

**THEORIZING RACE, GENDER, ABILITY, AND PRECARIY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION: A WAY FORWARD**

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(A) Early Childhood Educators Without Borders

Abstract

This paper argues gendered racism, patriarchy, precarity and the ableism/disability culture is imbedded in Early Childhood Education training and workplace contexts that simultaneously claim to value and promote inclusivity and diversity. Therefore, this paper seeks to ask inclusion and diversity for who? In this paper, I first showcase the policies and guidelines that govern Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) and students who are entering Early Childhood Education programs in post-secondary institutions. I then draw on the analytical framework of race/racism, gendered, dis/ability, patriarchy, precarity, to explore how the field of ECE has created an oppressive culture; this section also brings fourth some understanding on inclusion and diversity. I also engage with legal frameworks such as the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom and the Human Rights Code Ontario to help frame my argument in a policy context. I conclude that discourses of inclusion and diversity are evoked loosely in current training and workplace contexts; and therefore, I argue that awareness of race, gendered racism, dis/ability and precarity should be included in all ECE post-secondary programs. I conclude with some propositions for a way forward for the ECE field, and toward equity for ECE workers.

Introduction

As a radical standpoint perspective position, ‘the politics of location’ necessarily calls those of us who would participate in the formation of counter-hegemonic cultural practice to identify the spaces where we begin the process of re-vision....To me the effort to speak about issues of ‘spaces and location’ evoked pain. The question raised compelled difficult explorations of ‘Silences’ – unaddressed places within my personal political...evolution.....I had to face ways these issues were intimately connected to intense personal emotional upheaval regarding place, identity [and] desire.....Talking about the struggle of oppressed people to come to voice,.... [someone] made the very down comment that ‘ours is a broken voice’. My response was simply that when you hear the broken voice you also hear the pain contained within that brokenness – a speech of suffering; often it’s that sound nobody wants to hear. (hooks, 1989, p. 203).

As explained above by hooks (1989), I am announcing my political privilege and standpoint at the beginning of this paper; namely, my entry point as a racialized gendered body, as an academic, and as a Registered Early Childhood Educator with a temporary impairment (lower back injury). In 1903, DuBois asked, “How does it feel to be a problem?” and in my case, I am faced with “the triple jeopardy of race, gender, and disability” (Erevelles, 2011, p. 3). Such a conundrum tends to be the label that society hangs on one’s neck for the sake of identity and social placement; this then creates as stated in the above quote a ‘broken voice’ that no one wants to hear and no one deems as important. Writing from the standpoint of an academic provides me privileges that not only allows me to use ‘the oppressor’s language’ as my weapon, it also offers me the opportunity to speak “in a language that will move beyond boundaries of domination” (hooks, 1989, p. 204) by engaging critical anti-racist, feminist, and anti-ableist theory. I speak not as a privileged oppressor but as an oppressed person recognizing that as a researcher, I “occupy privileged status that can be deconstructed but not rectified without structural change” (Dossa, 2009, p. 4). Therefore, because of this contradictory space of privilege, I have to be reflexive, as the interrogation of subject formation becomes part of my

work, my politics; and, if I dwell too much in deconstruction without pursuing structural change, my drug.

As explained by Vernon (1997) “reflexivity, is the examination of the ways in which the researcher’s own social identity and values affect the data gathered and the picture of the social world produced, [this] is a critical exercise for those researching the experiences of oppression” (p. 159). This reminds me that my position of a privileged researcher should make me aware of how my work situates my subjects. As a researcher, my aim is to analyse ways in which languages that are depicted in different spaces can create oppressive spaces for some groups. Texts are a form of power that has been used to define and group individuals together through the use of scientific discourse, observation, categorization, definition of "types" and standards of "normality" (Villadsen and Mik-Meyer, 2013, p. 13). These, Withers (2012) concurs that in the fight of advocating for one, we should be careful not to “run over” (p. 101) another as it erases other identities. The “erasures occur for a number of reasons: prejudice, ignorance and/or an attempt to distance a group in order to better lay claim to privilege” (Withers. 2012, pg. 101). Acknowledging and being aware of my standpoint will remind me to be careful not to become an oppressor from within and an oppressor in disguise.

My argument in this paper is that gendered racism, patriarchy, precarity and the ableism/disability culture is sickly imbedded in the Early Childhood Education training and workplace context that speaks passionately of inclusivity and diversity. And this is why this paper seeks to ask ‘Inclusive and Diversity for Who’ as “diversity research in the past was dominated by a focus of the “problems” associated with diversity, such as discrimination, bias, affirmative action and tokenism” (Shore et al, 2010, p. 1). In this paper, I review the literature, I then proceed with some definition of the main words that will be used through this paper. The

next section of the paper provides definitions and synopsis on the concepts that was later elaborated on. Following the synopsis is a space to showcase the policies and guidelines that govern Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) and students who are entering to study in Early Childhood Education program in post-secondary institutions. In the next section, I give salute to the disability social model, theorizing it to provide the context of where it stands within the disability community today. I then draw on the analytical framework of race/racism, gender, dis/ableism, patriarchy, and precarity, to explore how the field of ECE has created an oppressive culture; this section also brings forth some understanding on inclusion and diversity. Since my paper is looking at educators in Canada and advocating for recognition, I engage with legal frameworks such as the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom and the Human Rights Code Ontario to help place my argument on a more political platform. The last section includes my final thoughts and a proposition for the way forward, for what is next.

Understanding the Early Childhood Field

The field of Early Childhood Education is saturated by racialized women who are seen to be “born carers”; this claim has been romanticized from pre-industrial times till today. Friedrich Wilhelm Froebel in the 1800s stated that women are “his natural allies.....and “women’s work as the first and most essential link in the chain of human life” (as cited by Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000, p. 99). With this in mind, one can conclude that women have always been seen by society, especially males, as the species to educate and be role models while teaching “good behaviour to all youth as required by the law.....habits that make a gentleman or a lady” (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000, p. 198). In historical research, Early Childhood Educators (ECE) were depicted as “Caretakers, teachers, or as childcare specialists” and this can be anyone with or without any special training (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000, p. 370). Specialized training to become a carer for

children can be received through “Early Childhood Education, Pediatric Nursing, Family –Life Education, and Mothering” (Lascares et al., 2000, p. 371). This quote helps one understand that ‘mothering’ can qualify one as a caretaker, someone who can be trusted with children because of the patriarchal social construction of gendered work.

With my experience of over ten (10) years dealing personally and also working in the field as a ‘caretaker’ of my own and other people’s children, I have come to realize that the field is saturated mainly by women especially racialized immigrant and mostly mature women. Knowing this, one can argue that women’s “choices of training are discursively mediated” (Shan, 2009, p. 358), but not because of their so called ‘natural instinct’ as carers, but because racialized bodies with a prior profession or education, migrating to Canada are “not able to practice” without going through the processes of becoming regulated (Shan, 2009, p. 358). Caring for children is the fastest employment for them to enter in order to start earning an income to take care of the family and/or help supplement their partner’s income. This has also placed women in a precarious position by having to juggle the different heteronormative gendered roles; working at home to keep the children and family together and acquiring work outside of their home to help support their family financially but lets one not forget meeting the high cost of maintaining a family in the Global North.

As a racialized educator in the early childhood education field, I have come to realize the different issues that women of colour continuously internalize, not to speak of bringing in the intersection of disability. Acquiring a back injury in the summer of 2014, made me aware of the difficulties that ECEs embody while trying to ‘Fake the Funk’ by hiding their pain while working with children in their various work spaces. My first realization of the ableist and ‘hush, hush’ culture that persist within the field of ECE was when I started asking the different centre’s

supervisors and centre directors. They are mostly ‘white, able bodied, and privileged’ that I worked for in relation to people with disabilities working in the field. During this stage, I was already internalizing some pain in my back; this is when I started investigating and asking both ECEs and supervisors questions such as “Have you ever worked with any persons with a disability before”? Almost all the answers that I received concluded that disabled individuals cannot possibly work in ‘our’ field as it requires ‘caring’ for children, ‘running’ after children and becoming emotionally connected to the children under our care. Their answers were very ableist to me as they automatically concluded that disability is only physical therefore disabled individuals cannot be a ‘caregiver’ (as an educator or as a parent). These experiences made me decide to keep “my mouth shut” especially if I want to keep my job. How can I speak of disability/impairment to my employers or colleagues if they themselves think of disabled individuals as not worthy or not able to be instrumental to the field that considers themselves as ‘inclusive and diverse’? But the question is: Inclusion and diversity to who and for who?

One particular answer that baffled me was from a ‘white male, classist’ supervisor of a centre that my children attended. I asked this supervisor what are his thoughts surrounding mental health and ECEs. Before I could elaborate on my question to provide him with more details of my thinking, he made me aware that mental health is not the employer’s issue but rather the educator’s. More like the ‘don’t ask don’t tell’ affair. All these separate incidents then made me conclude that the field of Early Childhood Education has created a ‘hole’ that is literally becoming a place where racialized bodies and individuals who are disabled in the field tend to be placed. This hole basically means a culture that isolates and segregates while individuals with disabilities do not have a voice within a space that they spend most of their daily hours taking care of other people’s children who might also be disabled. Therefore creating an

environment where educators become “relegated to the segregated and alienation spaces” (Erevelles, 2011, p. 97) becomes the norm in the field.

