

Caring, Dwelling, Becoming:
Stories of Multiage Child Care

by

Deborah Thompson
B.A., University of British Columbia, 1987
M.A., University of British Columbia, 2001

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ABSTRACT

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ABSTRACT

Using postfoundational and postqualitative frameworks, this dissertation considers what materializes when four child care centres adopt a multiage grouping structure, which includes children born in four consecutive years in each centre. The research question asks how do children live their lives in multiaged child care? To explore that question, the study challenges developmentalism as the dominant principle for organizing child care groupings. Engaging with three theoretical concepts, caring relations, dwelling, and becoming, the dissertation further questions: a) what characterizes relationships in these multi-aged centres? b) how do children negotiate through the curriculum in the centres? c) how can the children's transformations be conceptualized in postdevelopmental theory/practice?

This action research project employs the process of pedagogical narrations to story three ordinary moments that occurred in the child care centres. The pedagogical narrations process extends those storied moments through the critical reflections of the caregivers who work in the centres. The analytic process, thinking with theory, plugs-in the three concepts, caring relations, dwelling, and becoming, to the stories, producing beyond-developmental understandings of children, childhood, and child care. The study demonstrates pedagogical narrations as an effective postqualitative methodology for caregivers to research their own practices.

This study concludes that child care structures such as age groupings, require situated ethics of care and responsibility, as well as, an early years reconceptualized curriculum that resists universalizing and normalizing practices in favour of situated ones. Considering caring relations, in spaces for young children, provides a context for thinking beyond simply, and only, adults caring for children, to thinking of children in relations of care with place, other non-human beings and non-living things, as well as other people, including other children and adults. Thinking with the dwelling concept encourages an attention to the present in early years settings, allowing more-than-developmental interests to flourish. Thinking becoming means thinking becoming-other, and positions subjectivities, including those of children, caregivers and place as unstable, shifting, and in relation.

Key words: becoming, caregivers, child care, children, dwelling, early childhood education, ethics of care, multiage, pedagogical narrations, post-qualitative research

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to Jen and Bayla, whose care filled ethics so profoundly influenced my understandings of children and caring; and to my daughters, Maggie and Leigh who continue to inspire me.

Chapter 1: Beginnings

Lila, Dahlia and Nathan stood on little chairs to examine an extended tripod.

Debbie asked: "Are you safe on the chairs? Or should you be sitting on them?"

Dahlia (2 ½) responded quickly and confidently: "Standing."

Nathan (also 2 ½) added: "And sitting."

When we attend to them, moments with children convey multiple, complicated and sometimes contradictory meanings (Forman, Hall & Berglund, 2001). This brief interlude suggests an adult's concern with safety and an attempt to control, a child's confident assertiveness, another child's reflective thinking, along with three children's willingness to risk, among other possible interpretations. The moment takes place in a research project investigating life in four multiage child care centres. The research project forms the basis of this dissertation. Edwards, Blaise and Hammer (2009) recommended that research examining multiage groupings move away from considering impacts on children's development toward a focus on participants, including children and adults. They argued for a need to "examine the complexities associated with teaching and learning within multiage classrooms" (Edwards et al., 2009, p. 56). Through careful attention to storied moments I aim in this dissertation to explore the complexities of caring, learning and living within these four particular multiage childcare centres.

Inspired by aspects of Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) philosophy, the anthropological thinking of Ingold (2000, 2010), Held's (2006) and Toronto's (1993) concepts of ethics of care, and challenges to universal applications of child development theory in early years settings (Burman, 2008a, 2008b; Cannella, 1997; Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999, 2007), this storied project contests the primacy of developmental theory as the foundational basis for child care practices. A provocation to reconsider this primacy came through the introduction of a broad age

range in the four child care centres. In this project, multiage groupings means that each centre included children from four consecutive birth years in one group. The changed age range necessitated exploring child care practices and examining the theoretical assumptions underpinning them. Through a focus on ordinary moments, this dissertation investigates children's relationships, experiences and transformations, when a previously taken-for-granted theoretical bedrock no longer informs practices. It questions: what characterizes relationships in these multi-aged centres? How do children negotiate through the curriculum in the centres? How can the children's transformations be conceptualized in postdevelopmental theory/practice? The overarching research question asks how do children live their lives in multiaged child care?

Organization

In this section I explain the dissertation's organization in two parts. The first part contains a description of how I use stories, theoretically and methodologically, and as well, as an organizational strategy. Secondly, I give an overview of the six chapters in the dissertation in the second part.

Stories

I present situated, momentary stories of living in these multiage centres in this dissertation. While working with specific documented ordinary moments, I knit particular philosophical concepts into them. I do not aim to produce an objective blueprint or correct pattern for best practices in multiage child care. Nor do I mean to claim truth through unique, authentically voiced, subjective interpretations of what happens in the centres. Instead, I wish to *story* living in these four multiage child care centres. I interrogate the beliefs and theoretical concepts that undergird the centres' materializing practices to consider the stories with philosophical ideas emerging through the research questions, which leads to alternate, beyond

developmental, stories about child age and child care. Writing the dissertation as a collection of stories allows many subject positions that produce specific, non-generalizable versions of encounters with philosophical thought, conceptual frameworks, methodological thinking and enacted practices.

Cotton and Griffiths (2007) proposed that *little stories* could be worked to show “how it is to be here” (p. 547). They suggested that little stories lead to actions and hold the possibility of illuminating and challenging philosophy’s big abstract questions. A situated story in a particular time may reveal what it is like to be in that place at that moment. In this view, stories, which can be narrations of fictional or factual events, hold the capacity to create thought about situations from a multiplicity perspective. A small moment described can produce new theoretical insights. As Elliot (2010) reminded us, “remembering our own stories of our practice can provide us with a deeper awareness of what needs to be shared and understood about this work” (p. 5).

Throughout this writing, I work the story concept in three ways: theoretically, methodologically, and organizationally. Theoretically, aspects of the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari inform this study and as Baugh (2005) explained, for Deleuze, theory is always local. I argue that our theories tell our particular local stories, about children, caregivers, care, curriculum and living in the multiage centres and that those stories reveal partial, situated truths, creating what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) described as a multiplicity.

Secondly, the little stories of centre life, through discussion, become the data in this action research. Three videos present three moments that through the process of pedagogical narrations (Berger, 2010; Government of British Columbia, 2008b; Hodgins, 2012; Hodgins, Kummen, Rose and Thompson, 2013) tell stories about the ordinary moments. I imagine ordinary moments as described by Forman and his colleagues (2001) as little stories (Cotton and

Griffiths, 2007). Vivian Paley (1981, 1984, 1986, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1998) told stories of children's play and through her storytelling showed her perception of those events. Following Paley, Forman and Cotton and Griffiths, I tell stories about our multiage centre living; stories that include my perceptions but also those of others. These stories, interpolated with our perceptions, become the material I analyze.

Finally, I use the *little stories* concept as an organizational writing strategy. I conceive of this dissertation as a collection, of short stories, that illustrates the research project. Each story presents a research component. For example in this chapter, following this introductory prelude, I tell three short stories connected by the idea of context. The stories depict chosen theories, events, analyses and conclusions without positioning them as the demonstrated single truth about multiage childcare. The dissertation becomes what Edwards and her colleagues (2009) call for - an examination of multiage complexity.

Structure

Six chapters make up the dissertation. Each chapter contains a story or several stories describing aspects and emerging questions of the research project. This first chapter explains the research purpose and the organization of the dissertation. It narrates the events that led to the research project and presents literature reviews of reconceptualized early childhood curriculum theory and of multiage groupings. I situate the research questions through describing the provocations that led to the research event, including theoretical and practical challenges to existing practices. Through clarifying the context, I begin the research story. I describe how practical problems, and proposed solutions, invoked a challenge to underlying assumptions about best practices, and then provoked an exploration of which theories underpinned those

assumptions. That exploration and the ensuing critique of developmentalism produced the theoretical framework that assembles this study.

In Chapter 2 I construct a theoretical framework through employing theories that speak to different aspects of the problems this dissertation explored. I begin with practice and practical concerns about caring, curriculum and transformation and follow those ideas into theory. I engage with feminist ethics of care theories (Held, 2006, Tronto, 1993) to consider caring. To explore curriculum, I position it as a phenomenological experience (Aoki, 2005) and connect that idea to dwelling, an anthropological concept (Ingold, 2000, 2010). Finally I question developmentalism as the primary theoretical explanation for children's growth, behaviour, learning, capabilities and capacities. Instead, I reposition it as one theoretical perspective among many possible. In the context of early childhood care and education (ECCE), developmentalism refers to child development theories' dominance in the informing of practices (Burman, 2008a, 2008b; Edwards et al., 2009; Lee & Vagle, 2010; Walkerdine, 1993). To consider children and childhood beyond developmentalism I think with philosophical ideas expressed by Deleuze and Guattari (1987).

The methodology story that I articulate in Chapter 3 links the theoretical framework with a postqualitative conception of action research. I describe a methodology that is neither quantitative (i.e., concerned with measuring) nor interpretative (concerned with re-presenting, as in many qualitative methodologies). Instead the methodology attempts to give up representational logic asking, "How might we become in becoming?" (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013, p. 631). With a story motif, I describe my method as a story constructed with setting (context), characters (participants), plot (method), and theme (meaning-making). Finally I explain the analytic process I employ. That process, from the work of Jackson and Mazzei

(2012), links both to the theoretical framework and to the methodological orientation of the study. Employing postfoundational theories, Jackson and Mazzei (2012) describe their analyses as *thinking with theory*. The thinking with theory process produces specific analytic concepts that in turn generate particular analytic questions.

Chapter 4 contains three pedagogical narrations or stories that were video-recorded, transcribed and then elaborated through the participant caregivers' reflections about the stories. Each story begins with an ordinary moment in the multiage centres. These moments include children engaged with caregivers, with each other, with non-human living things, with materials and with place. The stories provide a context as well as a telling of a moment. Additionally they included the multiage caregiver's reflections about the moments. The stories link the research context, the theoretical framework and the methodological orientation to the analysis.

In Chapter 5, I extend the stories through an analysis. In this analysis, I juxtapose the three stories and the caregiver reflections with three analytic questions generated by the theoretical concepts, caring relations (Held, 2006), dwelling (Ingold, 2010), and becoming (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). I consider how the stories extend the three concepts, in order to conceptually expand child care understandings, and how the concepts further complexify the stories.

Chapter 6 offers tentative conclusions. In the chapter's first section I interrogate the overarching research question with the intention of producing new insights. To do so, I consider conceptually, the words *how*, *children*, *live*, *multiage* and *child care* from within this study. To close this last chapter, I tell three final stories. One chronicles my insights. The second demonstrates what the research event added our practice. The final story, an epilogue, presents one more complex moment.

I turn now to the opening story.

The Story Of Our Line Of Flight Toward Research

This story contains two overlapping histories that together situate the research project. I use the concept of a line of flight (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) to position the histories in relation to each other. The first history considers the relationship between a developmental discourse and child care regulations. The second describes the provocation that led to the project, to the research and to this dissertation. Together these histories form the context of this dissertation.

A Developmental Discourse and Regulation

The project began through questioning current regulations regarding age segregation in child care centres. In British Columbia, Canada (the child care centres' location), the Child Care Regulations Community Care Facility Act (Government of British Columbia, 2009) governs child care structures and practices. The existence of an Act regulating child care suggests, minimally, a legal obligation to protect children and, perhaps more optimistically, a hope to provide them with enriching experiences. Additionally, the regulations actuality implies that accepted knowledge exists about how to protect children and about how to provide optimal environments for them.

Pacini-Ketchabaw (2005) described how particular historical discourses embedded within an Act govern child care regulations. Employing Foucault's ideas, she explained:

Wherever power relations exist, a field of knowledge is constituted. Reciprocally, wherever a field of knowledge exists, power relations are constituted. The effects of discursive power relations involve the formation and regulation of meanings and understandings, disciplining how people act. (p. 42)

A particular discourse, (in this case an age-normed developmental discourse), situated in a field of knowledge (the knowledge base of the early years field) engenders, maintains and is maintained by particular power relations (relations between children, caregivers, families, administrators, academics, regulators, legislators and communities) that lead to regulations. The regulations discipline how those in the early years field, including caregivers, administrators and licensing personnel, think and act. Simultaneously, early years professionals' actions, beliefs and experiences become knowledge that works to maintain age-norms based on developmental discourses. Challenging the regulations requires interrogating that knowledge to uncover other possibilities.

Contesting age-normed regulations generates a call to re-imagine child care and understandings of children produced by a developing-child discourse. That discourse incorporates two related but differing depictions: child as learner (see for example, MacNaughton, 2003) and child as needy (see for example, Burman, 2008a). A learning child image generates, and is generated by, learning, teaching and schooling discourses that attend to children's development of particular knowledge and skills. This learning child discourse includes a curious, innocent child who becomes a competent, knowledgeable adult. Depicted differently, a needy-child image assembles feeling, nurturing and caring discourses concerned with meeting needs with a goal of producing a physically and psychologically healthy adult from a vulnerable child. Together, the learning child and needy child discourses help construct an image of the *known* developing child. Within a developing child discourse, a naïve vulnerable child lacks knowledge and abilities, but over time learns and/or develops, and gradually changes from a dependent innocent child to an independent knowing adult. Children who do not meet the developmental norms of the abstract *known* child interrupt these discourses.

However, the interconnecting discourses maintain power relations that produce and are produced by particular understandings of children; for example, the understanding that younger children need more protection and care, have more to learn and are less developed than older children. That image strengthens and maintains a developmental discourse, which in turn supports and is supported by power relations that work to produce and regulate child care practices assumed to benefit the future adults that present children will become (Cannella, 1997; MacNaughton, 2005).

Similarly, constructions of early childhood institutions are both constituted by and constitutive of constructions of the child, and are thus productive of pedagogical practices (Dahlberg et al., 2007). Knowledge about what the developing child lacks, based on child age, constructs specific understandings about the learning and/or caring demands of certain-aged children and thus, creates a need for specialized (determined-by-age) child care environments. The learning child requires teachers or educators who provide age-appropriate curricular practices in a (pre) school environment (see for example, Epstein, 2007). The needy child requires protective adults who provide age-appropriate care in a home (like) environment (see for example, Honig, 2002). Beliefs, based on age, about learning and/or care requirements constructed through a (known) developing child discourse, lead to restrictions about which age children can participate in which learning/caring environments. On the line traced here, particular aged children require particular kinds of school-like/homey places. This view of children implies that different aged children need different kinds of those places.

In this way, age-based developing-child perceptions guide regulations, practices and the broader field of early childhood care and education. Those perceptions produce understandings that children under three years of age ought to be in smaller groups than older children, require

more caregiver attention than older children do, and need caregivers with specialized knowledge. These beliefs about differing requirements lead to specific regulations about group size, adult/child ratios, and caregiver education for different age groups. The ideas and resulting regulations imply that younger children depend more on adults than older children do. While those ideas and the underlying beliefs might seem both obvious and benign, they may work to produce practices that are not.

As the child known by age comes to require a particular kind of environment, I suggest that particular kinds of environments become unable to accommodate children outside the designated age range, i.e. infant/toddler child care centres can only work for children under age three years while over-three child care centres only work for children over age three. In practice, in British Columbia, if, for some reason, a centre desires to have outside-the-age-range children in the centre, that centre must apply for either a temporary placement, for under-threes in an over-three centre, or a temporary retention, for an over-three aged child in an under-three centre (Government of British Columbia, 2009). Children in the acceptable age range for the centre but without most of the age-normed developmental skills and abilities become children ‘at risk’ (Barnes, 1982) or children with special needs (Kenneth, 1985) or children requiring extra supports (British Columbia Ministry for Children & Families, 1997) or children with exceptionalities, including being gifted (Allen, 2011). Developmentally appropriate practice comes to mean that children outside the designated age range cannot be cared for in a particular environment, either because they are too young and therefore (theoretically) not yet developmentally capable of managing the environment or because they are too old and (again theoretically) cannot be suitably challenged in it.

Regulations based on child age do not address differing developmental patterns - patterns produced by something other than age. However they do impose sharply different environments for children at designated ages. For example, in the current regulation system in British Columbia, environments for children under age three years require one adult for every four children (Government of British Columbia, 2009). This environment holds the capacity to provide a substantial amount of support for children learning self-care skills such as dressing and eating. A child, just before her third birthday, will be cared for in a centre with that one to four adult-children ratio. Abruptly, sometime near her third birthday, she will find herself in an environment with one adult per eight children. The amount of help provided may be significantly less. For many children this will not be a problem. Some children require very little aid for activities like dressing when they are just two years old. Yet, some three-year-old children and even some four- and five-year-old children might thrive better with more support. Regulations grounded on age norms disregard even such simple incidents of diversity.

Assumptions and theories about connections between age and development produced some of the child care regulations that govern the child care centres in this study. Challenging those assumptions and theories revealed other ones, which in turn shaped new practice visions. Those visions include seeing a child care centre as a place for children to live their lives, as a space filled with caring but complex relations, and as a site reconceptualizing the curricular foundations of early years age-based practices. The project began with awareness that, while developmental beliefs would continue to influence practices, caring for a wide-age-range group of children could disrupt taken-for-granted practices introducing other, potentially more careful and thoughtful, practices.

Beginning in January 2009, we - the caregivers, managers, licensing personnel and I - implemented our plan, which included a primary caregiver system, our interpretation of responsive curriculum, and the multiage groupings, and the caregivers and I studied what happened. The primary caregiver system entails assigning responsibility for particular children to a specific caregiver (Goldschmied & Jackson, 1994; Gonzalez-Mena & Eyers, 2011).

Responsive curriculum refers to our plan to create a varied complex curriculum determined by the perceived differing needs, interests and abilities of the children in the group. This meant that many events happened at the same time. As I have described, in this study, multiage groupings mean that each centre includes children from four consecutive birth years in one group. This structure produced centres in which children range in age from fourteen months to sixty-eight months depending on the time of year. With these practices and structures we embarked on our plan.

Provocation

A provocative suggestion from the child care director sparked the plan for the multiage groupings. For several years, I worked in a large organization that provided early childhood care and education programs for children ranging in age from infancy to twelve years. One morning the childcare service director asked my opinion about an idea. Prior to our conversation, the provincial government had made a slight change to the regulations governing family daycare. The director pointed out that the changed regulations permitted one family day home child care provider to care for a group of up to eight children whose ages could range from infancy to twelve years. The requirements restricted the number of children younger than three years of age and required that the caregiver have an ECE (Early Childhood Educator) license to practice (Government of British Columbia, 2009). The director wondered why we could not have a

similar age range in a group care program since our standards exceeded these requirements. A changed age-range structure could address child care availability problems experienced by the child care service and the families it served.

I believe the director asked for my opinion about her idea because I taught a child development course in an ECCE (Early Childhood Care and Education) program at a local post-secondary educational institution. I think she expected me to make an argument against such a plan through reference to child development theories and developmentally appropriate practices. However, rather than responding with a developmental truth, I enthusiastically supported her idea based on my own beliefs constructed during my career caring for young children. Her question ignited my imagination regarding what could be in child care spaces if we understood the relationship between developmental theories, child age and child care practices differently.

This particular early years organization has a history of innovation and change. The organization began several years ago when eight separate non-profit child care co-operatives managed by parents amalgamated into one service managed by the post-secondary institution where the centres are located. The institution created a unit called Child Care Services. After some initial transitional difficulties the child care service came into being with: an infant centre for children under eighteen months of age, three toddler centres for children aged eighteen months to three years of age, four group care centres for children aged three through five years of age and a school-age after school program. One of the group care centres offered a kindergarten program for five-year-old children. Child Care Services immediately added a fifth group care three to five program. Over the next several years the child care service evolved, inheriting a building and adding programs.

The idea to create new age groupings in child care had not developed in a vacuum. By the time the director and I had our conversation the organization operated sixteen programs. Demand for child care on the campus had grown dramatically over the years. Logistics meant high demand for care for children under three years of age while economic considerations required an association of centres for under-three year olds with centres for over-three year olds. The institution desired more child care and prepared to build five new centres. Four of the new centres became multiage centres and the pilot project that is the subject of this dissertation. The fifth building allowed the creation of a new infant program. From the time this research project began until the present, Child Care Services has added more programs so that there are twenty-eight licensed programs in the organization.

The Child Care Regulations Community Care Facility Act (Government of British Columbia, 2009) regulates the provision of services for young children in the province of British Columbia and governs this child care service. The category of child age determines which regulations regarding adult-child ratio, group size and level of caregiver education apply to a particular program. For group child care programs for children under age three years, the act requires one adult per four children, a group of no more than twelve children and at least one adult with an infant/toddler post-basic certificate. In group child care programs for children between three and six years of age, the act requires one adult per eight children, a group of no more than twenty-five children and at least one adult with a basic early childhood educator certificate.

