknowns and uncertainties that accompany this engagement. Levinas (1985) suggests an ethical obligation that calls educators to engage authentically with the Other, asserting that genuine understanding transcends

the boundaries of fixed identities and requires an embrace of the fluidity and multiplicity of existence. This perspective necessitates a profound reconsideration of how pedagogical encounters are seen, revealing the importance of an ethical stance that acknowledges the complexity of individual identities in educational environments.

Derrida (2000) further complicates this idea by framing hospitality as a paradoxical principle, one that exists within a “double bind” where the definitions of host and guest become blurred (p. 12). The requirement to welcome the student as an Other is thereby situated within a web of contextual ambiguity, where the roles of those involved in the educational process are not clearly defined. This dynamic may call for educators to engage in critical reflection on the power relationships at play within field practicum, ultimately challenging the very structures that define who is considered an insider or an outsider within educational settings. As such, the project of preparing future educators necessitates a deeper engagement with the ethical dimensions of their practice, as well as an acknowledgment of the rich, diverse experiences that students bring into the pedagogical space.

Furthermore, in seeking to cultivate a more inclusive pedagogical approach, it becomes vital to engage with and reinterpret the aims of early childhood preservice education within a broader context of diverse perspectives and experiences. The notion suggests that such programs should consider equipping future educators not only with theoretical knowledge but also with practical skills that facilitate pedagogical practices. This understanding requires a significant reorientation of current field practicums, emphasizing the necessity of cultivating a welcoming attitude towards the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of students. In doing so, it may become important for educators to be equipped to create both physical and metaphorical spaces that embrace the multiplicity of student experiences and identities. This necessitates a

fundamental reorientation of pedagogical encounters, emphasizing the cultivation of sensitivity towards authentic openness and responsiveness to the unfamiliar and diverse. Consequently, this approach may promote inclusivity and affirmation within practicum.

Therefore, field practicums, through this condition, has the potential to be reconceptualized as dynamic arenas for the cultivation of complex and diverse pedagogical encounters, rather than mere venues for the application of skills and completion of tasks. By equally prioritizing theoretical knowledge alongside practical methodologies, preservice educators can learn to appreciate the uniqueness of each student as an asset rather than a challenge. Such practices may foster an appreciation for student experiences as essential elements that enrich classroom culture, promoting dialogue, respect, and a collective commitment to understanding the diverse narratives that students bring with them. This proactive shift within the preservice educational paradigm has the potential to create early childhood education settings that are not only welcoming but also transformative, paving the way for a more equitable and enriched landscape of becoming that honors every child's narrative.

From this perspective, the act of welcoming transcends our understanding of hospitality; it transforms into a profound act of deconstruction. Through this lens, welcoming is understood as the dismantling of preconceived narratives and existing power dynamics that dictate the boundaries of who belongs and who is seen as belong to the margins. It requires an acknowledgment of subjective multiplicity and an active challenge to the dominance of singular truths, advocating for an agonistic understanding of educational practices within the field. This engagement calls upon educators to embrace a more fluid conception of their roles and responsibilities, inviting a critical examination of the complexities of pedagogical encounters. Thus, the practice of welcoming emerges as an ongoing, reflexive commitment to openness in

educational contexts. This commitment cultivates an environment where encounters with the Other are not only welcomed but are also viewed as opportunities for transformation and growth for both students and educators alike. It invites a continual questioning of the boundaries imposed by fixed categories, promoting a radical reimagining of how we can ethically and pedagogically engage with the multifaceted challenges and realities inherent to educational practice. In fostering this openness, educators are encouraged to embrace a nuanced exploration of pedagogical contexts, thereby reinforcing the transformative potential of these engagements and compelling a reconsideration of our approaches and understandings in the pursuit of more inclusive and dynamic field practicum experiences.

The second essential condition for nurturing intellectual encounters among educators involves the ongoing **creation, shaping, and reshaping of collective spaces and meaningful time**. This condition, much like the others, not only focuses on nurturing intellectual encounters but also harnesses the transformative potential of dialogue, time, and hospitality in reimagining the preparation of future educators. Consequently, it resonates deeply with my third research question, highlighting the fluidity and interconnectedness of these concepts. Drawing from the field of music, as discussed in Chapter 5, I have noticed the important connection between dialogue and listening. This connection reveals not only the reliance between sound, thought, and experience but also a landscape filled with complexity, formed by the interplay of time, intention, and interpretation. In this context, the insights from Margulis (2018), Del Nevo (2017), Watkins & Scott (2012), and Wright (2004) prompt me to rethink the roles of educators and students, urging me to see them not merely as passive listeners but as active participants in a shared pedagogical conversation. These collective spaces are more than just physical locations; they are dynamic environments where creativity, collaboration, and intellectual encounters may

thrive. Within these spaces, students and educators are encouraged to engage deeply with one another, experiment with ideas, and cultivate a sensitivity that explores new possibilities while pushing the limits of existing practices.

