

Children's Bodies in Early Childhood Education

by

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## ABSTRACT

This project is comprised of three separate papers that emerged from my involvement in the University of Victoria's Investigating Quality in Early Learning Environments Project in British Columbia. Using a postfoundational framework, this action research project valued reflective thought, collaboration, decision-making and action while bringing together researchers and stakeholders as subjects in experiential and deliberate exploratory participation in the investigation of educational practices. The aim of the project, originated by Drs. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw and Alan Pence, has been to broaden and deepen discussions on quality in early childhood education at local, regional, national, and international levels. My involvement in the project spanned an 8-month internship that included collaborating with community facilitators in the province, participating in monthly learning circle discussions with educators and researchers where we shared pedagogical narrations, reading and reflection conversations with educators and other stakeholders, connecting my own thoughts of theory and practice through reflective writing, and visiting children and educators during site visits. Each paper that unfolds stands on its own but also connects with the others. I begin with a literature review that provides a glimpse of what is known about understanding children's bodies in early childhood education. My thematic review highlights the way current empirical research questions developmental psychology's ideas about bodies. My approach comes from postfoundational reimaginings of bodies while asking how empirical research understands children's bodies. The second paper asks how government policy shapes children's bodies in early childhood education by interpreting specific sections of British Columbia's Child Care Licensing Regulations through a critical discourse analysis. I

question conformity while unpacking the institutionalized practices that control bodies, and I disrupt governmental and social power structures that regulate, normalize, and discipline bodies. Finally, the third paper unpacks my own tensions when letting go of common assumptions about bodies, while asking how early childhood education might restory the image of children's bodies. This empirical piece complexifies bodies during a particular scenario that involves risky play. The paper advocates for bodies by contesting the powers of dominant discourse and considers the ethical implications of bodily encounters, while opening space to think differently. I notice and pay deep attention to the corporeal as it explores and generates truths that bring forth creative evolution by going beyond what is possible.

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It has been an honour to participate in the IQ Project. Through collaborative conversations with facilitators and educators, our pedagogical narrations continue to provide experiences and complexities where theory and practice entangle, bringing valuable meaning to the field of early childhood education and creating ripple effects for governments, communities, families, and especially children.

## **PAPER 1. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This literature review provides an overview of empirical research about children's bodies in early childhood education. Its purpose is to present a snapshot of how postfoundational understandings of bodies inform practice in early childhood education. I use a definition of a postfoundational approach offered by Pacini-Ketchabaw, Nxumalo, Kocher, Elliot, and Sanchez (2015) to identify postfoundational understandings of bodies. These authors note that postfoundational approaches question normative assumptions and resist common ideas that often come from a developmental lens that universalizes children's bodies in early childhood education. Thus, a postfoundational theoretical approach works to open possibilities for thinking differently. I have organized my review of twelve published and peer-reviewed postfoundational early childhood education research studies into five themes: bodies and learning, bodies as a site of culture, bodies and movement, bodies expressed in art, and gendered and sexualized bodies.

### **Criteria for Inclusion in the Review**

To search for peer-reviewed literature, I began browsing articles, books, chapters, and thesis submissions available within the University of Victoria library by using the research discovery tool Summon 2.0. I used key terms such as "children's bodies in early childhood education," "bodies in early childhood education," "early childhood education bodies," and "Foucault bodies and education." I chose to include Foucault because his theories align with postfoundational understandings of children's bodies. In addition, I conducted a search in the database Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC), suggested by Galvan (2014), using search terms "children's bodies" and "young

children's bodies" and then advancing the search with "early childhood education." I also searched in Google Scholar using the same key terms as in my ERIC search, and I received several related suggestions, including "early childhood education theory practice divide," "Deleuze and Guattari early childhood education," "poststructural ideas in early childhood studies," "role and potential early childhood education," and "Reggio Emilia early childhood bodies in education." I advanced these suggestions with a further search using the term "bodies."

I focused on empirical studies describing original research. I chose peer-reviewed academic literature available in English. I eliminated common health and safety themes, such as obesity, eating habits, children's weight and height, exercise and sport, and those relating to body mass index, because I wanted to narrow my focus to understandings of children's bodies in early childhood education (classrooms) instead of looking at the science of bodies, such as the biology and physiology of bodies. I chose to exclude subjects related to children's perceptions of body size and the relationship between body weight and body skill, because these subjects stretched beyond the scope of my project. I excluded Google.com as a search tool because it brought only literature about training programs for educators, how-to guides about caring for children's health, appropriateness of rough play and challenging behaviour, and development of bodies through a psychological lens, which did not include published, peer-reviewed empirical studies.

### **Themes**

I identify and describe below five pertinent themes that highlight my assessment of the literature: bodies and learning, bodies as a site of culture, bodies and movement, bodies expressed in art, and gendered and sexualized bodies.

## **Bodies and Learning**

This theme refers to ideas related to how early childhood education researches children's learning. Several subthemes emerged about researching bodies and learning through the literature: (1) researching how bodies learn, (2) increased expectations of preacademic and self-discipline skills, and (3) the role of power in learning environments. I discuss each of these subthemes below.

### **Researching how bodies learn.**

In this subtheme I think carefully about how the early childhood education field researches learning from a postfoundational approach. Five articles in the literature question the way bodies learn. First, Parks and Schmeichel's (2014) postfoundational analysis of children's bodies during research assessment interviews is predicated on the critique that solely linguistic-focused analyses erase the "embodied power relations between majority researchers and minority children" (p. 505). Their analysis focuses on "the ways children position themselves as willing (or not), attentive (or not), and competent (or not)" (p. 505) in relation to the movement of their bodies during academic assessment. By attending to the child's shifting body, their research "enriches understanding of the ways in which discourses, subjectivities, and bodies are inextricably linked and the ethical and political responsibility that researchers have for exploring the ways in which we acknowledge and represent these linkages" (p. 509). Their study complexifies how we as researchers analyze children's learning by suggesting that if the child's body is not taken into account and therefore the only focus is on language, the research does not fully assess and understand children's learning.

Second, Cliff and Millei (2011) and Millei and Cliff (2014) question the regulation of bodies in preschool bathrooms through two ethnographic studies that analyzed how developmental discourses have worked to shape and control children's bodies for learning. They do this by highlighting how techniques of power regulate and discipline bodies for the purpose of learning, using Foucault's ideas of biopower. The authors note that strategies and techniques of biopower are employed to shape children's subjectivities—including perspectives, emotions, beliefs, and desires—in relation to their bodies (2011). These studies question common expectations of constant educator surveillance, which regulates and disciplines children's bodies as a form of biopower that keeps bodies' performance within predictable levels of safety and control (2011, 2014). Cliff and Millei describe how educational systems are often structured in ways that promote norms—defined as usual, typical, common, or dominant ideas—regarding the way bodies learn. In the first of these two studies, Cliff and Millei describe these norms as working bodies into habits and routines that organize time and the body's reaction to it. For example, they describe health routines such as hand-washing as practices that regulate bodies. By challenging and unpacking dominant approaches to practice in early childhood education, Millei and Cliff's research suggests thinking about other pathways for understanding how children's bodies learn.

In a different study, Burke and Duncan (2016) capture shared embodied experiences in learning environments, also problematizing the body as subjected to routine and management. Their research describes children's bodies in New Zealand as conjuring up feelings of anxiety for educators. They compare this view with a view of bodies in Japan, where educators see children's bodies as calming, intimate, and

nostalgic. Their study questions cultural learning discourses in New Zealand that regulate and promote the body as useful and work to engrain learning into the child's core.

Mirroring Euro-Western contexts, the study questions the way educators in New Zealand are required to civilize disruptive and unproductive bodies by organizing and disciplining them for improvement. This comparative study of New Zealand and Japan perceives learning in rural Japan as "lucky" (p. 9) for bodies because they live free from urban pressures while surrounded by nature. Educators in Japan reported that they are encouraged to incorporate physical touch as a strength-based portrayal of the learning process, contrasting with the anxiety seen in Euro-Western learning contexts.

Fourth, Clark (2011) explores bodies as more than a site for discursive expression by using a relational-materialist onto-epistemology that leans on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of bodies without organs. Clark provides an account of bodies by asking how they assemble through exploration in the classroom. She pays attention to the expressed processes of bodies as becomings. Her research views bodies and learning as thinking with the interconnectedness of bodies in the world. This lens notices the nonhuman material bodies in the classroom, such as the walls, chairs, and loose parts, and how they affect and are affected by each other.

Fifth, Land and Danis (2016) conducted an inquiry-based project that thinks deeply with movement, pedagogically. Their study considers how children's bodily encounters with movement are "relational, [that is,] how movement is a process and practice of negotiation, connection, co-creation, and experimentation" (p. 31). Their study finds meaning through movement encounters, such as resolving disputes about spatial awareness in relation to other bodies. Using a relational lens, they describe

movement as “a process of discovering, rediscovering, and, most importantly, negotiating ‘truths’ communicated by different movements, with the necessity of connecting through different movements” (p. 32). Their project questions discourses that work to have children master skills of bodily movement, such as ball-catching, and instead turns pedagogy into an enactment of politicized encounters that reengage with how movement matters.

In short, the first subtheme approaches the investigation of how children’s bodies learn by questioning common assumptions about how children’s bodies learn according to predetermined standards that define what is normal (Moss, 2014).

#### **Increased expectations in self-discipline and preacademic skills.**

Four articles are included in this subtheme that questions Euro-Western society’s focus on school readiness in the form of increased expectations in self-discipline and preacademic skills in early childhood education. Both Millei and Cliff’s (2014) and Burke and Duncan’s (2016) research questions the need for young bodies to learn physical self-discipline skills as a determinate of school readiness, arguing that this expectation has contributed to distancing the body from the educational experience. Additionally, both Parks and Schmeichel’s (2014) and Van Laere, Vandenbroeck, Roets, and Peeters’ (2014) research questions the emphasis on cognitive and language competence for measuring school preparedness because of its minimization of the child’s body. First, Millei and Cliff (2014) highlight that “educators’ practices were shaped by their own positioning in [developmental] discourses, rather than noticing and attending to children’s experiences in the bathroom” (p. 253). For example, they question developmental discourses that label a child’s body as missing the milestone of school

readiness when it wets itself. While questioning the way bodies learn from the context of the preschool bathroom, their study notices that Euro-Western early childhood education prefers to remain distant from children's bodily experiences. Second, Burke and Duncan (2016) describe the seemingly unorganized body as tending to be ignored in educational settings because it does not fit into developmental frameworks that require disciplined, civilized bodies that are seen as ready to learn. For example, the child's body that chooses not to clean itself after making a mess while eating is considered disorderly. This view of children's bodies has contributed to educators distancing themselves from the body.

Third, questioning the emphasis on cognitive and language competence for measuring school preparedness, Parks and Schmeichel (2014) observed three African American preschool children whose noncompliant or distracted young bodies were revealed. As a complicated piece of the puzzle that explains what can be known about testing cognitive ability during mathematical performance, their study contributes to the conversation about school readiness. They express a definition of learning as more complex than a mere cognitive assessment can provide. Fourth, Van Laere, Vandebroek, Roets, and Peeters (2014) analyze the term *schoolification* (p. 236) in early childhood education. They find its meaning to devalue care and emotions, lack a holistic view, and hold expectations that emphasize only cognitive and language competences in the pedagogic relationship. Their study points to the notion that teaching has evolved into a technical performance where competition is endorsed through the measurement of subjects' abilities. The literature in this subtheme interrogates the focus on preacademic and self-help skills as a priority for learning. Merely measuring self-help

and cognitive performance has contributed to distancing, minimizing, ignoring, and neglecting children's bodies. In contrast, postfoundational thinking in the literature complexifies the way young bodies learn.

### **The role of power in learning environments.**

This subtheme follows ideas about how the circulation of power plays a role in learning environments. First, Burke and Duncan's (2016) research questions the focus on the body as the site of discipline. They question how early childhood education often ensures that children's bodies learn by following what are considered civilizing routines, such as a daily schedule. Their study describes Foucault's concept of biopower and how it normalizes bodies by following common thinking that is considered rational and useful for bodies. This rationality works in educational institutions by employing developmental psychology's ideas that control bodies. Furthermore, Parks and Schmeichel (2014) question the common idea that young bodies often show signs of noncompliance during standardized testing. They note that this idea is closely related to power relations. The power of resistance is apparent in these bodies through their unwillingness to be attentive to the priorities of the institution. This circulating power dynamic leads the literature to question the need for both measuring and comparing young bodies in Euro-Western contexts.