For the programs in the pilot project, we made a proposal for an exemption to the regulations. We proposed to care for twenty-four children between the ages of fourteen months and six years, with an adult-child ratio of one to six and a requirement for all caregivers to have

or obtain infant/toddler education certification. We also proposed that each child care centre would include up to eight children under age three years and the other children would be between ages three and six years. This proposal addressed three issues: group size, adult-child ratio and caregiver education. The selected group size was the one associated with older children: twenty-four children. The chosen ratio included requirements from both age groups, one adult per eight children over age three years and one adult per four children under age three years, producing a ratio of one adult to six children, of whom four would be over three years and two under three years of age. The caregiver education standard required was the infant/toddler program requirement - a post-basic infant/toddler certificate.

Our immediate concerns, as well as those of the licensing body, regarding our plan involved our ability to provide individualized care for very young children and at the same time provide a rich, stimulating learning environment for older children. These concerns appeared to me to emerge from a developmental discourse requiring our examination of that discourse. For example, during an inspection just before one centre's opening, the licensing officer wanted to know how the (older) children would have unimpeded access to our small interlocking blocks. I had placed the blocks in a cupboard that children couldn't reach since there were many small parts and I thought they could present a choking hazard for the youngest children. I planned for the blocks to be brought out during times and in situations that (in my view) could be adequately supervised. The licensing officer wanted the small blocks to be freely available to older children so that they could choose play activities without depending on adult support. This small disagreement reflects age-based-developmental discourses. First, the licensing officer held strong convictions about pre-school-aged children's needs, such as autonomy and opportunities for creative challenging work and developmentally appropriate fine motor practice. Meanwhile, I

maintained strong beliefs about the developmentally appropriate safety needs of infants and toddlers. These discourses produced contradictory practice demands and a binary: safety or challenge. Our request generated particular commitments from us to the licensing body to address this complexity.

In our proposal, we committed to incorporating primary caregiving arrangements with the intent to ensure sensitive and responsive care for the children under-three years of age. As I described earlier, primary caregiving arrangements refer to a practice of assigning a key or primary adult to each child (Goldschmied & Jackson, 1994; Gonzalez-Mena & Eyers, 2011). We also agreed to provide responsive environments with the intent to ensure that older children had challenging learning experiences. We further committed to researching our multiage child care experience. This dissertation emerged in response to that commitment.

The project began. The licensing body accepted our proposal and construction of the buildings finished. I coordinated the start-up of the four multiage child care centres, purchased furniture, materials and equipment, and participated in hiring staff and enrolling children. Supported by my administrators and the licensing officer, I developed initial policies and procedures. The first programs opened and we (the administrators, newly hired staff and I) plunged into the new programs with both hopeful anticipation and fear of the unknown. Finally, to learn about “doing” research, I became a student again.

Through critical reflections about the initial concerns, the assumptions embedded in our proposal and related concerns from our licensing officer, two interconnected questions unfolded. First, we wondered if we remove age segregation, would we be able to care for toddlers? Second, would we be able to provide a rich environment for older children? I began by considering the theories and assumptions engrained in the practice commitments we made to the licensing body.

The concerns about the wellbeing of the children of our proposed age range, along with our strategies to address those concerns - the primary caregiving system and a responsive curriculum - exposed a developmental discourse. Expressed anxiety, about ensuring sensitive and responsive caregiving for the youngest children, coupled with an absence of concern, about the care needs of the older children, implied that those who work with older children easily provide (enough) sensitive, responsive care for them without requiring much thought. Similarly, conscious attention, to the provision of a stimulating, challenging learning environment for the oldest children, without similar concern about the environments of younger children, suggested that providing learning environments for children under-three years of age does not require much critical conscious attention from those who care for them and can easily be done. Situated in these limiting, possibly false, assumptions, our research project began. In time, these vague wonderings produced considerations about relationship characteristics, curricular experiences, understanding transformations, and the workings of multiage childcare.

Eventually the frenzy created by beginnings – opening new centres and starting an academic program - settled somewhat. In Deleuze and Guattari terms, the frenzy these beginnings generated can be thought of a rupture or as deterritorialized lines of flight that slowly settled into routine or newly segmented lines (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). However, initiating our research project produced other dis-ruptures. To rethink the theories entwined in our practices, including our familiar, permitted practices, as well as our proposed ones, I looked toward literature about reconceptualized early childhood education curriculum (RECE) and about multiage groupings.

An ECCE Reconceptualist Story

Reconceptualizing curriculum requires reconsidering theories and practices that maintain a particular hegemony in a curricular space (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubbaum, 1995). In early years spaces developmental theory dominates and produces particular curricular enactments. During the 1990s, several early years scholars worked to reconceptualize early childhood care and education theory beyond developmentalism. Tools such as pedagogical documentation (Dahlberg et al., 2007; Lenz-Taguchi, 2010, Olsson, 2009; Rinaldi, 2006), learning stories (Carr, 2005) and rhizoanalysis (MacNaughton, 2005) emerged in the early years research. Over time, curricular frameworks that incorporated developmental and non-developmental theories were created, bringing a reconceptualized, beyond-developmental understanding to early years curriculum (e.g. *Te Whàriki*, Government of New Zealand, 1996). In this dissertation I work with pedagogical narrations, an ECCE reconceptualizing process influenced by pedagogical documentation, learning stories and rhizoanalysis. To situate the dissertation, I review literature that (a) challenged developmentalism, (b) situated pedagogical narrations, and (c) examined curricular frameworks incorporating reconceptualized early childhood education (RECE) principles.

Challenging Developmentalism

In ECCE spaces, reconceptualization began with a challenge to the hegemony of developmentalism (Bloch, 1991, 1992; Cannella, 1997; Dahlberg et al., 1999, 2007; Kessler, 1991; Kessler & Swadener, 1992). Many scholars contested both child development theory dominance, as well as the inattention to social justice issues in early childhood institutions (Campbell & Smith, 2001; Cannella, 1997; Dahlberg et al., 1999, 2007; Grieshaber & Cannella,

2001; Kessler & Swadener, 1992; MacNaughton, 2005; Moss & Petrie, 2002; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Pence, 2005; Soto, 1996, 2000; Swadener & Lubeck, 1995; Viruru & Cannella, 2001).

Working within a reconceptualist perspective, Kessler (1992) emphasized the importance of context for early childhood care and education curriculum, while Bloch (1992) described and critiqued the historical relationship between child development and early childhood education research. Mallory and New (1994) argued for social constructivist theories as a basis for early childhood special education. They suggested that these theories could provide a more just approach to special early years education. Similarly, Cannella (1997) pointed out that without examining the assumptions and beliefs that have historically guided early childhood education, some children and families could be excluded in early years institutions. Later, Dahlberg and her colleagues (1999, 2007) interrogated universal, singular predictable notions of quality in early years environments. They clarified their challenge with examples of early years settings that, in some way, went beyond quality and showed how quality can be, and perhaps ought to be, understood as contextual (Dahlberg et al., 1999, 2007).

Cannella (1997) questioned whether the attempt to improve children's experiences through the application of child development knowledge has led to better lives for all children. Challenging the assumption that a curriculum based on children's needs and interests unambiguously privileges children's concerns, Kessler (1991) argued that children's needs and interests are only considered legitimate when they compare favourably with other valuations of what is desirable and normal. She pointed out that to be available as a basis for curriculum, the needs and the interests of children must be both identified and known. However, frequently, interpretations of children's needs come from comparing a particular child to developmental norms (Kessler, 1991).

Dahlberg and colleagues (2007) described contextualization as “locating the work of the early childhood institution within a particular place and time” (p. 109). They argued that each childhood context contains different communities with values, beliefs and knowledge specific to the particular setting. Kessler (1992) also suggested that we consider the “sociocultural influences on the early childhood curriculum and the way such factors impact on what is prescribed as developmentally appropriate practices” (p. 40) in order to better understand practices and be more able to create change in those practices. In different settings different conceptions of what constitutes developmentally appropriate practice will exist but understanding those conceptions in a decontextualized way can lead to universalizing practice. Polakow (1992) claimed that, “shaping and molding the child to fit monocultural institutional norms does not promote autonomy or build on the child’s strengths” (p. 145). Each of these critiques implied that reliance on normative understandings of a “universal child” works to silence certain children while maintaining the status quo.

Given the dominance of developmentalism, it is difficult to imagine that development, as a construct, will not be adequate for creating early childhood curriculum (Lubeck, 1996). However, the normative theory of child development, as Lubeck (1996) pointed out, “orients us to an abstracted schema that becomes the ‘mismeasure’ of the child who displays a different developmental trajectory” (p. 156). According to Fler (2006), the normalized universal understanding of the child, taken from developmental theory, is a cultural construction that needs review in light of other possible interpretations from different cultural perspectives. Writing about issues of “race”, gender, and culture, MacNaughton (2005) warned of the consequences of unreflectively applying developmental theory in early childhood practices. She explained, “early childhood educators who reproduce and act on these allegedly universal developmental norms

are committing a form of violence that privileges cultural homogeneity and marginalises cultural diversity” (p. 37).

Reconceptualization involved “a tradition of curricular theorizing that sees as its crucial goal the social transformation and reconstruction of educational institutions such as ECE” (Iannacci & Whitty, 2009, p. 22). To do such work, Walkerdine (1999) suggested careful consideration of what is taken to be true and what other events are ignored.

If we begin to interrogate both what is spoken and the way it sits so neatly alongside that which receives no comment, we may be able to approach the complexities of explanation and intervention in childhood in a different kind of way, one which avoids the dangers of the easy certainties of normality and pathology. (p. 21)

As a possible guide to reconceptualizing early childhood education, Cannella (1997) outlined three values:

(1) social justice and equity as the right of younger human beings; (2) education as hearing and responding to the voices of younger human beings in their everyday lives; and (3) professionalism as the development of critical dispositions in the struggle for social justice. (p. 162)

These values each speak to curricular practice considerations focused on different early childhood curriculum components including: justice for a group of human beings, a need for empathy and caring about the lived experience of children, and a call for critical reflection.

Working within a poststructuralist position, MacNaughton (2005) theorized that using knowledge tactically could produce spaces for different ways to act and to “know” with children. She suggested two strategies to do so: first, seek multiple perspectives that challenge educators’ own governance by “truth” in our work; and second, overlay marginalized meanings on our own

truths. From a similar perspective, Pacini-Ketchabaw and Berikoff (2008), considered how racialized discourses work to shape children's identities, and recommended that early childhood educators listen carefully to children's experiences. They argued "engaging in listening means examining and challenging our own perspectives on children's subjectivities, questioning our biases and assumptions about children's understandings..." (p. 263).

Dahlberg and Moss (2005) proposed that spaces for young children designed differently from usual taken-for-granted understandings could be conceptualized "as spaces of possibility and surprise; as sites of ethical and democratic practice; or as 'works of art' or in many other ways. We could if we wanted, apply 'moral-practical' and 'aesthetic expressive' rationalities to them" (p. 59). Understanding childhood as a social construction, Moss and Petrie (2002) described their vision of creating spaces for children to live their childhoods, as buoyed by considerations of children's potentialities, rather than negative constructions of needy children. Dahlberg and colleagues (2007) argued that constructions of early childhood institutions are both constituted by and constitutive of constructions of the child, and are thus productive of pedagogical practices. Suggesting that one construction positions ECCE institutions as producers of particular outcomes for children such as skills, they offered an alternative reconceptualized construction of early childhood institutions as forums for civil society "in which children and adults participate together in projects of social, cultural, political and economic significance" (p.73). Encouraging a reconsideration of pedagogical practices, they suggested that within this alternative construction, early childhood institutions become "a place *for* children to live their childhoods" (p. 75).

Moss and Petrie (2002) extended the reconceptualizing discussion by challenging the degree of attention paid to future outcomes compared to children's current experience:

Of course there are connections between the child's present and the child's future. The present leaves traces on the future. The future has been reached through the present. But we doubt the linearity and inevitability of the relationship: question the critical importance and irrevocable consequences of early experience; and have serious reservations about the devaluation of childhood *per se*, the ethics of instrumentality and the abrogation of adult responsibility that follow from a belief in the child, and her normalization, as a cure for society's ills. (p. 2-3)

This suggests that valuing childhood requires an emphasis on a child's present. Moss and Petrie proposed that over-concern for the future brings about instrumental and normalizing practices that impinge on children's experiences in the present. Concerns, about who the future person the child will be and about how that person will contribute to the world, focus on forging a desirable future identity. Pursuing that goal produces ethical questions about what a desirable identity is, about who desires it and about the implications of attempting to produce a singular identity. In contrast, a concentration on the child's actual present attends to relations, experiences and possibilities. It reduces demands for specific future outcomes, opening to other possibilities, and it produces different ethical questions. These questions include interrogating early years curricular experiences.

Additionally, describing early childhood institutions as forums in civil society, Dahlberg and her colleagues (1999, 2007) rejected constructions that position those institutions as primarily important because they fuel an economy, function as home-substitutes, or provide foundations for life-long learning. They included family economic wellbeing, intensity of relationships, and concerns for the future in their depiction of early childhood institutions but suggested that those institutions ought to emphasize the present moment. "Our construction of

what the early childhood institutions can be foregrounds early childhood as an important stage in its own right and the early childhood institution as a place for the young child and for the life she lives, *here and now*” (p. 83).

Early reconceptualized ECCE curriculum theory called into question understandings of a single universal early childhood identity – *the child*– and of a connected single universal *developmentally appropriate* ECCE curriculum. More recent reconceptualizations push for a rethinking of developmental theories and practices where children are not seen as the center of curricula and practice but rather as always already engaged with what Taylor (2014) described as entanglements.

In a current edited collection, Bloch, Swadener and Cannella (2014) offered critical reflections of the past RECE movement along with “diverse imaginaries for new pedagogical spaces, social justice action and activisms, peace and hope” (p.8). In this volume Taylor (2014) advocated, “for situating children’s entangled relations” (p. 124). She explained that these entangled relations include cultures, histories and specific grounds, and “immediate grounded relations along with other places and discursive spaces” (p.124). Engaging with an entangled relation, Pacini-Ketchabaw and Nxumalo (2014) worked with posthumanist perspectives to trouble early childhood education colonialisms and one of its legacies, multiculturalisms. Writing with a decolonizing-ECCE-practices intent, they described a material-discursive pedagogical encounter with the potential to create “openings in early childhood pedagogies to include the affective, the unforeseen and unexpected” (p. 136). Imaginaries and entanglements that create openings to the affective and the unexpected further reconceptualize early years practices.

Such reconceptualizing involves reconsidering listening. Early in the RECE movement Cannella (1997) called for hearing and responding. Later, Pacini-Ketchabaw and Berikoff (2008) proposed a careful listening, one that challenged our assumptions about children. While listening, as a practice of “the good early childhood educator”, may be a familiar goal, a reconceptualized listening practice requires awareness about the entangled relations Taylor (2014) described. A fixed, known, pre-existing (developmental, gendered, racialized, or, or, or...) explanation of meaning will not be adequate for listening in this way. Listening to shifting subjectivities by an unstable subject produces a requirement for a deep and uncertain listening. This kind of listening requires reconceptualizing child care.

This dissertation engages with some of these reconceptualized ideas about children and child care. In it, I take up the challenge to developmentalism to question age segregation in child care settings. I respond to calls to: value responses to children’s every day lives” (Cannella, 1997); to create space for children’s present lives (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Dahlberg et al., 2007; Moss & Petrie, 2002); and to listen carefully (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Berikoff, 2008).

Pedagogical Narrations

To listen for the entanglements produced by challenging developmentalism, I work with pedagogical narrations. Pedagogical narrations - a practice that emerged through reconceptualizing ECCE curriculum – is informed by descriptions of the practice of pedagogical documentation (Dahlberg et al., 1999, 2007; Fraser, 2006; Kind, 2010; Lenz-Taguchi 2010; Moss & Dahlberg, 2006; MacNaughton, 2005; Olsson 2009; Rinaldi, 2006; Pence & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2010; Strong-Wilson & Ellis, 2007). Many reconceptualist ECCE scholars have pointed to the pedagogical documentation method, developed in the municipal preschools of Reggio Emilia, Italy, as a tool to explore pedagogical understandings and as useful in re-

conceptualizing early years curriculum (Dahlberg & Moss 2006; Dahlberg et al., 1999, 2007; Fraser, 2006; Lenz-Taguchi, 2010; Olsson, 2009; Rinaldi, 2006; Strong-Wilson & Ellis, 2007).

The Reggio Emilia preschools have inspired many ECCE scholars, curriculum guide writers, early childhood educators and child caregivers in their research, theorizing and practicing (e.g. Government of British Columbia, 2008a; Government of New Brunswick, 2008; Dahlberg et al., 1999, 2007; Fraser, 2006; Kind, 2010; Lenz-Taguchi 2010; Olsson 2009; Pence & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2010). In an introduction to a text describing the theories and the practices of these preschools, Moss and Dahlberg (2006) linked the concepts of rhizome, lines of flight and becoming from the thinking of Deleuze and Guattari to the pedagogical practices, including pedagogical documentation, of Reggio's teachers. They suggested that within these practices "thought then is a matter of experimentation and problematisation – a line of flight, and an exploration of becoming" (p. 8).

Pedagogical documentation in the Reggio Emilia preschools actualizes an important conceptualization: *the pedagogy of listening* (Rinaldi, 2006). A listening pedagogy means emotional and interpretive listening through the senses to connections and requires deep awareness and openness to another (Rinaldi, 2006). Pedagogical documentation can enable this kind of listening through producing traces of events that can be revisited and reinterpreted (Rinaldi, 2006).

Researchers, educators, and caregivers, influenced by these preschools, have incorporated the practice of pedagogical documentation both into researching with children as a pedagogical practice and into researching pedagogical practices. Dahlberg and colleagues (1999, 2007) reconceptualized early childhood care and education as situated in civil society, and children as citizens. This view of children, childhood, and sites of early childhood care and education invites

privileging the present and the local when reconsidering and reconceptualizing curricular practices.

In Sweden, the practice-oriented Stockholm project, influenced by the Reggio Emilia preschools, aimed “to deconstruct the dominant discourses in the early childhood field to be able to reconstruct other discourses” (Dahlberg et al., 2007, p. 126). This project introduced a changed understanding of thematic work and observation toward Reggio inspired project work and pedagogical documentation to the preschools involved. The change involved moving pedagogical practices away from normalization of children toward co-construction with children, of new ideas. Provisional understandings gained from this four-year project included the ideas that: change requires networking, documentation, and reflection; pedagogical practices should begin from children’s work; and pedagogues (caregivers) with support from others should drive those pedagogical practices (Dahlberg et al., 1999, 2007). Another key finding of this project was the importance of looking at the use of time for documentation and collaboration when working in this way.

In another Swedish research project, Lenz-Taguchi (2010) questioned what might be the ethical consequences of different learning and developmental theories, belonging ontologies and epistemologies in early childhood education. To consider this question, she analysed pedagogical documentation. She concluded that,

Practices that perform an ethics of immanence and potentialities go *beyond* the prevailing divides in education, such as science/art, intellect/body, rationality/affect, etc. and become transgressive and affirmative of change and development in a perspective of human beings in a mutual state of co-existence with everything else. (Lenz-Taguchi, 2010, p. 177)

In a study that engaged with “Deleuze and Guattari’s theoretical thinking in the field of education” (p. 125), Olsson (2009) employed pedagogical documentation, which included video and audio recordings, photographs, written records and collected artefacts, as a method. This study involved an analysis of the collected documentation, through Deleuze and Guattari’s idea of an assemblage of desire. Specifically, Olsson (2009) considered the desire of children and teachers “to experiment with subjectivity and learning” (p. 133). Within this framework, desire is seen as productive rather than as lack. The research project considered questions about what the children desired and how the desire connected to subjectivity and learning (2009).

In each of these Swedish research projects, the scholars acknowledged the influence of the municipal preschools of Reggio Emilia (Dahlberg et al., 2007; Lenz-Taguchi, 2010; Olsson, 2009). However in each project, they also engaged with pedagogical documentation practices in localized, situated and theoretically different ways. Dahlberg and colleagues (2007) described how the practice allowed them to understand curriculum differently; Lenz-Taguchi pointed out the different ethics inherent in pedagogical documentation; and Olsson engaged with pedagogical documentation as a method to consider philosophical ideas in early childhood curriculum.

Relatedly, Carr (2005) and a group of researchers developed a tool similar to pedagogical documentation, learning stories, to narrate and assess learning dispositions through a series of research projects focused on the balance between exploration and belonging. In these projects learning dispositions referred to sensitivities to dispositions toward identities contained within learning environments. Similar to pedagogical documentation, learning stories consisted of video and audio recordings and written documentation of children in their early years environments.