Literature in the field of Early Childhood Education and the different issues that oppresses individuals such as race, disability and other disabling intersections are missing in Canada but widely researched in the United Kingdom and somewhat in the United States of America. But even those two locations have solely focused their literature on educators within the school systems but not educators in the childcare setting; therefore, making it very difficult to put together literatures or narratives of Canadian educators. My searches had to change so to be able to tailor my case to the policy makers; I searched phrases such as “disabled educators”, “history of individuals with disability in the labour force”, “disabled teachers barriers for disabled ECE students”, “early childhood educators with disabilities”, “teachers with disabilities”, “race, racism and early childhood education” and so many more but nothing was really significant to my research. This road-block then led me to rethinking the field and my research and allowing me to conclude on theorizing from an oppressed stand point. I had to re-strategize by digging and reflecting deeper into the field while recounting oppressive spaces that many of my colleagues face as they work in the field that limits them to just caregiver.

To borrow the words of Anderson, Keller & Karp (1998), I argue that “the voices and stories of educators with disabilities deserve to be shared more widely” (p. 7), in order to create change and a safe place to work and be human. With the lack of personal narratives of racialized disabled bodies in the field, I then decided to include my own personal lived experience as an entry point to the Early Childhood Education Field. Before one can understand the importance of ECEs as professionals, it is important to put into context the demographic trends of families using childcare services from 2007 – 2012:

After shrinking for some years, the number of children 0-5 years increased between 2007, 2009 and 2012, rising from 2,093,000 children 0-5 years in 2009 to 2,230,000 in 2012. According to 2011 census data, the 0-4 age group has been growing at the highest rate in 50 years (11% since 2006). The number of children 0-5 years with employed mothers rose between 2009/10 and 2012, from 1,268,000 to 1,376,000. The labour force participation rate of mothers with young children continues to increase. In 2012, it was 69.7% for mothers whose youngest child was 0-2 years, 76.6% for those with a youngest child 3-5 years, and 84.0% for those whose youngest child was 6-15 years. (Ferns & Friendly, 2012, p. 6)

It is therefore evidenced in the above quote how largely patronized and needed childcare is to the sustainability of this country. As it also shows an increase in labour participation of mothers with young children, hence creating a dualistic income for families.

The above quote is also why this paper looked at some of the disabling factors that affect women and access to education and employment. Brooks & Deegan (1981) and Badwin & Johnson (1995) looked at women and disability in the workplace; both papers argue that wage disparities and employment differ when a gendered individual is embodying a form of impairment especially when it is visible. Armstrong & Armstrong (2010) in their analysis provided waged differences for men and women working in Childcare settings; they claim that male childcare workers from 1990's average income was \$20,000, while woman's wage was averaging \$13,252 (p. 42). In 2015, Early Childhood Educators pay rate was still averaging roughly \$13 an hour (Dacosta, 2015), with this information, one can argue does not reflect the high Canadian standard of living.

Many studies have claimed that space creation has been one of the factors by which people from hegemonic groups continue to disable people with disabilities, especially those with accessibility aids such as wheelchairs and so on. Imrie & Kumar (1998), in their research, helped one understand that the "design of the built environment is disablist by restricting, and discriminating against, the mobility and access requirement of disabled people" (p. 357). While

following the same train of thought, Kitchin (1998) also made a similar claim, showing that “spaces are currently organized to keep disabled people ‘in their place’ and ‘written’ to convey to disabled people that they are out of place” (p, 343). Anderson & Keller & Karp (1998) and Cunnah (2015) provided different narratives of both educators and students studying to become an educator in the teacher education field. Pointing out that most of this literature dates back to 1800s, so one needs to question if disabled individuals are still marginalized and excluded from mainstream employment or society in general.

Steve Baron, Rena Phillips & Kirsten Stalker (2007) also performed surveys to question whether policies and guidelines are deterring individuals with a disability from entering into post-secondary institutions. During their questioning, they found that students with hidden impairments have been excluded to mention their embodied impairment. Their narratives, allows one to understand the different disabling issues that people with disabilities face during employment and also during their placements.

Definitions

Patriarchy:

Patriarchy as defined by Lorber & Moore (2006) originally as a social organization marked by supremacy of the father in the clan of family, the legal dependence of wives and children, and the reckoning of descent and inheritance in the male line. Now, it is a belief system that presupposes the dominance of certain groups of men, the priority of high-status men’s agendas and interests, and the acceptability of men’s acquisition of a disproportionately large share of social and political power. (Lorber & Moore, 2006, p. 6).

Racialization:

Racialization as cited by Agnew (2007) “refers to the process that produces and constructs the meaning of race and to the structures that accompany such a process” (p. 9).

Disability:

Disability as stated by Gleeson, (1998), “is a ‘profoundly spatial experience’, meaning something that is lived and produced at every imaginable scale” (p. 195). Disability can therefore range from micro level interpersonal processes and struggles with daily tasks to macro level policy realms which constitute state institutional practice (Gleeson 1998, p. 195) that define the rights (or lack of) for people living with disabilities.

Diversity:

Diversity is differences and uniqueness that each person brings to the early learning setting including values and beliefs, culture and ethnicity, language, ability, education, life experiences, socio-economic statuses, spirituality, gender, age and sexuality (as cited by College of Early Childhood Educations, 2011, p. 29).

Inclusion:

Inclusion is an approach to practice in early learning and care settings where all children are accepted and served within a program and where each child and family experiences a sense of belonging and no child or family is stigmatized or marginalized. Inclusion means to bring people in rather than to exclude them – in thought, words or deed (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2011, p. 30).

Early Childhood Education:

Professional practice which includes the assessment and promotion of the well-being and holistic development of children through the planning and delivery of inclusive play-based learning and care programs within the context of diverse family, school and community groups (as cited by College of Early Childhood Educators, 2011, p. 29).

Early Childhood Educator:

An Early Childhood Educator is a registered member of the College of Early Childhood Educators (p. 29).

Concepts Used To Theorize

As noted above, the main concepts that will be used to theorize the field of Early Childhood Education (ECE) are gendered racism, disablism, ableism, precarious. Using these concepts to theorize the field will not just open the space for dialoguing but it will allow both the oppressors and oppressed to understand their stands and how the conversation can start and be changed.

Racialized Gender

Gender is defined by Lorber & Moore (2006) as a “legal status as a woman or man, usually based on sex assigned at birth, but may be legally changed. Gender status produces patterns of social expectations for bodies, behaviours, emotions, family, and work roles. Gendered expectations can change over time both on individual and social levels. (Lorber & Moore, 2006, p. 5). While Sarah Ahmed (2002) defined race as, “not an intrinsic property of a body, nor the precursor of ethnicity; rather, race affects and shapes ethnicity as “the cultural inscription of group identity” (p. 46). Writing this section is very tricky as I am now isolating gender and race as it applies to black educators. This does not necessarily mean that only black

educators within the field of Early Childhood Education experience racism or oppression, but I am reminded to always remember the place that I writing from (Vernon 1997). This also is where bell hooks (1989) argued that it is imperative for someone to always remember their standpoint (representation) so that they are not creating an oppressive discourse that will unconsciously oppress the already oppressed. Withers (2012) also made one aware not to run over others in our race for equality or equitable rights and this is why I fully stated my standpoint above.

Some of these reminders coupled with other research forced me to make a conscious decision to only use this section for gendered racism for black educators experiencing disabling oppression within the field of Early Childhood Education because of my embodiment as a racialized, gendered person with a non-visible impairment. Understanding and putting into words how gendered racism happens within the field could be an interesting trajectory, “But personally it’s [racism] like a daily battle and I feel like I always have to look over my shoulder. ...And that’s stressful” (Jackson et al, 2001, p. 95). It is sad but this is how I felt during my time working in the field.

This is violence within the work place and this violence as Sharma (2001) puts it becomes “so successful for the hegemonic that they have become transparent-holding in place the ruler’s claimed superior self, named or identified in myriad ways, and the inadequacy and inferiority of those who are ruled” (p. 426). So the question now becomes ‘why are black educators experiencing stress and oppression from their hegemonic privileged counterparts?’ And ‘why is this the case in a field where we are trained to teach respect of one’s culture through representations of diverse books, our languages towards children and through planned programs/activities’. These are the questions that will be explored further in this section as it is

very important to the field of ECE and disability studies and it allows one to understand the conundrum that continues to disable racialized bodies in the ECE field.

Glenn (2002) allows one to understand that race and gender should be seen as binary instead of separating the two trajectories; because separating it “marginalized major segments of the communities they claimed to represent” (p.6). And this was visible before 1980 where research shows that racialized women started to notice that they were omitted from the binaries of race and gender (Glenn, 2002). As stated by Glenn (2002),

In studies of ‘race’ men of colour stood as the universal racial subject, while in studies of ‘gender’, white women were positioned as the universal gendered subject. Women of colour were left out both narratives, rendered invisible both as racial and as gendered subject (p. 6).

And I must say that as an educator, this hasn’t changed within the ECE field. And as Browne & Misra (2003) puts it, “race is gendered and gender is racialized, so that race and gender fuse to create unique experiences and opportunities for all groups – not just women of color” (p. 488).

Ableism

Ableism is connected to disablism as Goodley (2014) explains it, “ableism encourages an institutional bias towards autonomous, independent bodies and hyper-capitalist forms of production” (p. 21). From this analysis, one links the connectedness between disablism and ableism as the end products are bodies that are productive or bodies that are constructed. Different authors have defined the word ableism differently but with the same meaning. Wolbring (2007) defines ableism as “the favoritism for certain abilities for example cognition, competitiveness or consumerism and the often negative sentiment towards the lack of favoured abilities” (p. 1). This allows one to understand that the ableism culture that so permeates the Early Childhood Education is because of the negative connotation towards certain bodies such as gender, race, sex, and disability that are all socially constructed by those in hegemonic and

patriarchy positions. Campbell (2009) on the other hand unpacked ableism as “Whether it is the “species-typical body” (in science) the “normative citizen” (in political theory), the “reasonable man” (in law), she argues, all these signifiers point to a fabrication that reaches into the very soul that sweeps us into life” (p. 7). As this quote depicts, the author in her explanation of ableism, brought out all the different ways that “defective” bodies are defined within ablest culture and within different disciplines. This, one can argue, makes it problematic and can create ablest cultures, as comments and policies develop subtly. This is what becomes dangerous and a silent killer and it is happening within the Early Childhood Education field.