In summary, the theme "bodies and learning" questions the need to gain and measure preacademic and self-discipline skills that have commonly defined school readiness. The postfoundational literature describes whole-body learning as complex and often beyond measurable capability. It considers the role of power in learning

environments, furthering ideas that reach beyond measuring and comparing bodily performance.

### **Bodies as a Site of Culture**

This theme refers to how children's bodies are understood from a cultural perspective. The subthemes that emerged through my reading were (1) breaking through bias with stories and symbols, (2) the placement, in Japanese culture, of children's bodies at the centre of the early childhood experience, and (3) concerns about disappearing bodies in Euro-Western culture.

#### **Breaking through bias with stories and symbols.**

This subtheme thinks explicitly about how cultural perceptions about bodies shape children's attitudes during daily practice. Martínez-Bello and Martínez-Bello (2016) put forward the need to highlight cultural biases in the early years classroom. They studied books used in early childhood education across categories of gender, age, activity level, space, and disability through stories and symbols. Textbooks were seen to powerfully legitimize what counts as social norms that represent the body. Their study emphasizes the importance of thinking with pedagogy that respects cultural differences in others by reflecting on the social and cultural attitudes that are projected onto and about bodies.

#### **Japanese culture places children's bodies at the centre of childhood.**

This subtheme is exemplified in Burke and Duncan's (2016) account that Japanese culture places children's bodies at the centre of the early childhood education experience by emphasizing bodily contact as a natural and necessary part of a child's development, both at home and at school. As examples, they describe the natural

tendency of educators in rural Japan to lie down with a child during naptime and to assist with toileting. Their research highlights a cultural perspective that understands and respects children's bodies as nostalgic and intimate and as an extension of a mother's body. This viewpoint embraces the body as existing during a celebrated time in the lifespan, before maturity is reached.

### **Concerns about the child's disappearing body in Euro-Western culture.**

Within this subtheme, I reviewed five research studies that describe how Euro-Western culture diminishes, disregards, ignores, dismisses, looks beyond, and is therefore causing the disappearance of children's bodies from early childhood education. First, Burke and Duncan (2016) critique New Zealand's understanding of bodies, which has become increasingly ingrained in the cultural fabric of early childhood education. They found that bodies occupy a culturally contested space that focuses on regulation and routine. This perspective limits physical touch between adults and children, therefore minimizing attention to the body. Their study questions the way educational spaces put children's bodies under surveillance, which contributes to anxiety and fear in the face of rising debate over appropriate policy and practice. Second, Bresler (2004), drawing from Tobin's ideas and from theorists that include Foucault, describes concern during a similar account in the United States of the child's body as disappearing. Bresler found that preschools have become a battle zone in the war against the body. Increased scrutiny and discipline of the child's body has come to the point that the body is diminished because children spend less time hugging, sitting on an adult's lap, and engaging in rough bodily movement, engaging instead in more time sitting at a computer.

Third, Cliff and Millei (2011) disrupt Australian early childhood education's preoccupation with anxiety and fear in the presence of the child's body because of its lack of civilization, presenting the child's body as a menace to order. Fourth, Millei and Cliff (2014) express concern with the normalization of the clothed and therefore hidden and protected body, which keeps educators comfortably distant from children's bodily experiences. Fifth, Huuki and Renold's (2016) study in Finland reviewed the child's body as holding an implicit threat of sexual abuse, a viewpoint that contributes to the normalization of distancing adults from children's bodies.

In summary, the literature gathered in this theme thinks with pedagogy that respects cultural differences relating to bodies in the classroom. It references the cultural understanding in Japan that places contact with the body at the centre of the childhood experience, in contrast to Euro-Western practices that regulate and civilize the body, minimize touch, and see the body as a threat in early childhood education.

### **Bodies and Movement**

This theme refers to the relationship between children's bodies and movement. The subthemes that emerged in the literature include (1) the body's need to move, and (2) challenging the dominance of able-bodiedness in education.

#### **The body's need to move.**

This subtheme is conjured in three studies in the literature that highlight the young body's need to move. First, Parks and Schmeichel (2014) provide a robust multimodal analysis that highlights the connection between children's bodily movement exercises and learning outcomes. Their ethnographic study complexifies human interactions by attending to the ways children position themselves through nonlinguistic

modes of communication. Noticing the subtle nonverbal bodily cues of discomfort revealed on videotape brought their analysis of children's bodily movements to surprising new ways of understanding the importance of movement for young children. Second, Huuki and Renold (2016), in their rhizomatic analysis of force relationships between bodies during crushing pile-up games, attend to how "affect jumps" (p. 756) across children's bodies. Their article thinks with the movement of children's bodies and beyond during predictable and unpredictable playground encounters. It considers the more-than-human relations at play, such as those of the climbing frame, where "much of the play in and around the [bodily] crushes take place . . . standing high up in the middle of the school yard" (p. 759). Their research goes beyond critique and explores the ebb and flow of power relations that make up the forces of children's bodily movement on the playground.

### **Challenging the dominance of able-bodiedness in education.**

This second subtheme deconstructs the dominant assumptions of movement. First, Martínez-Bello and Martínez-Bello's (2017) study interrogates the way children's bodies in educational environments are commonly shown as able-bodied. This dominant portrayal lays foundational assumptions that all children's bodies can and should move similarly. The study urges educational environments to display photos of bodies that move differently, including the differently abled. For example, displaying antibiased, nondominant images of children's bodies that move in wheelchairs would likely provoke conversations for thinking with bodies in alternative ways. This kind of exposure would begin to unsettle common understandings of how bodies move. Second, Land and Danis (2016) put forward an inquiry-based movement research project that suggests attending

to uncommon movements by engaging with the “complex, contested, and politicized worlds of contemporary childhoods” (p. 26). Their study highlights the need for pedagogy to “become differently response-able to uncommon movements” (p. 33) as an ethical entanglement that intentionally explores bodily movement within the spaces of early childhood education. These ideas invite different possibilities for movement of bodies in early childhood education.

### **Bodies Expressed in Art**

This theme encompasses what the literature says about the relationship between children’s bodies and art. This theme refers to how a child’s body makes sense of the world, using a postfoundational lens that values uncertainty (Moss, 2014). Two subthemes emerged in my review of the literature: (1) bodily encounters as exploratory space in the classroom, and (2) how works of art bring messages that socially construct bodies.

#### **Bodily encounters as exploratory space in the classroom.**

This subtheme is exemplified by Clark’s (2011) exploration of the child’s body and its connection with abstract and concrete experience to a place that informs research about how the young body connects to the real world. By carving a space in the classroom where the child’s body creates, solves, designs, and makes (non)sense of children’s work, Clark opens multiple possibilities for understanding bodies differently. Using Barad’s relational-materialist onto-epistemology approach to bodies, Clark brings plexiglass, paintbrushes, and paint to an articulation that merges with Deleuze and Guattari’s ideas of a body without organs. She does this by experimenting with assemblages of embodiments. Clark highlights material and discursive

interconnectedness and sees the body as part of a productive force with other bodies, including nonhuman bodies, in the classroom. Her aim is to present a process of disruption for reconceptualizing the bodily experience by using an encounter as a provocation for thinking differently in early childhood pedagogy. Her research imagines alternative approaches that invite creative expression for children's bodies and that place bodies into the real world as a way to become part of it.

**How works of art bring messages that socially construct bodies.**

This subtheme adds to the conversations about encounters that shape understandings of how a child's body fits into the world.

Three studies found discrimination against less common bodies because of the depiction of dominant bodies in public spaces through photos and images. In the first two studies, Martínez-Bello and Martínez-Bello conclude that illustrations in children's books (2016) and displays of bodily illustrations on walls (2017) contribute to implicit messages that shape how societies know bodies. By categorizing bodies as young/old, able-bodied/disabled, boy/girl, and white/not-white, they found that able-bodiedness is legitimized because disabled bodies are rarely seen in educational environments. In the third study, Drummond (2012) found the need to move beyond dominant public images of children's bodies wearing gendered clothing, in order to disrupt thinking about what is *correct* for bodies.

Four studies in this theme (Clark, 2011; Martínez-Bello & Martínez-Bello, 2016, 2017; Drummond, 2012) put forward the need to deconstruct common notions of difference between bodies and to open ideas about understanding the capabilities of children's bodies. The research highlights and questions embedded dominant social

constructions of bodies in art during daily practices and environments. The literature opens space for understanding the way children's bodies make sense of the world.

### **Gendered and Sexualized Bodies**

This theme refers to how young bodies are understood through the lenses of gender and sexuality. Several subthemes emerged through my reading: (1) how dominant discourses of masculinity and femininity are formed, (2) the risk of educational systems taking a neutral stance on gender norms, (3) questioning the idea that children should not acquire sexual knowledge, (4) how threats of sexual abuse cause denial of the child's body, (5) the nostalgic and innocent naked body, and (6) the workings of consent through bodily encounters.

#### **How dominant discourses of masculinity and femininity are formed.**

In this subtheme, three articles challenge dominant assumptions by thinking about the social construction of gender norms on the young body. First, Drummond's (2012) longitudinal research investigated Australian boys' constructions of masculinities over eight years, beginning at age five. Using data from focus group interviews, his study challenges and makes public dominant gender discourses by following the progression of how boys are led by implicit hegemonic discourses of masculinity that shape status-quo thinking about what matters when "doing masculinity." Beginning without a conception of the meaning of masculinity, boys in this study discuss and draw pictures of how their body is striving to become big, fast, muscular, risky, powerful, and interested in sport, making explicit a North American preoccupation with patriarchal values. Second, Huuki and Renold (2016) report on an ethnographic multimodal study of kissing, chasing, and piling-up games on a children's playground. They challenge masculinist hegemonic

attitudes and observe how boy bodies become entangled with discourses of physical force. They highlight how discursive forces work to normalize developmental tropes of masculinity by holding territory over girls' bodies during boisterous or rough-and-tumble play. Third, Martínez-Bello and Martínez-Bello (2017) examined, through a content analysis of illustrations representing bodies in early childhood education classrooms in Spain, how gender equality might be taught. They used a rating scale to analyze how various naked, seminaked, and clothed bodies were depicted in pictures. The photos included human bodies, animals with human characteristics, fantasy characters, and human-made characters. Representations sometimes included hairstyle, physical stature, the presence or absence of facial hair, and other distinguishing gender characteristics. The research found that by showing equal representation of children's bodies, with no single predominant role for girls or boys, children learned gender equality. The study suggests the need for early childhood education to move beyond common decorative depictions of bodies to think with and reinforce antibiased gender education.

This subtheme challenges dominant assumptions by thinking about the social construction of gender norms on the young body.

#### **The risk of educational systems taking a neutral stance on gender norms.**

This subtheme continues with the articles in the previous subsection and adds a fourth study to the conversation. First, Drummond (2012) reveals that many young boys do not see themselves as having masculine characteristics, such as being muscular or interested in sport. His study informs educators that taking a neutral stance by having little or no political or ideological concern about gender stereotypes is problematic for progressive thinking. Leaning on Blaise, who claims that by preschool age, children have

learned to categorize themselves and others based on gender, Drummond warns early childhood educators that neutrality leaves children, families, educators, communities, and governments with only dominant attitudes. Second, the warning of neutrality is also sounded in Huuki and Renold's (2016) study, which adds to a growing awareness of how even small moves that question common gendered hierarchies of bodies can release the grip that constrains gender norms. Their study used arts-based and embodied methodologies to "overcome the discursive and other forms of representational stagnation that lurk" (p. 766) in early childhood education. The authors hold that the actions of "intra-vention" are essential. Third, Martínez-Bello and Martínez-Bello (2017) encourage conversations in early education environments that highlight the influences, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions that contribute to gender awareness, urging the need for critical thinking about how bodies are portrayed in the classroom. Their study leans on Blaise's suggestion that if early childhood educators are not concerned with how social issues of gender influence children's identities, it will be very difficult for them to bring about social change and improve the lives of all children. A fourth idea emerges when Van Laere et al. (2014) provide a feminist analysis of early childhood educators in Europe. They deconstruct the illusion of dominant gender stereotypes that describe women's bodies as *naturally* working in caring positions, such as early childhood educators. Challenging the mind-body dualism in discourses and practices of care, this study explores the concepts of embodied subjectivity and corporeality, while thinking about encouraging a more equally gendered workforce in early childhood education instead of idling in a neutral stance about women filling caring roles.

This subtheme describes gender stereotyping and the risk of educational systems taking a neutral stance.