Learning stories, framed around learning dispositions-in-action, made up learning narratives that make sense to teachers and families. In these research projects, teachers and researchers used learning stories to assess the self-making narratives that emerge in early childhood spaces. Self-making narratives contain tensions between autonomy and commitment, exploration and belonging that Carr suggested are “dynamic engines for learning and development” (p. 48). Carr and her colleagues used the learning stories in research that linked observations of children to their learning and performance goals. They connected these goals to exploration and belonging respectively. In this way learning stories, as developed by this research group, worked to link descriptions to assessments (Carr, 2005). The scholars framed formal school assessments around how children engaged with the created learning environment. They intended with the learning stories to include individual, familial and cultural diversity and incorporate such diversity into accountability requirements. This assessment goal required close and careful listening similar to the practice of pedagogical documentation followed in Reggio Emilia and by certain Swedish scholars. Learning stories illustrated how narratives produce expansive, inclusive descriptions with the capacity to also include unique, specific, individual details (Carr, 2005).

Similarly, when examining relationships between young children’s gender, class and ethnic identities with their understanding of cultural and “racial” diversity, MacNaughton and colleagues employed a method called rhizoanalysis (MacNaughton, 2005). Working with rhizomatic thought, they strove to understand children’s constructions of gender and ‘racial’ meanings. The rhizoanalysis involved linking observations of children engaged in play with child development texts as well as other texts related to culture and feminism. Video recordings as well as interviews with children became the observation data. Through rhizoanalysis,

MacNaughton and colleagues produced alternative readings of those observations. Like pedagogical documentation and learning stories, rhizoanalysis engages with recorded observations of children in early years environments. However, it extends and transforms analysis of those observations, going beyond interpretive practices that either normalize or pathologize children according developmental theory. Rhizoanalysis engages with other texts that introduce other theories such as feminist or post-colonial theory to analyses of children's everyday experiences.

Beginning with the preschools in Reggio Emilia, the practice of researching children's early years experiences through attentive observation practices covered a wide range of possible research questions. Some, such as the pedagogues in Reggio Emilia, researched ideas with children as a pedagogical practice (Dahlberg et al., 2007; Rinaldi, 2006). Others expanded this particular understanding of pedagogical research to include, as well as children's questions about life, adults' broad questions about pedagogy. For example, Dahlberg and her colleagues (as described in Dahlberg et al., 2007) explored how to change practices through working with documentation. Lenz-Taguchi (2010), and Olsson (2009), each worked with the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari combined with a pedagogical documentation method to explore issues of binary thinking and of subjectivity. Carr (2005) used learning stories to assess learning dispositions, which highlighted the importance of attending to context and subjectivity, rather than only to the measurable universal outcomes when assessing practices in early years environments. Working with documentation through rhizoanalysis, MacNaughton (2005) examined particular issues such as intersections between ethnicity and class with "race" and gender. Although different practices emerging in different locations and with different intents,

pedagogical documentation, learning stories and rhizoanalysis, each involve the careful listening described by Pacini-Ketchabaw and Berikoff (2008).

These various pedagogical documentation iterations connected to, and inspired the emergence of pedagogical narrations practices in British Columbia (e.g., Berger, 2010, 2013; Hodgins, 2012, 2014; Hodgins et al., 2013; Kocher, Cabaj, Chapman, Chapman, Ryujin, & Wooding 2010; Kummen, 2010, 2014; Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kocher, Sanchez & Chan, 2009). For example, engaging early childhood educators “to reflect on knowledge experiences, and values embedded in the educators’ own practices” (Pence & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2010, p. 129), the Investigating Quality project worked with pedagogical narrations in a participatory action research project. The authors concluded that the process encouraged educators to place more value on their own work as well as to expand visions of what may be possible in practice and their knowledge bases (Pence & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2010). These practices, pedagogical documentation, learning stories, rhizoanalysis and pedagogical narrations, with reconceptualized curriculum theory impact current early years theorizing, practices and have influenced some newly developed curricular frameworks.

Curriculum Frameworks

Four recently produced practice-guiding frameworks incorporated some reconceptualized early childhood curriculum ideas and pedagogical documentation practices. One, *The British Columbia Early Learning Framework* [BCELF] (Government of British Columbia, 2008a) connects directly to the location of the centres in this study and I engage with that framework in this study. The other three demonstrate how reconceptualized early childhood curriculum theories, philosophies and values can be actualized in early years settings.

The *BCELF* offers curriculum guidance to those who work in British Columbia's early years field. Neither prescriptive nor rigid, it presents a series of questions to consider practices in early years settings. Influenced by the pedagogy of the preschools of Reggio Emilia and Sweden and by *Te Whàriki* (Government of New Zealand, 1996) Aotearoa/New Zealand's early years curriculum guide, the *BCELF* and the accompanying guide *Understanding the British Columbia Early Learning Framework: From Theory to Practice* (Government of British Columbia, 2008b) incorporate developmental and beyond-developmental guidelines for practice. Concepts evident as influences in the framework include pedagogical documentation, inspired by the preschools of Reggio Emilia, and ideas, such as wellbeing, belonging and exploration, explicitly articulated in *Te Whàriki*.

Exemplifying a reconceptualized approach to ECCE curriculum, *Te Whàriki* (Government of New Zealand, 1996), focuses on Aotearoa/New Zealand's context with an unequivocally bilingual document. *Te Whàriki* identifies four foundational principles: empowerment of the child to learn and grow; a holistic approach to learning and growing; the integration of family and community in the curriculum; and the importance of children's responsive and reciprocal relationships with people, places, and things in learning (Government of New Zealand, 1996). Five curricular strands - wellbeing, belonging, contribution, exploration, and communication – weave through the principles (1996). These four principles, five curriculum strands, and the document's bilingual design demonstrate foundational curricular considerations beyond child development theories.

Also influenced by *Te Whàriki*, as well as many other sources, another Canadian province, New Brunswick, created an ECCE curriculum framework called the *New Brunswick Curriculum Framework for Early Learning and Child Care* (Government of New Brunswick,

2008). The *NBCF* names four goal areas for early childhood institutions: well being, play and playfulness, communication and literacies, and diversity and social responsibility and as well contains several principles to guide practices. The principles include the ideas that nurturing relationships are important to children, that children are unique and agentic in their learning, that they are in reciprocal relationships with the people and things in their environment, that development and learning are holistic, that children belong to different communities, and that culture and language mediate learning. This framework explicitly describes pedagogical documentation as a tool for evaluating and developing meaningful curriculum and reflects the goals of reconceptualized ECCE theory through the focus on relationships and the consideration of diversity and social responsibility as curricular goals.

Developed just after the *BCELF*, Australia produced an ECCE curriculum framework called *Belonging, Being, and Becoming: The Australian Early Years Learning Framework (EYEF)* which places learning at the core of its vision statement (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009). In this curriculum framework, belonging “acknowledges children’s interdependence with others and the basis of relationships in defining identities” (p. 7); being “recognizes the significance of the here and now in children’s lives” (p. 7); and becoming “reflects this process of rapid and significant change that occurs in the early years as young children learn and grow” (p. 7). These values surround five principles, eight goal practices, and five envisioned learning outcomes. Unlike the other three frameworks, *EYLF* does not differentiate between age groups of children. The lack of differentiation implies that developmentalism understood by age is not a foundational principle. This idea offers possibilities to reconceptualize curricular practices of ECCE. The principles in the *EYLF* include creating respectful, secure, reciprocal relationships; creating partnerships with home; holding high expectations for all children leading to equity;

holding a respect for diversity; and maintaining ongoing learning and reflective practice (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009).

The pedagogical practices desired in the *EYLF* include: adopting holistic approaches; being responsive to children; planning and implementing learning through play; intentional teaching; creating physical and social learning environments that have a positive impact on children's learning; valuing the cultural and social contexts of children and their families; providing for continuity in experiences and enabling children to have successful transition to school from their early years setting; and assessing and monitoring children's learning to inform provision and to support children in achieving the learning outcomes (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009). The language contained in this framework moves between the familiar curriculum development language of goals, outcomes, and assessment to a language that reflects a curriculum reconceptualization (e.g., well-being, belonging, being, becoming). Like *Te Whāriki*, the Australian guide emphasizes the context in which children live. It privileges relationships and diversity, encouraging practitioners to consider child development goals when planning curriculum but to also go beyond them. In addition, the absence of age guidelines challenges the taken-for-granted link between developmental theories, age, and ECCE curriculum.

While these frameworks each contain potential to support innovative, creative, contextual practices, any framework could become a tool to re-inscribe normalizing goals, objectives, and measurements. Writing about her experience with the *BCELF*, Elliot (2010) argued that the framework is static and is a monologue, missing the vigorous, varied discussions that created it. She cautioned that it rests on "the authority of the government and academe" (p. 16). Similarly, Ashton (2009) worried that the stories contained in a support document, for the *NBCF*, that she

co-authored might be taken up as “the one-T ‘Truth’ ... as best practice – as contextless, replicable activities” (p. 78). Smith and Campbell (2014) explained how the *EYLF* became part of the *National Quality Framework (NQF)*. Referring to the work of Gore, Smith and Campbell (2014) wrote about their experience with the *NQF*, as an operation of power/knowledge relations, “signified by the tactics of surveillance, normalization, exclusion, distribution, classification, individualization, totalization and regulation” (p. 296). Osgood (2010a) pointed out that government-policy authoritative discourses can marginalize or pathologize counter narratives that emerge from nursery workers’ subjective engagement in “doing professionalism”.

These cautions highlight the dangers produced through codification and point to the riskiness of contextless frameworks and curricular guides. Situating frameworks within a reconceptualizing early years curriculum perspective points to ways to attend to the risks while engaging with a authoritative discourse. In British Columbia, pedagogical narrations provide one methodology to potentially move caregivers’ subjective narratives in from the margins and maintain the varied discussions and contestations desired by Elliot (2010) and Ashton (2009).

However, these four frameworks through their explicit philosophical orientations also each contain inspiration toward openness and thoughtfulness for those who work in spaces and places for young children. The *BCELF* through using questions about practices instead of best practices statements highlights the understanding that many possibilities can be ethical. *Te Whāriki* demonstrates concrete respect for the indigenous culture and language of Aotearoa/New Zealand. The *NBCF* specifically suggests pedagogical documentation, a pedagogical practice for listening, as useful for early years spaces. And finally the *EYLF* does not categorize by age, implicitly challenging developmentalism. Together they show how reconceptualized ECCE theory can engage with practice guidelines. For this study, they create a space to consider

multiage early years child care as a possible ethical practice with capacity for respectful listening.

Multiage Early Years Spaces

Multiage can mean different things in different settings. For example, in school settings multiage may refer to two age groups such as kindergarten-aged children and grade-one-aged children in the same classroom. It can also refer to schools that group three or more ages and/or grade levels together. In my own childhood school experience, a process known as streaming worked to place different aged children in the same grade. The term multiage, sometimes referred to as mixed age, encompasses these different kinds of groupings in primary school settings.

In British Columbia (this project's setting) children younger than kindergarten age (five or six years old depending on birth date) do not attend compulsory school, either public or independent (private). Instead children may attend a variety of independent profit or not-for-profit settings that include part day pre-school programs for children over three years and full or part day child care programs for children from infancy to six years. Most often settings contain at least two ages together in groups. For example the infant/toddler centres can include all children under age three. So child care centres may include babies and one year old children; they may be made up of one and two year old children; or they may contain under ones, one-year-olds and two-year olds. Similarly, groups made up of three and four and possibly five-year-old children comprise three-to-five child care centres. Preschools also include children from age three to five years, sometimes age segregated and sometimes two birth years together. These programs are not considered multiage in this local context. Family day care centres may provide care for children from infancy to age twelve years and are multiage. Additionally, an official category, Multiage

Family Day Care, exists in British Columbia in which no more than eight children ranging in age from birth through age twelve can be cared for together when certain other criteria have been met (Government of British Columbia, 2009). In this study, multiage refers to groups of under-age-six-years children, of four or more birth years, together in the same group – a category outside current legislation.

Informal family child care, whether parental, extended family or community, most generally will have children of many ages in a group. In such settings, grouping-by-age does not exist. Reflecting this idea, when schools or child care centres incorporate multiage groupings, they sometimes refer to them as family groupings. In the following section I describe three studies that considered multiage child groupings in early years child care settings as well as one recent study with a very wide age range of primary school aged children.

Review of Multiage Groupings Research

Bernard, Pacini-Ketchabaw, Pollard, Chud and Vukelich (2000) reviewed legislation in Canadian provinces to enhance understandings about regulations regarding the inclusion of very young children in multiage settings. A component of this research identified three concerns along with suggestions to address the concerns. Bernard and colleagues (2000) recognized as issues: the protection of young, not-yet-walking children, a danger of staff reduction if groups combine, and the nature of activities that multiage mixing would permit. To address these problems, they suggested: that protection needs might diminish over time, that staffing challenges could be addressed through cautious staffing reconfigurations, and that guideline be developed to address multiage visioning.

Also addressing questions about the developmental impact of mixing ages in early childhood environments, in a quantitative study, Bailey, Burchinal and McWilliam (1993) found

no long-term differences in development between children in mixed age groups and those in same aged groupings. In their study, children ranged in age from one year, nine months to five years, seven months of age. Children from up to three birth years made up the mixed age groupings while the same age groupings held children of one birth year. The developmental trajectories examined included communicative, cognitive, motor, adaptive and personal-social. The authors noted that younger children in the mixed age groupings scored higher in the adaptive and personal/social areas but that the difference decreased over time and disappeared by age five (Bailey et al., 1993).

In a recent study, Edwards, Blaise and Hammer (2009), examined early childhood education (ECE) teacher's multiage grouping understandings. Their research revealed that the teachers' relied on developmental theory to explain their experiences in those settings. Edwards and her colleagues (2009) pointed out that, "multiage grouping research has focused largely on 'the developmental question'" (p. 56) and that, "such research assumes developmental theory as the norm for understanding children's development" (p. 56). This research concentrated on the perspectives of ECE teachers and other key stakeholders. The study centred on three different programs, including one in which the children ranged in age from one to five years; one where they ranged in age from three to five years; and one where the range included toddlers through four year olds. Eight teachers participated. In this study, teachers attended four workshops that offered information about teacher research and multiage grouping. The authors determined that the ECE teachers had three understandings about multiage groupings, all framed within a developmental perspective (2009). The understandings included the ideas that multiage age groupings support learning, assist children in managing peer relations and reduce stresses produced by chronological groupings. Edwards and colleagues (2009) concluded that, "potential

exists for such work [reflection and research in multiage groupings] to generate pedagogies that reflect understandings of postdevelopmentalism in action as well as in theory” (p. 62).

Weir (2011) described experiences in a primary school classroom that included fifty-four children from kindergarten (age five) to grade six (age eleven) with two teachers. Weir (2011) concluded that this multiage classroom revealed the importance for learning of long-term relationships amongst students and teachers and students with each other and teachers with co-teachers. Additionally she pointed to the significance of children taking responsibility for their own learning, of classroom as community, of spontaneity and uncertainty in learning, and of teacher’s trusting the problem-solving ability of the classroom community.

While situated across a philosophical, theoretical, and methodological range, these few studies highlight the scarcity both of multiage early years child care practices and of the research considering those practices. These studies also underscore developmental theory dominance in conceptualizing education and caring for children under-six-years and for imagining who those children are or might be. Weir’s (2011) study focused on relationships; while Bailey, Burchinal and McWilliam (1993) concentrated on developmental outcomes. Bernard and colleagues (2000) identified concerns rooted in developmentalism and Edwards Blaise and Hammer (2009) pointed to the pervasiveness of developmental thinking in the early years field.

Reconceptualizing Child Care with Multiage Groupings

While engaged with developmentalism, the studies I have reviewed contribute to reconceptualizing age groupings in child care centres. In my study, I engage with pedagogical narrations (Berger, 2010; Hodgins, 2012; Hodgins et al., 2013), a version of pedagogical documentation, to challenge the ‘known’ identity of children based on their age, and to instead explore what pedagogical possibilities exist beyond understanding and grouping children by age.

We may understand children as gradually becoming more independent and less reliant on adult supervision, however, a universal vision of development through normalization narrows “becoming” options to predetermined patterns in which expected skills and abilities emerge at particular ages. Then, environments (including curriculum, and caregiving practices), that match known -through-child-age needs, can be predicted and regulated. Inspired by the invitation from Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (1999, 2007) to think child care beyond quality, and building on the beyond-developmentalism thinking of Edwards and her colleagues (2009), in this research project I consider multiage child care reconceptualized through non-developmental theories.

Chapter Summary: Situating

This chapter outlined the research problem and context and clarified the organization of the dissertation. I have explained how the dissertation compiles little stories to illuminate the research purpose, theory, process, and knowledge generated. I described the purpose as an investigation of a particular experience of multiage child care provision. To situate this study I told a story about the project’s birth and reviewed literature that reconceptualized early childhood education curriculum through challenging developmentalism, exploring the practices of pedagogical documentation, as well as literature considering multiage child care experiences. In the following chapter I describe the study’s theoretical orientation.

Chapter 2: Practicing with Theories while Theorizing through Practices

Chapter two outlines the theoretical framework that guides my research. I describe how I perceive theory and practice to be interconnected and inseparable components in early years environments. I also examine three different theoretical concepts: caring, living curriculum, and rhizomatic thinking to consider relationships, education and developmentalism. I consider the practices employed in this project (primary caregiving, responsive curriculum and multiage grouping) and discuss the theories entwined in those practices. Many different and sometimes contradictory theoretical orientations, such as feminist ethics of care, phenomenology and poststructuralism produce my theoretical framework. The contradictions and diversity highlight the theory/practice complexity in these multiage child care centres and in the research project.

The theory/practice entanglement produces three analytic tools: caring relations, dwelling and becoming. Primary caregiving connects to feminist ethics of care theories and leads to the concept of caring relations (Held, 2006). Responsive curriculum invites an examination of curriculum theory. I consider curriculum through the lens of living curriculum. Following other curriculum scholars who discuss a living, or lived, curriculum, I borrow the concept of dwelling from the work of anthropologist, Tim Ingold (2000, 2010). Finally, I engage with the concept of becoming (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). These entangled concepts/practices: caring relations/primary caregiving, dwelling/ living curriculum, becoming/rhizomatic thinking; connect, producing this dissertation's ground, framework, and content.

Theory In Practice And Practice In Theory

I place practice as central to theorizing early years spaces. Lenz-Taguchi (2010) argued for a need to “go beyond the theory/practice binary divide” (p. 3). To do so, she proposed an intra-active pedagogy for early years spaces. Drawing on the work of Karen Barad, she explained

intra-active pedagogy as attending to relationships between “all living organisms and the material environment” (p. 10). Following Lenz-Taguchi, rather than positioning theory and practice as binary concepts, I understand them as enmeshed in inseparable relations; they unfold together in relation with each other. Theories shape practices while simultaneously practices produce theory.

In early years spaces, thinking, feeling, experiencing, acting and being acted-on occur together. The materials, events and places intra-act with the inhabitants, children and adults as well as living non-human others, producing unique, un-replicable moments (Lenz-Taguchi, 2010). Already in the mix, theories, beliefs and emotions infuse practices and plans. To begin this section, I consider how developmentalism lives in early years places. I then consider primary caregiving, responsive curriculum and multiage child care practices, and the theories implicated in those practices.

Developmentalism and Practice in Early Years Settings

Re-imagining child care to think beyond age-segregating practices leads to reconsidering the theories embedded in those practices. I start from the position that as a theoretical foundation, developmentalism limits what early childhood caregivers conceptualize as possible, desirable, and/or appropriate for practices in early childhood places (Burman 2008a, 2008b; Cannella 1997; Lee & Vagle, 2010; Lubeck, 1996, MacNaughton, 2005). When predetermined age-based developmental needs form the theoretical basis of practical actions, wide variations in a group’s perceived needs and capabilities can make choosing an action problematic.

Consider story reading, a familiar practice in early childhood programs. Working with (taken-for-granted) ideas of child development theories, an early childhood caregiver will choose a story – and a way of reading the story – that best meets the developmental needs and

capabilities (as perceived by the caregiver) of a particular group of children. If the story reader judges the children's needs and capabilities to be homogenous and predictable, the plan for the story-reading activity will follow logically from that judgment. However, if the group is not understood as homogenous – for example, if the children range in age from one to five and through developmentalism are understood to have different needs and capabilities – the caregiver may theorize the story-reading activity as a difficult, and perhaps impossible, pedagogical practice. To think the practice pedagogically possible requires re-theorizing the group's capacity.