With the above information, one can argue, as Goodley (2014) mentioned, that “ableist knowledges [are] naturalized, neutralized and universalized” (p. 23). It is easy to argue that ableism naturalizes and neutralizes as it tries to bring sameness to all bodies to conform to the set norms; this then creates an internalized ableism norm/culture in the ECE field that is seen to showcase role modeling for the children in their care. One can also argue that ableism is universalized in the sense that it is used as alleviating poverty and disability from those who are being colonized and it also permeates within the globalized market. This I argue is problematic as it sets the norm and the culture for an already oppressed people, which then starts to create the Other. One way that Goodley (2014) explained using ableism is through the thought process of Campbell, who argued that “as soon as disability emerges as a site of marginality, then so too do “Other” identities” such as “ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality as a consequences of attempts to maintain...the ableist normative” (p. 22). This analysis makes it interesting to use ableism within my work as it helps one understand and dissect the different intersections that are operating within the Early Childhood Education field. It can also be concluded that desiring the perfect body is a way that the hegemonic sees an individual as a commodity or as defective body as

already argued by Kitchin (1998) who has observed that “the dominant group’s cultural practices are promoted as the norm” (p. 346)

Disablism

Disablism as cited by Tyler (2015) comes “as forms of practice and experience which ‘exclude, eradicate and neutralise those individuals, bodies and minds and community practices that fail to fit the capitalist imperative” (p. 660). So why disablism? As already mentioned, a disabling act happens when a body fails to meet the hegemonic capitalist body that is commodified for profit. The word disablism is one that has evolved over time. It has helped advocates and people with disabilities understand what is disabling and creating oppressive barriers for individuals from minority groups. One can list several different issues that have been disabling and a determinant of health for minority groups especially within labour circles. An example of a disabling factor within the Early Childhood Education has more to do with the elimination of certain bodies within texts and the patriarchal hegemony power that continues to create policies that favours precarious employment leading to precarious pay and placing racialized and disabled women in vulnerable positions. These have been because of the socially constructed capitalist state, our obsession of perfection and other things as Goodley (2014) kindly puts it:

Our obsessions with our own bodies and biology, fuelled by institutional, expert, scientific discourse and the fascinations of popular culture trains our thoughts on our individual selves, our minds and our bodies to check how we match up to a normative model of humanity. (p. 4)

This means that the disabling culture that is visible within the Early Childhood Education field is not a mere women hating on women issue, but instead an ingrained inherently politicized

structure that might be harder to break unless solidarity is created among the oppressed groups and minorities that are experiencing the disabling acts.

Understanding the disablement of the different structures that surrounds the Early Childhood Education field allows one to understand the different complex processes, discourses and interpretations of ablest oppressive culture that have evolved overtime. It also makes one understand that the arrangement of the environment plays a huge role in how bodies have been commodified within the normative model of humanity. This, Goodley (2014) made us aware that “our bodies are being bought, sold and exploited for the benefits of the capitalist” (p. 10). This means that once a body deviates from the norm, their value as part of humanity drops and this is where medical models of curing starts to play a role within the deviated body. So the big question is, how will disablism help theorize the different disabling interlocking oppressive issues within the field? This displacement that is widely visible in the field makes one question why and how a field that claims to be inclusive and diverse towards children and their families can ignore their own from within.

Precarious

Using the concept of precarity in the field of ECE is a way to bring out the different oppressive spaces that is alienating women and individuals with disabilities that are in the field. Research has shown that “racialized immigrant women in Canada are over-represented in low-paid, low-skill jobs characterized by high risk and precarity” (Premji et al., 2014, p. 122). This analysis is a worrisome one as it creates a dialectical binary issue that not only puts women’s life in danger, but it can also create tension in their home. Precarious living/employment, Vosko (2005) explains, “encompasses forms of work involving limited social benefits and statutory entitlements, job insecurity, low wages, and high risk of ill-health”

(p. 3). Basically it is referring to disabling employments and unfortunately, this is what is happening within the field of ECE.

Many reasons why I believe that using the concept of precarity will help eliminate or bring to the political stage the gendered precarious lifestyle due to the different categories and disabling trajectories, especially one's social location such as: the interaction between one's location (race and gender and political and economic conditions) (Vosko, 2005, p. 3). And since a majority of the individuals in the field of ECE are racialized females, it only makes sense to understand that most of these individuals face "labour market experiences negatively [which impacts] their physical and mental health" (Premji et al., 2014, p. 123). Precarious employment is multi-dimensional and it is informed by "multi-method analysis, exploring household dynamics, institutional processes, social and legal norms, and workers' expression of their agency" (Vosko, 2005, p. 4). Late year, Premier Kathleen Wayne committed a \$1 increase in pay for ECEs, but I argue that this is not enough to end precarity as living standards are viciously on the rise. Exploring this concept further will allow me to literally dissect the field using precarity to theorize the endless fight for higher pay and the elimination of an ill health life style.

Salute and Theorizing the Social Model of Disability

It is out of respect that this paper creates a space to critique and salute the first and most used disability model that has placed disability/dis/ableism on a political platform, the social model which most people have been made to understand started the fight to end the internalized and systemic oppression. It is also a barrier breaker in allowing individuals with a disability in the workforce. The social model emerged from "within the organization of oppressed people" (as cited by Thomas, 1999, p. 32), which is usually not the case. I argue that it is limited to all groups that embody disability. The social model's argument is that:

It is not the individual's impairment which caused disability, or which is the disability, and it is not the difficulty of individual functioning with physical, sensory or intellectual impairment which generates the problems of disability. Rather, disability is the outcome of social arrangements which come to restrict the activities of people with impairments by placing social barriers in their way. This social causation, or social creation, of disability is sometimes referred to as the 'social construction' of disability. (Thomas, 1999, p. 32).

This quote by Carol Thomas helps one understand the trajectory and binary dilemma between how individuals with a disability are socially defined, even though the social model clearly states that it is not the individual's impairment which causes disability but rather the disabling barriers that hegemonic ablest groups in society have created. So if the social model can cause political change by crafting such statements, then why is the social model receiving so much criticism from disability rights and other groups?

As Withers (2012) puts it, the social model of disability's main critique "is its focus on paid labour" (p. 89). Thomas (1999) concurs that this model, even though focusing on social environmental barriers within the workplace, its emphasis on employment makes it limited for other groups to work with. Some other limitations with the social model as widely researched both by Thomas, Withers and other disability advocates are that the social model left out other groups such as those who do not embody the hegemonic race or the heteronormative being. This means, as already stated above that, the social model, while advocating on political platforms, consciously or unconsciously left out "particular groups of disabled people on the basis of gender, sexuality, race, or age" (Thomas, 1999, p. 41). This Thomas claimed is:

Usually seen to be either to do with the model's inherent weakness or because of its application by men/straight people/white people/young people who tend to construct problems and solutions in their own image: [But the question is] what about disabled women?.....[and] disabled black and minority ethnic people?" (Thomas, 1999, p. 41).

The criticism of the social model has created such a mess within the disability rights movement that most are calling for "further development". This has helped create a pool full of different

disability models that has tried to include other groups such as the radical disability model by Withers (2012) which is still eliminating groups; and others that are calling for “renewal, transformation, or even the abandonment of the social model of disability” (Thomas, 1999, p. 41). But I disagree over the total abandonment of the social model as it has been the cornerstone and the torchbearer of the disability rights movement allowing for the “accommodation of difference” (Thomas, 1999, p. 41). Though it screams out with the hegemonic race, patriarchy, and whiteness, it still started it all. The criticism of the social model of disability makes this paper focus more of its attention on different theoretical platforms that are more political while transgressing issues that women in care work face. And as Withers (2012) and some of the authors already mentioned in this paper made it clear that despite the criticisms, all other disability advocating tools are built upon the social model. So therefore, the social model should be seen as the corner-stone to disability barrier breaking in today’s contemporary advocacy.

Guidelines and Policies

The next section allows one the opportunity to put into context some of the legal documents that governs ECEs as per the College of Early Childhood Educators. The Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice (CESP) provides written documentation on how ECEs should behave as professionals. The CESP’s purpose is to “establish and enforce professional standards and ethical standards that are applicable to members of the College and that demonstrate a respect for diversity and a sensitivity to the multicultural characteristics of the Province (as cited by College of Early Childhood Educator, 2011, p. 6). The college also provided six in-depth standards that educators need to know when in the field working. And they are:

- I. Caring and Nurturing Relationships that Support Learning
- II. Developmentally Appropriate Care and Education
- III. Safe, Healthy and Supportive Learning Environments

- IV. Professional Knowledge and Competence
- V. Professional Boundaries, Dual Relationships and Conflicts of Interest
- VI. Confidentiality and Consent to the Release of Information Regarding Children and their Families (College of Early Childhood Educators. 2011, p. 11).

These listed standards of practice are extensively explained in details in the policy book. The code of ethics which is said to reflect the “core set of beliefs and values of care, respect, trust and integrity. The beliefs and values are fundamental to members of the profession and guide their conduct” (College of Early Childhood Educators. 2011, p. 11), and they are:

A. Responsibilities to Children

Early Childhood Educators make the well-being and learning of all children who are under their professional supervision their foremost responsibility. They value the rights of the child, respecting the uniqueness, dignity and potential of each child, and strive to create learning environments in which children experience a sense of belonging.