**Questioning the idea that children should not acquire sexual knowledge.**

This subtheme is highlighted in five studies that question Euro-Western culture's idea that children should not acquire sexual knowledge. First, Bresler (2004) draws on theories including those from Foucault, as well as narrative studies. She notes that children, especially girls, who begin to show signs of sexual understanding at a young age are often suspected of needing treatment from a specialist. Her overview finds that adults often repress childhood sexuality because of their own tension or embarrassment, bringing a sense of moral panic at the idea of breaking the innocence of the young child's body. Reminding the reader that childish sex play does not harm the child, Bresler puts forward the need for adults to engage in conversations with children to clear taboos about sexual understandings that would otherwise be hidden. Second, Burke and Duncan (2016) similarly found that educators in Euro-Western countries experience ethical tensions when trying to ignore children's sex play, because constant surveillance is usually expected and sanctioned by governmental policy. Their work describes the apprehension of what to do with sexualized young children's bodies in educational contexts. Third, Cliff and Millei (2011) highlight a similar account, adding Foucault's description of society's need to manage bodies in civilized ways to delay any "premature" sexual thoughts or behaviours. Fourth, Millei and Cliff (2014) question the common surveillance of children's bodies in preschool bathrooms because it upholds images of young bodies as ignorant and in need of protection against dangers. These dangers include exploring their own bodies or the bodies of others. Fifth, Huuki and

Renold (2016) found that children's bodies on the playground have a need to think, do, and become during daily activities. Sometimes these activities are seen as exploring sexual acts, such as kissing. Their study forges transformative practice by suggesting that early childhood education gift new modes of thinking, doing, and becoming for young bodies, urging educators to carefully consider ethical, strength-based approaches to bodies acquiring sexual knowledge.

### **How threats of sexual abuse cause the denial of the child's body.**

This subtheme emerged from three studies that connect sexual abuse with the denial of the body in the context of early childhood education. First, Burke and Duncan (2016) detail how Euro-Western educators have become technical, distant professionals who avoid touching children's bodies because of the possibility that the child could misunderstand the act of touch as a sexual act. This threat traces the child's body as a site of anxiety and fear, where touch might be dangerous for educators because of possible sexual interpretation. The literature describes educators as witnesses for each other when assisting with children's bodies in areas such as the bathroom. Second, Cliff and Millei (2011, 2014) note that educators often find the child's naked body to be a menace to the order of hygienic expectations about appropriate use of the bathroom, which puts forward institutional discourses that regulate and govern bodies from a distance. Third, Bresler (2004) describes how diaper changing and holding a child in an adult's lap has acquired a climate of suspicion and panic. This level of panic has enacted rules that decrease intimacy between the child and educator. Bresler's work questions the lack of honest talk about bodily pleasures when working with children. This subtheme notes the evolution of

moving to a disembodied response that finds denying the child's body easier than embracing it.

**The nostalgic and innocent naked body.**

This subtheme puts forward an alternative to denying or diminishing the child's body. Instead, Burke and Duncan's (2016) study in rural Japan found freedom of the corporeal, because educators placed the child's body at the centre of the early childhood experience. Their study revealed that educators in Japan view children's bodies "through a lens of nostalgia and innocence" (p. 7). For example, "bodily contact is seen as a natural and necessary part of a child's development" (p. 7), and groups of naked young boy and girl bodies are commonly seen playing together outside on hot days. After their play, children's bodies were observed standing naked in line for bathing before getting dressed. Their research found that early childhood education in Japan thinks differently about children's bodies compared with Euro-Western notions of the child's body.

**The workings of consent through bodily encounters.**

This subtheme thinks with questions that emerge in the literature about how children learn the workings of consent through bodily encounters. Huuki and Renold's (2016) account deconstructs children's bodily encounters during which the educator's gaze portrays a desire for bodies to stop what might be considered sexual play. They aim first to understand and "*loosen the stranglehold of how the binary subject positions victim . . . and perpetrator*" (p. 765, emphasis in original) by mapping the way bodies pile up onto each other. They describe consent as a relational force or flow, constantly in process, which led their research to its second aim of exploring the more-than-human dynamics of consent. This idea stretches theories about children's sexual power play, as

observed when a group of boys lowered a girl's body to a fence in the playground, connecting relationships with the material. Material examples in the study included the climbing apparatus, gravel in the playground, and a surrounding fence, which hold discursive, sociohistorical, and affective force relations that entangle in the potential becoming of the child's body. Their study ruptures common ideas about how consent is learned by young bodies.

In summary, this theme puts forth the way young bodies are understood through the lenses of gender and sexuality. It moves from the formation of dominant discourses in masculinity and femininity to the risk of taking a neutral stance on gender norms in early childhood education. It also questions ideas about children acquiring sexual knowledge and describes how threats of sexual abuse cause denial of the child's body in Euro-Western contexts. Comparisons are made between Euro-Western ideas that view the body as threatening and the nostalgic, innocent centering of the body in early childhood education in Japan that invites bodily contact. The theme finishes with a disruption of how the dynamics of consent are learned through bodily encounters.

### **Conclusion**

This literature review gathered available postfoundational empirical studies that describe how children's bodies are understood in early childhood education. The literature review was organized into five themes: bodies and learning, bodies as a site of culture, bodies and movement, bodies expressed in art, and gendered and sexualized bodies.

The primary focus that the review brings forward is the need to highlight and unpack the limitations of dominant understanding of bodies in early childhood pedagogy,

to open possibilities for practicing differently. By deconstructing common assumptions about how the young body is understood, the postfoundational literature works to shift status-quo assumptions in pedagogy and contribute to reimagining the child's body.

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**Paper 2. Children’s Bodies in British Columbia’s Childcare Regulations: A Critical  
Discourse Analysis**

Power functions at the level of the body, at the *micro* level . . . [by] reach[ing] into the very grain of individuals, touch[ing] their bodies and insert[ing] itself into their action and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives. . . . Power also involves resistance . . . [that is] largely of its own creation due to the discursive nature of power. . . .

The resistance to DAP [developmentally appropriate practice], and to its multiple discourses, is another exercise of power not localized to one specific place or person but part of discourses. This resistance plays an important role in legitimizing the discourses around the care and education of young children. (Pacini-Ketchabaw, Nxumalo, Kocher, Elliot, & Sanchez, 2015, p. 209, drawing from Foucault, 1977, 1978; emphasis in original)

Furthering discussions that relate to children’s bodies in early childhood education (Burke & Duncan, 2015; Millei & Cliff, 2014), this paper challenges normative thinking by reflecting on children’s bodies as they are depicted in British Columbia’s Child Care Licensing Regulations (B.C. Laws, 2016), referred to in this paper as “the regulations.” Using critical discourse analysis, I point out how techniques of power are embedded in this particular document by deconstructing it through an examination of how it works to regulate, normalize, and discipline children’s bodies in early childhood education. I describe how this government policy has worked to create and sustain what

are considered to be common childcare practices, by exploring the following four questions adapted from Pacini-Ketchabaw (2005):

- What assumptions have been made about children's bodies through the organization of the regulations?
- How have techniques of power worked to shape bodies through the discourses present in the regulations?
- What social, cultural, and contextual conditions relating to children's bodies are embedded in the regulations?
- What issues have the discourses in the regulations claimed to resolve?

I propose that unpacking the position that children's bodies occupy within the regulations will contribute to deeper understandings of how early childhood education is understood and will open new conversations about young bodies in early childhood practices. Uncovering hidden meanings within regulatory childcare texts has benefited children and families, as well as those who work with them, by considering alternative discourses (Moss & Petrie, 2002; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2005). In order to consider alternate discourses in the field of early childhood education, policy documents need to be critically examined (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2005). My examination of the regulations looks for patterns where I believe discursive thinking begins, as described by Sevenhuijsen (1998):

Policy texts and legal texts are, after all, "stories in themselves": they include patterns of dealing with things, which are often the result of political compromises and discursive traditions. They often contain fixed patterns of speaking and judging, but they can also open up unexpected

discursive spaces, where new forms of thinking and judging can start. (p. 30)

My intention in this paper is not simply to deconstruct the regulations, but to look carefully at how power works through the regulations and to highlight deeply held assumptions that work to regulate, normalize, and discipline children's bodies. I engage MacNaughton's (2005) poststructural interpretation of Foucault's (1977, 1978) work to consider these practices as workings of power, defining power as a network of discursive relations.

My work questions how early childhood educational practices are entrenched in power that acts on young bodies. I look for examples hidden in the regulations that are understood as "correct" childcare practices based on implicit assumptions that have been formed by the discourses of developmental psychology and heteronormativity. These discourses work within a regime of truth that prescribes "the right way" to organize children's bodies. I describe how these governmental circuits of power become deeply enmeshed in disciplinary knowledges that measure practices in terms of technologies (Ashton, 2014). I highlight hidden social, cultural, and contextual conditions in the regulations by making connections about neoliberalism and its powerful workings, which transfer ideas into policy texts that have powerful connections to daily practices that shape bodies. I describe how political power works to give greater value to some bodies over others. While describing the workings of discursive power, I aim to extend the reconceptualization literature (Cannella, 1997; Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 2013; Kessler & Swadener, 1992; MacNaughton, 2005; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015) by opening cracks in the ways of thinking, working, and doing early childhood education.

I begin by defining the concepts and practices of *regulation*, *normalization*, and *discipline*. I focus on these key elements because of their relationship with the circulation of power that works through children's bodies in educational settings (MacNaughton, 2005). I then describe how critical discourse analysis works to deconstruct the regulations (B.C. Laws, 2016). Next, I introduce the purpose of the regulations and discuss how regulation, normalization, and discipline work, specifically in the regulations, keeping in mind the four questions I set out in the introduction. I conclude with final remarks that aim to open ideas for the field of early childhood education.

## **A Theoretical Standpoint**

### **How Does Regulation Work?**

To begin defining the term *regulation*, I lean on the way MacNaughton (2005) unpacks Foucault's "regimes of truth." These regimes work to control thinking and being by aligning behaviours with political intent. MacNaughton (2005) connects the emergence of what is accepted as truth with Gore's (1993) description of generating an "authoritative consensus about what needs to be done . . . and how it should be done" (p. 30). Through the employment of mainstream thought, "truth" is linked in circular relations with systems of power that produce and sustain it (Foucault, 1977). Once formed, these systems of truth create dominant power, then discourses emerge that influence knowledge about how early childhood education is *supposed* to be, based on what is considered to be appropriate or correct knowledge. Ideas that become known as rational, or the common way of thinking, connect powers of neoliberalism with governmentality. This powerful connection provides and promotes a system of ideas that translate into mechanisms or technologies of practice. Thus, regimes of truth work to

govern and therefore regulate powerful ideas about what are considered to be desirable ways to think, act, and feel.

MacNaughton (2005) brings regimes of truth into the realm of child development knowledge. Her work leans on theorists such as Walkerdine, Cannella, and Alloway to describe how the regulation and governing of ideas contribute to what is recognized as the appropriate or correct way to understand and organize young children in educational settings.

Many critical early childhood education researchers and theorists suggest that discourses in developmental psychology have created truths that are commonly used by early childhood educators to determine ways to classify, distribute, and regulate children's bodies (Burman, 2008; Cannella, 1997; MacNaughton, 2005; Varga, 2011). According to MacNaughton's (2005) analysis, developmental regimes use "developmentally appropriate education [as] the mark of a good early childhood educator and developmentally inappropriate education marks out a bad early childhood educator" (p. 33). Therefore, developmental regimes of truth have encouraged and confirmed knowledge that prescribes how to do early childhood education correctly.

Additionally, MacNaughton (2005) interprets Foucault's idea of truth as having both political and ethical substance. For example, the behaviour of children's bodies becomes directed by official government-sanctioned truths that are woven together with a system of management that governs what is held to be the most "desirable ways to think, act and feel in, for instance, early childhood institutions" (p. 32). Thus, a system of morality is officially sanctioned, dictating what is considered to be good or true and what makes the early childhood educator a person who holds ethical substance. The weight of

what the regime considers morality thus lies within each educator, and each educator is expected to practice within the boundaries of what the regime considers to be true. For example, the rules of behaviour that are appropriate through discourses of developmental psychology “for children at specific ages and [during particular incremental] stages” (p. 31) of development follow the belief that all children’s bodies have similar needs at established times. MacNaughton describes these prescribed and institutional truths as having real implications for children’s bodies because they work to constrain and dictate the possibilities of what bodies can and cannot do and be. She notes that early childhood educators are positioned as entrusted authority figures that have a responsibility to produce bodies that are similar in order to fit within a particular mold in society that values sameness.