In this project, when we made our original request to the licensing body to pilot multiage child care we committed to two practices: a key person/ primary caregiving practice and a practice we named responsive curriculum. Primary caregiving, or a key person system, refers to organizing staffing so that one caregiver has primary responsibility for a small group of children (Goldschmied & Jackson, 1994; Gonzalez-Mena & Eyer, 2011). In these centres, we assigned a group of six children to each caregiver. Alongside the primary caregiver practice we implemented a responsive curriculum practice. By responsive curriculum we meant a curriculum that develops or unfolds based on the perceived interests and capacities of individual children as well as the intersections of individual interests with the interests and capacities of other group members, including children and adults. Incorporating these two practices within multiage groupings meant that many events, activities and projects happened at the same time. Along with those events/activities/projects lived embedded, influential, and perhaps contradictory theory/practices.

Implementing multiage groupings explicitly challenged age segregation while, at the same time, implicitly questioned developmentalism. Primary caregiving and responsive curriculum practices invited an examination of the tacit developmental theories contained within

them. Examining relations between our proposed practices and developmentalism highlighted how developmental theories have come into thinking and into practices and how the practices have produced and maintained dominant theories.

Primary Caregiving and Developmental Theories

The commitment to a primary caregiving practice emerged in response to concerns (ours and licensing personnel's) about our ability to provide care for very young children in a large group with many older children in it. Primary caregiving acknowledges the idea that very young children require attentive, focused care. The practice further implies that caring happens in relationships rather than with interchangeable adults. Our concerns and subsequent proposal suggest that we agreed with those theoretical tenets about care and very young children.

Held (2006) described care as “both value and practice” (p. 9). As early years professionals, we value and practice care and caring. Our organization's name, *Child Care Services* along with the four early years programs' designation, *child care centres* implies this value and the attendant practices. At the onset, the project proposal addressed the challenging issue of providing *care* within the multiage structure. *Caring* surfaced as a value when we confronted initial concerns both from licensing personnel and from ourselves about our ability to *care* in this structure. Our proposal to our licensing body positioned *care* as a key concept: since we anticipated difficulty in adequately *caring* for toddlers, we adopted a primary *caregiver* system to address the difficulty without really knowing that the difficulty existed. And finally, as I have suggested, the action of predicting this problem revealed that we held theoretical assumptions about young children and their *care* demands.

An awareness of care and caring appeared, disappeared and reappeared in an ongoing cycle throughout this project. However, other ideas, such as children's experiences and learning,

curricular issues, adult's roles and theory/practice critiques dominated the ECCE literature I reviewed, my discussions with licensing personnel, and the decisions made with other caregivers about daily life in the centres. Care slipped to a marginal position, returning to its place as a taken-for-granted idea, something we un-problematically understood as a universal principle, something we knew how to do and could easily provide.

Similarly, many ECCE textbooks often appear to position care as a given, context-less, easily understood concept (Goldschmied & Jackson, 1994, Gonzalez-Mena & Eyer, 2011). Those texts usually describe *how to* care and often *why* to care but do not interrogate what constitutes care or caring. Some care provision suggestions include the key person/primary caregiving system that we adopted, as well as systems of small groups of same aged children that we did not adopt.

Texts such as *People Under Three: Young Children in Daycare* (Goldschmied & Jackson, 1994) and *Infants, Toddlers and Caregivers: A Curriculum of Respectful, Responsive Care and Education* (Gonzalez-Mena & Eyer, 2011) recommend key person/primary caregiving systems. The licensing requirements regulating the centres of this study limit centre group size for toddlers to half as large as that for children over three - twelve children compared to twenty-five (Government of British Columbia, 2009). These recommendations and regulations support, and are supported by, beliefs that children under three years of age require more attention and perhaps more *care* from adults than older children do.

Often, interpretations of developmental theories such as attachment theory (Bowlby, 1973) and psychosocial theory (Erikson, 1963) form the basis for recommendations directed toward working with (i.e. caring for) infants and toddlers. For example, Gonzalez-Mena and Eyer (2011) recommend primary caregiving systems and small group sizes. These theoretical

interpretations and associated recommended practices imply that developmentally appropriate caregiving includes grouping together small numbers of similar aged infants and toddlers with familiar caregivers. Those implementing the practice often intend to create a context that supports fostering relationships so that very young children develop trust in an adult(s), enabling the children to feel secure, and thus, providing a foundation for later emotional health (Gonzales-Mena & Eyers, 2011).

Child-caring theories, located and created within specific contexts, produce situated child care practices. In addition, ECCE post secondary programs teach students of early childhood education both academic theories about caring for children and how to apply the theories to practice. At the same time, to paraphrase Gittins (2009), all early childhood educators, caregivers, and other early years practitioners carry into practice personal theories about caring created through their own childhood histories. If understood by the caregivers as truth, these academic and personal theories can work to produce and maintain particular practices.

Child caring practices also produce and maintain theories. Lived experiences, interpreted in specific ways, can contribute to the construction of personal theories held by individual caregivers, as well as reify their learned formal academic theories. As a life of caring-for children unfolds, caregivers build and modify their theories from their practical experiences. Additionally, in child care centres, caregivers work in a context where they care for children with others. The caregiving team acts together in certain ways, practicing particular caring-for actions and not others. Working in a context, in which some actions occur while others do not, may produce and strengthen some theories and discourses about actions while perhaps weakening or marginalizing others.

Concerns about our caring ability in the multiage programs produced the key

person/primary caregiver practice commitment we made to the licensing body. The concerns suggest a taken-for-granted developmental discourse at work, even as we were in the midst of arguing for a non-developmental practice. This echoes Edwards and colleagues (2009) who found that the early childhood teachers in their study often located understandings of multiage groupings in a developmental discourse rather than in a post-developmental one. Those authors (2009) pointed out that this occurred even though the actual practice, multiage grouping, appeared to challenge developmentalism.

Our plan to include some toddlers in a larger than typical group challenged regulations as well as assumptions about developmentally appropriate practice that influence the regulations. However, our plan to provide primary caregiving appeared to accept some tenets of those same assumptions. Although we explicitly planned to provide care through the proposed primary caregiving practice, we simultaneously veiled our developmental assumptions about care and caring. We appear to have held contradictory beliefs at the same time: age matters in caring practices/ age does not matter in caring practices. The tension generated by this developmental/post-developmental theoretical contradiction lived in our practices/discussions/research as we engaged in actual multiage child care practice, provoking confusion, passion and debate amongst the caregivers.

Responsive Curriculum, the British Columbia Early Learning Framework and Developmental Theories

When we wrote our proposal to the licensing body we anticipated certain questions and ensured that we addressed them in the proposal. We understood that the regulations had materialized through a long history. One historical component included developmentalism as a foundational basis for child care. We expected to be asked, and indeed were asked, how we

would ensure that very young children would receive close attentive care in such a large group and how we would ensure the provision of a challenging environment for older children while protecting the younger children from undue risk.

During the initial planning discussions for the multiage centres we frequently returned to questions of how it would be possible to create safe *and* challenging environments and experiences for children of a wide age range. Like care, ideas about children learning, permeated every aspect of this research project. To address questions about how we would provide appropriate and meaningful learning experiences for a developmentally diverse group of children, we proposed a responsive curriculum. As I described earlier we used this term to mean an environment that responded to the centre children's (not child's) intersecting abilities and curiosities in the centres. Questions about *safety* and *challenge* invited conversations about what safety and challenge each meant. The tension between safe and challenging, including debates about what meaning we attached to those words, had characterized our workplace discussions about early childhood environments and curricular experiences even before we considered creating multiage child care centres. That tension escalated and dominated our beginning discussions after we began to consider the idea of multiage child care.

Perceived incompatible requirements based on age-based differences for developmentally appropriate practices generated other, related, ethical practice questions. How could we provide a safe yet challenging environment for all children if some children's safety needs prevented the support of other children's developmental needs? How do we know when a child is safe? How do we know what challenges/stimulates a child? Can an environment be safe and challenging at the same time? These conflicts and questions required us to reconceptualize our understanding of early years environments, curriculum and learning children along with our ideas about safety and

challenge.

To engage with the theories and discourses embedded in the safe/challenge binary, we used *The British Columbia Early Learning Framework* (Government of British Columbia, 2008a). The *BCELF* bases recommendations on “the latest knowledge on how best to support young children’s early learning and development” (Government of British Columbia, 2008a, p. 3). This claim roots the framework within *known-child* discourses. The discourses, through child development theories create the (latest) knowledges about supporting children’s learning and development (MacNaughton 2003). The theories include child maturational theories, learning theories, and constructivist theories as well as non-developmental theories such as feminist, post-structural and post-colonial theories (2003). Many of these theories can be apprehended embedded in the framework and contribute to producing and maintaining discourses about safe and/or challenging child care practices.

The *BCELF* organizes questions addressing environments into two categories – one for children under three years of age and one for children between ages three and five years (Government of British Columbia, 2008a). In both categories, the framework situates safety and challenge within daily practices as important considerations when planning environments for young children. Clearly positioning safety as significant, the first two questions ask, “In what ways do adults convey to infants and toddlers a sense of safety in their environments?” and “How do adults communicate to children that the environment is safe for them?” (p.19). Placed in the area, *Well-Being and Belonging*, these questions suggest that adults should explicitly describe the safety of the environment to children. This suggestion implies that in order to thrive, and to experience wellbeing, children require safe environments, and also an awareness of, and belief in, the safety of their environment while they gradually develop abilities to assess safety.

The framework emphasizes safety as an important concept to consider in infant-toddler early years settings with several other questions: “How do adults provide an environment that is safe, clean and inviting” (Government of British Columbia, 2008a, p.19)? “How are infants and toddlers given opportunities to safely be together” (p.22)? And, “How are real materials (e.g., pots, pans, brooms) provided for children to interact with safely” (p.24)? These questions highlight the theoretical and practical importance of child safety for caregivers, particularly those who care for children who are under three years of age. The extra focus on safety for children under-three years of age could be attributed to maturational theories that suggest that younger children have fewer skills and less dependable judgment.

Maturational theories explain human development as a process in which children conform to nature (MacNaughton, 2003). Different versions of maturational theories put greater or lesser emphasis on nature being age-predicted. Some maturational theories describe maturation as conforming to an individual’s pre-existing nature; others suggest conforming to universal human nature (MacNaughton, 2003). In either case, change theoretically occurs as a child ages with younger children being less mature and more in need of adult protection than older ones.

Further exploration of the *BCELF* shows that it also contains theoretical assumptions about the importance of offering children challenges in ECCE settings (Government of British Columbia, 2008a). For example, it asks those who work with children over three years of age, “How are children supported to meet challenges and take appropriate risks in their play and learning” (p. 27)? And, “What opportunities do children have to express their joy, amusement and challenges in learning?” (p. 27). This belief in the importance of challenge for learning and developing underlies other questions, for example, “What creative and constructive problem-

solving activities encourage children to cooperate with and support each other? How effective are these activities” (p. 26)? The framework contains both clear and inferred references to the importance of challenge in experiences and environments for young children.

The challenge requirement reflects a constructivist theory of learning. For example, Piaget explains new conceptual understandings as generated by disequilibrium (MacNaughton, 2003). Disequilibrium occurs through a challenge to a learner’s existing understanding. Challenges, such as new information, or new task requirements create disequilibrium, thus generating the opportunity for new skills and/or new understandings - learning - to occur. In this way, a learner constructs new knowledge through adapting to the new environmental challenges (MacNaughton, 2003). This theory places importance on individual’s discovering and uncovering concepts through their own adaptation processes.

MacNaughton (2003) pointed out that Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory also holds that knowledge is constructed. However according to socio-cultural theory, construction occurs within a social and cultural context in which a more experienced person or group supports a learner’s construction process (MacNaughton, 2003), emphasizing the role of language in conceptualization (Berk, 2005). A question, in the *BCELF*: “How are children supported to meet challenges and take appropriate risks in their play and learning” (Government of British Columbia, 2008a, p.27)”, suggests the influence of socio-cultural theory in the framework’s pedagogical theory about what kinds of environments facilitate learning. Positioning challenge as important for learning suggests that constructivist ideas inform the framework’s underlying theoretical orientation.

These constructivist theoretical discourses underscore the contradictions, tensions and age-related understandings about beliefs surrounding children’s safety and the importance of

challenge for learning. For example, the *BCELF* asks more questions about safety than about challenge in the sections addressing environments for children under age three years. However, it asks more questions about challenge than safety in the section addressing environments for children over age three years. That emphasis echoes the concerns that emerged during our multiage pilot project planning. It also highlights how developmentalism contested our plan.

As I have described, when we developed our proposal, before we were even challenged by others, we addressed how we intended to keep toddlers safe while still providing a rich stimulating, challenging learning environment for older children. We explicitly described our proposed practices (primary caregiving and a 'responsive' curriculum) as ways to provide safe-for-toddlers-but-challenging-for-preschoolers environments - a conceptualization that developmentalism implicitly positions as oxymoronic. We regularly faced the question of how we would keep toddlers emotionally and physically safe in a busy, stimulating, noisy preschool environment, from licensing personnel, from our colleagues not involved in the project and from parents considering the centres for their children. The questions from the *BCELF*, early years professionals including caregivers and administrators, along with parents, all incorporate the safety/challenge issue inherently produced through developmentalism.

Safety/challenge issues, understood within an age-appropriate framework, appear to be positioned as binary oppositions within an early years practice. The oppositions connect to several different, sometimes contradictory, developmental theories including: individual and normative maturational development theories, and individual and social/cultural constructivist developmental theories (MacNaughton, 2003). These diverse theories hold in common an understanding that developmental requirements differ according to age and stage. Introducing a multiage grouping into the theoretical confusion inherent in early years practices increased the

theoretical complexity in this project.

Multiage Groupings, Postdevelopmentalism and Rhizomatic Thinking

Our project began with a move away from positioning developmentalism as a singular or multiple theoretical basis for understanding change and children toward what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) explained as multiplicity, in this case theoretical multiplicity. A turn from developmentalism included turning from age as a normalizing structure toward openness to other conceptions of children. However as I have described, personal beliefs and curricular guides informing ECCE practices, rest on, depend on, are founded on age-normed developmental theory (see Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Gonzalez-Mena & Eyer, 2011; Government of British Columbia, 2008a). The commitments we made in our proposal acknowledge the inherent developmentalism in ECCE discourses. To think of children growing and changing without knowing growth and change through age can seem impossible or even nonsensical. We initiated our project mired in contradictions, with a practice, multiage grouping, that challenged developmentalism while simultaneously including practices, primary caregiving and responsive curriculum, that maintain and are maintained by developmentalism.

Age marks time passing, and individual children (and all other living things and most non-living things) change over time. Some changes happen in a similar way at a similar age to many human children. For example, human beings change in physical proportion as they grow from infancy to adulthood: babies' heads are larger in proportion to their bodies than adults' heads are to their bodies (Berk, 2005). Alongside theories that account for observed and measured physical changes through maturational concepts, some theories, for example, psychosocial theory, attachment theory, constructivist theories, socio-cultural theory, include contextual considerations to explain age-related human change (MacNaughton, 2003). In these

theories, nature and culture interact either to accelerate or to compromise typical or normative development.

Applying these theories to practice suggests that children's ages and stages will interact with environments either to foster or to harm typical development. For example, based on these theories, poor quality early childhood environments (i.e. child care centres or preschools) can be predicted to negatively impact child development. However, carefully matching environments to ages and stages will, theoretically, support optimal development of children. Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (1999, 2007) challenged this child care quality construction. They pointed out that such theoretical applications to practice/environment evaluations work to reproduce a specific cultural understanding of early years as that marginalizes other constructions, (2007). Groups that encompass children of more than one stage (associated with age) certainly problematize such matching.

Multiage groupings allow postdevelopmental theory into practice. At the same time postdevelopmental theory produces space to consider multiage groupings. A postdevelopmental perspective does not mean that physical changes from infancy through preschool years must be ignored. Rather it suggests that change exists alongside uncertainty about what change will bring. Aspects of Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) philosophy offer conceptual possibilities to think beyond developmentalism: multiplicity, connection and heterogeneity. With these principles, change in children can be understood as unknown, not predictable, not pre-existing and not pre-ordained. Change will constantly occur through unknown connections continually producing something new.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) explained thought through the image of rhizomes. They pointed out that a rhizome differs from a taproot and from a fascicular root. A tree grows from a

taproot. Plants, such hybrid roses, grow from fascicular roots. This means that a different plant is grafted onto an original root. The plant becomes multiple, for example more than one kind of rose can be grafted onto the same root. However the root remains one. Spreading plants such as irises, bamboo and crabgrass grow from rhizomes. This means that many roots can form from the same plant. Deleuze and Guattari use each of these images to produce different ways to conceptualize thinking.

Thinking with a taproot image generates an understanding of singular truth, for example, best practice. As a principal root, a taproot presents a unity, a unity that can be split into parts but the parts continue to make the whole. The ability to split the whole into parts produces binary logic (e.g. children under-age-three and children over-age-three). A taproot understanding of childhood allows the concept of the known-by-age child and with that knowledge points to a particular *best* practice for children of that age.

Thinking with a fascicular image creates understandings of multiple truths, or best *practices*. Deleuze and Guattari described a fascicular root as multiple, but with a secret unity, a unity that “subsists, as past or yet to come, as possible” (1987, p.5). In this case, multiple means additions to the first unity. Working with a fascicular root image creates multiple possible under-age-three and over-age-three understandings. Non-developmental theoretical explanations can be grafted on to still-developmental understandings of children. Explanations of non age-determined differences could be made through reference to attributes such as gender, context, temperament, genetics, or culture among others. These non-age explanations can be incorporated with developmental ones to produce conceptions of under-age-three girl children and over-age-three girl children or under-age-three children with autism and over-age-three children with autism or of under-age-three raced or classed children and over-age-three raced or classed

children.

Instead of a linear dichotomy, a fascicular root evokes a cyclical unity, the non-known in thought, which holds potential to become the known (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). This implies that while we may not know the total range of what describes and differentiates under-age-three children from over-age-three children such knowledge could yet come to be known. The principle defining, normalizing difference category, the secret unity, *age* remains. Best practice can become best practices but the concept of best remains.

Rhizomatic thinking makes conceptualizing best undoable. Neither practices nor outcomes can be contained or predicted. Being unable to describe or predict outcomes renders planning best practice or best practices impossible. Rhizomatic thinking means practices and plans must be responsive, unique and open. What is thought will impact what line the rhizomatic action will follow. Practices, events and plans will emerge in response to the centre participants' questions, assumptions, thoughts and feelings.

To explain thought as rhizomatic, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) provided six principles. The principles include connection and heterogeneity, multiplicity, asignifying rupture, cartography and decalcomania. They present the principles of connection and heterogeneity together. Connectivity describes how each point of a rhizome connects to another. The points then always connect to each other through lines while lines connect with each other at a point. Heterogeneity means that the connected traits (lines) are diverse. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) argued "a rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles" (p.7).

Multiplicity refers to the idea that there is no One to which it is possible to return (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). In the context of this study, the One would be age group in which

development is, or can be, known and normalized. Multiple developmental theoretical perspectives produce developmental possibilities (e.g. under-three-aged girl child and under-three aged boy child). However within that perspective, the One (age group) persists as the underlying unity. In contrast, from a multiplicity perspective, development cannot be known through age group or any other category.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) explained multiplicity linguistically. In the taproot image, the singular unity (in this case age group) exists as the object: *we plan for the under-three age group*. With the fascicular root image, the multiple exists as the subject: *Under-three's require many caregiving behaviours such as close attentive protection and consideration of individual temperaments*. With a rhizomatic principle of multiplicity it becomes impossible to speak of the One either as an object or as a subject. Multiplicities change through deterritorialization, where the multiplicities “change in nature and connect with other multiplicities” (p. 9). Disrupting a *best practices* understanding through grouping children differently can be understood as a change in the nature of group child care and offers a connection with other multiplicities such as family groupings and early years spaces and responsive curriculum and, and, and. The various lines intersect and connect producing specific interconnected multiplicities - what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) referred to as “a *plane of consistency* of multiplicities” (p. 9).

To clarify the principle of asignifying rupture, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) described how rhizomes when broken start up again on old or new lines. They explained:

Every rhizome contains lines of segmentarity according to which it is stratified, territorialized, organized, signified, attributed, etc., as well as lines of deterritorializations down which it constantly flees. There is a rupture in the rhizome whenever segmentary lines explode into a line of flight, but the line of flight is a part of the rhizome. (p. 9)

Rather than producing new truth, ruptures create new planes of consistency, which may themselves be deterritorialized and reterritorialized. In this project, changing the age grouping deterritorializes the child care rhizome.

The principles of cartography and decalcomania refer to mapping rather than tracing (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Tracing means to reproduce from an original. When intersected with the idea of thinking, tracing reproduces the known and prevents new thought. Mapping invokes an orientation “toward an experimentation in contact with the real” (p. 12). They emphasized that they do not understand a map and a trace as a binary. Rather they suggest that “it is a question of method: *the tracing should always be put back on the map*” (p. 13). To work with this concept means to place interpretations back on to descriptions, to hold explanations against an event map.