Early Childhood Educators are caring empathetic, fair and act with integrity. Early Childhood Educators foster the joy of learning through play-based pedagogy.

B. Responsibilities to Families

Early Childhood Educators value the centrality of the family of the family to the health and well-being of children. They recognize and respect the uniqueness and diversity of families.

Early Childhood Educators strive to establish and maintain reciprocal relationships with family members of children under their professional supervision. These relationships are based on trust, openness and respect for confidentiality. Early Childhood Educators collaborate with families by exchanging knowledge and sharing practices and resources.

C. Responsibilities to Colleagues and to the Profession

Early Childhood Educators interact with colleagues and other professionals in ways that demonstrate respect, trust and integrity. Through their conduct, Early Childhood Educators strive to enhance the status of the profession in their workplaces and in the wider community.

Early Childhood Educators value lifelong learning and commit themselves to engaging in continuous professional learning to enhance their practice. They support experienced colleagues, those who are new to the profession and students aspiring to the profession.

D. Responsibilities to the Community and to Society

Early Childhood Educators value and engage in collaboration with community agencies, schools and other professionals.

Early Childhood Educators recognize that they contribute to community and society by advocating for and promoting an appreciation on the profession, children and early learning. (College of Early Childhood Educators. 2011, p. 11)

These code of ethics are engrained in ECEs while they are receiving their training in post-secondary institutions. We are told to engrave both the standard and professional ethics on our hearts.

Education Institutions Policies and Guidelines

This section will be based on the program requirements from post-secondary institutions such as Humber College, Seneca College (Diploma and Degree), Seneca College (Diploma and Degree), Sheridan College, George Brown (Diploma and Degree), Centennial College and Ryerson University. Humber College (2015) in their additional requirement sections states that “Students must be in good physical and mental health and meet the same physical and immunization requirements as those for the staff employed by the agency/facility where the practicum is taking place” (n.p). On Humber College’s website, they went on to provide more information about their program which is that their diploma program:

- Prepares you to work with children (birth to 12 years) and their families in programs recognized by The Ontario College of Early Childhood Educators. You’ll gain the skills employers are looking for within an ECE program that is designed to be responsive and inclusive to children, families and the community.
- Learn about human development and how to foster children’s learning through:
 - observation and reflection, and the preparation of pedagogical documentation- the creation of inclusive learning environments and natural play spaces
 - designing curriculum
 - collaborating with relevant community agencies
 - achieve early childhood leadership and advocacy skills

The next institution is Ryerson which offers a degree program in ECE; their ECE program website provides the different requirements and course that students will have to meet

to move to a higher level in the program. Ryerson on their Course Learning Outcomes (n.d), states that:

Students will consistently demonstrate the ability to:

- Plan and implement a range of activities within the centre's curriculum framework that promotes child development and practices which reflect inclusiveness and regard for diversity.
- Form responsive and nurturing relationships with children and their families.
- Exhibit professional behavior

Their course requirements states that “absences due to medical reasons must be supported by Ryerson University Student Medical Certificate” (n.d, n.p).

George Brown College (2016) offers a diploma ECE program and is affiliated with Ryerson's degree program. This means if a student successfully finishes the diploma requirements, they are able to take one semester bridging course that can provide them admission upon successful completion (n.p). On their ECE program requirement page, George Brown stated that:

Field placement is a mandatory and complex component of the program. Should accommodation issues arise, a Special Needs Consultant may be called upon to assist the applicant in determining whether she/he can meet the requirements necessary for safe caregiving for young children (n.p).

Seneca College in their program made applicants aware that:

If at any time a student jeopardizes the physical and/or emotional well-being, health or safety of a child through actions or behaviours and the supervising professor determines that the student is not capable of the required level of independent functioning, the student may be withdrawn from placement and may fail the course. The student may be asked to leave the program. (Seneca College, 2015, n.p).

Seneca College also made one aware to incoming students that upon successful completion of their courses, students will be in the position to:

1. Demonstrate professional practice consistently

2. Establish positive, responsive relationships with children, co-workers, supervisors, and families

Centennial College, and Sheridan College did not have any information relating to inclusivity nor mention anything regarding accommodating students with disabilities and this I argue is a form of containment which will be discussed further in subsequent sections.

Labour – Childcare Centres Policies and Guidelines

It helps to place some context to how words are used within the Childcare centres' policies and guidelines especially in regards to employment. Childcare Centres and their different policies also use language such as 'inclusive environments' (YMCA, PLASP, Humber College Childcare Centres and many more). But I argue that this is a subtle way that childcare centres use to bring in parents and their children with disabilities as they are allocated more funding if they are able to create space for a child with a disability at their centres. So claiming that they create inclusion and diversity within their centres is just a façade. But my question again is, 'Inclusion and diversity for who'? YMCA of Greater Toronto, who have received multiple awards in Toronto as the "Greater Toronto's Top 2015 Employer, 2015 Best Diversity Employers, 2015 Top Employer for Young People and other awards, boast highly of their accomplishment on their website, but I wonder what the indicators are and if it includes race, gender and or disability inclusion of their staffs. PLASP childcare centre claims that:

Non-discriminatory hiring practices are supported in order to give individuals of all racial and religious backgrounds the opportunity for employment. We believe that everyone has worth and value and all staff are entitled to be respected, supported and treated fairly by their co-workers and supervisors. (PLASP, 2015, n.p).

Such policies also permeates through all the other childcare centres in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

Theorizing the Social Relations of ECE

Theorizing Gender/Gendering in ECE

Gender inequality has been on the agenda of both local and international political stages in recent media, with this in mind, gender (racialized women specifically) have since historically been oppressed and taken advantage of. This has therefore created a systemic struggle. These never ending struggles “for women and minorities to achieve success have increasingly inspired diversity scholars to argue for the importance of equality” (Shore et al, 2010, p. 3). As I have already mentioned above, women have been seen to be gentle, and nurturing hence being placed in the direction of care giving with minimal wage. This then places women in a precarious location “as passive victims of their bodies, of their ideas, of men or of capitalism” (Armstrong & Connelly. 1989, p. 5). But the question is why should this paper isolate the issues of racialized female oppression within the ECE field and why now? The answer is simple, but not that simple to getting it through those who are white hegemony and are male/female in powerful places. As hooks (1989) stated “I had to face ways these issues [as they are] ...intimately connected to intense personal [emotion]” (p. 203), and when that’s the case, it is easy to become one with those that I am privileged to be part of as Registered Early Childhood Educator recognized as professionals. Several studies have made one aware that gender in itself is socially constructed (see Kelan 2009, Gamarnikow, 1983, Glenn 2002 and others), which means that gender which was constructed by the white male hegemony has its own category about who can fit into that categorization or which body is allowed in the normative space.

To help conceptualize the field, Service Canada made one aware that the field of caretaking and teaching children good behavior is filled with majority gendered racialized and immigrant workers but with some form of education and professional registration:

According to census and National Household Survey data, women held more than 96% of the jobs in this occupation in 2011, a percentage that has been fairly stable since 1991. The annual employment income (\$25,842) shown in the "Characteristics" section of the "Statistics" applies only to the 50% of people in this occupation who worked full time and full-year in 2010. The average employment income for those who did not work full time and full-year was \$18,113.....(n.p)

College and university graduates will be given preference to fill educator positions, and educator assistant opportunities will go to candidates who meet the basic requirements of the position, usually a high school diploma and child care experience. In either case, few positions will be filled by unemployed early childhood educators and assistants with experience, as the unemployment rate in this occupation is very low. A number of positions may be filled by immigrants. The fact that the percentage of immigrants in this occupation in 2011 was slightly higher as that of all occupations (19% compared with 14%, according to National Household Survey data) shows that positions are accessible to newcomers. (Service Canada, 2015, n.p)

Knowing this provides confirmation on why the field of ECE should be creating a more inclusive and diverse space that not only speaks for children but also social justice for the bodies that look after the children. Service Canada (2015) also concurred that “This kind of work with children usually attracts many candidates. Regulations, however, require early childhood centres, still commonly referred to as "day care centres", to increasingly hire candidates with very specific training” (n.p), making it sound as if immigrants will not be bringing enough skills to teach or care for white hegemonic children.

Evelyn Glenn (2002) has been one of the authors that has extensively researched on how racialized gendered bodies have been misused within labour:

The concept of gender thus provides an overarching framework from which to view historical, cultural, and situational variability in definitions of womanhood and manhood, men and women, and in their relative power and political status. If one accepts gender as variable, then one must acknowledge that it is never fixed but is continually constituted and reconstructed. (p. 8).

This reconstruction of womanhood and manhood was more visible dating back to the 1800s which created an “unfree labor”....”the category of unfree labor thus became racialized as non-white at the same time that free labor was racialized as white” (Glenn, 2002, p. 56). This shift

also continued to see women as domestic workers “because their common law marriage contract obligated wives to provide labor for their husbands” (Glenn 2002, p. 56).

This shift of women embodying and providing labour for their husbands also encompasses both emotional and physical labour. This allows one to understand the binary of shared emotional duties of women within their home as a wife and I argue now also within their work as carers. To make sense of these double roles and to visualize the dichotomy that women find their self within this system, Chancer & Watkins (2006) helped place this trajectory into context:

Lets imagine that the worker did not leave...her job at the end of a work day but rather returned home withher boss to sleep and possibly have sex: how might this affect the possibilities of workers organizing as a group to overcome the subordination they experienced in terms of class. (p. 37).