Therefore, the regulations work to sustain what MacNaughton calls “Practices of inclusion and exclusion” (p. 85) that rely on binaries that classify bodies into those that fit into a particular mold and those that do not. My analysis interprets the regulations as prescribing behaviour through dominant understandings that create discourses that bring truth from an authority accepted as powerful and knowing and that expect what is understood as the best outcome. Leaning on Fler (2003), unpacking the regulations brings forward insights about EuroWestern ideas that universalize bodies according to best or commonsensical practices, including why and how policy is formed and implemented and how it privileges one way of interacting with children’s bodies while silencing other ways of interacting with bodies.

### **How Does Normalization Work?**

MacNaughton (2005) takes the idea of privileging some bodies over others and, using Foucault's (1977) description of power as described below, claims that the definition of normalization begins with power—not the kind of power that is understood as forcing one person or group to do something, such as sitting quietly. Rather, MacNaughton explains that,

for Foucault, power is a relationship of struggle (Belsey, 2002) to dominate the meanings we give our lives. It is a battle to authorize the truth, because truths don't just happen, they are *produced* in our struggle to decide the meanings of our actions, thoughts and feelings. More specifically, power is a relationship of struggle over how we use truths and build discourses about normality to produce and regulate ourselves (e.g., our bodies, desires and texts), our relationships and our institutions, especially our production of normality (Alvesson, 2002). (MacNaughton, 2005, p. 27, italics in original).

MacNaughton puts forward that this struggle of power plays out in pedagogy through a set of truths about what is considered normal development and what is not (e.g., what is understood as healthy and not healthy, what is accepted as normal learning and what is not). These truths, in turn, are regulated through practices. With an abundance of accessible literature that details lists, maps, and instructions of what normal child development looks like, child development can be easily measured and expressed as normal. For instance, a simple Internet search for “measuring normal child development” draws four million results. Growth and development milestones can be accessed on

government sites such as HealthLinkBC (2016) to determine if a child's body falls in line with what is considered to be normal.

MacNaughton (2005) notes that over time the social sciences have categorized children's bodies by organizing specified ways to practice early childhood care and education that uphold truths about normal ways to comfort bodies, relate to peers, and concentrate on tasks. For example, comforting a child who experiences sadness can be sanctioned according to a child's age. The way that norms are categorized is important because the process upholds truths that affect child-educator relationships and influence whether and how they are institutionalized. Truths about a normal child matter, because educators use these truths as they connect with others and manage programs, representing an understanding of the "normal child, the abnormal child, and the delayed child" (MacNaughton, 2005, p. 29). Developmental truths about children's bodies matter, because governments use them to inform their policies as they work to improve the community's capacity to use data to monitor child development and create effective community-based responses (KSI Research International, 2017).

Therefore, normalization works by "comparing, invoking, requiring, or conforming to a standard that expresses particular truths about, for example, the developing child" (MacNaughton, 2005, p. 31). This happens by observing children's bodies and comparing their routines with what has evolved as discourses of developmentally appropriate practice during behaviours such as sleeping, toileting, and eating that shape children's temperament according to what is considered to be normal (Millei & Cliff, 2014).

## How Does Discipline Work?

To define *discipline*, I begin with MacNaughton's (2005) use of Foucault's (1984) work to describe the political substance of a regime of truth as a reliance on the practices of power that bring the regime and its truth to life. Embedded in these practices lies the power of rules that organize and discipline behaviour. Drawing on Gore's identification of Foucault's ideas, MacNaughton describes "micropractices of power" (pp. 30–31) that can be used to analyze how daily practices in early childhood education bring truth to life. This is important, because bringing truth to life is how discourses emerge and thus how common thinking is born. These micropractices include *surveillance*, which disciplines by closely observing from a reference point that follows particular truths. For example, educators who expect to be observed and supervised by others who believe that best practices follow developmentally appropriate approaches will comply by bringing a developmental regime of truth to their practice. *Exclusion* disciplines by using truths to dictate what should be included or excluded, with an understanding that particular ways of being are desirable or undesirable, and by creating a definition of pathology for what is undesirable. For example, the early childhood educator who follows developmental truths will understand nondevelopmental truths as wrong, and will exclude them. Furthermore, an educator will use *classification* as a means to differentiate between right and wrong amidst groups or individuals in ways such as *distribution*, which ranks development by organizing bodies into groups according to age or stage of development. *Individualization* uses truths to separate individuals, for example, separating bodies that are developing normally from those that are not. *Totalization* uses truths to produce a will to conform, such as following developmental truths to guide decisions about what all children should

be capable of doing at a given time. For example, in the early childhood educational setting, children's bodies are ordered and regulated to realize that their own desires are secondary to those of the group (Burke & Duncan, 2015). Therefore, discipline is the enactment of what has become known as truths through the use of micropractices of power to govern ourselves and others.

These enactments bring about ethical questions: MacNaughton (2005), leaning on Foucault, describes institutionally produced and approved truths that govern and discipline bodies through discretion about where, what, and how bodies are expressed. Using Feher (1987), MacNaughton (2005) describes the political notion of the body as a "battlefield of power relations" (p. 30), yet, on the other hand, ethical questions arise regarding how one's own body is in relationship with itself and how that relationship shifts. Thus, the political substance of a regime of truth entangles with an ethical definition of the relationship of people to their bodies. Millei and Cliff (2014) provide an example of this struggle by describing the supervision of children's bodies in the bathroom as holding political power through the regulation of bodies as the object of critical examination and self-examination in order to cultivate healthy habits and to produce "proper" deeds that fall in line with communicated norms. Thus, ethical implications that explore other possible activities in the context of the bathroom space depend on the relationship children have to their bodies. This unpacking of discipline complexifies ideas about how the educator's view on policy in the bathroom might align or conflict with their own ethical ideas when observing bodies during toileting activities.

Therefore, discipline works in early childhood education through truth that has become knowledge and is therefore sanctioned institutionally to produce an authoritative

consensus that guides educators to the point where it is difficult to *be* in any other way. Once officially accepted, truths work to discipline and govern bodies through techniques and procedures that direct bodies. These neoliberal mechanisms of discursive power work to manage and govern early childhood education by producing a system of ethical substance that holds the authority to decide what practices are good/bad, right/wrong, and true/false for children's bodies. Within this disciplined and polarized regime, developmentally appropriate education has become the mark of a good early childhood education program.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis**

Connecting the theoretical assumptions that suggest how regimes of truth emerge, as described above, with the practices of working with young children demonstrates the importance of unpacking hidden discourses used in policy texts such as the regulations (B.C. Laws, 2016). I use critical discourse analysis because it invites a mode of inquiry to notice, interpret, and critique existing realities. With *critical* discourse analysis, the work “assesses the extent to which [realities] match up to values that are taken (contentiously) to be fundamental for just or decent societies” (Fairclough, 2013, p. 178). The method considers the workings of discourse for the purpose of human well-being, and is therefore appropriate for the meticulous work of interpreting the meanings embedded in the regulations. This section will define critical discourse analysis and describe how I use it to highlight the workings of power in policy documents like the regulations.

MacNaughton (2005), following Foucault, describes discourse as a way of thinking and writing that uses shared language for conversation, shared concepts for understanding it, and shared methods for examining it. Situated within qualitative

research, my work follows Berg and Lune's (2012) description of discourse analysis by studying, not only the words that are used, but also the "social construction and apprehension of meanings thus created through this discourse" (p. 364). This includes thinking about how, where, and when the discourse surfaces in social and cultural situations. In other words, Berg and Lune describe critical discourse analysis as examining and interpreting the way language is used in viewing the social world.

Using the specific text of the regulations as my data, and bringing Berg and Lune's (2012) method to early childhood education, I think with Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2015) by highlighting poststructuralist ideas of taken-for-granted knowledge and questioning how these knowledges bring inequalities that have impacts on children's bodies in everyday practice. My analysis shows how discourses within the regulations have developed through early childhood education's understanding of children's bodies. This method works to highlight and name discourses that are embedded in the regulations, noting how their power works in three key areas in early childhood practice: regulation, normalization, and discipline. As I comb through the regulations, I notice how the social relations of power relating to children's bodies are entrenched in the hidden discourses, and I consider the cultural contexts in which these communications occur. I do not merely look at the words, but I seek an awareness of what Berg and Lune (2012) refer to as the "social construction and apprehension of meanings thus created through this discourse" (p. 364). Finding deeper meaning is important, because meaning illuminates multiple ways of thinking about young children's bodies and how they matter in educational contexts, which contributes to conversations that begin to shape change.

To provoke and extend my thinking about how power works through the discourses embedded in regulation, normalization, and discipline, I ask the following four questions adapted from Pacini-Ketchabaw (2005): (1) *What assumptions have been made about children's bodies through the organization of the regulations?* Attending to assumptions requires deep thinking about how government regulation creates and confirms regimes of truth. (2) *How have techniques of power worked to shape bodies through the discourses present in the regulations?* While combing through the document, I notice ways that knowledge is formed through the power of discourse, and how regulation, normalization, and discipline are related to that power. (3) *What social, cultural, and contextual conditions relating to children's bodies are embedded in the regulations?* The regulations have been issued in a region that includes multiple cultural understandings and thus they encompass a scope that includes an infinite variety of contexts. Within this context, I disrupt the way the regulations enact regulation, normalization, and discipline in universal ways. Therefore, my analysis considers how the regulations organize children's bodies through a diverse social, cultural, and contextual lens. (4) *What issues have the discourses in the regulations claimed to resolve?* I notice the way discourses have worked to keep ahead of and solve anticipated conflicts through the employment of regulation, normalization, and discipline in early childhood education.

Thinking with these driving questions centres my work to highlight discourses that open conversations about the complexities of bodies in practice.

### **The British Columbia Child Care Licensing Regulations**

Legislation to regulate child care in British Columbia began in 1989 under the Community Care and Assisted Living Act. Amendments were made effective in 2004 (Child Care Canada, 2006) and again in 2007 (B.C. Laws, 2016). The primary purpose of the regulations is to “ensure the provision of quality care services in [the province of] British Columbia” and to protect “the health and safety of children in care” (Government of British Columbia, 2008, p. 3). Additionally, a more recently added regulation “places emphasis on providing opportunities for [children’s] social, emotional, physical and intellectual growth” (Government of British Columbia, 2008, p. 3). The regulations provide a framework for children, families, educators, directors, and provincial government licensing officials who identify what constitutes the protection of children through the health and safety requirements needed to acquire a licence to operate a care facility. The regulations list facility requirements, including those pertaining to the physical environment. Manager and employee requirements are listed that describe the qualifications needed to work as and to hire early childhood educators. The regulations set out an assurance of what is considered adequate training and good character for child care providers (B.C. Laws, 2016). The document is organized in six parts, each containing up to four divisions. The divisions are then subdivided into sections that are numbered from 1 through 77 from the definition section at the beginning of the text and continuing to the end of part 6. Sections that have been cancelled on a particular date are noted. The document then continues with eight appendices listed in alphabetical order, beginning with Schedule A and ending with Schedule H.

My analysis focuses mainly on the following parts of the document: Part 2—Licensing and Facility Requirements, which includes how to apply for a licence and facility requirements; Part 3—Manager and Employee Requirements, which includes requirements of employees, employee qualifications, and educator certification, as well as requirements for the supervision of children; and Part 4—Operations, which includes general care requirements that relate to hours of care, sleep, health and hygiene, nutrition, and access by others. This portion of the regulations sets guidelines regarding the treatment of children and illnesses, as well as how to keep records for each child. My analysis also refers to Schedule B—Applying for a Licence, Schedule E—Group Sizes and Employee to Children Ratios, and Schedule G—Program of Activities. I chose as examples some specific sections of the regulations instead of others because they fit with my focus on how discourses work to regulate, normalize, and discipline children’s bodies in early childhood education.

### **An Analysis of the Regulations**

While paying attention to the circulation of power as I look in the text of the regulations for assumptions that create discourses, I look for variations in the nuances of social and cultural ideas and the ways they might be exchanged and understood. My careful, detailed, and systematic interpretation aims to highlight hidden meanings for children’s bodies through the discourses that I name and describe. To describe how regulation, normalization, and discipline work in the document, I attend to the four questions that were noted in the introduction and methods sections to provoke my thoughts. I describe specifically how the organization of the regulations has real implications for influencing how educators think, act, and feel in their understandings of

children's bodies. I do this by making connections with the way practice routines are employed in early childhood programs because of the assumptions (MacNaughton, 2005) embedded in the text of the regulations.