The mapping concept troubles the ECCE pedagogical practice known as observing and recording. In that practice an observer records a description, interprets the record through a predetermined theoretical lens, and finally evaluates children, environments, practices according to whatever theory or theories have been invoked. Working with the cartography/decalcomania principle concept instead requires that theoretical interpretations and evaluations must be traced on to the map, the recorded event, so as to notice what the interpretations and evaluations leave out, ignore, do not apprehend.

Understanding children and child care as connected and heterogeneous and as multiplicities disrupted through asignifying rupture, and through cartography and decalcomania, produces a postdevelopmental plane of consistency. A heterogeneous principle suggests many possible trajectories or lines, including developmental and non-developmental ones while the connection principle describes how the ideas - the lines - intersect to produce something new. The multiplicity principle disallows categorizing children into multiple predetermined identities

while an asignifying rupture means the impossibility of predicting what change will bring. Mapping and decalomania produce a method for thinking and rethinking the meanings we ascribe to children, childhood and child care.

Primary caregiving, responsive curriculum and multiage groupings as practices provide a basis for thinking theory. Primary caregiving rests on attachment and psychosocial theories, and responsive curriculum on maturation and constructivist theories, all developmental theories. However, multiage grouping, thought through postdevelopmental theoretical perspectives, might invite different considerations of care, curriculum and change.

Theorizing Child Care Beyond Developmentalism

To think childcare beyond developmentalism means to invite non-developmental theories into practice and non-developmental practices into theory alongside developmental theories and connected practices. Ethics of care theories offer ways to contemplate care beyond developmentalism. Reconceptualizing curriculum through phenomenology, means focusing on unique perceptual experience rather than on general age-predicted learning outcomes. Finally, the philosophical system of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) provides a toolbox to consider change non-developmentally. Congruent with Deleuze and Guattari's six principle, these three theoretical orientations have both points of intersecting connections and at the same time widely diverging lines.

The theories connect through a shared openness to the future. Ethics of care holds that, to care demands remaining open to the other as an *other*, to not knowing the other (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). The phenomenological curriculum theory I employ requires remaining open to what is to come rather than predicting learning outcomes (Aoki, 2005; Roth, 2013). The philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) proposes that ideas open along a line of flight.

Following a concept from each theory through intersections with multiage stories produces a plane of consistency of multiplicities. This plane contains a different perspective of what can be possible in a child care center. In the following section I map the three theoretical perspectives to think with multiage child care.

Ethics of Care

Thinking differently about ECCE introduced ethical considerations. As I have argued, applied developmentalism produces expectations of universality or normalization leading to prescribed best practices and known rules. Dahlberg and Moss (2005) argued that turning away from such certainty and order opens space for “reversing a process which has seen ethical and political practice replaced with technical practice” (p. 63). They called for the reconceptualizing of ethics and ethical practices in early years spaces and pointed to the potential of the ethics of care. Pointing out that ethics of care attend to making ethical choices in particular contexts, they further described care ethics as connected to responsibility, relationships, and otherness. Dahlberg and Moss (2005) suggested that an ethics of care becomes active practice when we “consider it to be the ‘care’ in ‘early childhood education and care’” (p. 90).

Dahlberg, and colleagues (2007) challenged the possibility of knowing quality or best practice. Abandoning the certainties of best practices or of high quality child care known through developmentalism, creates opportunity for more thoughtful, respectful early years practices but also holds potential for more thoughtless, disrespectful practices. Multiplicity, including child care practice multiplicity, requires an ethics. Following the suggestion of Dahlberg and Moss (2005), I situate a feminist ethics of care as the ‘care’ in these multiage child care centres.

A wide range of feminist theories and scholars from many disciplines influence conceptions of a feminist ethics of care. The theoretical orientations include liberal, cultural and

poststructural feminist perspectives. Scholars from disciplines such as philosophy (Sara Ruddick, Eva Kittay, Victoria Held), psychology (Carol Gilligan), anthropology (Deborah Bird Rose), political science (Joan Tronto), education (Nel Noddings), and women's studies (Selma Sevenhuijsen) engage with feminist ethics of care.

According to Virginia Held (2006), the work of Sara Ruddick laid the foundation for a feminist ethics of care. Ruddick (1980) examined maternal thinking focusing on the caring practices of mothering. She proposed that mothering experiences hold the capacity to produce particular moral perspectives. Ruddick (1980) further suggested that the beliefs and values imbedded in those perspectives could have implications for practices beyond mothering.

Considering ethics from a psychological perspective, Gilligan (1977, 1982) contested ideas that privileged beliefs in universal moral principles as the basis for moral reasoning. She suggested that many women rely more on contextual details to reason morally than on abstract justice ideals. Gilligan did not claim that only women reasoned about ethics in this way or that women never reasoned morally in justice oriented ways. Rather, she suggested that lived experience impacts reasoning about moral behaviour.

Noddings (2003) understood an ethics of care as a commitment to remain in caring relation to an-other, as "a will to remain in caring relations" (p.103). Noddings (1984, 2003,) described a caring relation as involving an engrossed carer and responsive care-receiver. Noddings (1984, 2003) also connected an ethics of care to women's experience as she pointed to natural caring and suggested that many women through their caregiving roles understand natural caring. However, she argued that natural caring does not require a commitment to care and thus does not require an ethic. She (2003) characterized an ethics of caring as striving "to maintain the caring attitude" (p. 105). She further elaborated that carers then, must attend to their own

condition, as bitter sacrifice cannot be ethical caring.

Tronto (1993) conceptualized care as both a cultural construction and a tangible action. In her understanding a feminist ethics of care did not root care in a private world or as a women's issue. She argued, "Care is not a parochial concern of women, a type of secondary moral question, or the work of the least well off in society. Care is a central concern of human life" (p.180). She pointed out that "caring requires that one start from the standpoint of the one needing care or attention" (p.19). In her understanding, care contains four distinct elements: caring about, taking care of, care-giving and care receiving. These elements involve noticing need, assuming responsibility for meeting the need, doing the work of meeting the need and having the caring work responded to by the one-cared-for (Tronto, 1993). According to Tronto, those four care elements produce four corresponding ethical action requirements: attentiveness to another, responsibility for another, competence, and responsiveness from another. Tronto (1993) further elaborated that ignorance cannot excuse inattentiveness; responsibility goes beyond obligation; adhering to professional ethics cannot absolve incompetence; and responsiveness means, "that we consider other's position as that other expresses it" (p. 136).

Kittay (1999, 2011) pointed out that care could mean labour, attitude or a particular virtue disposition. She stated, "An ethic of care develops and refines the normative characteristics in the labor, the attitude, and the disposition" (Kittay, 2011, p. 53). In writing of disabled person's care requirements, Kittay (2011) reasoned that all human beings depend on care from another at some point in their lives. She suggested a public ethic of care "based on the idea that we are all embedded in nested dependencies" (Kittay, 2011, p. 56). In her view, an ethics of care emphasizes dependence and connections as strengths rather valorizing independence and autonomy.

Similar to Kittay, Held (2006) argued that the ethics of care reconceptualizes ideas about the public and the private. She further explained that the ethics of care values emotions and the moral claims of particular others. Valuing the claims of particular others, such as a child, an ill person, or an elderly parent means attending to that individual “regardless of universal principles” (p. 10). In the ethics of care, emotions have value in the context of decision-making. Held did not suggest that emotion should guide decisions without reflection. Rather she argued that reasonable rationalizations cannot stand entirely alone in every moral inquiry. To avoid the pitfalls of unreasonable emotion, Held (2006) stated, “we need an *ethics* of care, not just care itself” (p. 11). Additionally, she argued the ethics of care challenges the superiority of abstractions and universality focusing instead on actual relations and the well being of those relations. The ethics of care confronts the moral issues contained within private relations that may be unequal, dependent, emotional and involuntary and then considers the implications of those moral issues for the public sphere. Explaining ethics of care, Held (2006) stated that,

The concept of care has the advantage of not losing sight of the work involved in caring for people of not lending itself to the interpretation of morality as ideal but impractical to which advocates of the ethics of care often object. Care is both value and practice. (p. 9)

Held (2006) acknowledged that her care characterization risks positioning it as natural, biological and governed by maternal instinct or “as motivated by emotions that are a threat to impartial, universal moral norms” (p. 133). However, she argued that, rather than limiting care ethics to the personal domain, human interdependence is a reality that relies on caring relations, that “caring relations form the small societies of family and friendship on which larger societies depend” (p. 43). She further concluded, “a globalization of caring relations would help people of different states and cultures to live in peace, to respect each other’s rights, to care together for

their environments, and to improve the lives of their children” (p. 168). This construction of caring, implicates care ethics in all aspects of all relations.

However, feminist theorizing, that reconceptualizes care as an ethical and political endeavour involving relations, responsibility and interdependence, produced critiques based on what could be understood in Deleuze and Guattari terms, the concept of the secret, hidden One. For example, providing a postfoundational critique, Sevenhuijsen (1998) argued that modernist conceptions of ethics of care risk the continued grounding of ethics in a normative image of an ideal subject. She emphasized the importance to ethics of care of avoiding a foundational human-nature image – in other words, the pitfalls of uniformity and totalitarianism. Nevertheless, she stated that while Held’s ideas may appear to contain a foundational image of women, they also undermine homogeneity. Striving to combine empirical and political-philosophical approaches to a feminist ethics of care, Sevenhuijsen (1998) located it within an idea of citizenship. She suggested that this creates space for carers to bring their expertise into public debates without connecting that expertise to a fixed caring identity. Positioned as a social practice she argued that care calls for situated thinking and ethics. Sevenhuijsen held that feminist care ethics rely on concepts of responsibilities and relationships not rules and rights, that such ethics connect to concrete rather than abstract situations without referring to a set of principles to follow (1998).

Thinking with Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) concepts of rhizome, becoming and lines of flight together with these various feminist care ethics theorizations produces connections between care ethics and principles of heterogeneity, connectivity and multiplicity. Caring practices, caring relations, can be mapped but not predicted. To be ethical they must be situational, relational, and open. Such positioning moves the ethics of care from a single story,

and along one line of flight, towards decentering the human subject, producing opportunities to reexamine, rethink and reconceive care.

With a decolonizing purpose, Rose (2002) proposed an ethics of care toward place. This construction of care ethics moves it from a human centric position to one that includes non-human aspects of the world. She suggested that connectivity with actual places invites us to care for those places and the peoples in them. Through connecting to our place, Rose (2002) believed settler-descents could make peace with place. She pointed to the idea that “an ecological self is materially embedded in specific place” (p. 312). She positioned our place as our partner. This connectivity to place calls us into relationship with place and asks for an ethics of care with place. Connecting ethics of care to the more-than-human, to place, extends and deepens understandings of care.

Understanding care ethics as including more-than-human does not preclude humans. Extending care ethics in such a way emphasizes how we might ethically care for/with children. Bath (2013) argued that listening to children could be conceptualized as an ethic of care in early years settings. She stated that a pedagogy of listening requires caring ethics and cannot simply be a technical practice. She further described pedagogical listening located in care ethics as a democratic care practice. This description positions the careful listening in early years settings described by Pacini-Ketchabaw and Berikoff (2008) as a democratic enactment of care ethics. Listening to the many ways children communicate becomes ethical practice.

Tronto (1993) asked questions about the responsibilities of care and her questions highlight our initial concerns about our changed practice. She asked, “How can I best meet my caring responsibilities?” (p. 137). Our fears about our ability to be attentive and to meet our caring responsibilities produced initial doubts about our multiage proposal. Our proposed large group

size combined with a wide child age range created uncertainty about the capacity of staff to develop close caring relationships with children. That uncertainty generated a productive tension producing awareness and focus on our conceptions and interpretations about care and relationships.

At the heart of Held's (2006) understanding of care ethics lays the concept of caring relations. For her, caring can only be understood as occurring within a relationship and within an ethics of care. Care, she suggested, seeks good caring relations. She further stated that in an ethic of care, caring relations "have primary value" (p. 19) and "connect persons to one another" (p. 129). Held described caring relations as trusting and mutually constitutive. Held also explained that rather than simply being actions, attitudes and attributes of selflessness, caring relations include persons acting for self and other. She argued for the "acceptance of the plurality of values, and of the primacy of trust and caring relations in various contexts" (p. 103).

Values and attitudes of trust, including sensitivity, empathy, responsiveness, and assuming responsibility, characterize caring relations (Held, 2006). However, problematically for building trust, any response to an-other could be construed as inaccurate and neither sensitive nor empathetic. Building on Tronto's requirement that care must be received by the cared-for, for trust to exist, a carer's actions in relation to the cared-for must usually be experienced by the cared-for as sensitive and accurately empathetic. This creates challenges when an adult caregiver assumes that a particular practice is a responsible and caring action, but the child receiving the care perceives it as an insensitive intrusion, a perception that therefore positions the caregiver's action as an uncaring one.

For example, an adult might construe washing a child's food-sticky face as a caring and responsible behaviour while the child may emphatically resist having her face washed. The adult

believes (possibly) that it is caring and in the child's best interest, to protect her skin from bacteria. The child intuitively (perhaps) that washing her face will be uncomfortable, disruptive and unnecessary. For the face washing action to occur in a caring relation, this adult and child must between them construct an interaction that acknowledges and accounts for both beliefs. It will require, on the adult's part, attentive listening, flexible thinking and considerate responses and on the child's part, listening, negotiation and acceptance. Other caring responses to the situation, besides the adult washing the child's face, might include teaching the child to wash her own face, waiting to wash her face until later, or having a third party - adult or child - help. It might be possible to wait for a short time for the child to decide to wash her own face - perhaps her skin is not as sensitive as others. There can be no universal prescription for what can be regarded as a caring face-washing response. Caring relations exist only in context and are informed by an ethics of care.

Taken-for-granted theories about, and accepted practices of, caring formed the background for thinking about caring in the child care centres in our Child Care Services. Knowledge about care requirements based on child age formed the basis of previous understandings about caring relations. In contrast, caring practices for older children tended to be guided by unchallenged understandings about children's need to grow toward independence and competence. In my research, the introduction of a wide child-age range system disrupted habitual thinking and practices about care, caring and caregiving, producing an opening, foregrounding ethics of care and with those ethics, the concept of caring relations. Recommendations about caring for infants and toddlers informed the practice of the primary caregiver system put in place in this project in these centres. The caring relations concept offered a way to consider caring beyond these developmental caregiving prescriptions, to highlight and value listening,

attentiveness, responsiveness, flexibility and responsibility. It produced the analytic question: How can caring relations be conceptualized in the context of these multiage centres?

Living Curriculum

As with caring for young children, developmentalism dominates ECCE curriculum theorizing, planning and implementation. However, the field of curriculum theorizing has offered other ways to think about children's experience in the multiage centres. Instead of understanding curriculum as school materials, reconceptualist scholars viewed curriculum as "institutional and discursive practices, structures, images, and experiences" (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 16). The concept of *currere* emerged through this tradition (Pinar et al., 1995). *Currere*, a verb, means, "to run a closed course" (Doll, 2002, p. 45) while curriculum, a noun, means "a course for running" (p. 29). Rather than working to quantify behaviors to describe their surface interaction or to establish causality, *currere* seeks to describe what the individual subject makes of these behaviors (Pinar et al., 1995). Connecting the noun curriculum (the course) with the verb *currere* (to run the course) produces a theoretical focus on relationships between planned and enacted practices and lived experiences within curricular content. In ECCE settings for example, the practices of the child care educators include, but are not limited to, creating physical environments, influencing social environments, choosing materials, providing activities and planning for relationship-building. Those practices characterize child care centres' curriculum while the children's experiences with the curriculum embody *currere*.

Suggesting that teachers live and work in the tension between curriculum as planned and curriculum as lived, Aoki (2005) explained that the planned curriculum contains the interests and the assumptions about knowledge of those who have done the planning. Those interests and assumptions, he pointed out, frame the intent (goals and aims) as well as the ideas about

activities, resources, and evaluations of the curriculum plan (Aoki, 2005). *Currere* focuses attention on the lived experience of curriculum (Aoki, 2005; Pinar, 2004). While not disregarding future outcomes from consideration, this curricular conceptualization shifts the foreground from future outcomes to present experience, keeping developmental outcomes in the background (Aoki, 2005).

Currere, or running the course of the curriculum, addresses a learner's phenomenological experience. Van Manen (2002) described phenomenology as reflective attention to the concreteness of lived experience. A phenomenological understanding of curriculum holds potential to uncover and challenge previously taken-for-granted ideas about children, as it asks us to see the world in the present through a specific child's eyes. This focuses attention on a child's experience with particular enactments of curriculum. It asks us to attend to experiences of 'running the course', to *currere*. This curriculum understanding moves away from adult concerns with planning future events and with evaluating the outcome effectiveness of past curricular events toward an intention of people - children and adults - living in the present in a particular place. It does not eliminate planning or evaluation but positions those activities as components of living. *Currere* understands curriculum as encompassing but also as going beyond institutional and teacher intentions (curriculum). The curriculum becomes that which is experienced by those in the setting. Thinking with the idea of *currere* creates space for emerging questions about children's and educator's thoughts, feelings, desires, motivations, perceptions and experiences.

Connecting the concept of *currere* to postmodern theory Slabbert and Hattingh (2006) stated:

The post-modern world creates the future. It follows that it is highly problematic, if not well nigh impossible to document/specify/outline curricula for it. It is life itself that

becomes the curriculum, and living it becomes education. *Currere* becomes what it was in ancient Greece, *paideia*, the adventure of discovering and living one's potential. (p. 716)

Understanding curriculum through a postfoundational theoretical lens provides a vision of 'being' that constitutes the interconnectedness of all phenomena revealing the significance of relationships with self, with others and with living and nonliving nature (Slabbert & Hattingh, 2006).

Roy (2005) suggested that we enrich students' understandings through conceiving education both as bounded and as flow. Positioning the future as important but dependent on listening to the present, he argued that justification of present doings through reference to a future is not an educator's task (Roy, 2005). Rather the task becomes, through intuition, the opening up of the present, "the four-part praxis that includes questioning time, reevaluating experience, negating finitude, and resisting measurement, does not affect only secondhand knowledge – it transforms perception itself" (p. 456).

Similarly, Roth (2013) described theorizing and researching curriculum as considering the eventness of an event, "theorizing an event *as* event - that is, through the lens of something unfinished and therefore as something that cannot be grasped because it does not yet exist as a completed and complete thing" (p. 389). Roth (2013) conceptualized curriculum as a living curriculum that considers the curriculum from the perspective of human experience rather than from the perspective of content or skills and emphasizes the idea that outcomes, experiences, events cannot be known because they are still in the future. Roth argued that we could think about and research curriculum through the lenses of the living event and the actors' co-life. In this construction, analyzing a curricular event means: that we let go of the idea of agential

subject, that we cease to understand the social world as a cause and effect composition, that we understand the world as both structured and as being formed, and that we focus on the event unfolding rather than relying on subsequent actions or outcomes as an analytic resource (Roth, 2013).

In a similar vein, Ross and Mannion (2012) drew on the thinking of an anthropologist, Tim Ingold to extend thinking about living, embodied curriculum to a perspective of dwelling. Ingold (2000, 2010) explained that dwelling refers to beings' immersion in their lifeworld. "Dwelling ... is about the way inhabitants produce their own lives" (Ingold, 2010, p. 3). Ross and Mannion (2012) described Ingold's dwelling ontology as positioning the world as a material-relational entanglement in which we are immersed. Our communication and learning capacities emerge from this entangled world of material embodied relationships (Ross & Mannion, 2012).

For Ingold (2000, 2010), the dwelling concept includes the ideas of paths, wayfaring and landscape. In this view, landscape is the place a person inhabits along with other inhabitants. Ingold (2000) uses a painting, *The harvesters* by Pieter Bruegel the Elder to clarify dwelling in a landscape. He pointed to the painting constituents, such as paths, a tree, people, corn and a church from the perspective of those in the painting. He described paths as necessary for going from place to place. As we go about living we make our way along paths. Along the way we attend to details of our landscape and through our imagination create ideas. We dwell in a particular time and a particular place, and that time and place hold affordances by which we perceive our own particular world. As we do so our paths cross other paths connecting our worlds and knowledge in relation to other living beings and non-living things. Ingold (2000) explained becoming knowledgeable as growing knowledge through our everyday activities as we

make our way along our life paths. “Along the way events take place, observations are made and life unfolds” (Ingold, 2010, p. 126).

These concepts, dwelling, wayfaring, paths, and landscape offer a way to consider learning and living in child care centres. Learning or becoming knowledgeable unfolds in a particular place. Unique to that place, the particular knowledge emerges from what can be apprehended there. We can image a child, or an adult, wandering through a child care centre - wayfaring through that landscape. Along the path, the child or adult will encounter many others: people, insects, toys, materials, natural objects, and purpose made tools among numerous possibilities. Every early years place, landscape, will contain distinctive perceptual affordances with which a wayfarer may engage.