This just shows how deep the issue of gender is, and to synthesize it to ECE, “their jobs entailed [not just pleasing their homes, but also] pleasing their” white female bosses (Chancer & Watkins, 2006, p. 47). And this means that majority of the “women in the context of [immigrants]”.....are women from poorer countries and are often compelled, for economic reasons, to import ‘love and care’ to children they care for in richer places so as to support their own children left at home” (Chancer and Watkins, 2006, p. 47). And this I argue can be emotionally draining for the woman whose professional standard of practices requires her to provide a “Caring and Nurturing Relationships that Support Learning” (CECE, 2011, p. 11). I mean how is this possible without emotional supports from both the white hegemonic bosses and in a larger context the capitalist state that continues to milk every dime that they make in a system that is already not viewing care work as important. This is why I argue that inclusive and diversity for who and why. It is important that the people in power realize that care work is not just about taking care of children

but also understanding the different intersection that the gendered racialized bodies that they are bosses over need better support than just a professional designation.

Theorizing Race/Racism in ECE

Another way that an oppressive culture has been built within the Early Childhood Education field is the racism that racialized educators experience especially in the case of black vs. white ECEs. As a racialized (black) gendered educator, I have experienced racism in several ways that have made me question and wonder why racialized bodies are even hired to be in the field of educating children of hegemonic groups in the first place. Racism in the field occurs in subtle ways that goes unquestioned, hence creating a norm or becoming part of the norm. The Ontario Human Rights Commission Act (2005) helped one better understand racism clearly:

Racism differs from simple prejudice in that it has also been tied to the aspect of power, i.e. the social, political, economic and institutional power that is held by the dominant group in society. In Canada and Ontario, the institutions that have the greatest degree of influence and power, including governments, the education system, banking and commerce, and the justice system are not, at this time, fully representative of racialized persons, particularly in their leadership. Racism often manifests in negative beliefs, assumptions and actions. However, it is not just perpetuated by individuals. It may be evident in organizational or institutional structures and programs as well as in individual thought or behaviour patterns. Racism oppresses and subordinates people because of racialized characteristics. It has a profound impact on social, economic, political and cultural life. (p. 13)

Racism occurs sometimes when parents of children in our care come into the centre and would rather speak to the “white coloured” colleague about their children’s day instead of speaking me the “racialized body” educator. An instance where I experienced such violence and exclusion was when a mother in a privileged position came in to pick up her daughter. I greeted her at the door, and she went straight to my white colleague to ask how her daughter’s day went. My white colleague answered the child’s mother by saying that she was sorry and that the ECE in charge of the preschool room is Evelyn, hence she will need to ask her (Evelyn) about her

(mother) child's day. When my colleague made her aware that I was in charge, she clearly ignored my presence and walked out of the room without asking me about her child. I was fuming, knowing that I couldn't call her on it or say anything to her regarding her racist behavior, since my education as an ECE taught me to be a passive sponge that absorbs everything that is thrown at me without questioning it.

As soon as she left the room with her daughter, I ran into my supervisor's office and explained everything that occurred with the parent in my classroom. To make matters worse, my supervisor brushed it off by making me feel like it's just in my head and that she doesn't see that particular parent behaving as such and this act solidifies the OHRC's quote stated above. It also helps confirm that institutions and leaders are not representing racialized bodies enough to create a more inclusive and diverse work environment. This made me also understand the "victim blaming" narrative that I have always heard about, but had never experienced it so vividly until now. Victim blaming is defined by *The Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime (2009)* as "a devaluing act that occurs when the victim(s) of a crime or an accident is held responsible — in whole or in part — for the crimes that have been committed against them" (p. 2) and this was exactly what was happening to me. The Ontario Human Rights Commission also made one aware of some of the myths that are placed on individuals experiencing some form of racial discrimination: "Racialized people play the "race card" to manipulate people or systems to get what they want, racialized people are too sensitive, tend to overreact or have a chip on their shoulder" (p. 17). I was blamed for thinking too deep or being too sensitive about an act of racism that a white privileged parent threw at me. This racist incident is not the first, and it will not be the last as the issue of racism and how as educators we deal with it is not part of the Early Childhood Education Field curriculum and teaching. So, in all honesty, can I place all the blame

on the supervisor? This has become the norm within the field and I argue that it is still persistent to date. As the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) (2008) stated, “It is no coincidence that communities which historically experienced racial discrimination continue to be placed on the lowest rungs of the social, economic, political and cultural ladder in Canada” (p. 8); but the dilemma is that nothing has been done to change such stressful oppression.

I state again the question from above, “why should race or racism be placed in the same space as Early Childhood Education”? It is simple, a field that teaches all educators to be inclusive and diverse without providing the tools on how to be ‘inclusive and diverse’, but as I argue, inclusion to what or for who? And secondly, the OHRC (2005) also made one aware that “acknowledging and understanding racism as a historical and current reality in Canadian society is critical” (p. 12). It becomes easy to brush off the issue of race by treating it as not happening or not important to look at or by compacting it and integrating it into the “inclusion and diversity” model, but I also argue that unpacking the issue of race is very important to the field that is said to teach good behaviour to future generations. Creating a space for race and racism within the field matters especially for “racial injustice, to which [blacks].....and other racially marginalized groups have been subjected [to]” (Orelus, 2013, p. 574). As also socially constructed, speaking about race within the ECE field “has much to do with the way many [racialized women in the field] are treated” (Orelus, 2013, p. 574) even by white privileged hegemonic parents. Creating a space in the field that speaks or teaches race and racism not only allows one to understand the implications it has on not dealing with it when it arises, but it also allows educators to know how to organize around it when the issue arises from children oppressing each other because of their different cultural or racial background. Also teaching

about race “informs social construction of race and the institutionalization of racism, and their long standing negative effects on People of color” (as cited by Orelus, 2013).

Race and racism are concepts describing two separate but interlocking social processes. In an oppressive state, one cannot happen without the other. Orelus (2013) argues that race and racism are the “cause of the inhuman socioeconomic, psychological, and political condition of People of Color” (p. 581) especially within the field. Drawing from this quote and others that are already stated in this paper, one is meant to understand that racism and race has created a “Us” vs “Them” culture that continues to oppress people of colour who have been historically being seen to be “genetically inferior to whites” (as cited by Orelus, 2013, p. 282). As a black educator, I notice these segregations within the field, especially now that I am more conscious about it and more aware of the different oppressions that is created and injected in professional culture. Policies that govern ECEs do unconsciously or consciously omit the word race or racism but instead elude to using the words “inclusiveness and diversity”. The policies that mention race do not make mention on what to do with racism or what happens to people of diverse race and this I argue is a form of institutional containment. Containment is said to be “a strategy used to silence the oppositional voices that Irvine (2011), calls ‘noxious materials’ excised through ‘linguistic isolation’ and that insulate the speaker from something disvalued or dangerous” (as cited by Gabel & Miskovic, 2014, p. 1147). And this is what happens within the ECE education system, within labour practices and between parents-teacher relationships.

An example of it happening which I already stated above from my own personal experience with a child’s parent who took it upon herself to deem me not worthy of being the head teacher of her child’s class because I was black and my white supervisor switched the situation on me making me feel like an ‘angry black woman’ looking for sympathy. How do I

work professionally in such hostile ‘color-blind racist’ environment? Orelus (2013) cited “the dominant racial ideology as the mechanisms and practices for keeping blacks and other racial minorities at the bottom of the hell” (p. 582). This form of racism I argue is more dangerous as it becomes the issue of the oppressed instead of the oppressor, because the oppressed starts to internalize the ideology that whites do not see colours “so it is me” (the oppressed) who has the issue and who needs to change. These feeling of internalized racism or the feeling of internalized oppression can make one feel like they are at the bottom of hell with a burning sensation that makes them want to explode but instead have to show professionalism. Several researchers have claimed how internalizing oppression can be detrimental to one’s health (Houssais, 2005, Campbell, 2008), especially knowing that these same bodies are in a position of a carer.

To prove that racism is not just in racialized people’s heads, a 2009 General Social Survey (GSS) found that:

Visible minorities, regardless of gender, more often reported experiencing discrimination or unfair treatment than non-visible minorities. One-quarter of both visible minority sexes in Canada reported discrimination or unfair treatment during the five years preceding the survey in 2009.... The most common reasons given as the basis of the experience of discrimination or unfair treatment were "ethnicity or culture" and "race or colour". (Statistics Canada, 2015, n.p).

This quote helps one understand that it is easier for visible minorities to experience discrimination and unfair treatments based on how they look, the countries that they come from, their language and worst of all their colour, meaning all odds are against them. It was also proven that “Visible minority women were more likely to be in a low income situation than non-visible minority women. Of the visible minority women in an economic family, 28% were below the low-income cut-off before tax” and this can be worst “When immigrant status was taken into account, 22% of visible minority immigrant women were in low-income situations, using after tax calculations” (Statistics Canada, 2015, n.p). I argue that this is because most of them are

stuck in care service work such as childcare “Black (31%), Filipino (39%) and South Asian (28%) women were most likely to be employed in sales and services” (Service Canada, 2015, n.p). I also argue that this is because of the capitalist pressure that puts them in a precarious situation of making ends meet and this is injustice and a Human Rights violation that no one seems to be paying any attention to.