### **How Does the Regulation of Bodies Take Place in the Regulations?**

#### **Discourses of developmental psychology.**

The regulations put forward discourses of developmental psychology. Through this lens, children's bodies are universal, and therefore need to fall into organized classifications that can measure education and care according to the age or stage of a child's body (Burman, 2008; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; MacNaughton, 2005). The regulations measure bodies in multiple ways. For example:

A licensee must ensure that the food and drink given to a child is sufficient in quantity and quality to meet the developmental needs of the child, having regard to (a) the child's age, (b) the number of hours the child is under the care of the licensee. (Section 48.3a-b)

Embedded in this example is the dominant rationalization of measuring bodies using a scale of age and time spent in care to prescribe adequate amounts of food and drink. This assumption follows a developmental psychology discourse that works to regulate bodies through quantifiable considerations that compare bodies of the same age (Burman, 2008). As Fleer (2003) explains, the organization and hierarchy of developmental discourses privilege bodies that score in desirable ways, such as consuming predetermined amounts of food and drink. Discourses of developmental psychology therefore regulate bodies by classifying them as desirable or undesirable, prioritizing the bodies that measure as compliant and therefore desirable.

### **Discourses of compliance.**

Generally, the regulations are organized according to developmental discourses that refer to a need to follow rule-based programming. The sections list guidelines that lay out everything from facility requirements for learning and sustaining a licensed designation to rules about the supervision of children. Along with setting rules, I notice a discourse of compliance that conveys a sense of certainty. Embedded in this certainty is the belief that outcomes involving children's bodies can and should be *known* when rules are followed. Therefore, expected, universalized images of what a body is capable of doing at a particular age are also known. Take the following example:

A licensee must provide to children a comprehensive and coordinated program of indoor and outdoor activities that is appropriate for the age and development of children in each group in the community care facility.

(Section 44.1b)

This section holds an implicit assumption that children's bodies need guidance and rule-based programming that follows assumptions based on age and development, even when terms such as "appropriate" are not clearly defined. Dahlberg and Moss (2005) describe practice based on inscribing a list of rules as a deficit-based approach that results in the regulation of bodies through an intention to follow authoritative power techniques.

Rule-based discourses such as those in the regulations conjure an embedded assumption that bodies are instrumental in rationality and purpose (Moss & Petrie, 2002). The provision of rules promotes a mechanism that falls in line with the image of the child as coming from a place and time where and when children's bodies need instruction by

others through rules that decide what is best for them (MacNaughton, Hughes, & Smith, 2007). The regulations provide this kind of mechanism through expert instruction.

The pattern of expected confirmation and belief in the regulations creates a discourse of compliance by putting educators in a position of holding the weight of necessary practice that upholds developmental truths. In other words, understanding and following the rules listed in the regulations as a regime of truth for regulating children's bodies indicates an expectation of compliance by educators. As long as educators believe they are providing excellence in programming by following a discourse of compliance with the regulations, children's bodies are regulated. For example, Section 56(1.f) requires that the licensee must keep a "log of minor accidents, illnesses and unexpected events involving children, that did not require medical attention and were not reportable incidents." In this example, the discourse of compliance works to regulate children's bodies through a requirement to log minor incidents.

Discourses of developmental psychology are hidden in the micropractices of power (MacNaughton, 2005), as described in the "How does discipline work?" theoretical section above. These micropractices are formed by bringing a regime and its truth to life. The regulations provide a vehicle that produces rules that rank, organize, and guide the behaviour (Gore, 1998, drawing on Foucault, 1984, as cited in MacNaughton, 2005) of children's bodies according to specific truths that control ways of thinking and being that fit into the child's particular developmental stage. For example, the chart shown in Schedule E in the regulations dictates a belief that a "preschool" care program must be limited to children "30 months to school age" (section 1.5), allowing a maximum ratio of 20 children with one educator and one assistant, or a maximum of 10 children

with one educator. This developmental regime of truth creates a discourse of classification by differentiating between groups of bodies based on their age and stage of development. A discourse of distribution also emerges through the developmental regime of truth that guides attitudes about what children's bodies are capable of doing and what particular amount of physical space is necessary for bodies to *be* at particular developmental stages in the context of safety. Another example is shown in Schedule B (Section 9a), which requires "a floor plan showing . . . the inside dimensions of each room and the width of each corridor and stair." This section regulates bodies through the endorsement of truths, which state that safe programming needs to contain children's bodies within specified physical boundaries in order to provide good care. Thus, the regulations regulate bodies through developmental discourses that frame thinking about what constitutes good practice in early childhood education. Good practice connects with developmental truths through discourses and produces certainty that "high quality early childhood pedagogy equals developmentally appropriate practice" (MacNaughton, 2005, p. 31).

### **Discourses of culture.**

Using a developmental framework provides a technique of power that shapes cultural discourses that regulate children's bodies in Euro-Western social contexts. For example, Section 48.3c adds to the requirement of providing sufficient quantity and quality of food and drink, as mentioned earlier, by incorporating the child's food preferences and cultural background. Yet, this addition to the regulations brings questions about why allowances for differences in culture and context are rarely seen in the document. The additional point seems to have been mentioned as an afterthought,

because the section does not describe in more detail the meaning of children's food preferences or cultural background. By carving only a small crack that might begin to give choices to children's bodies, and by opening only a glimpse into thinking beyond Euro-Western culture toward what multiple cultures might bring, the regulations privilege a Euro-Western cultural understanding. This cultural dominance is shown again by referencing the Canada Food Guide (Health Canada, 2016) regarding food and drink. I will say more about the Food Guide in the next section of the paper.

### **Discourses of heteronormativity.**

The regulations work to regulate bodies through discourses of heteronormativity that privilege dominant heteronormative attitudes about gender, sexuality, and sexual behaviour for children's bodies. For example, Schedule F.1(b) states that "a licensee who provides overnight care to children . . . must ensure that no child over 6 years old is accommodated in a room shared by another child of the opposite sex without direct employee supervision." This rule promotes a discourse of heteronormativity by putting forward a single way of knowing children's bodies, defined by preferred, dominant heterosexual gender identities and sexualities, that remains hidden in developmentally appropriate practice (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015). Dominant heterosexual gender binaries are confirmed through a single way of knowing that a body of one biological sex should not be in the same room overnight with a body of another biological sex. This example demonstrates developmentally appropriate practice based on scientific knowledge and the structure of knowing children objectively and teaching in appropriate ways (Blaise, 2005). This knowledge base provides certainty based on developmental needs, yet does not address the social, cultural, and political construction of children's

bodies or the social justice notion of gender beyond biological male or female bodies. The example shows again the use of measuring a child's age as a scale for categorizing bodies through discourses of heterosexual expectation. The example highlights, through a discourse of heteronormativity, the requirement to separate children using a scale of chronological age and biological sex, implying that sexual play will develop into the next stage of development (Blaise, 2005) by the age of six years. It also shows how the regulations work to resolve quandaries around discourses of heterosexual behaviour that might ensue between children's bodies during the night. By ignoring any other possible sexual thoughts or behaviours, such as those within a homosexual lens, the regulations regulate children's bodies from a dominant developmental framework that assumes that children older than age six are not trustworthy in overnight situations when they are in the same room as other children who are younger and are implicitly understood as needing protection. By recognizing and questioning concepts of normalization and privilege found within heterosexual culture, we can disrupt taken-for-granted dominant understandings of gendering bodies in the classroom and highlight how they play an integral part in creating normal and correct behaviours for bodies.

### **Discourses of mistrust.**

The regulations lay out other implicit discourses of mistrust around age categories that confirm understandings that a person's age can be a potential threat to a child's body. For example, Section 20.1 states, "The licensee must not permit a person over the age of 12 to be ordinarily present on the premises . . . while children are present, unless the person is of good character and the licensee has obtained a criminal record check for that person." This section shapes a discourse of mistrust, implying that once a child is 12

years old, they may no longer be innocent and cannot be trusted in the space of younger children unless they have been deemed safe by a recognized governmental authority such as the local police. Following Millei and Cliff (2014), this hidden discourse brings about visions of young adolescents as objects or agents that threaten programming through misbehaviour. This is how the regulations form a binary that younger children are innocent and older children are threatening, which works to resolve threats of potential conflict, such as child molestation, by placing blame on older children. This binary regulates bodies by securing barriers that separate older children, who are seen as potential threats, from younger children, who are understood as innocent and in need of protection. This is how the discourse of mistrust is born through the regulations.

Another age category is exemplified in the regulations that creates a discourse of mistrust by positing the definition of a “responsible adult” as age 19 or older. This hints that people between 12 and 19 years are a potential threat to young children. These examples lean on discourses of developmental psychology because they categorize bodies by measuring chronological age on a scale that confirms certainty for discourses of mistrust (Burman, 2008; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; MacNaughton, 2005).

### **Discourses of protection.**

The regulations regulate bodies by forming various other discourses that begin with the need to protect young children’s bodies. For instance, Section 16(4b) conveys implicit messages with respect to play area, materials, and equipment that are based on an assumption that children’s bodies are vulnerable. To ensure that children have enough space to play and that anything considered a hazard is removed, this section states that “play materials and equipment accessible to children . . . are safely constructed, free from

hazards and in good repair.” This rule sets up a discourse that children need to live in what Fleer (2003) calls a “child-centered” or “artificial world” (p. 66) in order to be safe. Safety is often a priority in early childhood education, and therefore good practice connects with safety standards that commonly require children’s bodies to be separated from the real or adult world in order to be protected. Fleer’s idea about overprotecting children is highlighted again in Section 15.2(c), which states, “A licensee must ensure that each piece of furniture or equipment for sleeping is appropriate for the size, age and development of the children intended to use it.” Underpinning images of children’s bodies as small, unknowing, and weak invites a technique of power through discourses that emphasize the relationship between children’s bodies and the need for protection from debris or hazards found in the real, or unsafe, world. The regulations therefore regulate children’s bodies through the creation and reinforcement of discourses of safety, which create truths that safety is achieved by putting children’s bodies in child-centred spaces that protect them from hazardous equipment. The regulations then work through these discourses to resolve potential safety issues, such as injury, that might arise in the real or adult world, in order to shield children’s bodies from harm.

Through these examples that create and sustain developmental truths, the regulations lay out a framework of hidden discourses for educators and programs to follow that regulate and shape children’s bodies through techniques of power.

### **How Does the Normalization of Bodies Take Place in the Regulations?**

Furthering discussions that show how techniques of power work through the formation of discourses to influence and create knowledge, this section focuses on how the regulations work to normalize children’s bodies by shaping developmentally

appropriate ideas and beliefs that constitute proper health and safety routines, as understood through a Euro-Western cultural lens.

### **Discourses of Euro-Western culture.**

The regulations work to shape and maintain developmental discourses that assume children's bodies need a particular set of nutrients for healthy development. For example, "[a] licensee must ensure that each child has healthy food and drink" (Section 48.1a), according to Canada's Food Guide (Health Canada, 2016), and must "promote healthy eating and nutritional habits" (Section 48.1b). The Food Guide provides a specific course of action by stating what kinds of food and drink, as well as how much food and drink, children's bodies need to consume. Connecting MacNaughton's (2005) explanation that normalization begins with power, the regulations put forward a regime of power by scripting a Euro-Western governmental policy that sees children's bodies, for normal development, as needing to consume food according to one particular knowledge base. In contrast, eating habits that do not fit within the clearly set guidelines are understood as abnormal for a child's healthy development, and therefore become less desirable or unacceptable for creating healthy bodies. MacNaughton (2005) sees the power to dictate healthy development as a relationship of struggle over how guides are used to enact and confirm "truths" that ensure nutrition for bodies. These truths build discourses about normality in ways that work to shape and maintain power over bodies by keeping them in check with particular cultural assumptions about health and safety. This is how discourses work in the regulations to normalize children's bodies.