From this perspective, we are prompted to consider practicum experiences where the principles of musical composition metaphorically inform pedagogical encounters. In this setting, each student adds a unique voice, creating a collective symphony of perspectives that enhances their becoming. As students navigate the complexities of pedagogical encounters, they have the opportunity to reflect on their practicum experiences, similar to musicians interpreting a piece of music. It is in these moments that improvisation and spontaneity become crucial elements of meaningful engagement.

By fostering collective spaces, we create a vibrant tapestry of exchange in which listening to each other becomes an art form, much like music itself. This artistic practice nurtures the processes of shaping both personal and communal identities. This endeavor may allow us to move beyond individualism, embracing a shared journey that deepens our understanding of what it means to learn and create together. Ultimately, this exploration highlights the importance of collective spaces that go beyond mere gatherings; these spaces embody the core of connection, collaboration, and intellectual engagement. Thus, one might wonder how we can successfully create environments where students truly thrive in the complexity of their shared placement experiences. What might this new landscape look like if it flourishes with creativity and reflects the rhythm of shared understanding?

Moreover, emphasizing the creation, shaping, and continual reconfiguration of collective spaces invites us to reflect on how the experiences of students, as they prepare to become educators, are intricately woven into their interconnected narratives. This perspective opens up

new avenues for redefining and transforming the ways in which students and educators conceptualize their roles and the fluidity of time within this context. Such an approach may suggest that the path to becoming an educator is not solely an individualistic venture but rather a shared journey. It may compel both students and educators to see themselves as creators who are responsible for nurturing environments that embrace inclusivity, where every voice is acknowledged, valued, and understood. Adopting this hospitable stance demands a critical reassessment of their roles, highlighting the necessity for educators to acknowledge their relational interconnectedness and the ethical implications that arise from all forms of engagement.

By understanding time as something beyond just a commodity to be optimized, educator preparation programs can transform the way we see our collective endeavors. By emphasizing “meaningful time,” field practicum moments can encourage future educators to prioritize building connections rather than merely mastering skills. This shift can lead to deeper relationships with students, families, and colleagues, fostering a sense of community that is crucial for holistic education. To support this effort, programs can include opportunities that underline the importance of building these relationships, helping preservice educators see themselves not just as knowledge transmitters but as facilitators of meaningful interactions. By redefining time as a resource for reflection and depth, field practicum can promote approaches that value slower, more thoughtful learning.

In other words, recognizing that individual temporal experiences are interconnected with those of others encourages a more collaborative and communal approach to pedagogy. When educators acknowledge this interconnectedness, they can cultivate supportive environments that prioritize empathy, understanding, and shared invention. This awareness highlights that the

journey of preservice educators is a collective undertaking, situated within a shared temporal context that unites educators, students, and communities. Ultimately, this insight can lead to transformative practices that enhance both the field of early childhood education and the pedagogical experiences of children. By creating educational spaces that embrace compassionate engagement and the diverse possibilities inherent in human existence, preservice educators can contribute to a more inclusive and dynamic early childhood education that equips all learners for the complexities of the world around them.

The exploration of ideas and concepts, particularly through the views of Derrida (2000, 2002, 2005), Biesta (2010, 2017), and Di Paolantonio (2019a, 2019b), has encouraged me to highlight the critical importance of **embracing uncertainty and ambiguity** as the next conditions necessary for fostering dynamic intellectual engagement. My discussion underscores that field practicum transcends its role as a simple locus for the acquisition of pragmatic pedagogical skills. Instead, it emerges as a dynamic space for transformative encounters that reshape the identities of both educators and students. The encounters with the uncertainty and ambiguity that each participant brings to these placements serves as a pivotal force for deconstructing ingrained narratives and power structures. This engagement emphasizes the fluidity of meaning, challenging rigid interpretations and advocating for a multiplicity of views. Such openness to ambiguity permits the exploration of voices historically marginalized, thereby facilitating a more democratic interaction with knowledge.

Aligning with Di Paolantonio's (2019b) assertions regarding adaptability, I have found that flexibility in the face of unpredictability is extremely important for educators operating in this complex landscape. This adaptability emphasizes the postmodern understanding that knowledge is not static but constantly evolving. By accepting uncertainty, we reimagine what it

means to educate and to be educated, thus opening pathways for profound intellectual engagement. This invites a critical examination of how we can reconceptualize our approach to welcoming and addressing uncertainty and ambiguity within our practicum settings. It also explores what is needed to position these dispositions as fundamental components of our pedagogical narratives rather than as superficial explanations. What transformations are necessary for early childhood education to fully embrace these elements as inherent to our pedagogical discourse? Moreover, embracing uncertainty and ambiguity may become integral to cultivating dialogue that fosters diverse relationships within practicum settings. This raises pressing questions about how prospective educators can be equipped to engage in authentic, responsive exchanges with children, families, and colleagues. It highlights the necessity of cultivating a sensitivity that enables the creation of learning environments where diverse voices are not just acknowledged but actively woven into the fabric of pedagogical decision-making. Through meaningful dialogic practices, we might cultivate more profound connections, opening spaces for the rich sharing of varied experiences and perspectives. Recognizing and valuing the distinct contributions of early childhood education students within pedagogical dialogue can open discussions that navigate the spaces between established knowledge systems and innovative thought. Such recognition may not only deepen the richness of our discursive practices but also stimulate a culture of inquiry that is committed to responsiveness. The dynamic interplay between embracing uncertainty and ambiguity while engaging with established knowledge frameworks may invite students and educators to critically interrogate their pedagogical commitments, all while remaining open to alternative practices. Navigating these complexities may provoke a reconsideration of prevailing norms and regulatory frameworks that can limit creative engagement, allowing students to reimagine their pedagogical approaches in ways that