The injustices that gendered immigrants especially black women face in the search for a better life leads them to living precariously and therefore creating a determinant to health. Denton et al (2002), made one aware that “paid work contributes to women’s mental health problems of stress, anxiety, and depression” (p. 331). And this they claim is more central within “community-based health and social services providers” (Denton et al, 2002. P. 331). To help place in context, stress in most social service work such as care work have been shown to “manifest in symptoms such as nausea, fatigue, problems falling asleep, anxiety, asthma, headaches, blurred vision, backaches, heart disease, diabetes, stomach and bowel problems, rheumatoid arthritis, cynicism, irritability, unhappiness, and burnout” (Denton et al, 2002, p. 331). It is therefore not un-reasonable to argue that most of these care workers have late onset disabilities that are developed during their career journey. Denton et al (2002) went further by stating some of the different sources of stress such as “feelings of powerlessness and little impact of respect to....policy, repetitive monotonous,.....stagnancy....racist attitudes....sexism.....lack of institutional and organizational support, lack of communication.....and low wages” (p. 331), and all these as they mentioned leads to detriment of job satisfaction and I add, determinant of health. But to end this section, it is important to include that the OHRC (2005) makes one aware that:

At a societal level, racism is evident in cultural and ideological expressions that underlie and sustain dominant values and beliefs. It is evident in a whole range of concepts, ideas, images and institutions that provide the framework of interpretation and meaning for racialized thought in society. It is communicated and reproduced through agencies of socialization and cultural transmission such as the mass media (in which racialized persons are portrayed as different from the norm or as problems), schools, universities, religious doctrines and practices, art, music and literature. It is reflected in everyday language; for example “whiteness” is associated with overwhelmingly positive connotations, while “blackness” is associated with negative connotations. This form of racism is maintained through socialization as children begin to absorb these beliefs and values at an early age. (OHRC, 2005, p.14).

This quote helps solidify my arguments on racism as it can and will trickle down to children if care is not taken. This paper cannot be completed unless a space is created for disabled gendered racialized bodies experiencing multiple layered oppression within the ECE field.

Theorizing Ableism in ECE

Just recently, as I was passionately speaking to someone in a privileged position with her own children about my research, she stated that she can tell that I am passionate about bringing change to the field, but she then made a comment that made me start thinking that, the ableist culture within the ECE field was not just being created by people within, but also from outsiders. She made me aware that she cannot allow a person with a disability to take care of her children, insinuating that maybe disability is transferable or, for a better use of word, contagious. So my question is, “how can I help break such insider and outsider oppressive thinking” that continues to segregate and alienate people with disability in a field that is also packed with racialized bodies? With my lived experiences from the field, it is now rather obvious for me to bring into light the different conundrum that is creating oppressive spaces within the field of ECE by creating awareness especially from the leadership all the way down to parents. But how could liberation and awareness be possible in an institution where a majority of instructors and professors teaching ECEs the appropriate etiquettes of an ECE are from the hegemonic race with

‘normative body’? And this is why I concluded that the field of Early Childhood Education (ECE) is dis/ableist, racist and patriarchal while creating precarious employment and spaces which needs to stop.

As already stated above, Goodley helped one understand the interconnectedness between ableism and disableism because the end product of both concepts is figuring out or weeding out the defective body that does not favor or will not be a product that will benefit the capitalist system. And this is why this section will use both ableism and disableism interchangeably to show how it has persisted in the field of ECE. It is easy to blame a disabling/ableist act on an organization or institution, but it will do better justice if one can prove such acts permeated history which then became the norm or the backbone of how different cultures view disability or impairment. As mentioned by Oliver & Barnes (2012), the Greeks were one of the first groups to practice infanticide in search of perfection and this they claim dates back to the second century AD (p. 12):

The child should be perfect in all its parts, limbs and senses, and have passages that are not obstructed, including the ears, throat urethra and anus. Its natural movements be neither slow nor feeble, its limbs bend and stretch, its size and shape should be appropriate, and it should respond to natural stimuli. (as cited by Oliver & Barnes, 2012, p. 12).

This is a case where perfection of one’s body starts from one’s entry to the world, an infant entering into a culture that sees blemishes as deviance can end up cast away without being given the chance or choice of livelihood. A child with an impairment or imperfection was also “seen as ‘Changelings’ – the devil’s substitutes for human children” (Oliver & Barnes, 2012, p. 12), which in many cultures were also blamed on the “mother’s involvement with sorcery and witchcraft” (Oliver & Barnes, 2012, p. 12). So the question is, how have these negativities about

disabled people with or people with impairments created the ableist and disablist culture that is propagated within the ECE field today?

As already stated above, Early Childhood Care could involve running around after children among other responsibilities such as planning and making sure that children in their care meet their developmental milestones before a certain age where they are ready to enter into mainstream Full Day education. This then requires ECEs to be inclusive and diverse to the different dis/abilities of children in their care and because of such broad requirements, to running and planning for children, people with disabilities/impairments are not deemed fit to embody the job description. As stated by Oliver and Barnes (2012), “the historically located historical sequence’.....is a cultural context to identity formation” (p. 10-11), and this formation has created the culture in which an imperfect body is not fit enough whether physically or mentally to care for children of the future. The created culture or perceptions of abled bodied supervisors have therefore been tainted, which has made it difficult for individuals without an “atypical” body to break through disabling systemic barriers. As Oliver & Barnes (2012) mentioned, “Cultures therefore establish both the criteria for what is considered ‘normal’ and typical, and also what is viewed as ‘abnormal’, different and unacceptable” (p. 11), hence only perfect bodies are seen as capable of joining the professional labeled ECE field as they meet the capitalist commodified body.

Even though “impairmenthas existed in all known human societies since at least the Neanderthal period....an idealized representation of” the perfect educator is still the vision that every supervisor and/or parents envision to be an ECE. During the Victorian years, Fielder (1981) made one aware that:

Not until the rise of sentimentalism and the obsession with the excluded and the marginal, which climaxes in the reign of Victoria, did the blind, the deaf, and the halt become major characters in large numbers of books written by authors and intended for readers who, thinking of themselves as non-handicapped, are able to regard the handicapped as essentially alien, absolute others. In such a context, fellow human beings with drastically impaired perception, manipulation and ambulation tend, of course, to be stereotyped, either negatively or positively; but in any case rendered as something more or less human. (as cited by Oliver & Barnes, 2012, p. 14).

This quote helps one understand that the visualization of people with disabilities within a text was placed for humour which created a less of a human imagery for individuals with impairments. But the question is, why should this negative imagery still be integral to the extent of displacing people with disabilities from ECE policies? Well as one can see the content within the standard of practice and ethics of the College of Early Childhood Educators and those policies from the schools listed above, it is visible that people with disabilities were excluded and in some cases, they would be accommodated with the approval of a special needs consultant. This alone would turn any individual away from entering into the field because it makes one aware that their bodies' attributes imperfection which therefore might not fit into the able bodied identity formation.

To place how people with disabilities have been marginalized in Canada's disabling ableist labour, Statistics Canada (2012) helped one understand that:

In 2011, the unemployment rate of persons aged 25 to 64 with disabilities was 11%, compared with 6% for people who did not report having a disability. The participation rate—the percentage of the population employed or seeking employment—was 55% for persons with disabilities, compared with 84% for persons without a disability

And this is in a country with over:

2.1 million people aged 25 to 64, or 11% of the population in this age group, reported being limited in their daily activities because of a mental or physical disability—conditions related to seeing, hearing, mobility, flexibility, dexterity, pain, learning, development, mental/psychological disorder or memory.

Even though the above quote brings forth some concrete statistics to visualize disability populations, I argue that this statistics might not be conclusive especially for those who refuse the label of disability or do not report their impairments because of fear of stigma within their community or the barriers they will have to face to claim disability. Marjorie et al (1995) made one aware in their research that “there is a large difference between the employment rates of disabled and nondisabled women” (p. 555) and this creates wage discrimination. They were also conclusive that their research results shows ‘that women with disabilities face a double burden of gender-and disability related discrimination’ which I argue is the case and the culture that has been created within the field of ECE. The ableist culture that has permeated within the field could also be because of parents’ perspectives on impairments/disability. This takes one back to my dear friend who bluntly told me that she would never allow a person with any impairments to watch over or to educate her children. This statement made me start thinking, do parents also watch for disabilities/impairments in teachers when they are asked to come in to the centres for a tour? What about impairments like mine and others that are not visible?

Disabling acts are also visible within architectural built childcare spaces that are constructed by able bodied individuals for able bodied people. This means that people with disabilities/impairments also “feel estranged and oppressed by facets of the built environment and generally feel powerless to do anything about it” (Imrie & Kumar, 1998, p. 357). This means that disabled people were not thought of worthy to include them within spaces that should be accessible for parents, children and educators with disabilities especially when they use accessible aids to get around. And this I argue is another reason why people with disabilities are limited or continue to face discrimination for employment “Two-thirds of... [the] public believe that discrimination limits disabled persons’ opportunities for employment” (Imrie & Kumar,

1998, p. 357). Imrie & Kumar (1998) also made one aware that “women with disabilities were subject to both disability and gender discrimination” (p. 559). Now adding race, ethnicity and other oppressive classifications that women embody can result in one being placed in “multiple oppressive” spaces and these I argue will create more negative attitudes especially if the disability is a mental illness. These are some of the reasons why the social model of disability have been heavily criticized. This can also be related back to the response that I received from the male supervisor who bluntly told me that the mental health/wellbeing of educators is not the issue of the centres, but rather an individual issue. His statement unfortunately mimics and concur with Michael Oliver’s argument “that exclusionary processes were reinforced by the state through ideologies of individualism (disability is an individual rather than societal problem” and medicalization (the need for disability to be treated)” (as cited by Kitchin, 2010, p. 344) and these views/perspectives have rather helped “maintained capitalist concerns, with the experiences of disability determined by the economy” (as cited by Kitchin, 2010, p. 344).