From an original purpose of reaching goals of quality care, health, and safety and provide opportunities for growth, the *Child Care Licensing Regulation Information*

*Packet* (Government of British Columbia, 2008) works to normalize children's bodies from a Euro-Western cultural context. However, according to the Government of British Columbia's welcome website (2017a), Aboriginal people have lived in what is now known as British Columbia for more than 10,000 years. They developed their own policies before European explorers began to arrive in the mid-eighteenth century, bringing with them Chinese migrants to help with conducting the business of fur trading (Government of British Columbia, 2017b) during a time when the province was home to thousands of Aboriginal people. Today there are approximately 200,000 Aboriginal people in British Columbia. They make up 198 distinct First Nations in the province, each with their own unique traditions and history (Government of British Columbia, 2017a). As Canada's most ethnically diverse province today, British Columbia welcomes nearly 40,000 new immigrants every year (Government of British Columbia, 2017c). With this in mind, I question how multiculturally diverse families in British Columbia might interpret the regulations in Schedule G.4c, which "encourage the emotional development of children, including providing a comfortable atmosphere in which children feel proud of their cultural heritage and cultural sharing is encouraged" (Schedule G.4c). I believe that the regulations impose cultural and contextual difficulties that challenge the way early childhood education understands and attends to each child's cultural practice, which often is not understood as normal or acceptable. For example, if a child's culture understands that sharing a bed is normal (Jenni & O'Connor, 2005) and the child prefers to sleep with another child, such as a sibling, the regulations provide a challenge because they require sleeping equipment to be "used only by one child at a time" (Section 15.2a). In contrast to the child's body that sleeps at home under family

values put forth through cultural assumptions, institutional care programs, such as those licensed through the regulations, are kept in check through Euro-Western cultural understandings that view children who wish to share a bed as abnormal and their bodily behaviour, therefore, as problematic. This example highlights how contextual and cultural techniques of power work through the discourses in the regulations to normalize, legitimize, and therefore assimilate bodies by sending messages that bodies are desirable only when they align with sanctioned Euro-Western cultural ideas.

### **How Does the Disciplining of Bodies Take Place in the Regulations?**

Using MacNaughton's (2005) explanation that discipline works through attitudes of discretion about where, what, and how bodies need to be expressed, this section highlights how the authoritative tone in the regulations works to discipline children's bodies.

#### **Micropractices of power.**

The regulations' authoritative tone blends ethical substance with a prescriptive vision. Ideas that channel ethical substance into a prescribed way of doing practice invite micropractices of power to work by bringing the regime of truth to life. As mentioned, MacNaughton (2005) describes micropractices, or techniques of power, as working through the supervision and governance of children's bodies in ways that support and sanction truths. These truths then work to guide the way we *think*, *do*, and *be* in our practice. An example of this technique of power is found in Section 46.1 of the regulations, which states, "A licensee must establish a program to instruct children in, and to practice the rules of, health and hygiene." This statement builds a micropractice of power with ethical tones through a discourse of best practice that requires educators to

teach children's bodies to follow rules of health and hygiene. Additional examples surround this statement, such as the "licensee must ensure that any surface used for food preparation, storage or consumption is not used for changing diapers" (Section 46.2). These specific rules underscore Millei and Cliff's (2014) ideas of how discipline works, by highlighting best practice discourses using an image of children's bodies as needing intervention to ensure health and hygiene.

### **Discourses of polarization.**

The regulations also discipline bodies by socially constructing the need for certainty from a polarized position of power. Dahlberg and Moss (2005) describe polarized or dualistic thinking as setting up opposing sides where one side is desired and preferred and the other side is banished or excluded. Although the regulations work to serve the majority of children's bodies in educational settings, the polarized model embedded in the regulations does not hold well against the child's body that contests the rules. If policy is believed to be the reconcilable force that pathologizes (Sukariah & Tannock, 2015), those bodies that challenge the norm or fall outside of specified and predictable boundaries are seen as needing to be disciplined.

The idea of privileging some bodies over others is embedded in phrases such as "unless the medical health officer is satisfied" (Section 9.2), which gives power to a governmental authority figure who is unfamiliar with the particular context of the program, the culture of its participants, and the social uniqueness of each child, family, and educator. Situated on the outside of each program, the medical health officer holds the right, through sanctioned regulations, to make assumptions about programs ahead of time, working to resolve problems that are deemed unsatisfactory before they arise.

Power is thus held by the person who makes decisions about which bodies will be privileged and which bodies will be excluded and thus pathologized (Fleer, 2003). Therefore, the regulations discipline bodies through the confirmation of polarized discourses that privilege and pathologize.

### **Discourses of colonizing childhood.**

Furthering the idea of choosing some bodies over others, Varga (2011) highlights the use of governmental techniques illuminated as discourses in the realm of sociohistorical colonization of children's bodies. As a strategy of power and control utilized by nations over subjugated people, governmental power has been shown to provide historical, racial, and social contexts for understanding and promoting "the advancement of Eurocentric culture through a generic 'White' development" (p. 137). With this in mind, and depending on the priorities and desires of those holding authoritative roles, such as the medical health officer, children's bodies are positioned in a place where they can be appropriated through attitudes about discipline embedded in the regulations. For example, Schedule G.3a states, "A licensee must ensure that a program of activities is provided that encourages the language development of children, including modeling of good language and listening skills." Embedded in this statement is the understanding that a child's body needs to listen in order to learn the language in their particular setting.

### **Discourses of surveillance.**

Finally, I highlight the discursive assumption that "children are supervised at all times by a person who is an educator, an assistant or a responsible adult" (Section 39.1). As a form of surveillance, supervision provides a micropractice of power that works to

discipline bodies through a reference of truths that once again resolve issues around what is considered to be normal or abnormal behaviour. Surveillance employs a witness to ensure that bodies act in ways that are considered to be appropriate. The supervisor or early childhood educator works as a catalyst for disciplining children's bodies through the regime of truth that imagines that bodies need binaries of totalization, or sameness, through forces of discipline that produce a will to conform, as described by MacNaughton (2005, p. 31).

Therefore, the regulations work to discipline children's bodies through the workings of the entanglement of power that is embedded in the political and ethical substance of a regime of truth. Thus, through the construction of sanctioned discourses, techniques of power allow discipline to work in ways that keep children's bodies in check with what is considered to be developmentally appropriate or best practice through a Euro-Western cultural lens.

### **Conclusion**

This paper challenged developmentally appropriate practice by unpacking British Columbia's Child Care Licensing Regulations (B.C. Laws, 2016). Critical discourse analysis highlighted dominant discourses relating to children's bodies in the ways of thinking, working, and doing early childhood education, while attending to four questions set out at the beginning of the paper, as follows.

First, the regulations bring assumptions that children's bodies should be organized by methods of developmentally appropriate practice to regulate, normalize, and discipline bodies according to measurements such as the age and developmental stage of the child's body. Using a clear scale of measurement provides certainty for bodies so that they can

be compared and universalized. The regulations assume that bodies need guidance to keep in check with developmental appropriateness. Appropriate bodies follow Euro-Western health and safety routines, such as those prescribed by the Canada Food Guide. Appropriate bodies are assumed to be those that identify as heterosexual and align with a heteronormative social construction that shapes gender ideas about bodily behaviour from a single way of knowing and connecting to biological sex. Assumptions that younger children are innocent and older children are threatening are embedded in the regulations, which posit that different age groups should be separated. Good educators are assumed to follow the high-quality programming of organizing children's bodies from a DAP model that views bodies through a Euro-Western framework.

Second, techniques of power work to shape bodies through the discourses of developmental psychology in the regulations by working to control thinking, being, and doing while aligning with sanctioned political intent. By forming and using systems of truth, dominant power regimes are created, which employ developmental discourses. These discourses then become rationalized by the common powers of neoliberalism and governmentality that promote a system of ideas that translate into mechanisms or technologies of practice. These mechanisms bring certainty, often through quantifying bodies toward a desired outcome, while pathologizing opposing outcomes. Thus, regimes of truth work to govern and regulate powerful ideas about how bodies should think, act, feel, and be.

Third, Euro-Western social, cultural, and contextual conditions are embedded throughout the regulations, prescribing health and safety routines through good/bad binary thinking that promotes high levels of health and safety routines and discourages

practices that are not considered ideal from a health and safety perspective. Cultural diversity is almost completely absent; not even the First Nations history of British Columbia is considered, nor is the incredible diversity the province has experienced since the arrival of European settlers and Chinese migrants in the mid-eighteenth century. Social and contextual conditions in the regulations come from a developmental perspective that children's bodies should be shaped in appropriate, standardized methods of organization.

Fourth, the discourses in the regulations work to resolve problems before they might arise. For example, discourses of heteronormativity provide developmentally appropriate thinking through a clear heteronormative lens instead of complexifying the possibility of other ways of doing gender or sexuality. Separating children according to biological sex is an easy way to resolve conflict from a male/female binary. Discourses of protecting bodies by sanctioning safety requirements separate innocent younger bodies from threatening older bodies and from real-world hazards.

Answering these questions through a poststructural theoretical perspective brings renewed recognition that "valuable knowledge is part of discursive relations" (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2005, p. 50). Understanding how discourses are formed and how they connect with knowledge is important, because this relationship invites critical reflection that opens multiple conversations that begin to shift common thinking about how to practice ethically with children's bodies, instead of following common prescribed ways of thinking and doing practice. Making these connections also helps to consider how rules uphold programming through goals that privilege dominant Euro-Western ideas while pathologizing ideas that are less common.

It is my hope that this analysis will contribute to discussions about children's bodies in early childhood education that move beyond techniques of control, through advocacy and freedom of expression that might emerge from alternative discourses.

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### Paper 3. Restorying the Image of the Child's Body in Early Childhood Education



**Figure 1. Building a ramp.**

“Watch out guys, bombs away! We can use it jumping and a ramp.”

“And we had two sprained ankles. It can be a ramp and a jump.”

*On a warm spring day, two bare-footed children's bodies move carefully in an outside play yard as they work together contributing high amounts of energy to lifting*

*and positioning loose boards. They carry the boards across the low, grassy yard and together decide to line them up on the steps that lead to the upper floor of the childcare centre. It seems that their intention is to be able to sit on the boards and slide down from the mid-point of the steps to the platform below. They squeal and jump with excitement while speaking about how their bodies might get hurt. I notice how their bodies wriggle with a rippling thrill as they collaborate in ways that freely explore a delicious and intoxicating space of free play.* (Field notes)

As an experienced early childhood educator, settler, graduate student, and new researcher, I recorded the above scenario during an eight-month internship in the University of Victoria's Investigating Quality (IQ) in Early Learning Environments Project (in one of many site visits to a child care centre). This action research project was designed by Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw and Dr. Alan Pence in the School of Child and Youth Care. The project's aim was to broaden and deepen discussions on quality in early childhood education at local, regional, national, and international levels (Pence & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2010, 2012). My role in the project included collaborating with one community facilitator, participating in monthly learning circle discussions with educators and researchers, reading and reflecting on readings through conversations with educators and other stakeholders, engaging with my own reflective writing that connected theory and practice, and collecting data during site visits in a child care centre.

During my internship I noticed a shift from what I knew children's bodies were supposed to do and be, to a place of uncertainty about the image of the child's body. The scenario of loose boards on the staircase brought forward my own reflections that leaned

on Pacini-Ketchabaw, Nxumalo, Kocher, Elliot, and Sanchez's (2015) ideas of "learning to complexify" (p. xi) early childhood education practices.

This paper begins by unpacking my own tensions that emerged when choosing to let go of embedded dominant assumptions about children's bodies during this particular scenario. Through collaborative reflection with the educators, I questioned the regulation of children's bodies from a Euro-Western cultural lens, beginning with a sociohistorical account of regulating children's bodies through systems of institutionalized power and considering how education has become entrenched in assumptions that construct common images of bodies. Next, I consider ethical and political implications of valuing social justice for children's bodies. I describe research within the growing discourse of risky play that values the way risky play enhances bodies' perception and competence in decision making. I consider a broader perspective of risk as a material discursive practice in relation to childhood, play, health and well-being. The idea of risky play connects with educator tensions of thinking in moments of not knowing that complexify how bodies search for meaning in the world. The paper then moves to restorying children's bodies by describing how bodies might gain power through acts of minor politics. I give careful consideration to advocating for alternative conceptualizations of children's bodies that invite creative thinking, doing, and being. Finally, I reveal surprises that the children, educators, and I discovered about bodies during the scenario when loose boards were placed on the staircase.

With the intention of opening alternative stories about the image of children's bodies in early childhood education following my own transformative experience through the project, my driving questions in this paper ask how early childhood education might

reconceptualize the possibilities of children's bodies, while considering the ethical implications of the field.

### **Unpacking My Own Tensions While Letting Go of Common Assumptions**

The encounter I described above struck me with a curiosity regarding bodies' capacity to think, create, collaborate, reason, and act in ways that in my past as an early childhood educator I would have shut down because of their potential danger. My previous experience upheld an image of the educator embedded in a technocratic practice that used authority to control the actions of children's bodies, complying with dominant assumptions about the way bodies are understood in early childhood education. The activity of placing loose boards on stairs would have been stopped in my past experience, because this bodily encounter would conflict with my previous assumptions about what children's bodies should and should not do or be. Through the time spent observing, collaborating, and reflecting within the project, my image of the child's body transformed from a position of knowing children's bodies to one of complexifying bodies as unknown and surprising. During this process, I highlighted and unpacked my own tensions in letting go of common assumptions about children's bodies that had driven my previous practice. I was in a process of creating space for doing practice differently. I realized that I had been so busy with the technicalities of daily routine and keeping myself in a place of comfort and certainty with young bodies that I did not look beyond common images of the child's body. During the moments in the scenario, I was aware of my urge to step in and stop what I considered dangerous play involving loose boards on a staircase. I felt the tension of going beyond my own comfort level while holding myself back from protecting bare feet from splinters or using my voice to suggest safer activities. I took a

deep breath, consciously choosing to move to a place of discomfort, beyond certainty, and embrace the unknown. I did this by holding on to my own curiosity about where this encounter would go.