resonate more authentically with the diverse needs of all learners within their educational contexts.

The reconceptualization of preservice education through embracing uncertainty and ambiguity regarding the conceptualization of time carries further profound implications. By recognizing themselves as temporal beings who both shape and are shaped by the intricate interplay of past, present, and future in their pedagogical practices, educators and students can cultivate a richer understanding of the pedagogical encounter as a space for exploring possibilities and alternatives. This perspective underscores not only the mastery of academic content and skills but also the significance of relational dynamics and contextual factors that influence deeper educational thinking beyond current learning experiences. By grounding their pedagogical philosophies and commitments in the concept of temporality, preservice educators may be better equipped to respond to the diverse needs of all members within their community. This approach may inspire educators to craft a narrative of possibility that promotes dialogue and creativity, not only for themselves but also for their communities. Furthermore, situating the experiences of preservice educators within a temporal context enables them to develop a nuanced appreciation for the complexities of their profession. They can gain insight into how their choices, whether in interactions with children and families, classroom experiences, or community engagement, carry implications that extend beyond the immediate context, influencing long-term possibilities and well-being for everyone involved.

The concluding condition, I wish to emphasize is the importance to **prioritize inquiry and exploration over the stringent structures of conformity**. While I chose to focus primarily on hospitality and dialogue, the invitation extends to the potential that time can offer in this context. Emphasizing inquiry and exploration over conformity is important because it challenges

dominant ideas that often shape our understanding of knowledge. This approach may encourage students and educators to question established norms and explore new perspectives, allowing for a richer and more diverse understanding of complex issues. As I delve deeper into the necessity of prioritizing inquiry and exploration in early childhood education, I find myself increasingly aware of the emerging conditions required to create an environment that transcends the rigid structures of conformity. It becomes evident that to foster genuine intellectual engagement among educators and students alike, we must actively dismantle the conventional frameworks that have historically stifled creativity and innovation in our educational practices. I would like to suggest here that this project is not merely an academic exercise; it is a profound call to rethink how we structure the pedagogical forms and processes for preparing students for their role of an educator, moving away from compliance-driven models toward a more fluid and exploratory approach.

At the heart of this reimagining lies the concept of unconditional hospitality, an idea that invites educators to embrace not just the differences among students but also the diverse inquiries that those differences foster. By cultivating a culture of inquiry, we create spaces where questions are welcomed, curiosity is encouraged, and authentic dialogue can flourish. This welcoming extends to recognizing that the richness of educational encounters is enhanced by the unique backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives that each individual brings into the learning environment. It requires us to let go of preconceived notions about what constitutes valid knowledge and to embrace a broader spectrum of understanding that prioritizes exploration over prescriptive answers.

In navigating the complex landscape of education, particularly in field practicum, I recognize that the struggle against the forces of conditional hospitality is not simply a matter of

pedagogy but embodies deeper philosophical tensions. Educators must continually assess the norms they adhere to, questioning whether these norms serve to confine or liberate their pedagogical practices. By fostering an atmosphere rooted in inquiry, we enable students to become active participants in their own learning processes, unsettling regulatory frameworks that prioritize adherence over creativity. This transformation is important for generating a vibrant educational culture where ideas can circulate freely, and collaborative exploration becomes the norm.

Moreover, I am increasingly convinced that the conditions necessary for prioritizing inquiry and exploration must include a commitment to co-reflection and shared experiences among educators and students. The dynamic interactions that occur in practicum settings should not only reveal pedagogical application but also provide opportunities for collective wondering. As we engage with one another through dialogues reminiscent of Plato's philosophical exchanges, we challenge ourselves to examine the assumptions underlying our practices critically and to embrace the uncertainty that comes with exploring unfamiliar territory. In doing so, we cultivate a sense of community that celebrates intellectual risk-taking and the unforeseen nature of discovery.