Theorizing Precarity in ECE

Precarity within the field of ECE is a common language that are usually internalized. Starting out in the field, as a racialized person with children and a partner, it became obvious that being in the field was taking a toll not just on my body but also on my family. Financially I was working basically hand to mouth trying to support whatever income my partner brings home. Getting up in the morning became systemic and structured for me; I have to make sure that my gendered roles as the mother of the house are met, following specific rituals to make sure that everyone is fed, I pack lunches, and drop children to school before I head to work already tired. I am always fatigued before getting to work, but will have to mentally leave the tiredness in the car so as to begin a new role as a care giver of other people’s children. Again the ritual starts all

over by making sure that my classroom is set up with developmentally appropriate activities for the children in my care. I also make sure that I am creating that “inclusive and diverse” space that so permeates within the centre’s policies.

During the time that parents start to drop off their children can be a time of struggle where some children are screaming because of the attachment and not wanting to detach from their parents/care giver. These are the hardest part of my daily ritual as I am playing my different roles and it takes a toll on me before the end of the day. I am usually already exhausted by the time I pick up my children from my mother who has been my care giver because we could not afford placing our children into childcare, obviously because my pay is only a buffer for all the bills. By this time the race/ritual starts again, start dinner, help my children with homework, get them ready for bed, prepare for the next day and also lets one not forget that I will also have to perform my intimate gender role with my partner (which sometimes I make up excuses so to be left alone) . By the end of the day when I have fully played out all my roles, I am mentally and physically drained, knowing that the fight continues till the day I am no more. The lack of sustainable income within the home sometimes brings forth arguments that can create extra stress and as the mother and the one that is earning less, I am always the one internalizing these stresses and arguments hoping to bring peace within my home. But the question is, how long can a person go through these internalized stresses? This is why I argue that the field brings forth a precarious life style especially for racialized immigrant women who as statistics already showed above are mostly stuck in low income and disabling employments.

My situation in the field speaks for many other ECEs as research shows that “more and more workers are earning less money, working...too much...[and] are also in precarious social locations because the growth of precarious employment is gendered and racialized” (Cranford et

al. 2003, p. 6). Different situations such as mine are not necessarily due to the lack of previous higher education, as research made one aware that “in 2006, the proportion of recent immigrants with a university degree was twice as high as among native-born Canadians. Despite this high level of schooling, several indicators reflect difficulties that recent immigrants entering the Canadian labour market encounter” (Galarneau & Morissette, 2008, p. 5). This I argue leads to stress, family separations which then equates to precarious living for the entire family. Such exclusion from the labour market has been attributed to more than just one factor, but the most obvious one is the “low rate of recognition of their credentials, which is partly reflected in the large proportion of immigrants with university degrees in jobs with low educational requirements, such as retail sales, [care giving],...cashier, truck drivers, office clerks, and taxi drivers” (Galarneau & Morissette, 2008, p. 5). Another reason why immigrants experience displacements and exclusion from the labour market can be related to the fact that recent immigrants are “more likely [not] to have English and French as their mother tongue” (Galarneau & Morissette, 2008, p. 6), meaning they might have an accent which make it easier to classify them as not ‘Canadian or Canadian Enough’.

Precarity is said to have different layers and dimensions leading to severity that creates unequal work/lifestyle and they can be categorised as Cranford, (2003) cited:

1. The degree of certainty of continuing employment; here, time horizons and risk of job loss are emphasized.
2. The second dimension is control over the labour process – this dimension is linked to the presence or absence of a trade union and, hence control over working conditions, wages and pace of work.
3. The third dimension is the degree of regulatory protection through union representation or the law.
4. The fourth dimension is income level, a critical element since a given job may be secure in the sense that it is stable and long-term but precarious in that the wage may still be insufficient for the worker to maintain herself/ himself as well as dependants. (p. 9).

From this analysis, it is obvious that Early Childhood Educators fits into majority of the four dimensions that are listed above especially knowing that research have already claimed that “many workers in Canada engage in employment situations that differ from the normative or ‘taken-for-granted’ model of the standard employment relationship” (Cranford, 2003, p. 7). The field has unfortunately also created some hegemonic structure that is favoring some ECEs within their place of work especially those working in the school boards requiring ECEs to work side-by-side with school board teachers. These ECEs are at an advantage as their pay and benefits are way over the normal ECEs pay working in childcare centres; the ECEs working and hired by the school board also are at an advantage in which they are represented by unions that are making sure that their pay and benefits are up to par with their work load. And these I argue eliminates them from non-standard work even though other intersections such as the over-representation of women and racialized bodies might still be in the school environment. Let one not forget that their positions working side by side teachers that are mostly represented by a majority white hegemonic hierarchy still can bring forth some form of precarity that oppresses on a more silent level:

Both childcare and kindergarten teachers report that their respective fields are characterized by differences in pay, working conditions, education and prestige. Moreover, when professionals from different disciplines collaborate, there is the potential for the professional with greater access to symbolic resources (e.g., pay and prestige) to dominate the other. (As cited by Gibson & Pelletier, n.y, p. 3).

And this unfortunately can create precarious living as Wilson et al (2011) called it, “working rough” (n.p) lifestyle; a lifestyle that not only affects the ECE but also people around them such as their families and the children that they care for.

It is unfortunate that even though school board ECEs are at a lower end of precarious employment, they are better off than those working in the childcare centres who are “working

rough and living poor” (Wilson, et al, 2011) with lower pay, and no bargaining or wiggle room for negotiation. The quote below provides one with the different dimensions of precarity that can be applicable to childcare centre ECEs, as it can be argued that:

Employers’ flexibility but takes stable and secure work away from workers. As a result, workers may have to piece together several jobs or short contracts to make ends meet. They may have to work under the table and accept pay in cash. Although many precarious workers’ pay taxes, they may not qualify for Employment Insurance (EI) and other benefits. (Wilson et al, 2011, p. 11).

And this is the culture in the field that should be classified as the most important, especially because ECEs provide “age-appropriate program planning to facilitate experiences that promote each child’s physical, cognitive, language, emotional, social and creative development and well-being, providing opportunities for them to contribute to formative assessment (assessment for learning) and evaluation of the children’s learning” (Ontario Ministry of Education, (2010, n.p). So the question is, how can racialized gendered bodies work in precariousness while also trying to piece together their home and their health and still be able to meet all that is required from them at work? And can precarity be ended or should I say, can a precarious lifestyle end for racialized, gendered, and disabled educators? This is a question that needs an in-depth ethnographic research, which will allow one to understand the different ways in which precarity is personalized/individualized especially as it is based on an individual’s family dynamics and immigration status.

Understanding Inclusion and Diversity

Since this paper has generously analyzed the different forms of oppression while theorizing each of it with concepts that allowed for a better understanding of the issues that continues to create holes for ECEs today, this section will help tie it all together by providing some understanding on inclusion and diversity and why the field of ECE should dissect those

two concepts to better understand or fit its meanings within the field. Several researches have concluded that:

Diversity research in the past was dominated by a focus on the ‘problem’ associated with diversity such as discrimination, bias, affirmative action, and tokenism.....[while] “the concept of inclusion has been nascent in the organizational literature for the past decade, with comparable streams of research occurring earlier in social work, and social psychology. (Shore, 2010, p. 1-2).

It is rather surprising that several policies and guidelines in the ECE field have adopted these concepts only relating to children with disabilities rather than broadening and defining it to include the educators themselves while protecting their own. And even with the recognition of these two concepts, “more progress has not been made in understanding and promoting inclusion [and diversity for all] in the work place” (Shore, 2010, p. 20). The concept of inclusion which has recently “replaced the integration concept from the 1970s” (Arnesen et al, 2007, p. 98), which was then “embedded in a discourse of diversity and inclusion underlining the rights for all to belong to a ‘normal’ [hegemonic] social community” (Arnesen et al, 2007, p. 107) simultaneously became the culture in the ECE field. I argue that both inclusion and diversity that are embedded in all ECE policies have “become a cliché – obligatory in the discourse of all right-thinking people” (Arnesen et al, 2007, p. 98).

Research has also shown that:

Diversity has been used to describe the composition of groups” within the ECE workforce (for example, diversity is considered to be a characteristic of groups that refers to demographic differences among members)..... [while] inclusion has been used to describe worker participation and empowerment. (Roberson, 2006, p. 214-215).

But the broadness of both inclusion and diversity makes one’s “views and feelings towards people who are different from them-and an organizational dimension-management’s policies and procedures targeted towards women and other [vulnerable] minorities” who do not seem to fit the set personalized norm (Roberson, 2006, p. 216). This makes it easy for one to claim that the

concepts of inclusion and diversity that has become the culture of the ECE field is therefore created as an effect “of power placed within discourses of governance, equity and knowledge.....[which one can argue] may mask continued exclusion” and oppression of oppressed groups (Arnesen et al, 2007, p. 100). So I argue that the concepts of inclusion and diversity is a political concept, but should it be the “common value, a principal towards which our institutions should progress”? (Arnesen et al, 2007. P. 107).

Laws and Charters

Now what? Should be the question to be asked after the extensive theorization of the field of ECE. Theorizing the field makes one understand that one’s ablest, or societal perspectives and actions only creates nothing but a disabling culture for people of minority groups. This is why this section will align the different laws, legislations and policies that oppressed individuals can use by building their own agency to advocate for themselves or for their colleagues. First is the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (CCRF) which was finally signed and came in full force in 1985; the Charter has been the corner stone for individuals with disabilities as it has been used alongside cases since its inception. The sections of the CCRF that has been mostly used to argue is the Guarantee of Rights and Freedoms section 1, which states that “The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the rights and freedoms set out in its subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society” (Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982, p. 70). The other part of the CCRF that has been used in court is section 7, which is the Legal rights and it states that “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the rights not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice” (Canadian

Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982, p. 70). The last part is Equality Rights section 15 which I argue is one of the most important of the Charter and of the land; it states that:

Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and , in particular, without discrimination based on race, national, or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability. (Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982, p. 70).