For instance, a boy enters a centre with his father. Perhaps his father must begin work early in the morning and they arrive first in a still quiet, still tidy centre. The boy has a cubby for his belongings and he and his father engage in a process of putting his belongings, his coat, his boots, and his lunch where they belong. Maybe a place exists for the pair to share a moment with a book before the father leaves for the day. Engaged in small preparations, an adult, the caregiver greets them when they arrive. If we imagine all these people, the boy, the father, the caregiver as wayfarers dwelling in that landscape, that place, we can understand them as walking along intersecting paths becoming knowledgeable as they engage in their everyday activities. Learning could be relational – the boy learning to feel safe leaving his parent, the father learning to separate gently from his son, the caregiver learning to welcome those entering the place. Alternatively we can see them learning things about concrete environments. The boy has many objects and materials with which to engage. The adults can be open to what the environment might offer through materials, a child’s question, or organizational demands. As wayfarers

dwelling and crossing paths, they can all be understood as learners and teachers, in a living curriculum.

Ross and Mannion (2012) understood the education process as curriculum making. This process focuses on the material context and participants' lived experience. They suggested that learners live curriculum as "an improvisation, a response to a context inherent in the relations among people, places, material and activities" (p. 308). They elaborated that in this perspective, learning occurs through apprehension and attunement. Attunement develops from apprehension, which means knowing through immersion in an environment. Ross and Mannion (2012) concluded that, "from a dwelling perspective, a curriculum must be a lived story" (p. 311). Following these authors, I employ Ingold's (2010) dwelling concept as a second analytic concept to consider how children negotiate curriculum in the multiage centres. With this concept I ask the analytic question: What affordances appear while children are dwelling and wayfaring through the centre?

Rhizomatic Thinking

Many standpoints exist from which to theorize producing several, often conflicting concepts with which to think. I have described perspectives that theorize caring, relations, ethics, learning, curriculum and developing. While each of these perspectives makes theoretical sense on its own, in the midst of practice, one theory may prove to be inadequate. Working with only one theory necessarily limits what can be thought. Rhizomatic thinking, in contrast, allows for and requires taking more than one perspective. We can begin to think of this theory and that theory and another theory and another, opening up to ideas as they appear in practice. Through resisting binaries, rhizomatic thinking allows retention of developmental theory while including and perhaps foregrounding the consideration of other perspectives and theories.

The images of rhizome, lines of flight and becoming illuminate the Deleuze/Guattari picture of thought. To think rhizomatically, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) propose uprooting the verb ‘to be’ and replacing it with a conjunction – ‘and’. This changes thinking from describing, how a situation is, to envisioning events as multiplicities. Thinking rhizomatically challenges the restriction of ‘either/or’ binaries (Conley, 2005). It offers the potential of change in which taken-for-granted understandings can be opened up and rethought. In this project, rhizomatic thinking with other caregivers about our visions of practice produced complicated conversations about caring and curriculum.

In the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari thought results through provocation of an encounter, “with the rhizome of thought shooting in all directions, without beginning or end, but always being in between” (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.117). Deleuze and Guattari (1987) depicted rhizome as made up of lines rather than fixed points and suggest that “any point of a rhizome can be connected to any other, and must be” (p.7). The New Oxford American Dictionary defines rhizome as “a continuously growing horizontal underground stem that puts out lateral shoots and adventitious roots at intervals” (Rhizome, 2014). The dictionary further defines adventitious as “happening or carried on according to chance rather than design or inherent nature” (Adventitious, 2014). Within this philosophy, rhizome alludes to “growth through the multitude of its own transformations” (Semetsky, 2006, p.71).

Roy (2003) explained, “the ‘rhizome’ is a lateral proliferation of connections, like the spread of moss, the sudden branching off or joining up of different intensities, flows, and densities” (p. 75). The rhizome shows how concrete, abstract, virtual entities and activities can be conceived as multiple and in interrelational movements with other bodies (Colman, 2005). It implies growth in more than one direction and hints at many understandings of concepts.

Rhizome offers more than one possibility in thought. It “is in constant process of making active, but always temporary, selections” (Conley, 2005, p. 234). Thinking rhizomatically means to consider a point, event, or idea and then allow thought to follow unpredictable, new directions, perhaps along an unexpected even startling line.

Describing the connection between rhizome and lines of flight, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) stated, “lines of flight transform multiplicities, rhizomes rupture into lines of flight but the lines of flight remain part of the rhizome” (p. 9). A line of flight describes how things connect (Lorraine, 2005). It is a creative path “of mutation . . . that releases new powers in the capacities of those bodies to act and respond” (p. 145). For Deleuze and Guattari (1987), lines of flight that deterritorialize generate multiplicity. Lines of flight traverse “individual and collective subjectivities . . . pushing centralized organizations to the limit” (Parr, 2005a, p. 148). Colebrooke (2002) pointed out, “any definition, territory or body can open up to a line of flight that would transform it into something else” (p. xxv). Movement along the line of flight creates becoming-other (Semetsky, 2006). In this way lines of flight can be understood as thinking that destabilizes and challenges entrenched ideas allowing those ideas to become other. Understanding thought as rhizomatic lines of flight shaped this research project.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) explained that lines of flight connect with other lines of flight in an assemblage. They described the assemblage process through the image of a rhizome. They posited that an assemblage connects, rather than divides, a field of reality, a field of representation and a field of subjectivity (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). For example, in the assemblage of a book they called the world the field of reality, the book the field of representation and the author the field of subjectivity. They stated that rather than existing as separate ideas these fields only exist in connection with each other (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

A book cannot be comprehended without what is written about, the writing of it, and a writer.

In the book writing assemblage, a human, a writer, constitutes the subjectivity field. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) described humans as becoming rather than as a static being. In their terms, “in order to really think and encounter life we need to no longer see life in fixed and immobile terms” (Colebrooke, 2002, p. xx). Stagoll (2005) explained the Deleuze/Guattari concept of becoming as, “the pure movement evident in changes *between* particular events” (p. 21). Deleuze used terms like becoming-other, becoming-woman, becoming-child to illustrate subjectivity. In this way, a subject changes or engages in a process of becoming through intersecting lines of flight. According to Roy (2003) “becoming is the transformation of life through the refusal of closed structures within which difference can be confined” (p. 77). Refusing closed structures frees differences producing becoming. New thoughts, ideas, and ways of understanding events become possible. Neither people nor environments can be understood as fixed but rather always as subjects and sites made up of multiplicities and potentiality.

The concept of becoming (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) offers a way to consider what we might usually comprehend as developing, differently. Located in a different philosophical paradigm than developmentalism, becoming makes it possible to think about children changing without requiring reference to normative and predictable developmental paths and outcomes. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) explained that “to become is not to progress or regress along a series” (p. 238). They positioned becoming as an involution - neither an evolution, nor a regression - between heterogeneous terms. Further, they described, “a line of becoming has only a middle” (p. 293). The original subject term and the creation term (the points at the end of the line) exist beyond the becoming line.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) referred to becoming-woman to illuminate their meaning of

becoming. However, in their characterization, becoming-woman does not signify a normalized, general and universal path of a girl becoming a woman. Nor does it allude to a man literally transitioning to become a woman through medical and surgical procedures. The theory does not negate or deny these events but does not mean them when using the concept becoming-woman. Rather, they clarified, “it is not the girl who becomes a woman: it is becoming-woman that produces the universal girl” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 277). Semetsky (2006) pointed out “*becoming* does not mean becoming the other, but *becoming-other*” (p. 6). Becoming creates. What it creates cannot be known beforehand. Always in between, becoming refers to the production of something new, rather than something inevitable or predictable.

Johansson (2012) elucidated the Deleuze and Guattari concept of becoming by contrasting it with an understanding of becoming found in some childhood studies research. In the second conception, becoming is understood as opposite of being (Johansson, 2012). This view places adults as complete or as human beings and children as incomplete or as human becomings. In this understanding, a becoming concept directs the focus of those concerned with children and childhood toward the future outcomes of present events. Becoming in this conception implies lack. Many researchers in the sociology of childhood field resist this idea of child as becoming as it can suggest that since children are incomplete they are not yet fully human (Johansson, 2012). Those researchers, according to Johansson, prefer to think of children as human beings rather than human becomings focusing on present experiences for the present child’s sake rather than for the future adult’s sake.

In contrast, Johansson (2012) explained that in Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy becoming refers not to “fixed entities interacting with each other but the event and the motion in itself, in which entities are produced” (p. 104). In this conception beings, including human

beings, are fixed entities while becoming means the milieu that produces. Becoming is a general condition of all. This understanding of becoming focuses on a present event not the future outcome. It suggests that neither adults nor child are ever complete beings but live always in the milieu or event of becoming. Following this idea, I chose to work with the Deleuze and Guattari construction of becoming as the third analytic concept.

To think about children with the Deleuze/Guattari conception of becoming-other means to think about identities and events as moving rather than either identities based on age, or event effects on a particular aged child. Thinking of children becoming-other means giving up the 'known' child, and avoiding predetermined knowledge about event outcomes for the already known child. There can be no fixed subject. When the theory postulates openness and not knowing, the practice cannot be prescribed by the theory. Instead theory and practice intra-activity will suggest unfixed unknown identities present in the moment and will produce possibilities in those moments.

For example, in Chapter 1, I described a debate that took place between a licensing officer and myself. The practice under discussion involved making small building blocks easily accessible to children. The licensing officer argued strongly for freedom and choice believing they support the development of initiative and positive self-concept. I argued equally strongly for care and safety believing the youngest children might, due to their oral stage of development, put the blocks in their mouths and choke. Located within developmentalism, both arguments contain known children, predicted outcomes and assumed knowledge about healthy development. The (theoretical) developmental requirements of each known-through-age child seemed to indicate that actual children of different ages could not co-exist well in the same environment. Whereas a theory proposing unfixed identities, not known through age, offered the possibility that young

children, older children and small blocks could successfully live together in the same space.

To think of a practice informed by a theory of becoming, required reconfiguring the truths of the autonomous preschooler taking initiative and the curious toddler learning the world through tasting it. Working with Deleuze and Guattari's idea of changing 'is' to 'and' meant including the theoretical concepts of age related initiative seeking and learning-through-taste with theoretical openness to other possibilities.

The block-storing question resolved itself in a rhizomatic fashion. Eventually others, children and caregivers, though processes of not knowing created a system in which children planned when and how they would use the blocks and how they (children and caregivers together) would keep block-tasters safe. Events revealed that not all children sought out small blocks for play, while some planned elaborate methods for extended use; most of the youngest children did not put the blocks in their mouths and some of them loved to build with them. The postdevelopmental theory contained within a multiage child care grouping produced a postdevelopmental practice. At the same time the multiage child care practice elaborated a postdevelopmental theory about appropriate materials and their storage. In this vignette, possibilities of becoming-initiator, becoming-block player, and becoming-safety manager entered the assemblage. As a postdevelopmental theoretical possibility, a theory of becoming enabled a practice of openness while that practice of openness created space for becoming-other. Thinking with the concept of becoming, alongside creating, producing and living in a multiage child care centre made possible the analytic question: what becoming-other possibilities for children emerged through living in multiage child care centres?

Chapter Summary: An Assemblage

In this chapter I have produced a complex, sometimes contradictory, theoretical

assemblage. I use the term assemblage to point to inspiration from the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari and to locate my dissertation. I have woven phenomenological thinking and modernist feminist theorizing into a postfoundational understanding. In this understanding, I position ethics of care philosophies, phenomenological theories and rhizomatic thinking as multiplicities. As I described earlier in this chapter, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe overlapping multiplicities as “a *plane of consistency* of multiplicities” (p. 9). In other words, although the theories that I work with are from diverse traditions, disciplines and even paradigms, thinking with Deleuze and Guattari creates the opportunity to envision particular ideas as deterritorializing rhizomatic lines of flight that intersect with other lines of flight producing something new.

Care ethics, living curriculum and rhizomatic thinking already live in practices. As an assemblage they intersect and create a potential for different practice. Understanding *currere* as rhizomatic lines of flight while imagining individuals as continuously becoming-other within caring relations offers potential to think about ECCE places beyond the limits of developmentalism. While curriculum defines the course and *currere* embodies the running of the (closed) course of the curriculum, thinking rhizomatically ruptures the course, making running off course or becoming-other possible.

Employing theory to re-imagine practice I have created a theoretical framework, or a plane of consistency of multiplicities (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), through a juxtaposition of ideas: rhizomatic thought in living curriculum grounded in an ethics of care. Rhizomatic thought produced the concept of becoming along lines of flight (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Living curriculum emerged from reconceptualizing curriculum and offered the concept of dwelling (Ingold, 2000, 2010). An ethics of care introduced attention to listening, responsibility and reciprocity leading to the concept of caring relations (Held, 2006). These three concepts, caring

relations, dwelling and becoming, generated new lines of flight that connected to my research methodology, including method and analysis. In the next chapter I explain the methodology, which I also understand as an assemblage.

Chapter 3: Research As/With/Of Practice

This chapter contains three sections, each addressing a story about how I conducted my research. In the first section I explore action research (the methodology) as an assemblage, involving both an academic practice and a pedagogical practice of child caregivers. Following Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept of assemblage I work with fields of reality, representation, and subjectivity folded into each other. In this assemblage, ordinary moments, videos, and caregivers' reflective conversations make up the field of reality while the analytic process constitutes the field of representation. My continually shifting researcher self, along with the shifting participant (caregivers and children) selves constitute the field of subjectivity. Linking Deleuze and Guattari's assemblage conceptualization to methodology, I position research *as* a practice. In the second section, I outline the research method – or the field of reality. I conceptualize pedagogical narrations as an action research method we employed, researching *with* practice or using practice to research. In the last section, I explain the analytic process that I used - thinking with theory - as described by Jackson and Mazzei (2012). In this section, I place the analysis as the field of representation and describe research *of* practice.

Methodology or Research as a Practice

Moving away from a focus on developmental impacts for children toward considerations of the complexities of living in multiage child care centres required an innovative methodology, what Lather and St. Pierre (2013) refer to as postqualitative research methodology. In this section of chapter three, I describe how I conceptualize research in general, and this research project in particular. First, I discuss postqualitative research methodology then, I review action research. Finally, I connect action research methodology with postfoundational theory, particularly the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and their assemblage concept to position this action research as a postqualitative methodology.

Postqualitative Researching

As the effects of the crises of legitimization and representation disperse in a rhizomatic fashion throughout the traditional disciplines produced by the epistemology of humanism, qualitative researchers in the social sciences, who are fond of poststructural critiques search for strategies that might enable them to produce different knowledge and to produce knowledge differently. St. Pierre, 1997, p. 175

From the beginning of this project, I sensed I would need a research strategy that allowed for uncountable and uncodable ideas. Both measuring the distal features and coding or interpreting the proximal features of quality child care (Dunn, 1993) would invite a return to the foundational developmental discourse I wished to challenge. Inspired to do research differently as St. Pierre described, I envision a storied research endeavor and employ *little stories* to describe the project. The stories I relate can be comprehended as lines of flight within an assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). I understand a line of flight to mean an unpredictable, not-yet-known path, contrasting with a preplanned or predictable line or path. In this dissertation I position action research methodology as an assemblage, a postfoundational theoretical concept. Many researchers have worked within the methodology while engaging with foundational perspectives. However, as I describe later in this chapter, in my research I engage with action research as a postqualitative research methodology.

Commenting on postqualitative research, Lather and St. Pierre (2013) asked, “How do we exist?” (p. 631) and “How might we become in becoming?” (p. 631). They wondered what postqualitative research might engage with, who researchers can be without humanism’s “I”. Lather and St. Pierre (2013) described postqualitative methodology as not privileging knowing over being, as refusing assumptions about “the nature of lived experience and the world” (p.

630), as giving up binary logic and representational logic, and as seeing language, material and the human completely imbricated and non-transcendent.

Masny (2013) explained research as an event made up of virtual assemblages that become or actualize as signifying assemblages. In other words, ideas, plans and theories become events, enactments and practices (2013). Becoming-other happens as researchers practice (do) research. Research as a practice can then be understood as research as an assemblage. The assemblage includes a multitude of concepts including but not limited to, researchers, events, participants, places, theoretical frameworks, materials, texts, analyses and endings that invite more thought.

Similarly, Law (2004) concluded that research methods perform and produce realities rather than report them. Realities, he argued, are made and remade. He described issues of ontological methodology:

Localities. Specificities. Enactments. Multiplicities. Fractionalities. Goods. Resonances. Gatherings. Forms of craftings. Processes of weaving. Spirals. Vortices. Indefinitenesses. Condensates. Dances. Imaginaries. Passions. Interferences. These are some of the metaphors for imagining method that I have sought to bring to life in this book. Metaphors for the stutter and the stop. Metaphors for quiet and more generous versions of method.
(Law, 2004, p. 156)

Law invited reconsideration of subject/object, nature/social and human/non-human binaries. He pointed out that research methods participate in which truth stories emerge and become through the research process and which do not.

Working with the ideas of Deleuze and Guattari, Martin and Kamberelis (2013) suggested designing educational research as productive rather than representational through mapping processes rather than tracing. In this conception, mapping produces new thought and contrasts

with tracing which traces or reproduces existing but not-yet-known thought, truth or reality. In this project, I attempt to map living in multiage child care rather than describe a single story (Adichie, 2009; Kummen, 2011) that stands for the real truth about child care and child development. Martin and Kamberelis (2013) explained that mapping works through charting open systems. They describe mapping as producing potential realities rather than known realities. The potential occurs through mapping lines of flight, which rupture and become productive rather than follow the segmented path.

Engaging with the process Martin and Kamberelis (2013) suggested, I mapped, or charted ruptures that occurred when we instituted a new practice (multiage groupings) in the centres. Beginning from a place where anything could happen and did (St. Pierre, 2011a), I desired a methodology that would permit uncontrolled or open systems as the project unfolded. We needed to be able to abandon the whole project if it became apparent that we could not maintain the health and safety of children. From that perspective, action research, which accommodates and even welcomes uncertainty and openness, appeared to offer a fruitful methodology. I entered into a postqualitative action research methodology to consider the questions provoked by our multiage child care practice.

Action Research

I began this project with particular desires. I hoped that the project would include many perspectives rather than one; be flexible allowing change; privilege relationships; maintain curiosity; and position the context as situated, particular and unique rather than as representing a universal experience. I also wanted an approach that considered the entire context of the child care centres – including children, practitioners, families, the communities in which the centres exist, materials and place. Finally, I wished to conduct research of our practices while I worked

in one of the Child Care Services centres. These research desires produced a requirement for a flexible, contextual, personal, methodology. That description appeared to me to be congruent with action research as described by Reason and Bradbury (2008a).

As with other methodologies, action research encompasses epistemological, conceptual and ideological aspects. Epistemologically, action researchers assume that knowledge of problems and their solutions involves a process of co-constructing social realities (Hoshmand & O'Byrne, 1996). Conceptually, action researchers focus on systems, interrelationships, and dynamic processes of change in context (Hoshmand & O'Byrne, 1996). Ideologically, they are usually committed to social change and equity (Hoshmand & O'Byrne, 1996). This perspective suggests that action research will most often be collaborative, since the ideas of co-construction, relationships, and equity refer implicitly to interpersonal processes rather than to individual endeavors. The project described in this dissertation took place in my work setting, an environment that demands intense collaboration. The project required situated knowledge, complex interrelationships and a collaborative commitment to a different practice. An action research methodology appeared congruent with both the aims and the context of the research.

To locate this dissertation both within an action research tradition and as postqualitative research in this part of this chapter I review first, the history of action research and then, the work of other scholars who have brought postfoundational thinking to action research. Finally, inspired by Law's (2004) metaphors, I position the stories that make up this dissertation as weavings, as imaginaries, as multiplicities. As such the methodology becomes postqualitative action research.

A brief history of action research. The history of action research illuminates the plurality of methods, purposes, and philosophies associated with the methodology. Many accounts of this

history begin with Kurt Lewin's work in the 1930s and 40s in the United States (Adelman, 1993; Cohen, et al., 2000; Holly, et al., 2009; King, 1992; Somekh & Zeichner, 2009). In a community situated project that addressed racism, Lewin's research focused on changing values and practices embedded in that community (King, 1992). Stephen Covey used action research methods in the 1950's in US education research (Fleming, 2000), but use of the methodology faded due to criticism from those who thought it lacked scientific rigour (Anderson, Herr & Nihlen 2007; Fleming, 2000).