This shift towards inquiry-oriented practices also necessitates an acknowledgment of the power dynamics that exist within practicum settings. It calls for a reimagining of the educator's role from that of a mere dispenser of knowledge to a co-creator of dialogue and inquiry. Such a paradigm recognizes that knowledge is not static but is co-constructed through relationship-building and mutual exploration. This transition invites educators to position themselves alongside their students as co-inquirers, where pedagogy becomes intertwined with becoming, blurring the lines that often separate the two. Ultimately, the commitment to prioritizing inquiry

and exploration over structures of conformity calls for a transformative shift in how we understand the preparation of future educators itself. It gestures us to embrace a holistic view of learning, one that not only acknowledges the multiplicity of voices and experiences but also celebrates the rich tapestry of curiosity and creativity that emerges when we dare to ask questions and explore together. In this evolving narrative, I am called to advocate for placement environments that honor the complexities of human experience, fostering a culture of inquiry that invigorates the journey of becoming an educator.

Propositions

In conclusion, I propose four key propositions: becoming pedagogues, shifting and opening new inquiries, creating more space and time for intellectual work, and rethinking our approach to ethics. By choosing these four directions, I intend to propose the creation of conditions for becoming more sensitive to the many justice issues we encounter daily in the early childhood education field due to neoliberal ideology. These propositions further aspire to open horizons rather than narrow them through restricted standards and limited ways of thinking. I hope that my propositions will not replace, but rather serve as provocations to engage in an exploratory discussion on what the preservice education and field practicums may look like for early childhood education students in today's time in Canada.

Proposition 1: Becoming Pedagogues

I propose that the field not only focus on the overall preservice early childhood education as the provision of time to acquire standards, knowledge, and skills mastery but also align itself with opportunities for students to actively shape their path toward becoming pedagogues. This will require work that goes beyond being fluent in the established norms that have defined the field of early childhood education in Canada. It involves thinking outside the established

approaches such as implementing specific aspects of the Reggio Emilia approach, engaging in developmentally appropriate activities, incorporating practices related to the science of brain development, and emphasizing documents like *How Does Learning Happen?* (2014) that set the standards for preservice education. Instead, I am alluding to Liselott Olsson's (2023) concept that "becoming a pedagogue is about paying attention to the long evolutionary time – the ongoing and seamless duration and transition from past to present and future – that changes us and the world" (p. 225). I believe that orienting educators, mentors, and students in this way, due to the shift in how we perceive the world around us, may contribute to reconceptualizing conditions in practicum and preservice education. I am referring here to conditions related to the transitions of educators within the context of the dynamic interplay between changes (or rather, the lack of it) in the environment (social, political, and physical) and how those conditions may contribute to the continuous transformation of the field of early childhood education. I am curious about the potential for navigating and thriving in early childhood education environments characterized by ongoing change, shaped not by rigid concepts, but by evolving truths. What I'm considering here is the notion that our understanding of the world around us is not static; it evolves over time as new information, perspectives, and encounters emerge. This invites us to acknowledge that what we regard as "true" today may be revised or even overturned in the future as we acquire greater knowledge and insights. In light of this perspective, I believe it is essential to pay close attention to how we nurture the intellectual explorations, questioning, and pursuits of both students and educators. In essence, the concept of evolving truth underscores the dynamic nature of knowledge and the importance of remaining open, curious, and skeptical toward new evidence and ideas. Therefore, it is intriguing to consider how we can cultivate students' dispositions regarding their roles in navigating ambiguity, change, evolving truths, and

the importance of acknowledging multiple and competing perspectives during interpretations and encounters with Others.

Olsson (2023) explains that embracing change in life involves recognizing the importance of long evolutionary times and seamless transitions. This requires paying attention to differences, transformations, and shifts within ourselves, others, and the world.

Change serves as a fundamental dynamic in the ongoing creation of existence on earth, intricately influencing our perceptions, actions, and memories. It is through the lens of change that we see our thoughts and determination interplay, fostering the emergence of the new. In engaging with Olson's provocation, one might inquire: if change is inherently prevalent and woven into the fabric of our lives, why does it manifest so infrequently within the realm of early childhood education? This raises questions about the dominant narratives that prioritize standardization and uniformity, potentially blinding us to the subtle, nuanced shifts that occur in learning environments. The prevailing focus on fixed categories may diminish our sensitivity to the rich, varied experiences of change that are crucial for becoming, suggesting that our understanding and engagement with change need to be rethought and recontextualized.

Becoming a pedagogue is an ongoing process, even after completing the preparatory program and experiencing life-altering effects (Olsson, 2023). In proposing a focus on becoming pedagogues, as described by Olsson, I aim to expand the emphasis to include the significance of embracing change associated with hospitality, thinking with time and temporality, and dialogue as explored in this dissertation. The goal is to promote the destabilization of the influence of neoliberal ideology linked with the limitations of the current conceptualization of early childhood educators and their ways of relating to students, each other, and the world. Emphasizing attention to long evolutionary times through hospitality, time and dialogue

necessitates reasoning of complexity, interdependency, unpredictability, and variation. This encourages the consideration that events and beings are not merely a sum of various parts and components, but rather dynamic and ever-changing entities, including students and mentors. Therefore, such condition may help with realization that interacting with the world around us by clearly drawing lines and defining things, practices, and thinking in reference to how they align with dominant ideas, certain privileges, and powers limits our potential for becoming the individuals we wish to become.