But the only time one can claim that their Charter of Rights was not recognized is when it has to do with the government/state of the land and or contracted government organizations, such as childcare centres who are somehow agents of the cities in which they reside. On behalf of the children in their care, the city pays subsidies for children and families that are not in the position to afford childcare payments. Most of the childcare regulations are also provided by the City, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health, Ministry of Children and Youth Services and all other government bodies. This places government as being responsible for infringing on one's equality and/or equitable right.

As stated by the CCRF every individual means, every discrimination that is based on one's race, national, ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age mental or physical disability which should not pose as a disabling barrier for individuals who embody one or more of the listed traits. It is not therefore ironic that the Human Rights Commission included in their documents some similar but very distinct characteristics of people that are commonly oppressed, and they are:

- Those with accent or manner of speech,
- Peoples' Name(s),
- Clothing and grooming,
- Diet,
- Beliefs and practices,
- Leisure preferences,
- Places of origin citizenship. (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2008, p. 11).

The Ontario Human Rights Commission has provided extensive rights and the duty for employers to accommodate a person with a disability while eliminating any disabling barriers that might hinder an individual from participating equally or from being treated with dignity. It is therefore imperative to include that some of the sections in this act are built upon *The United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Disabled Persons*, which one can argue is also built upon the Disability Social Model. The duty to accommodate s.3.1.1 basically means:

Accommodation must be provided in a manner that most respect the dignity of the person, if to do so does not create undue hardship. Dignity includes consideration of how accommodation is provided and the individual's own participation in the process" (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2008, p. 1).

S. 3.1.2 Individualized Accommodation –...Each person with a disability must be considered, assessed and accommodated individually

S. 3.1.3 Integration and Full Participation – Integration and full participation for persons with disabilities requires barrier-free and inclusive designs and removal of existing barriers. Preventing and removing barriers means persons with disabilities should be able to access their environment and face the same duties and requirements as everyone else with dignity and without impediment. Where barriers continue to exist because it is impossible to remove those barriers at a given point in time, then accommodation should be provided to the extent possible, short of undue hardship.....Employment, housing, services and facilities must be built or adopted to accommodate individuals with disabilities in a way that promotes their integration and full participation.

S 3.1.3(a) Design By Inclusion – Integration requires up front barrier-free design and inclusion-by-design in order to fully integrate persons with disabilities into all aspects of society as much as possible.

S 3.1.3 (b) Removing Barriers – Organizations should understand and be aware of the possibility that systemic barriers may exist within their organization and actively seek to identify and remove them. Barrier removal maximizes integration with one's environment so ideally everyone is able to participate fully and with dignity. (OHRC, 2005, p. 2-4).

And this is why it important to teach and integrate these listed laws and legislation into the ECE curriculum as it makes future ECEs and already Registered ECEs aware of the different protections that they have as employees. The OHRC also made it clear that the cost of accommodating a person with some sort of impairment should not be used as an excuse for

putting in required accessible architectural spaces as, “one must be wary of putting too low a value on accommodating the disabled. It is all too easy to cite increased cost as a reason for refusing to accord the disabled equal treatment” (OHRC, 2005, p. 12), as “organizations can make use of outside resources in order to meet their duty to accommodate and must first do so before claiming undue hardship” (OHRC, 2005, p. 14) .

My Final Thoughts

In this paper, it is evident that all the concepts that were used intersect and are all linked to oppression of the ‘weaker’ and ‘most vulnerable’ groups in our society. Some of the research used in this paper dates back to the 1800s, making it obvious that the issues that are exposed in this paper permeated through recent history and are still manifesting within the ‘weaker’ groups in today’s society. My goal was to critically analyse the power structures that fuels the field of ECE and how texts and pictures of all governed ECE institutions and childcare hiring policies are a form of containment, hence creating systemic and oppressive barriers for those already in the field and also those interested in working in the field. What I have noticed as Gabel et al, (2014) will call it, “‘the way things are’ or ‘what we have always said or done,’ thus evoking a governing culture” (pg. 1148); the norm is trickling from the top-down (Macro, Meso and Micro level) and are therefore evoking a certain disabling culture within the field I so passionately love which needs to stop. The word inclusive and diversity should not be used loosely to make policy sound great and we should allow for a space where children can see the different professional bodies. This way, we are exposing them to a more diverse and inclusive culture that showcases different bodies and minds of adults in the profession, instead of narrating bodies as to what they cannot do or limiting individual’s potential . It should show in our texts (policies), pictures and

our environment which will help eliminate the invisible power at play that is segregating and oppressing while creating a 'WE vs. THEM' culture.

Future research should focus on narratives and the experiences of ECEs working within the field experiencing or noticing the disabling, ablest, racist, and precarious culture; this will allow and push for a culture change that can also influence hiring and Early Childhood Education Care policies and guidelines. It will also allow for a curriculum and policy change, that embodies the real definition of inclusiveness and diversity. Kuttai (2010) made one aware by sharing personal auto-ethnographic literature about her journey as a person with disability, becoming pregnant and raising a child. In her book *Maternity Rolls*, she quoted another writer Andrew Sparkes who wrote that "I...attempt to take you as the reader into the intimacies of my world. I hope to do this in such a way that you are stimulated to reflect upon your own life in relation to mine" (as cited by Kuttai, 2010, p. 41). This quote will not only place the readers of individual oppressed narratives into their shoes, but it will rather help to understand the daily disabling and oppressive situation that has been placed on the oppressed for generations. It will also bring disability to the forefront of policies especially how it intercepts with other disabling socially constructed cultures. Dossa (2013) also made one understand that:

If stories are listened in an appropriate way, they have the potential to effect social change. This is because when readers engage with stories and their various interpretations, new meanings are created that will reverberate in the readers' own local culture and sometimes the dominant culture as well" (p. 25)

With this quote in mind, It is therefore critical to always remember our personal/social/cultural interpretations as it is easy for oppressed groups to negatively internalize the social constructions that is laid out especially for individuals with multiple oppressions who "from the moment...she/he emerges into a world where she/he receives messages that to be disabled is to be less than" the perfect body (Campbell, 2008, p. 151). Campbell (2008) made

one understand that the “notion of internalized racism [and other forms of oppression] indicates a process whereby people of colour [gender and dis/ability] absorb and internalized aspects of racism” and other oppression (p. 154). This is the time to reconceptualize our socially constructed policies, cultures and the world in general to make it a safer haven for every individual no matter their visible and/or non-visible embodiment. Chinua Achebe (n.d) made us aware that “what a country needs to do is be fair to all its citizens - whether people are of a different ethnicity or gender” (n.d). It is my hope that this paper permeates through the Early Childhood Education field and hegemonic policy makers as change is overdue. It needs to have happened yesterday.

What is Next?

With my extensive research and the fight for a more equitable work place and space for ECEs, I have therefore come to the conclusion to start a not for profit organization that will make sure that ECEs are aware of the intersection of what it really means to embody a profession such as Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECE) while creating the space and dialogue on how solidarity can be built in order to break the systemic oppressive cultures that has been created within the field of Early Childhood Education. This has gone on too far. Gendered racialized disabled bodies should not be afraid of the hegemonic, rather we should be loud enough to ask for a pay increase, work/life balance, visibility and more equitable policies that includes us and the respect that any professionals deserve. With the latter in mind, I propose to name the not for profit – *Early Childhood Educators Without Borders (ECEWB)*. One of the reason why this type of advocacy group is needed is because ECEWB takes a different approach to understanding and analyzing oppressive cultures, oppressive spaces, and systemic oppressive disabling policies leading to oppressive precarious living; basically, we are barrier breakers

(Please see Appendix A). As Maya Angelou (n.d) puts it “Each time a woman stands up for herself, without knowing it possibly, without claiming it, she stands up for all women” (n,p). Mahatma Gandhi (n.d) reminds us to “be the change you want to see in the world” (n.p). We should not be ashamed of who we are as racialized disabled Women and as carers, rather as the Ghanaian prominent symbol reminds us to “go back and fetch for it (Sankofar)” (Ghanaian proverbs, n.d, n.p). Therefore, I stand with anyone to reclaim our work as carers but not without respect, dignity, better pay, equitable rights and the voice to stand tall and strong.

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Appendix A

Early Childhood Educators Without Borders

Mission:

To break systemic disabling and oppressive barriers for ALL educators around the globe.

Vision:

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION WITHOUT BORDERS (ECEWB) aims to Break and Bridge employment, social and disabilist barriers for Early Childhood Educators around the globe. Education and employment are a right and are entitled to everyone no matter their embodiment.

Who we are:

ECEWB is a not for profit organization that is created to empower, enlighten, elevate and break the different systemic oppressive barriers that are faced by Educators around the globe. Research has proved that racialized women especially within the Global North face extreme disadvantages at their work places as care givers and not to forget the systemic disableist policies that is to accomplish the capitalist propaganda. ECEWB will accomplish its goals by working with local and international postsecondary schools, government bodies, child care centers/schools, non-for-profit organizations and the communities to first and foremost identify their needs before working hand in hand to develop programs, and training that will meet individual and community needs.

What we do:

Professional and community Training

Advocating for and on behalf of racialized, gendered, immigrant and disabled ECEs

Policy consultation with Government agencies

Policy Evaluation and Monitoring and Field Research

Curriculum Mapping

Providing peer support for educators

Collaborating with other not for profits to break boundaries

International Graduate Field Placement

Capacity Building

Employment Mentoring

How We Stand Out:

We use frameworks that are suitable to the projects and communities, but we are grounded in other frameworks such as: Social Ecological Analysis, Social Theory, Evidence Base Practice, Intersection, Feminist, Anti-Oppression, Critical Race Theory, Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) and many more depending on the specific assignment.