### **Opening Exploratory Space**

The intended pedagogy in this particular childcare centre was to open exploratory space for children's bodies by offering loose materials and a sense of freedom in decision making during play. The educators in this setting held the perception that children's bodies are exploratory and unknown. Learning from the educators during this encounter, I questioned what might have been lost if I had intervened with the flow of play during these moments. I noticed the multiple ways of learning that came through these bodies, which helped me to recognize how pedagogy might evolve. Thinking deeply while observing the children's bodies in these moments shifted my perceptions about the field of early childhood education. For example, I knew I could not possibly have prescribed this scenario of exploratory learning using a prepackaged teaching activity aimed at putting particular pedagogical intentions into a compartmentalized learning space and expecting children's bodies to comply. The bodily encounter that happened before me explored creativity, discovered compassion for others through sharing, created language, and experimented with problems. These bodies showed great capacity through their immense, urgent energy of unplanned and playful exploration, which could not possibly have been met through planning, regulation, or discipline (Skott-Myhre, 2008).

While reflecting on opening exploratory space, I questioned the need to regulate children's bodies, looking beyond Euro-Western culture's dominant assumptions in early childhood pedagogy.

## The Regulation of Children's Bodies in Early Childhood Education

### My Own History

My experience in early childhood education has enacted dominant assumptions about how children's bodies *should* play. For instance, children's play has not traditionally included barefoot experimentation with splintered loose boards on steep structures with potential safety hazards. Stairs were created and understood with the intention of assisting bodies up or down structures, and climbers learn to approach stairs as a life skill (Cesari, Formenti, & Olivato, 2003).

It has been my experience that making demands on bodies through regulation fits within Euro-Western culture's status-quo thinking. For example, my previous image of the early childhood educator followed common expectation that children's bodies need to stand in line, sit quietly, and follow routines within a schedule. From this common cultural perspective, I had learned that educators must ensure that young bodies stay within the confines of compliance through a lens that values safety and regulation (Government of British Columbia, 2008).

However, following the work of MacNaughton (2005), regulating children's bodies prescribes predictable "truths" in developmental psychology that have real implications for children's bodies because they work to constrain and dictate the possibilities of what bodies can and cannot do and be. These truths position the image of the early childhood educator as the trusted authority figure who holds the responsibility of producing similar bodies that fit a particular mold in society. For example, when a child's body acts outside the margins of desired expectation (for instance, by placing loose boards on a staircase), educators might try to stop children or redirect their play.

Questioning my own image as an educator opened new ways of thinking about regulating children's bodies.

### **The Rise of Regulating Bodies Through a Sociohistorical Lens**

The encounter I described above led me to consider sociohistorical events that shaped educational systems toward what has become a common system of regulating children's bodies. Burman (2008) notes that the new field of psychology fell in line with meeting the demands of prevailing social anxieties in the late nineteenth century. For example, the urbanization in England that was brought about through industrialization produced appalling conditions of poor health and poverty. Burman writes: "The physical state of the general population was a matter of widespread concern. . . . [P]oliticians and the emerging social scientists focused their attention on the 'quality' of the population" (p. 18). Burman adds that health clinics and the nursery school enabled large numbers of children's bodies to be observed by skilled experts under "experimental conditions" (p. 20). This surveillance helped to produce an understanding of what has popularly become known in psychology as the "normal child." The construction of a normal child's body instilled what has become accepted as *good habits*, defined by keeping order through critical observation or examination. Drawing attention to bodies that fall outside the norm of following good habits, Sukariah and Tannock (2015) describe that a century of pathologizing the body in developmental discourse has been viewed as regular practice. By putting forward an image of the child's body through the negative lens of its potential inability or abnormality, bodies have become deficit categorizations based on scales that measure and compare chronological age with ability (Burman, 2008). Hence, originating from an intention of improving health and poverty, institutions moved toward

psychologizing, organizing, pathologizing, and therefore normalizing bodies through various forms of standardization. Continuing with this idea, Burman (2008) suggests that a process of standardization has “set up a reciprocal dependence between the normal and abnormal” (p. 20), making the abnormal possible. This form of dualistic thinking understands regulation only through oppositional or binary categories, such as acceptable or not acceptable, and ignores the nuances between them. This thinking leads to exclusion, such that one child’s body is desirable while another is not (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p. 26). For example, holding highly productive bodies as the model for educational achievement reinforces that problem bodies, in comparison, do not excel in educational settings. These ideas reinforce negative images of children’s bodies.

Continuing with the historical context of Euro-Western institutional systems of power, Dahlberg and Moss (2005) lean on Deleuze’s (1992) description of disciplinary societies that were based on individual closed institutions and worked as “normalizing machines” (p. 50) for the purpose of keeping laws and disciplinary methods in check. Techniques of disciplinary power grew with the rise of institutions, such as the factory, barracks, hospitals, and schools, constructing societies of control through governance. Adding the work of Rose (1999) to these ideas, Dahlberg and Moss explain that the school was a particularly important institution for normalization through regimes of supervision and judgment in relation to norms of scholarly moral behaviour. They argue that the preschool can be seen as “an institution where disciplinary power is deployed through a range of knowledges and technologies that form part of a dominant discourse” (p. 52). These knowledges contribute to what has become known as developmentally appropriate practice (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009),

which works inside a framework of knowing what, how, and when children need to learn. If educators can regulate a child's body, then developmental theories can be understood as having institutionalized power that shapes children's bodies (Butler, 1997). In these ways, normativity prescribes and conceptualizes bodies as the "object": "an agent and instrument that acts and is acted upon by others" (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015, p. 53).

These regularities dictate how children's bodies eat, move, and develop in political and cultural contexts (Millei & Imre, 2015). Considering the framework of dominant thinking, Millei and Cliff (2014) suggest that temporal and spatial controls have become common alongside discipline to monitor children's bodies to fit the needs that become the norms of society.

Therefore, through common historical circumstances of regulation and discipline in educational institutions, the image of the child's body has emerged as weak, incomplete, innocent, incapable, and in need of adult intervention (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015). Yet, from an ethical and political perspective, how might educational systems shift from controlling bodies through systems of regulation and discipline toward a more positive image of the child's body that advocates thinking and doing *differently*?

### **Ethical and Political Implications of Children's Bodies**

Dahlberg and Moss (2005) describe the potentially close relationship between "ethics—understood as the sphere of the undecidable—and for the political—understood as the search through negotiation and compromise, for what is acceptable and for the negotiation of provisional agreements" (p. 158). If the contestations of children's bodies can be seen as negotiations of unknown creativities in everyday moments, how might these contradictions be considered ethical openings for understanding and enhancing

meaningful foundations for living? Dahlberg and Moss also consider the specific relationship between ethics and practice, noting the implications of favoured approaches through a particular ethical lens, thinking with Levinas's notion of the "ethics of an encounter" (p. 13). Such an ethics, they argue, requires a matching political theory of care, to place value at the heart of a "just, pluralistic, democratic society" (p. 123).

With an incredible responsibility to provide quality care "to the highest standards of ethical practice" (Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia's code of ethics, 2008, p. 1), educators in British Columbia are described as having "a significant, enduring impact on the children's lives" (p. 1). Yet, I wonder how each educator might interpret these ethical standards differently. For example, what ethical goals of pedagogy might be reached within practice routines that focus on quality through regulation and discipline? How might ethical practice support social justice for children's bodies? When binary thinking, such as acceptable / not acceptable and safe / at risk, becomes muddled and the script is taken away, how might children's bodies be perceived differently? Is it possible that, without the comfort and safety net of binary thinking, some educators might find themselves in a terrifying place of risk?

### **The Growing Discourse of Risky Play**

Moving toward reconceptualizing the possibilities of children's bodies, there is a growing discourse of risky play in early childhood education that invites educators to unpack their own histories and consider the relevance of risk, while managing and promoting risk taking as beneficial for the well-being of children's bodies (Lester & Russell, 2014). For example, Lavrysen and colleagues (2017) found through empirical research that incorporating activities that invite risky play in educational contexts had a

positive impact for young bodies. Noting decades of decline in outdoor and therefore risky play, largely as a result of overprotecting young children's bodies, their study intended to promote risk taking. Educators in the study considered their own beliefs and attitudes about risk taking to loosen barriers and encourage positive risk-taking experiences for young bodies. They observed the young body's ability to learn "risk perception" (p. 90), defined as making a realistic appraisal of the risky situation, which precedes "risk competence" (p. 90), defined as the ability to see opportunities in a risky situation and make decisions about whether to engage in the activity. If the child chose to engage in the risky activity, their body worked to transform the activity into a manageable and controllable situation. During a three-month intervention period, the study promoted exciting and challenging experimental risky play activities that restored the images of children's bodies for many educators.

Following Lester and Russell's (2014) broader perspective that considers a contemporary understanding of how risk plays out in material discursive practices in relation to childhood play, health and well-being, risky behavior might be interpreted as challenging and extending the current common-sense understanding of play by "turn[ing] conventional wisdom on its head in pretty much the same fashion as children do when playing" (p. 242). Their reconfiguration of conceptual tools and approaches complexifies play and multiplies the possibilities between risk and material discursive practices of childhood, and entangle what might become multiple creativities with play, risk and health, moving risky play beyond traditional understandings. By disrupting actions such as organizing, identifying, measuring, and classifying of children's bodies, Lester and Russell emphasize neoliberalism's forces of control, consumption and commodification.

They point out that life itself is rarely given attention. To think about risky play differently, they consider arranging interwoven ideas of relationality, materiality, and performativity to explore worldly connections of bodies through a perspective on emergence. If a body's life is emergent, there is no fixed, self-contained identity. The authors note that life can be creatively and actively assembled through the process of desire – always becoming something more. We might say that placing loose boards on a staircase involves the ability of a body to “affect and be affected” (p. 249), or power to command resourceful ways to create new worldly entanglements.

Connecting the discourse of risky play with the IQ project, Atkinson, McDaniel, and Tanner (2017) bring different perspectives to what educator risk taking might look and feel like in the forest when they “create spaces to test ideas, play with understandings, stand back, notice, and wonder what other ways of being and doing are possible” (p. 21). In their explorations with the children in this setting, “adult voices are quiet, rules are set aside, and questions are allowed to flourish” (p. 21). Thinking with the growing discourse of risky play as beneficial for bodies, the educators share feelings of worry, anxiety, and conflict while allowing children's bodies to engage in risky play, for example, when they lick moss or run down trails where they cannot be seen by adults. These tensions invite my own questions about the ethical responsibilities of educators, such as, what is too risky for children's bodies? What is safe? Are these young bodies old enough to develop risk perception? Are they capable of making decisions using risk competence? Where are my feelings of discomfort coming from? Am I enjoying the encounter, and if not, what would it take to bring enjoyment? Who decides what bodies can and cannot do, and how far this exploration should go? What are the tensions among

educators? What would the families think of this level of risk? What would the licensing regulations say about the encounter? What are the children's bodies saying? What are the ethics of this encounter?

Curtis (2010) reminds educators that taking risks is part of practice, noting, "with few risks there are few rewards" (p. 56). She adds that educators have differing thresholds as to what they consider too risky. Lenz Taguchi (2008) describes the value in consciously problematizing what educators take for granted and resisting the dominant thinking that is most available to us. She puts forward the choices made in practice as being "driven by our sense of responsibility to our new understandings of ourselves, our work, and the children" (p. 280). While questioning the role of the educator during children's bodily encounters of risky play, educators have the opportunity to practice an ethic of resistance by disrupting common thinking as a vehicle for negotiating ethically grounded professional choices.

### **Thinking in Moments of Not Knowing**

In this project, while observing children's bodies in the scenario I described in the introduction, I felt tensions related to the discourse of risky play. While grappling with these uncertainties, I was guided by Berger's (2015) "thinking in moments of not knowing" (p. 130). How might the idea of not knowing what a child's body will or can do, as an inquiry, invite what Loiselle, de Finney, Khanna, and Corcoran (2012) refer to as "exploration of movement, connection and expansion in and between the lines of power, resistance, desire and possibility in order to offer a departure from linear or reductive methods" (p. 188)? While considering these and other questions that invite

different ideas in early childhood education pedagogies with respect to bodies, below I move to further unpack the idea of working in the space of not knowing.