I wonder, therefore, how students' actions and thinking about their responsibility to others and the world would shift if they had the opportunity during their field practicum to focus on becoming without clear boundaries between the past, present, and future, and within the generative tensions that exist in constraints and possibilities of a teaching body. Not concentrating on managing time or being managed by time, but rather, as discussed in Chapter 4, paying attention to life as it unfolds to us and how we experience it may contribute to their transformation. Thinking with long evolutionary time requires a logic and consideration of seamless transitions, co-evolutions, relationships, therefore, focusing on encounters with Others. Viewing encounters with each student as a future educator who will carry forward understandings and dispositions could change the way we see students in the field. Therefore, extending hospitality to students, as discussed in Chapter 3, where the ideas, discourses and ways of thinking and being of students and mentors are constantly being shaped and reshaped by questioning and reconceptualizing their own thinking and understanding as they encounter situations and Others. This, however, requires focus on a dialogue as the opportunity for exploration and embracing differences, building relations, and deeply engaging in the overall transformation of the field and all its members. This also requires inviting dialogue, as discussed

in Chapter 5, as a way of giving voice to the changes and newness during pedagogical encounters.

Our actions today will significantly influence the future of our field. The experiences and becoming of students will determine the direction and evolution of the profession. Neglecting to pay attention to gradual changes in daily practices and the opportunities to enhance students' openness and sensitivity to diversity, radical thinking, and shifts raises questions about the autonomy and freedom the field is willing to give up when orienting students solely around standards and dominant truths. Furthermore, standards preserve the notion that meaning is fixed and rarely open to change and interpretation. I am intrigued by the potential impact of enabling students in their journey of shaping and enriching early childhood education by alluding to change caused by hospitality, time, and dialogue.

Proposition 2: Inquiries

I propose that the early childhood education field consider restructuring its pre-service education by rethinking, reorganizing, and reorienting its inquiries. Biesta (2019), in his discussion on the relationship between education and society, points out that we tend to view this important relationship from a single perspective, asking only one question: "What kind of school does society need" (p. 664). He suggests that reframing the question to "What kind of society does the school actually need" could change our thinking and lead to new possibilities (2019, p. 664). Following the same logic, and considering what I have offered in previous chapters, I encourage the early childhood education community to ask not only how to best prepare students for the job market, but also how to cultivate welcoming spaces for dialogue. Spaces where educators' identities are shaped and reshaped through individual and collective exploration of meaningful educational possibilities. By focusing on exploring possibilities and challenging the current "there is no alternative" approach, as described by Peter Moss (Pacini-Ketchabaw &

Moss, 2020, p. 99), our efforts can become more relevant and meaningful. Moss uses the phrase “there is no alternative” to criticize the prevailing neoliberal narrative in early childhood education. This critique challenges the notion that the free market is the only viable option in today’s world. Our explorations could gain even more significance if we focus our inquiries on challenging the deeply rooted “there is no alternative” mindset in our practice, as described by Peter Moss (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Moss, 2020, p. 99). For instance, asking how pre-service early childhood education can help challenge the dominant neoliberal discourses that constrain teaching and our interactions with children and their families can lead to an examination of the impact of viewing students as consumers of knowledge and early childhood education as a service. Exploring the responses needed to address various social justice issues, such as the need to amplify marginalized voices, engage in ongoing critical consciousness, share power, and respond to students’ needs, may showcase how the field could benefit from “diverse perspectives, different understandings of the world, and different values” (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Moss, 2020, p. 99).

Walther Omar Kohan (2023) offers a different perspective on the questions that we can pose to the field. In his interview after attending *the 9th Nordic Conference on Adult Education and Learning*, Kohan emphasizes that in education, the primary concern is with the “how,” followed by the “what,” and then, to a much lesser extent, the “why” and “for what” (Kohan et al., 2023, p. 38). He points out that the “how” is often linked to a specific logic and evaluation culture, where educators ask “how to do what we are told to do” (Kohan et al., 2023, p. 39). Kohan urges us to not only identify ourselves with how well we execute tasks, but also to focus on being and becoming our own “how.” He suggests using the term “method” interchangeably with “how,” conceptualizing it as “who we are” , and further elaborates:

I think that each educator needs to be his or her own method, so to speak. If not, he or she just reproduces others' how. Hence, I think it is important to help educators to problematize their relationship with the how. The more comfortable, complacent and unconcerned we are with the how, the more suspicious it becomes to me. The more an educator says "Oh, I found this and that method that I can apply; now I know how to do this and that," the more problematic it gets. For she is just reproducing another's how. (Kohan et al., 2023, p. 39)