Later Stenhouse and Elliott introduced action research methodology to education research in the UK (Cohen, et al., 2000; Noffke & Somekh, 2005). Stenhouse (1981) argued for teacher research, positioning it as a site of systematic and critical inquiry. He believed that research should become part of a community of critical discourse and argued that "perhaps too much research is published to the world, too little to the village" (Stenhouse, 1981, p. 111). From this perspective, teachers in practice have opportunities to conduct research that has local relevance. Elliot engaged in an action research project concerning the problems of teachers implementing inquiry approaches in classrooms (Elliot, 1976). That research project specifically addressed teachers' practical application of theories in relation to their practice of using inquiry approaches (Elliot, 1976). This vision included the idea that teachers' working theories strongly influence their practice. In this way, action research enabled teachers to uncover the implicit theories from which they worked and to generate hypotheses about practice that could be further researched (Elliot, 1976).

In another development of educational research, several American researchers, including Cochran-Smith and Lytle, focused on teacher research and introduced the concept of teacher self-study (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; King, 1992; Noffke & Somekh, 2005). In teacher

research, teachers investigate their own practices; Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) defined teacher research as inquiry by teachers that is systematic and intentional. They linked the origin of the teacher researcher movement to the ideas of both Lewin and Stenhouse, but also referred to Dewey's idea of teachers as students of learning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993).

Often reflecting Lewin's work, action research flourished not only in educational settings, but in community-based and organizational settings (Noffke & Somekh, 2005). The type of research that developed in community and organizational settings frequently aimed toward challenging unjust situations (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). With a social justice orientation and informed by critical theory, this type of action research sought to transform practices with the intent of emancipating particular groups (Kemmis, 2008). The ideas of Paulo Freire strongly influenced this stream of action research (Anderson, et al., 2007).

Some current action research practices, built from the historical traditions of reflection, social justice concerns, and participation, include participatory action research (PAR), teacher research, action inquiry, appreciative inquiry, and cooperative inquiry (Reason & Bradbury, 2008b). PAR focuses on whole communities participating in research processes guided by their own thinking, with an aim of improving conditions of that community (Rahman, 2008). Teacher research continues to involve teachers researching their own practices (McNiff & Whitehead, 2002; Tomal, 2003). Action inquiry aims to inquire into and transform personal and social experiences within particular domains (Torbert & Taylor, 2008). Appreciative inquiry focuses on the "root causes of success" (Ludema & Fry, 2008, p. 281). Cooperative inquiry involves all participants in an inquiry group as co-researchers and co-subjects (Heron & Reason, 2008). These various action research iterations demonstrate the wide range of research possibilities within this methodology. Critical theories concerned with social justice inform much historical

action research as well as current practices. Additionally, some action research engages with postfoundational theories.

Action research and postfoundational theories. Postfoundational theories hold the promise of enhancing action research by expanding research-praxis (Amorim & Ryan, 2005; Brown & Jones, 2001; Gergen & Gergen, 2008; Ison, 2008). Postfoundational theories challenge the idea that identities can be captured, organized, and transformed into written formats of public knowledge (Amorim & Ryan, 2005). These theories point instead to the idea of multiple identities that may change with circumstances (Amorim & Ryan, 2005; Gergen & Gergen, 2008), an idea that holds implications for such underlying concepts of action research as voice and empowerment. Postfoundational theory allows practitioners to see experiences, as “open to contradictory and conflicting interpretations” (Brown & Jones, 2001, p. 5). Through disrupting habitual ways of thinking and doing, postfoundational frameworks challenge inappropriate or inadequate category systems (Brown & Jones, 2001). As Drummond and Themessl-Huber (2007) explained:

... there is no predetermined limit on what we may become or how we may engage with problems and create events. There is no intrinsic necessity to the way things are at the moment. It is the way things have turned out. They could have turned out differently. And still could become different, hence action research projects ... seek to actualize something that was not there before. (p. 437)

A postfoundational concept, rhizomatic thinking, impacted the design of this action research project. The Deleuze/Guattari image of the rhizome offers an expansive way to think methodologically about action research (Amorim & Ryan, 2005, p. 582). Thinking rhizomatically involves thinking in non-linear directions. Employing a rhizomatic methodology

means pursuing paths as they emerge in the research. Such a methodology offers possibilities of change throughout a research process and thus is congruent with action research (Amorim & Ryan, 2005). Rhizomatic thinking also allows and supports, perhaps even demands, consideration of multiple perspectives within a research process. In this study, I did not set out to defend multiage childcare or to define best practices in multiage childcare. Instead I aimed to examine, to interrogate, to unmask and to extend the beliefs, values and ethics that influenced our centres' practices. A postfoundational action research methodology supported that kind of research aim.

Considering action research methodology through a postfoundational theoretical lens required an examination of how subjectivity could be understood. The philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) informed the study's theoretical framework. According to Boundas (2005), "Deleuze insists that subjectivity is not given; it is always under construction" (p. 268). Subjectivity then cannot be understood as fixed for any participant in the research process, including academic researchers, teacher researchers, or in this case, caregivers, children and me. As Lather and St. Pierre (2013) described, a postqualitative methodology challenges humanism's "I", making assumptions about "lived experience" problematic. Further, Masny (2013) explained that researchers become-other as they research. These ideas challenge identity categories such as researcher, insider, caregiver or children, complicating the possibility of fixed truth claims about categories.

Stories As A Postfoundational Action Research Methodology

To disrupt habitual ways of thinking and to challenge inadequate category systems as Brown and Jones (2001) suggested, in this action research project I incorporate stories of ordinary moments. Narratives offer a possible method for postqualitative action research,

possibly an imaginary or a crafting, a quiet, more generous method that Law (2004) envisions. They can create provisional understandings and insights leading to different knowledges (Cotton & Griffiths, 2007; Walker, 2007). Azocar (2014) argued that storytelling offers a way to recognize “the complexity of children’s lives” (p. 170). While Farrant (2014) proposed that we could reconceive knowledge as storytelling. Lewis (2011) stated that we engender stories through actions and that story’s recursiveness allows us to make small discoveries and re-see the wonder of ordinary, everyday events. According to Walker (2007), narratives are “fundamental to processes of action research, such that it is hard to imagine how we might do or write about action research in a non-storied way” (p. 295).

Walker (2007) identified six methodological issues that relate to stories as research. First, fine detail, contained within the narrative form, gives narrative power. Second, stories contain the possibility of capturing complexity, allowing multiple truths to emerge. Third, narratives allow reflexive awareness of our knowledge that works to challenge our will to ignore. Fourth, narrative is never only a personal, idiosyncratic story. Fifth, since narratives are constructions, they are neither “purely authentic” nor “innocent.” Finally, accountable and responsible knowledge can emerge through listening to the stories of others. In summary, Walker (2007) posited that narratives offer power through detail, complexity through multiple truths, awareness through reflexivity, broad understanding through personal story, subjectivity through construction, and responsible knowledge through listening.

Cotton and Griffiths (2007) also valued narratives, and proposed that “little stories” as methodology can show how it is to be in a specific time and place. Understanding how it is to be in a particular educational site can highlight what needs to be changed and for whom. Little stories lead to actions and hold the possibility of illuminating and challenging philosophy’s big

abstract questions:

The practical question then arises: how can these ‘little stories’ be told? Indeed, what might count as a ‘little story’? In other words, how can the experiences and practices of such a range of humanity be communicated? How can their stories be told so that they enter into critical conversation with the abstract questions raised in philosophy – and make it work for their own ends? (Cotton & Griffiths, 2007, p. 547).

Vivian Paley stumbled on to the idea that her personal recorded anecdotes about her day to day encounters with the children she taught was research:

The act of teaching became a daily search for the child’s point of view accompanied by the sometimes unwelcome disclosure of my hidden attitudes. The search was what mattered - only later did someone tell me it was research - and it provided an open-ended script from which to observe, interpret, and integrate the living drama of the classroom. (Paley, 2007, p.154)

In narratives such as *Wally’s Stories* and *Boy Who Would Be a Helicopter* (Paley, 1981, 1990), she told stories about particular children and made inferences about what the events she recorded meant. While absorbed with making meaning, she avoided knowing through her professional expertise. Instead she listened and remained open to what children said, to other possibilities. Her method provides a possible answer to the question Cotton and Griffiths (2007) asked. She told concrete little stories that invited conversations with abstract ideas.

Forman, Hall and Berglund (2001) stated that ordinary moments fill children’s days and that those ordinary moments tell children’s stories. In other words, an ordinary moment is a little story. As a narrative, an ordinary moment story can contain power, complexity, awareness, understanding, subjectivity and responsible knowledge through detail, multiple truths,

reflexivity, personal story, construction, and listening. Forman and colleagues (2001) argued that recording ordinary moments promotes inquiry as well as dialogue between children and educators. In this project I work with ordinary moments video-recorded to consider caring, learning and changing.

Through the pedagogical narrations process, the storied ordinary moments expand when others' thinking intersects with them. Never complete, as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) described, the becoming continually unfolds and refolds. In this research story, I describe the context, how the caregivers and I watch the videos and reflect on them, and I record their reflections and comments. As I add each component, pedagogical narrations come into being and, understood rhizomatically, they continue becoming. Within this process, I consider the stories through the theoretical concepts of caring relations, dwelling, and becoming.

Pedagogical narrations can be understood as an assemblage. Assemblages contain fields of reality, representation and subjectivity folded into each other (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). In this assemblage, events and the caregivers' reflections, constitute a field of reality, while the caregiver's inferences and my analysis constitute a field of representation. Finally, as Jackson and Mazzei (2012) explain, the field of subjectivity contains our (my) continually shifting researcher, caregiver selves. In this way I understand the postqualitative action research methodology I employ as research as a practice, as pedagogical narrations, as situated in postfoundational theory, as an assemblage, as stories.

Method or Research with Practices

In this section, I describe the research method as a constructed story. First, I describe pedagogical narrations as a process of building stories from recorded ordinary moments. Next, I position research participants as characters in a story. Following, I situate the method as the plot.

Then I explain the theoretical concepts used in the analysis as the story themes. Finally, the story ending relates how the research process concluded.

Stories Becoming: Pedagogical Narrations

To begin the research, the centres' caregivers, including me, immersed ourselves in a process of generating and analyzing 'little stories' (Cotton & Griffiths, 2007) or ordinary moments (Forman et al., 2001) – a process of pedagogical narrations (Berger, 2010; Government of British Columbia, 2008b; Hodgins et al., 2013). Conceptually, I understand pedagogical narrations as process and product, as theory and action, as lived experience and living curriculum, as documentation and story telling, as being and becoming. Similar to Lenz-Taguchi's (2010) description of pedagogical documentation, through the process of sharing interpretive meaning about an event, pedagogical narrations resist reductive, normalizing strategies of practice. Like pedagogical documentation they contribute to a "search for meaning" (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 63). Also reflecting the ideas of pedagogical documentation (Rinaldi, 2006), in our process we focused on what is coming about, on the construction of problems, on learning processes, taking into account thoughts, speech, action, materials, and environments.

Other early years researchers have incorporated and expanded pedagogical documentation in their own contexts. For example, Olsson (2009) considered how to keep events in pedagogical documentation open-ended and complex through adding to the familiar ideas of comments, interpretations, and reflections on empirical material the linguistic propositions found within the production of sense. Sense and events are understood as ongoing activity or as being continually produced (Olsson, 2009). She asserted that pedagogical documentation should focus on the learning process rather than on knowledge or goals.

I understand pedagogical narrations as interconnected messy tangles of research lines and

practice lines - while we researched our practices we engaged in research practices. This statement describes insider action research generally. However, I have found that in working with pedagogical narrations, it has become impossible for me to separate the concepts of research and practice. Lenz-Taguchi (2010) described theory and practice as intra-activity. Theory lives in practice and practice absorbs theory. I have begun to understand research and practice in a similar way. The tangle in my study included an image of children as researchers, caregivers' research with pedagogical practices, and my academic research project, alongside the plan to write a research report about practices for our licensing agency.

Creating pedagogical narrations involves a group revisiting and re-thinking a recorded event that has taken place in an early years setting. The record can be produced in many ways: children's work, audio recordings, photographs or video recordings. Likewise, the revisiting can take place in many different ways, with children, with others in the worksite, with parents, with outsiders or a combination of those groups. Pedagogical narrations involve caregivers, educators, teachers, children and others researching events in early years settings, taking what is provisionally learned in the research process back into pedagogical practices. As such, pedagogical narrations can be understood as a form of action research. In this section I describe our method of collective research with pedagogical practices - the process of building the pedagogical narrations. It is a story.

Characters/Participants

In this story/project, the characters/participants were the children who attended the centre and the caregivers who worked in the centres. Initially the study involved nearly one hundred children. The participant caregivers included twenty-two adults, who worked in the four centres, including me. Jackson and Mazzei (2012) described how, in a their project, they narrowed their

focus to two participants. In this research I did not video all children and only three video-recorded moments became the pedagogical narrations. Those moments evolved into data gradually and without an obvious or preplanned selection process. Additionally, not all participants took part through the entire process. Some caregivers took leaves from their positions or new positions, and some families left the centres during the study. Other children and caregivers joined the project after it began.

Whose voice? I took the lead in the project but the other caregivers had major roles in determining what direction the research took. The children primarily participated through the daily centre life with the caregivers and did not participate in the meetings. Research stories, including this one, involve a narrative voice and position. This story places me as the narrator in the position of research writer while placing the other participants as well as me as characters who researched our own and each other's theories about practices. However, my narration considers their collective actions and reflections through *my* lens that they continually affected. Never fixed, our subjectivities shifted and shaped each other's throughout the process.

Mazzei and Jackson (2009) problematized the concept of giving voice. They pointed out that even attempts to present participant's voices unadulterated and the inclusion of multiple voices contain a researchers' shaping. They argued that through reinscription processes, voices are distorted and fictionalized. Alcoff (2009) posited that "there can be no complete or definitive solution to the problems of speaking for others, but there is a possibility that its dangers can be decreased" (p. 128). Osgood (2010b) acknowledged the ethical challenge of representing others' voices without arrogance and partiality. In choosing a method that borrows the image of story telling I attempt to tell our story with full awareness that it is my version of that story not the real, complete, only version. I hope it avoids arrogance but it is most certainly partial.

Who participated and how? The project began with an invitation to all caregivers who worked in the centres and, through their parents, all children who attended the centres to participate in the research project. The caregivers self-selected while parents consented on their children's behalf. (See appendices A & B) When possible, children were given the option to refuse to participate even when parental consent had been obtained. However, that option was not available to those children who could not be informed due to their (in) ability to understand the ideas of consent, choice and refusal. (Perhaps this is best thought of as an (in) ability to communicate their understandings to us or to our (in) ability to understand their communication). None of the children, their parents or caregivers declined the invitation.

An invitation to participate, rather than another participant selection method, prevented the exclusion of those who wished to be included. However an invitation could create a sense of being coerced to participate. I addressed that issue through an option to decline participation along with an explicit reassurance that no penalty would be experienced by that choice. In addition, caregiver participants took part in the project at different levels, all agreed to be part of the video recording and all took part in team reflections about video generated in their own centres. Not every caregiver participated at the final level of analyzing video from other centres.

The caregiver participants became characters in the video stories along with the children. The participating caregivers also became characters in the pedagogical narrations through the inclusion of their reflective ideas and interpretations. The pedagogical narrations became the material analyzed in this study. However, the pedagogical narrations themselves were research events in which caregivers' researched their own practices. In that context, the caregivers were also researchers in the story.

The Plot/Method

The method story involved an account of messy practices. To start our process I met with the caregivers who had agreed to participate in the research. At the first group meeting I explained the purpose of the study and the method that I had chosen. We discussed a few ideas of interest to us and agreed to some tentative areas that we might explore. Initially, we thought that I would focus on particular questions/interests while videoing but, after a failed first attempt, we quickly dropped the idea of a predetermined focus. That failure emerged due to my lack of experience using a video camera. The camera's materiality interrupted the researching discourse. Where the light was, where the children were, and where the camera could physically be placed, determined what could be videoed. Unimagined events, such as children engaging with the tripod, also shifted attention. We adapted and decided to allow the 'here and now' to dictate what would be available for later consideration. I arranged a schedule¹ to collect data and we began.

I went to the first centre and practiced with the camera. I met with the children in a group meeting to explain what I was doing and that they could choose to ask me to not record them. I began to video different activities, interactions and moments that were occurring in the centre. The videos focused on already existing practices. As the process went on over days, weeks and months, I recorded video of children engaged in events such as playing, interacting, eating, painting, and reading. Sometimes the situation of the moment, such as light or sound impacted what I could record and therefore impacted what could later be considered. Sometimes, children demanded that particular events be recorded, influencing what we could revisit. Sometimes, I chose to focus on what captured my attention in the moment, also affecting which ideas we explored.

¹ I did not collect video during my scheduled work time but always as an extra person in the centre. The data collection thus needed to be scheduled outside of my regular work hours.

I spent several sessions in each of the four centres video-recording ordinary moments. After recording I viewed the video and sorted it. Some video remained unexamined beyond my initial viewing, while some I took forward to the particular centre's caregivers to consider as possibilities for pedagogical narrations. This process involved collaborations with other caregivers. These camera encounters with living in the centre and caregivers' engagement with the recorded moments formed the research data.

Following the video sessions, I reviewed the videos, making notes about the event and selecting the videos to begin with. After a few videoing sessions I attended a staff meeting at the centre that had been the site of the recordings. We watched a few of the videos and considered our interpretations of the events. At these meetings we used a portion of the Critical Collaborative Reflective Dialogue [CCRD] (MacDonald & Sanchez 2010) to critically reflect on the event. The CCRD begins with a documented event and participants individually recorded their questions, assumptions and comments about the event. They then verbally describe their reflections and questions to the group. After we completed that process, we discussed those reflections and questions as a group. I audio-recorded the caregivers' (complicated) conversations that occurred during the revisiting of the ordinary moments. Staff members were required to attend the regularly scheduled staff meetings when these discussions took place. However, the caregivers could choose to not be recorded during those sessions although none of the caregivers made that choice. Each centre went through this process.

During the initial meetings, the children's caregivers considered videos of ordinary moments in the childcare centre to think about what those environments offered children and how they might be experiencing the environments. This allowed those responsible for creating the curriculum - the caregivers - to voice curricular goals, intentions and evaluations. In this way

we understood the children's experience (*currere*) through the caregivers' interpretations but not through the children's interpretations. We created a collaborative interpretation of ordinary moments from a particular centre by the caregivers who worked that centre.

At a later, larger meeting, we presented the videos (chosen at the small meetings by the children's caregivers) to an audience made up of caregivers from the other three multiage centres. Not all caregivers in the four centres attended the larger meetings as those discussions were not part of regularly scheduled meetings and not everyone could or would commit that much time. At these larger meetings, I showed the chosen video-recordings and the larger group recorded their questions, assumptions and interpretations following the CCRD (MacDonald & Sanchez, 2010) I audio-recorded those discussions. These meetings resulted in the initial pedagogical narrations process: videos of ordinary moments in a childcare centre accompanied by multiple reflective perspectives about the recorded events. The video-recordings and reflections were lines of flight that intersected in an assemblage - the pedagogical narrations.

Story Themes/Meanings

As well as characters and plots, stories have themes. Themes range and may include morality tales, author's message, cultural knowledge or underlying philosophical meaning. In this method story, the themes lie in what the stories can illustrate about the particular research questions. The stories illuminate our (the characters in this story) thoughts about caring relations, *currere* or dwelling, and children changing or becoming, as well as how we understood multiage centre life.

However, the analytic method I employed in this research eschews coding data according to themes (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014). Forcing data into predetermined thematic categories contradicts openness of rhizomatic thought. In this method story, theme refers not to data

interpretations but rather to insights revealed about the pedagogical narrations process. Themes made apparent through this process included the ideas that openness to others can produce new thought, that revisiting experience offers insight, and that child caregivers have the capacity to do research.

The End of the Method Story

The pedagogical narrations process involved us researching with our practice(s). The video recordings provided opportunities to revisit particular (partial) moments in children's lives. While we revisited those moments we rethought our assumptions, theories and truths. Researching our theories with our practices allowed us to both confidently reclaim our theories and to reflexively challenge them. Minimally, we more carefully articulated what we thought we were doing. More deeply, we reinvented, re-interpreted, and re-theorized our understanding of childcare and re-considered and sometimes changed practices. The ordinary moments and complicated conversations we engaged in about the ordinary moments became the data I analyzed in this dissertation.

Thinking with Theory or Research of Practice

In this section I explain the data analysis process. St. Pierre and Jackson (2014) argued that post methodologies, such as the one with which I have engaged, require analysis without or beyond coding. They positioned coding as existing in epistemologies and ontologies of positivism and humanism rather than those of the "posts" (St. Pierre and Jackson, 2014). Incorporating the writing of Deleuze and Guattari, St. Pierre and Jackson (2014) suggested, "that *post-coding* analysis functions like a rhizome (instead of like a tree)" (p. 717) in an open, non-method, that "analysis occurs *everywhere and all the time*" (p.717). I describe in the following, how I employ what Jackson and Mazzei (2012) called thinking with theory, to analyze data,

without coding. I also explain how I chose what became data.