### **Possibilities for Bodies' Creativity**

As I watched the scenario of children's bodies working with loose boards on the steps, I was astonished at how much I did not know and could not predict about how the scenario would unfold. These young bodies were taking risks that broke through common images of "rendering children passive and needy recipients of expertise" (Lester & Russell, 2014), because they flourished with a sense of creative freedom. This free exploration opened possibilities for bodies that invited social connection, physical and emotional care for each other, and new forms of language. Their bodies connected with grunts, squeals, and high-pitched screams as they tripped and fell, only to pick their bodies up again and move forward. If children's bodies are understood as resourceful, contradictory workers who push boundaries to the edge of what their bodies are capable of doing, I wonder what might be lost when a body is "under constant surveillance, or at least perceive[s] itself to be" (Millei & Cliff, 2014, p. 250) within a framework of control?

In pursuing these thoughts, I recognize that these bodies have escaped from what Wright (2009), leaning on Foucault (1977), considers *utility*, as seen in prisons, barracks, and schools that manage bodies through regularizing routines and habits. Conversely, in this particular childcare centre the children's bodies seem to find a sense of freedom that invites creativity while flourishing at the edge of what their bodies are capable of doing, knowing, and being. This sense of creative freedom happens through a bodily encounter that breaks free from predictability.

### **Bodies as Searching for Meaning in the World**

Following Skott-Myhre (2008), it is through the body that humans come to know the world. Although the body's sensory apparatus allows perception, this does not mean that bodies *know* the world as it is. Through systems of culturally inscribed experience, social structures and norms are learned in an ever-changing historical environment. Current conditions confirm and replicate bodies. Thus, the body is subject to what has been socially inherited, and it is presented as the site that performs social norms and structures (Skott-Myhre, 2008). Skott-Myhre draws from Butler (1997), noting that beyond sensory experience such as sight and touch, bodies can hold the possibility of resistance when asserting alternate discourses aside from what is considered common. Performative bodies are therefore not determined ontologically or biologically, but produced by cultural processes. When children's bodies break free of common patterns, such as using loose boards on stairs to make a slide, predictability is also broken. When predictability is broken, generally there is a response from dominant society to restore the body to a normative baseline of function premised on an essentialized normal body. Unpredictability, seen as a limitation by dominant society, brings about disciplinary responses such as institutionalization, which has proclaimed these children's bodies as "radically distinct and inferior to the normative body" (Skott-Myhre, 2008. p. 62). In this way, the body is produced as an effect of the social through its performances of historical struggles over knowledge and power. Thus the body's performances do not arise from within the body, but are the result of the struggle for meaning and structure in society (Skott-Myhre, 2008, p. 64).

Skott-Myhre (2008) refers to Spinoza's (2000) assertion that no one knows what a body can do, while Spinoza defines a body as made up of many composite parts. He argues that each body has structural similarities, such as molecules and organs, but radically differing expressive capacities. In this way, each body is a unique expression of the life force. This force of each body, which is made up of many bodies, resides in its desire to persist in its unique expression of life. When the collision with other bodies is amplified, this desire to persist in a unique expression is given more force. If the powers of the collision and the unique force have a common capacity, creative forces can move forth. If the forces share no commonality, they are toxic and therefore decrease each other's life force. This view of living matter as expressive for an infinite number of differing capacities is the reason Spinoza claimed that it is impossible to predict what a body can do. Skott-Myhre (2008), building on Spinoza's understanding that a body cannot be reduced to any particular set of structures, asserts that the ontology of a child's body can be perceived as holding an infinite capacity of "expression and force based in new collisions with other bodies it has not encountered yet" (p. 67). Being and becoming are the same, but are shown at different moments of activity and rest within the larger set of relations that define the unique logic of each body's constitution by the collectivity of bodies that comprise it. As Skott-Myhre explains it, Spinozist ontology describes the process by which "life produces itself through the infinitude of expressive capacities found in both the individual body and the infinite collective of bodies that is life at any given moment" (p. 71).

Skott-Myhre (2008) refers to Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) reference to both individual and communal pathways that lie beyond normality, producing *lines of flight*,

which are found in the creative performance of the body by the body. In this way, the body is the subject of life that produces the space of life by offering a mode of performance and expression that goes beyond questioning. The body cannot know itself until it collides with all of the other bodies in the moment of the act of expression. Bodies that intersect between lines of history, politics, discourse, technology, and geography merge and collide with other bodies in flight through time.

During the bodily encounter with loose boards on the stairs, I felt the expressive language of the body's performance break apart the logic of the socially constructed body, not by making sense of it, but by challenging the laws of physical sense through a new avenue of time and context (Skott-Myhre, 2008).

### **Restorying the Images of Children's Bodies**

In an effort to challenge past conceptualizations of children's bodies in the scenario presented above, the educators and I participated in collaborative conversations, first attuning to the children's bodies. We struggled to listen with a responsibility to make meaning from what was communicated verbally and nonverbally, without preconceived ideas of correctness. The work of open listening, inspired by Davies (2011), required us to shift our common perceptions about children's bodies to really listen, see, and feel the bodily encounter in the moment, with an open mind. This meant not knowing in advance what knowledges would emerge from the entanglements of the encounter. We found this work to be difficult, and it opened what Deleuze (1994, as cited in Davies, 2014a) calls "differentiation" to becoming other than oneself. Davies (2014b) argues that this journey of "an exciting and very demanding path of experimentation . . . can take us to the edge of the not-yet-known" (p. 734), and thus begins to trace new pathways. We focused on

the way the children's bodies explored and how they found meaningful pathways of becoming part of the world. Through this lens, I could restory my image of the child's body as exploratory through acts of experimental discovery. I could reconceptualize bodies as searching for meaning in the space of the not-yet-known.

As I photographed this moment that might have been easily hidden, the educators and I wondered what the families would think if we shared the encounter with them. How might we talk together about the experience and take the encounter beyond the boundary of the care space? Thinking through these questions brought a sense of urgency that propelled us to share particular moments when two bodies built a slide on the steps with parents and community groups. Sharing encounters such as these might work to expose and perhaps shift images about the potentiality of children's bodies in a public way (Hodgins, 2012; Rinaldi, 2006). We agreed that by recognizing children's bodies as capable through public documentation, we could become facilitators of discussions about rules rather than enforcers of rules (Atkinson, 2012). By opening conversations with children, families, communities, and governments through writing this research project paper, we believe educational communities have the potential to restory bodily images from common status-quo thinking toward new knowledges that work to create courageous and unexpected futures (Rinaldi, 2012).

The pedagogical narration that I have shared highlights a disruption from what Foucault (1987, as cited by Jones-Smith, 2016) described as maintaining the powerful influence that often gets storied from dominant discourses in society. Instead, from a position that challenges truth, the educators and I wondered what might be possible if no single story of universal truth existed outside of the experience. By reconceptualizing the

image portrayed by these children's bodies, we noticed the emergence of a different cultural and relational practice. The pedagogical narration can be understood as restorying what has been socially constructed as common through relationships that have shared and confirmed what is assumed and expected across communities (Gergen & Gergen, 2004). The process of restorying can be seen as a desire to think critically about how to reproduce and inherit meaning in early childhood education (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015). My interpretation sees bodies as affected during these moments in ways that wake up a sense of opportunity, compassion for others, and excitement about creating innovative forms of children producing something useful, as children, without adult ideas or orders. From a cultural and contextual tradition that communicates enormous potential for the unknown, reimagining ideas that are constrained by what has been considered traditional truths about children's bodies can open endless possibilities and new ideas in practice. In this way, playing at the edge of reason can open new stories and worlds of meaning (Gergen & Gergen, 2004) for children's bodies.

### **Minor Politics and the Power of Children's Bodies**

Restorying can free what can feel like a cramped space of care by opening new ideas in pedagogy. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's (1999) concept of *minor politics*, Dahlberg and Moss (2005) explain the small reworkings of "the ways in which creativity arises out of the situation of human beings engaged in particular relations of force and meaning, and what is made of the possibilities of that location" (p. 138). By building a slide on the steps, the children's bodies became the force of power that brought meaning to the activity, as a site of minor politics. These children are travelling on a journey to unscripted places in their play that might have been unimaginable and unattainable

considering the EuroWestern realm of normality surrounding them. Their bodies are oblivious to what might be considered proper, sensible, and normal behaviour. They flourish in moments of discovering new modes of possibility. What must it feel like to be interrupted during such moments of ecstasy, moments that reach such delicious heights? Rinaldi (2012) views a child's body as powerful from the moment of birth, because it is open to the world's possibilities. If a baby's body enters the world with openness about what, when, and how ideas emerge, imagine the possibilities of expanding what might be considered normal.

### **Advocating for Alternative Perceptions of Children's Bodies**

With the purpose of advocating for alternative perceptions of children's bodies, I lean on Hodgins' (2012) ideas of attending to "complexity, multiplicity, and plurality" (p. 10). Without prepackaged learning outcomes based on universal thinking about predictability, images of children's bodies can be seen as unique and full of variables that highlight complexity. These ideas invite different worlds where multiple possibilities for restorying bodies can come out of each moment. With potential to open spaces that advocate for new perceptions, encounters with children's bodies can resist single-mindedness.

With this in mind, there is a multitude of possibilities that contribute to the ontology of early childhood education through the images of children's bodies. As I observe bodies doing their work through these moments, I continuously question what kind of practice lies beyond the boundaries of taken-for-granted, universalistic, and normalizing ideas and practices (Lenz Taguchi, 2008). Questions that ask what/where/when/why/how frame thoughts that disrupt powerful discourses and advocate

for alternate perceptions of children's bodies. In this way, perhaps difference can be made to matter (Davies, 2014b).

### **The Surprises**

My driving questions in this paper ask how early childhood education might reconceptualize the possibilities of children's bodies, and what are the ethical implications of the field, relating to children's bodies. By opening possibilities of how loose boards can shift images of young children's curious, wiggly, and experimental bodies, space emerged for not-yet-known ideas. These moments that complexified bodies unveiled an absurdity within common sense that is often described as regulation. In this paper, I unpacked questions about how my own image of children's bodies shifted from a previous place of common, normative systems of education and care that assumed high levels of controlling and regulating children's bodies, toward restorying bodies.

When the educators and I looked through a lens of curiosity that asked what might emerge for children's bodies while opening different perceptions about our own images of bodies, I was taken by surprise. The first surprise in the scenario was contesting dominant discourse by seeing these young bodies as strong enough to lift boards on their own and move them to a deliciously risky place through a process of play that did not break any bones, create splinters, or bring tears. This activity followed Santos's (1995) idea that refusing conformity creates the will to struggle for alternatives. Next, the surprises went much deeper. The activity turned into an encounter that opened new stories about what children's bodies can do, think, and be. By thinking differently about bodies, the educators, children, and I felt a sense of being alive, alongside a creative ideological commitment to participating in collective action (Richardson & Reynolds,

2012). The second surprise was an out-of-the-ordinary response to an encounter, an opening for something different to happen, a “‘crackling apart’ or ‘fragmentation of contextual understanding’” (MacNaughton, 2005, p. 110). The third surprise was reaching a sense of utopia, defined by Moss (2007) as a political action that emerges by contesting dominant discourses for the purpose of envisioning change. This happened by imagining new modes of possibility that radically pushed the boundaries of normal existence. By moving beyond rules stating no boards on staircases, we created a disruption in expectation that led to excited squeals and jumps alongside creative innovation. The children’s bodies in these moments showed me that we were going to a place outside the ordinary, breaking through common boundaries, and cracking assumptive ideas. By inviting change, new visions were turned into “utopian action” (Moss, 2007, p. 13). This idea links with Deleuze’s (1985/1989) description of the artist as a “creator of truth” (p. 146) in a way that truth can only be formed or reproduced. Deleuze described creating truth as an opening for change, which, as shown in the scenario, is a vital element of creative evolution. Leaning on Foucault, Moss (2007) adds that there is a close connection between contesting dominant discourses, thinking differently, and change: “As soon as one can no longer think things are as one formerly thought them, transformation becomes both very urgent, very difficult and quite possible” (p. 13). This was the fourth surprise in these moments: what MacNaughton (2005) refers to as “an affective response to an encounter with things marvelous” (p. 110). In the scenario, the children, educators, and I felt wonderfully connected to the world in a way that brought tremendous meaning as a result of the encounter. It was the feeling of exaltation that went beyond what was known as possible.

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