Viewing ourselves as 'methods' could offer an opportunity for future educators to prioritize our becoming, moving beyond standard facts and processes. This approach involves delving deeper into subjects or issues and making space for individual perspectives and creativity. Genuine involvement can lead us to explore new paths, challenge conventions, and seek original solutions. By emphasizing the creation of conditions for diverse ways of thinking beyond the norm, we can enrich the field and interactions among educators, students, families, and others, by promoting authenticity, uniqueness, and invention. I believe that it's important to recognize and embrace the intrinsic complexity of why-questioning of our being and becoming. By doing so, we can challenge the prevailing approach of viewing things from a single perspective and instead cultivate an understanding that encompasses a variety of viewpoints. This shift towards a more holistic view is crucial, especially in educational settings where it's essential to see students as complete individuals rather than as disconnected parts that need to be altered to fit an existing mold. Embracing this mindset allows us to create a more inclusive environment where individuals from diverse backgrounds, life experiences, and perspectives can engage comfortably. This approach fosters a richer, more equitable, and inclusive educational environment where everyone is encouraged to participate and express their unique identities.

In summary, the impact in the field won't come from the answers we provide students during their preservice education, but from the kind of questions they develop a habit of asking.

This is because, as suggested by Kohan,

a question invites us to begin to think. [...] When we give an answer, we close the beginning. [...] However, when you offer another question, it is like re-beginning or offering to rebegin. It is like accepting the beginning and saying “OK, and what if we begin here?” and so on. So, I think we have begun, but we are still beginning. (Kohan et al., 2023, pp. 54-55)

If we start viewing students as continuously beginning anew when they pose questions this will require a re-examination of how we can nurture their dispositions for inquiry and the formulation of their own questions. This may prompt us to consider the roles of hospitality, dialogue, and the multifaceted concepts of time discussed in previous chapters. By doing so, we may invite students to interrogate traditional assumptions, thereby embracing complexity, subjectivity, and the prevailing norms of knowledge production. This shift may not only challenge established narratives but also open pathways for diverse interpretations and understandings, highlighting the fluid nature of meaning and the importance of context in educational settings. It is also important to consider here that it is crucial to support the creation of students' own language rather than promoting standardized, professional language rooted in neoliberal ideology. As discussed in chapter 3, language influences how educators and students in field practicum perceive space, position themselves within that space, and understand the relationships between objects and people. It is intriguing to consider the possibilities that could arise if students begin framing and directing their inquiries in their own languages.

Proposition 3: Intellectual work

I propose reorienting preservice early childhood education to focus more on curating and nurturing the intellectual dispositions of students rather than on technical or instrumental skills. I am referring to thinking beyond traditional norms, such as being curious, open-minded about differences and multiple interpretations, skeptical, having belief in your own intellectual abilities, and seeing value in pursuing intellectual explorations and inquiries. This shift would require changes to the current content and approaches used to prepare students for the field. For instance, this reorientation would lead us to consider what might be possible if we critically examine the deeply rooted child-centered approach in early childhood education. I believe that child-centeredness, based on certain ideas about educators, limits the range of teaching methods available and reinforces the perception of students as technical workers. This narrow focus contributes to widening the gap between theory and practice.

In her compelling critique of child-centered pedagogy, Rachel Langford (2010) expanded on earlier extensive scholarship to underscore how this approach limits the identity and agency of the educator. Langford (2010) emphasizes that in child-centered pedagogy, there is no space for early childhood educators to participate in intellectual experiences themselves, but only to cater to the experiences of the independent, autonomous male child. Despite these concerns, the approach remains heavily promoted and is a significant component of the Ministry of Education and the professional college documents. This presents significant problems, as suggested by Land et al. (2022).

This child-centered onto-epistemology grounds itself in anti-intellectualism under the guise of predefined and overdetermining universals, standard practices, and shared developmental trajectories. Within it, pedagogists and educators are configured as

facilitators, who must draw on particular evidence-based, verified, and validated practices to ensure proper child development. (p. 112)

As the quote highlights, the authors emphasize the drawbacks of child-centered approaches in the field. When child-centered pedagogy is based on predetermined and over-determining universal standards and shared developmental plans, it restricts the many other possibilities and relationships available to us. Especially in our postcolonial setting, both epistemology and ontology are crucial in considering local knowledge systems. Also, there are early childhood education scholars such as Affrica Taylor, Iveta Silova, Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, and Mindy Blaise who argue that looking at early childhood education solely through the lens of child-centered view and developmental psychology may not adequately create spaces for discussing real-world challenges (Common Worlds Research Collective, 2020). They propose a more flexible approach that considers the diverse environments and realities children (and I will add, students in practicums) encounter, rather than a one-size-fits-all model for child development and learning. Additionally, they advocate for moving away from the idea of human superiority over other species and recognizing our place within interconnected ecosystems (Common Worlds Research Collective, 2020). In their own words:

This is why our speculative visions for future survival declare the need for a fundamental break with humanist education (new or not). This is why we call for an inter-related series of shifts: from promoting humanism to exercising an ecological consciousness; from working for social justice to working for ecological justice; from understanding humans as social beings to understanding humans as ecological beings; from upholding exclusive human agency to recognizing agentic more-than-human relations. (Common Worlds Research Collective, 2020, p.10)

However, as demonstrated in this dissertation, this requires a richness of views, perspectives, and disciplines. Holding tightly to developmental psychology that forms the basis for child-centered pedagogy limits our thoughts to a very narrow range of views, discourses, and fields (Moss, 2019). This is because child/human-centric views mostly focus on the experiences and emotions of humans (Floom & Janzen, 2020), emphasizing personal stories. In these stories, the complex web of relations (beyond human centric ones)-are often overlooked and considerations are reduced to discourses of child development and or neoliberal discourses.

Proposition 4: Ethics

My final proposal is to contribute to the body of work that questions and invites more inclusive ways of considering ethics in early childhood education. At present, the prevailing view is shaped by a set of professional standards that govern behaviour and actions of educators. This approach demands adherence to a few fundamental values. *The Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* (2017) describes these codes as “responsibilities” (p. 7). The list includes “Responsibilities to Children”, “Responsibilities to Families”, “Responsibilities to Colleagues and to the Profession”, and Responsibilities to the Community and the Public (p. 7). However, each of these responsibilities is listed in hierarchical order and is constrained by rules that pertain to the completion of a limited number of tasks. Despite the extensive discussion about relationships with others in the Code, these relationships are often constrained to specific definitions and a limited set of actions. In essence, and as already mentioned in this dissertation, the current ethical practice revolves around how well the student or educator knows the codes (responsibilities) and how effectively they can apply them during their interactions with others. This approach significantly restricts the way we perceive each other and the world, as well as our potential for diverse and multifaceted relationships. It limits pedagogical interactions and tends to narrow exploration, favoring predetermined plans instead. This has an impact on the future of

the field because such an approach to ethics prevents educators from considering the dynamic nature of ethics, which requires constant adaptation to new challenges in an ever-changing world. This logic does not promote the idea that ethics should be relative to the times we live in and the culture we are trying to create; a culture of reflection, questioning, respect for multiplicity, difference and various interpretations, and an understanding of the importance of context in decision making. Instead of viewing educators as those who think about ethics as part of providing a safe environment for children and families, we could acknowledge their own involvement and equal participation in rethinking what is ethical in early childhood education. I wonder how the field may be affected if not only the professional college but also educators, students, children, and families engage in ongoing exploration of ethics, perhaps through pedagogical documentation.

Sharon Todd (2003a) provides a similar critique of employing ethics through standards. She argues that by linking learning to existing ethical codes and values, students only gain instrumental, so-called “professional” knowledge to be applied to practice. She highlights the problem with this approach, stating:

So what are we saying when we insist on instrumentalizing education in relation to ethics as a programmatic moral code? Do we risk putting educators in the position of experts who are “in the know” while ignoring the way moral relations transpire through the lived realities of everyday life, relations which require no specialized knowledge, and perhaps no formal knowledge at all? And what does this say about experts’ attitudes toward the “ordinary people” who, ostensibly, are waiting for knowledge to be bestowed upon them so that they might then “become” moral? (p. 6)

In contributing to this discussion and in order to influence preservice education, I propose involving students in considering the conditions that can aid in responding to the complexity of ethical moments in early childhood education. Rather than solely ensuring that students internalize established principles and professional standards for ethical conduct, we might consider creating spaces for ongoing dialogues that interrogate the fluid and emergent nature of contemporary issues. This approach would allow students to reflect on their ethical choices and explore how to respond in different situations. Their questioning and encounters with others, as well as their cultural, linguistic, and experiential knowledge, may open up opportunities for us to think about ethics in contexts we wouldn't encounter otherwise. Students' personal stories and narratives can help us gain deeper understandings of ethical complexities and inspire change to be more relevant to societal changes, where families, educators, and students often represent different ways of thinking and living.

I also propose inviting a multidisciplinary approach to discussions about ethics with students. Embracing multidisciplinary views may help us see the broader implications of our actions and decision making. I believe that multidisciplinary exploration can not only open the possibility of exploring ethics through complex topics such as technology, politics, economics, religion, or the role of theories in our practice, but it can also lay the foundation for the way we relate to each other. Since multidisciplinary approaches represent diversity, multiplicity, various interpretations, connections, and areas of interest, this can only add to a more inclusive way of encountering differences.

A participatory approach to ethics is also advocated by Peter Moss (2019), who suggests that ethics are equally important as political practice. Moss emphasizes that ethics should take precedence over rules and regulations. He draws on Zigmunt Bauman to highlight the limitations

of an ethics of rules and regulations, while discussing the understanding of the term “choice” (p. 56). Moss (2019) argues that the contemporary concept of choice is heavily influenced by neoliberalism and consumerism, promoting individualistic decision-making in purchasing. Moss advocates for a reconsideration of decisions and choices to prioritize community and ethics. He suggests that decisions should put the most ethically sound actions first, taking into account connections and responsibilities to others. Moss recommends making decisions in consultation with others, despite ultimately bearing responsibility. Rejecting rigid codes and rules that govern actions does not lead to unethical behavior. Instead, it opens up opportunities for educators to take a more active role in ethical decision-making, think independently, and take accountability for their choices, rather than attributing fault to a set of rules or guidelines (Moss, 2019).

I wonder, then, how shifting our current practices to align more closely with Moss’s view may influence preservice education. Would creating conditions for students to become more active in ethical decision-making contribute to reassessing the issues with ethics as actions that can only be evaluated reactively and based on compliance with the code? How including students in ethical decision-making, where they need to analyze complex situations, weigh different opinions, and foresee the consequences of their actions, may contribute to the way they think during pedagogical encounters? Would such an approach to ethics within the context of the diversity of students’ thoughts and the newness they bring to their field practicum help us to pay attention to the fluidity of ethics and the need for ongoing evaluation and adaptation of our decisions? Would that create conditions for a more inclusive, dynamic, and context-sensitive approach to ethics in early childhood education?

From the discussion presented above, we can see that ethics has much to offer the field of early childhood education. I strongly believe and share the view with other scholars that taking a

more open approach to ethics can enrich the field by helping us understand how we perceive, act, and navigate ethical encounters with others. According to Fitzpatrick (2021), Levinas' philosophy on ethics emphasizes the importance of our responsibility toward others, our interactions with their differences, and the function of rules. Levinas suggests that it's not a matter of choosing between acting out of duty or hospitality and acting out of inclination or hostility, but rather genuinely wanting to do good versus feeling obligated to do so (Fitzpatrick, 2021). Levinas asserts that we all have a responsibility to be hospitable and are held accountable to others, whether we desire it or not (Fitzpatrick, 2021). In the context of early childhood education, we can all agree that when the College of Early Childhood Educators published the ethical standards for educators, they aimed to ensure ethical practice and safe environments for children and their families. They fulfill their role by establishing standards, overseeing and monitoring compliance, implementing strategies to educate their members, and establishing processes for promoting transparency and accountability. The College's approach to ethics is often seen by educators and students as a requirement for becoming early childhood educators. They feel that alternative ways of thinking, including the ideas presented in this chapter, are outside the realm of choice. Therefore, I propose considering Derrida's idea of deconstruction as an ethics to welcome other ideas necessary for exploring the interplay of meaning and language in ethical decision-making within the field of early childhood education. In this dissertation, Derrida's work is taken up as an orientation rather than a method, an undertaking that invites educators to remain open to what cannot be predetermined or fully resolved in advance. I hope that Derrida's views can help educators and students realize that they don't need to limit their ethical practice to a single response within the scope of following the Code. Ethical practice

could be shaped and reshaped within the tensions, oppositions, conflicts of meanings, interpretations, and differences, where contradictory ideas help shape the meaning of each.

By working within the tensions of the Code and personal ethical values, principles, or new propositions, educators and students may realize that ethical views are constructed through language and culture and therefore are subject to multiplicity, revisions, re-evaluations, and rethinking. In navigating tensions, students and mentors may come to understand that adhering to ethical standards often involves recognizing the injustices being perpetuated that cannot be easily resolved. These tensions also help in identifying power dynamics within established ethical norms and standards. Deconstructing these norms can lead to questions such as: who benefits from the Code, and whose voices are being marginalized? However, we still need these boundaries, limits, and lines established by the Code to assist in ethical exploration. Instead of judging which practices or standards to follow, we should engage in a continual dialogue between contrasting ideas, moving back and forth across the limits and beyond. As Derrida suggests, meanings are not fully self-contained; they are never final or fixed, but rather shift and evolve through interaction with other meanings (Critchley, 2014). Derrida refers to this idea as “closure,” where traditional boundaries and frameworks are both rejected and yet cannot be entirely surpassed. This creates a paradoxical situation where one cannot fully adhere to established traditions, nor completely break free from them (Critchley, 2014, p. 20). This logic understood as the dual relationship between refusing to stay within boundaries and rejecting breaking the rules, it is very relevant to the reality of early childhood education. This is because educators and students in preservice education are caught between the rules, regulations, and standards that limit their lives but are understood as best ethical practices, and the possibilities of the new, which places them in constant ethical struggles.

The four propositions presented in this chapter serve as a small invitation to revisit the practices of preservice education and the ways in which we welcome new educators to the field. My intention in this chapter is to broaden our perspectives. Therefore, I am not suggesting new ideas to replace the older ones, but rather to focus on how students' thinking and intellectual dispositions are being nurtured. I just envision a tapestry woven from the threads of four key ideas, where we can embrace the role of pedagogues, dynamic participants in reshaping and redirecting discourse. By focusing on the different ways students conceptualize reality and actively inviting their voices, we can reexamine ethical considerations. This approach may foster new conditions where the "new" is not simply an addition but a vibrant emergence, continually developed and evolving within preservice education. I wonder how this fluidity might enable us to question the very essence of becoming, reshaping our understanding as we navigate an early childhood education landscape marked by multiplicity and transformation.

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