Becoming Data

Three pedagogical narrations become the study data, or the field of representation. The three transform from moments into particular examinable data chunks through a complex but unpremeditated process. As described, the method began with me videoing ‘ordinary moments’. Limitations of what would and could become data for this study happened when I videoed one event precluding the possibility of videoing another at that moment. Many contextual and material components affected how I chose what to video - time, space, light, noise, events, people, and ideas. In the instance of recording, I let the moments call to me. Why particular moments called varied. Sometimes the ambience invited: *peaceful, or exciting, or anticipatory*; sometimes relationships: *younger children with older, negotiations about materials, or adult/child interactions*; sometimes conceptual ideas summoned: *environmental respect, focused attentiveness, or uninterrupted play*. Regardless of the reason, the action of choosing particular video limited what becomes the data of pedagogical narrations.

I also controlled what become pedagogical narrations when I decided what video to show to the caregivers. This did not happen through intent to narrow the amount of data. Rather, a finite amount of time to review the video as a group meant that not all the video could be viewed. Video quality often impacted choosing which video to take to the caregivers. The sound, focus and intelligibility of the clip affected what I forwarded. I also picked clips that contain images that I connected to our topic or our practices. In this way, my videoing abilities, my biases, my interests and my interpretations continued to intersect with the forming data.

In a similar fashion, the caregivers regulated what becomes data. Usually, I chose two or three clips, edited them, and took them to the centre where the caregivers viewed them before we

meet. I primarily made editing decisions based on the visual or auditory quality of the video; sometimes the content of the moment influenced my choice. Our process allowed caregivers time to reflect on their own practices as well as those of their colleagues and to consider the children's experiences. Often, our discussions evoked feelings and discomfort. After discussing the clips we chose one to take forward to the larger group. We never formally articulated the choosing criteria. Most typically, we chose those clips that engendered the most passion in the smaller group. Curiously, all three pedagogical narrations, that become the study data, began with moments that happened out-of-doors. This did not happen with conscious intent. It happened when teams selected which video to take forward to the larger group.

Following, the interests, biases, and passions of the "audience" influenced the discussions and the focus of the larger meetings. Those discussions intersected with the video producing a line becoming pedagogical narrations. Inherent in the methodology of pedagogical narrations, the direction - or line of flight - that the conversations followed could not be known beforehand but once had, they further affected what was available to analyze.

In this analysis, I consider the pedagogical narrations through the thinking with theory process described by Jackson and Mazzei (2012). They proposed a methodological and philosophical analytic process intended to proliferate rather than foreclose knowledge (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). The process involves viewing data across multiple conceptual perspectives. They suggested that researchers think with data "to accomplish a reading of data that is both within and against interpretivism" (p. vii). Arguing that codes, themes and transparent narratives fail to critique the complexities of social life, they challenged both the idea that "voices" speak for themselves and the idea that conflicting, complicated voices can be reduced to themes or codes. To preclude limiting what can be thought through data, they intended that their analytic

method - thinking with theory - avoid creating a coherent narrative to represent meaning (2012). According to Jackson and Mazzei (2012) this analytic process holds implications for questions about what can be asked of data, about what and how a researcher hears, as well as a deconstruction of “why one story is told and not another” (p. ix). They argued their process diffracts representation rather than crystalizing it.

To think with theory, Jackson and Mazzei (2012) worked with the Deleuze/Guattari idea of assemblage, understood as a process not a thing. Jackson and Mazzei (2012) explained that in their assemblage, data, theory and method constituted the field of reality, while producing different knowledge constituted the field of representation, and becoming-researcher constituted the field of subjectivity. For them, their assemblage meant that the theories, data and method (ideas to think with) connect with producing different knowledge (thinking), and ideas and thinking connect with becoming-researcher self (thinker).

I adopted their analytic method for this research project, as it is congruent with the theoretical framework and with the research methodology. The philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) influences both my theoretical orientation and the Jackson/Mazzei description of thinking with theory. I understand this project as an assemblage that includes daily living in the centres, the research method, the caregivers’ theories, as well as my own thinking, and the shifting, complicated multiple subjectivities of all participants. I do not mean to imply that this is a coherent narrative. Rather, the project loosely assembles several theory-practice segmented lines that occasionally intersect with each other producing rhizomatic-thought lines of flight. The method exemplifies: video recording intersecting with daily life in the centre, video viewing intersecting with caregivers’ theories, and caregivers’ theories intersecting with philosophical thinking. The intersections temporarily deterritorialize the project producing new thought, and

perhaps changed theory-practice.

Jackson and Mazzei (2012) aimed to challenge qualitative researchers and qualitative research practices. Their primary purpose was to contribute to understandings of qualitative research practices, particularly to understandings of analysis beyond coding (2012). To do so, they initiated a research project in order to explore and to explain their beyond-coding practice. They explicitly stated, “we were not going to use this book to advance knowledge about the essence or phenomenon of first-generation women academics [their example research project]” (2012, p. x). While not endeavouring to uncover an essence or phenomenon of multiage childcare, I, unlike Jackson and Mazzei, I do intend to contribute to a specific theoretical/practical conversation; one about the limits of developmentalism for child care and, more specifically, about the possibilities of multiage child care. I follow their proposed analytic method, as it appears to offer a way to accomplish my research goals.

Jackson and Mazzei’s (2012) proposed analytic method is also congruent with the methodology of the study. The arguments they made, that voices don’t speak for themselves and that multiple voices cannot be narrowed into a theme or code, resonate with me. I hope, through this research project that attends to complexities, to expand understandings of child care possibilities to include non age-determined practices.

To describe their method, Jackson and Mazzei (2012) elucidated the three fields of machinic (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) assemblage through figurations: *plugging in*, *the threshold* and *folding and flattening*. Plugging in illustrates a field of reality, the threshold illuminates a field of representation and folding and flattening identifies a field of subjectivity (2012). Plugging in can be understood as connecting thoughts, ideas, stories, theories, data and concepts to each other. In the threshold, thinking takes place and is stopped momentarily - plugging

concepts into each other transforms thought. Folding and flattening describes a methodological practice “that embraces the mutually constitutive” (2012, p.11). The practice focuses on the ‘in-between’: for example, the in-between researcher and researched, or the in-between data and theory. The process flattens binaries and folds the researcher into the assemblage. I borrow these figurations to construct a framework to think about, with, and through the pedagogical narrations as data.

Plugging-In

Describing the process of *plugging-in*, Jackson and Mazzei (2012) referred to three related moves. Those moves included working the same data chunks repeatedly; disrupting theory/practice binaries by putting philosophical concepts to work; and showing what questions a specific theoretical concept makes possible and how those questions emerge in the middle of plugging-in. They positioned “plugging in as a *process* rather than a *concept* something we could put to work” (p. 1). Further utilizing the work of Deleuze and Guattari, they characterized plugging-in as producing an *assemblage in formation*, which means to produce something new (2012). They suggested that plugging-in demands that we go beyond being knowledgeable about specific theories and data to being attentive to the particular situated details of each.

Plugging-in involves reading data while thinking theory. Jackson and Mazzei (2012) described beginning their process with intent to work with constructs from three theoretical frameworks - phenomenology, critical theory and post structuralism. Rather than engaging with those theories in an abstract way they planned to uncover the implications of the constructs for “qualitative methodology, analysis and representation” (p. 3). However, as their project unfolded they found they had too much theory and too much data, limiting what could be told, producing either simplistic stories or broad generalizations. They partially addressed this by narrowing the

data. That move allowed them to focus on two participants enabling repeated examination of the same chunks of data with various theoretical lenses. As they further engaged with the data, in the *plugging in*, a relationship among the texts emerged, dissolving the larger theoretical frameworks while creating the notion of thinking with specific theorists (2012). Eventually, they refined their focus more narrowly to specific concepts contained within a theorist's body of work. They contended that plugging-in requires awareness of the particular theoretical concepts locations and of the data.

I follow their thinking to analyze the data of this study. Similar to their description, in this project too much data threatens to lead to general simple stories. Echoing their process, I narrow the data from all the collected data to three pedagogical narrations that speak to my original questions about caring, lived curriculum and change and include many, sometimes contradictory perspectives from the caregiver participants. A focus, on the pedagogical narrations and the beginning research questions, combined with the theoretical framework of the study guides me to particular theories to use in plugging-in. The initial questions focus on relationships and learning, while the theoretical framework includes the philosophical thinking of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), living curriculum theorizing, and care ethics.

The philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) framed the research from the start, influencing choices about the theoretical grounding, about the methodology and about the analytic method. Their concepts of rhizome, lines of flight and becoming offered ways to think about interconnected subjectivities, curriculum and life in the centres. Reconceptualized curriculum theory provided further ways to consider curriculum that included ways to think about relationships and lived/living experience. Finally, ethics of care theories provoked thinking about the theory/actions of ethical caring in the centres. Jackson and Mazzei (2012) described,

“how the larger theoretical frameworks dissolved and what sprouted in the assemblage of our thinking were *people, or theorists*” (p. 4). For this project, I pursue their idea and consider particular theorists from within the study’s organizing theoretical framework and from the work of those theorists I employ specific theoretical concepts that resonate with the research questions.

To plug-in, I repeatedly review selected stories (the evolving pedagogical narrations) that serve as data chunks with intent to disrupt restrictive thinking generated by binaries produced by age. The three concepts I employ while plugging-in surfaced through different theoretical orientations and constructions and each speaks to different research questions. Through the theoretical framework I trace the questions through ethics of care theory, curricular theory and the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari (1987). Three theoretical concepts emerge through that process: *caring relations* from the work of Virginia Held (2006), *dwelling* from anthropologist Tim Ingold (2010), and *becoming* from Deleuze and Guattari (1987). The analytic questions made possible by the theoretical concepts include: a) How can caring relations be conceptualized in the context of these multiage centres, b) What affordances appear while children are dwelling and wayfaring through the centre, and c) What becoming-other possibilities for children emerge through living in multiage child care centres? I focus on these specific analytic questions in chapter five to consider the broader research questions about relationships, curriculum and transformation and finally in chapter six, the overarching question: How do children live their lives in these multiage child care centres.

In the Threshold

Jackson and Mazzei (2012) offered “the figuration of the threshold as a way to situate ... plugging in” (p. 6). They positioned a threshold as the middle, as entry/exit, as a passageway. Similarly, Rose (2002) explained threshold both as a boundary that separates inside and outside,

and also as an opening that connects the inside to the outside. She elaborated that a threshold exists both inside a space and outside the same space depending on how it is approached. It is a structure/idea without meaning or purpose unless it connects to another space/thought (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). For Jackson and Mazzei, the image of threshold provided a way to think about excess, for example, as exceeding a threshold. They described the threshold as that space where data texts and theory texts collapsed into each other. It is a place where theory can be arrested or stopped for a moment. They stated “thinking with theory as arrested in the threshold, then can signify *temporary meaning that can escape and transform at any moment* - at moments after more reading, for example” (2012, p. 6).

In this process of thinking with theory, data transform continually. Theory changes data. With one theory we understand data in a particular way while with another theory we attend to a completely different aspect. A theoretical concept can be used to make a particular interpretation about data. Jackson and Mazzei (2012) asked us to remember that other interpretations erupt from other theory; that multiple perspectives from which to consider data exist. To think data with theory but “within and against interpretivism” (p. vii) invites asking questions about what the data say to us about our theoretical concepts rather than only the meaning that can be made of the data through the theoretical concepts.

Data pushes theory toward its limit. Jackson and Mazzei (2012) challenged researchers to think about data within a theory, but also with understanding that theory including theoretical concepts can only be understood by what is left out. For example, in this writing, I work with caring relations, a theoretical concept articulated by Virginia Held (2006) in her writing about ethics of care. A focus on caring relations includes concepts of care and of relations but may leave out ideas of objectivity or disinterested actions of fairness. Thinking with theory cannot

offer, “a full answer because it gets its very identity from what is excluded” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p.7).

Goals of this process include transforming theory and data and keeping meaning on the move (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012.) To do so, Jackson and Mazzei developed particular questions that could be asked of the data through plugging-in specific concepts. For example they plugged in the concept of ‘intra-activity’ from the work of Karen Barad and asked of their data, “*How do Cassandra and Sera intra-act with the materiality of their world in ways that produce different becomings?*” (2012, p. 9). Working with the concept of ‘desire’ from the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari, they asked of the same data, “*How does a desiring silence function to keep/maintain/produce smooth social, familial, and professional relations?*” (p. 9). Each theorist’s concept they considered provided a threshold in which they could briefly stop a temporary meaning. Arresting data segments in each threshold created multiple perspectives of their data.

Jackson and Mazzei (2012) explained that to enter the threshold means to arrest ideas to study them. The theoretical concepts that I use - caring relations, dwelling and becoming - all inherently imply movement through time. Stopping them momentarily resembles freezing a frame in a movie or focusing on one passage in a novel for careful viewing or deep reading. The movie or novel stories will unfold, move and change with or without the stopping action as will the living told within the stories of the pedagogical narrations. However, stopping in the threshold allows a moment to think, plug-in and conceptually analyze the pedagogical narrations.

It is not my intent to smooth the conceptually contradictory theoretical edges of these different theories in order to produce a coherent explanation of the data. However, a commonality exists amongst the concepts. Caring relations, dwelling and becoming, each focus

attention on the space between something, the intermezzo. Caring relations happen in the in-between, whether it is in-between people, in-between a person and other living beings, or in-between people and non-living objects or environments. The dwelling concept provides us with a way to consider the present between, but including, the past and the future. Finally, becoming encompasses change as it is happening, like dwelling in the present. Becoming happens on a line of flight, the line exists between points.

In each case, the concepts defy and deny the possibility of precise prediction and absolute control. They cannot contribute to a discussion of normative development because the future relationship, event or state is unknown and still to come, unimagined and beyond control. These three concepts with their intrinsic quality of presence also resist interpretive categories and correct explanations. However, consideration of the analytic concepts may contribute to temporary understandings about living in these multiage centres. Additionally, the analyses make possible a chronicling of how four multiage programs worked without requiring or producing proclamations about *best* early years practices or the *right* way to do multiage child care.

In this analysis, I include three pedagogical narrations comprised of videos as well as the conversations that occurred during the research meetings. Through the analysis I further expand the pedagogical narrations by considering what the recorded documents may say about caring relations, dwelling and becoming. These three concepts extend the pedagogical narrations, adding my thinking with those theoretical concepts to the stories. Understanding the pedagogical narrations as evolving stories underscores their status as tentative, partial, local, incomplete and forever open to becoming other.

Becoming Researchers

In this project I was an insider with many roles. My roles included lead researcher, doctoral

student, employee, coordinator, supervisor and caregiver. These roles situated me in multiple relationships. I led the research component as a part of this dissertation and as part of my project coordinator responsibility. In addition I, with support from two administrators, wrote the original proposal to licensing and I coordinated the start-up of the centres. I mentored those in the other three centres and I am responsible to the licensing body for ensuring that practices in all four centres adhered to our proposal. During the data-producing phase, I also worked within the project as a lead caregiver in one of the centres. In that centre my responsibilities included caring for children, developing the program, supervising of the work of five other caregivers, communicating with families, ensuring that practices and environments met licensing requirements and managing a small budget. Currently, I work as the program manager in Child Care Services, which involves leading these teams as well as others in continually examining their theories and practices. My shifting responsibilities and relationships mean at any given moment I might occupy more than one subject position.

Complexifying subjectivity, the context also shifted continually. Each day brought events, challenges, stories, and changes. Additionally, all of the other research participants also continually changed subject positions. As we learned or encountered challenges, we changed our practices, our thinking and our relations. Considering subjectivity from a Deleuzian perspective, allowed understanding subjectivity as ever shifting, continually being constructed and reconstructed (Boundas, 2005).

Jackson and Mazzei (2012) stated that they folded and flattened not only data into theory and theory into data but also their researcher selves into the theoretical threshold. They wrote that, “we seek to unsettle the “I” both of the researcher and the researched who is a static and singular subject” (p.10). Neither researchers nor participants can be understood as stable and

singular. The several “I’s” that I named earlier can provisionally locate my subjectivity but only temporarily. Shifting subjectivity produces an understanding that relationships and experiences will also be unstable and fluid in meaning. How my position connects to another’s will always move with our dynamic and plural subjectivities. This creates ethical responsibilities.

Ethics

In this section I describe the formal ethics procedure I followed. Ethical considerations in this research project included the impossibility of accurately describing children’s authentic experience in the centres, as well as considerations of power relations amongst participants including me. The implications contained within my complex, rhizomatic position, along with others’ positions, required examination of potential limitations throughout the entire research process. I began the research with strategies to address the ethical considerations of power relations circulating between others and myself. Those others include children, parents, caregivers I supervised, those who work in the programs that I coordinate, those who supervise my work and those who license our centres. When we began, I wanted to include others in the process but did not want to oblige others to participate in the process. I did not want to present my interpretation of our experience without input from others and at the same time I did not want any child, caregiver or parent to believe that they were required to participate. In addition, power relationships between other participants such as children and caregivers, caregivers and their supervisors and caregivers with each other needed to be considered. Finally, the process of providing very young children with the opportunity to agree to participation in the research challenged me.

Awareness of the ethical challenges complicated the research process but thinking about power relations kept awareness of ethics at the forefront. For example, choosing which video to

use in our discussions required ethical decisions based on perceived consequences for those in the videos. However, this selective process then impacted what could or would be discussed, thought about or interpreted by others. Ethical implications provoked complications but also enriched practices, relationships and the research process itself. More formally, I engaged with the ethical requirements of the university I attend.

I received consent from the HREB and approval for the research from the Child Care Services director. Before parents enrolled their children in the centre, the assistant director informed parents that the centres were the site of a pilot project and would be involved in a research project. Three child care senior supervisors recruited the children, and obtained their parents' consent for the children to participate, through letters to the parents (see Appendix A). In the centre in which I was the senior supervisor, another caregiver did the recruitment. The child care director recruited the caregiver participants and obtained their consent to participate through a letter (See Appendix B).

The main safeguard to power-over issues was that, while I had influence in procedures, I had very little actual power-over participants. In my senior supervisor and coordinator roles I held neither the power to deny care to families nor the power to hire or fire caregivers. All participants were given the opportunity to opt out at any time although none did. However some caregivers chose to participate at the level of being recorded but not of engaging in the analytic discussions of the videos. Finally, to protect confidentiality, the video recorded data is maintained on a password protected computer hard drive and will be destroyed after five years from the collection date.

Chapter Summary: Researching

In this chapter I have described my methodology as postqualitative action research

engaging with stories through a process of pedagogical narrations. I presented the method as telling a story that includes characters, a plot, story themes and an inconclusive conclusion. The third part of this chapter contained an explanation of the analytic approach, thinking with theory, which I employed. Finally I reviewed ethical challenges produced through the methodology and the ethical review process that I completed. The next chapter introduces three stories describing ordinary moments in the multiage centres.

Chapter 4: Stories of Multiage Child Care

In chapter four I tell three stories: *On the Deck*, *We Are All Canucks*, and *Summer*. Each story includes an ordinary moment and caregivers' reflections about the moment. The caregivers' reflections expand and elaborate the moment, Later in chapter five with further analysis, I extend the stories by introducing the theoretical concepts, caring relations, dwelling and becoming into the assemblage. Through telling these stories, I illuminate what living in a multiage space might do.

To exemplify stories as research, I point to the writing of Vivian Paley. In her books, such as *Wally's Stories*, *Mollie Is Three: Growing Up In School* and *Bad Guys Don't Have Birthdays* (Paley, 1981, 1986, 1988), she knit her ideas about specific children's play events into her transcriptions of their conversations and actions. Particularly interested in fantasy play, her stories included and intertwined her theories about children and play with what her tape recorder captured of their play. Reading her stories illustrates for the reader, ways, perhaps novel, to think about play and children. Earlier I described how Deleuze and Guattari (1987) explained a book as an assemblage that folds in together three fields, reality, representation, and subjectivity. (Events, ideas and theories characterize the field of reality; the writing constitutes the field of representation; and the writer is the field of subjectivity). In Paley's books, the play and her theories about play made up the field of reality, her account was the field of representation, and she was the field of subjectivity. Her books assembled that which is written about, with a written account and her subjectivity to create not *the* true story but stories that tell *a* truth. The books live, illuminate, create because they included events, words, feelings, thoughts - the field of reality.

In a similar way, I envision this dissertation as an assemblage in which the stories along

with the theory I have introduced make up the field of reality. My writing, our choosing particular videos, our focusing on some reflections, and my working with particular theoretical concepts interpolated with enacted events, together produce the field of representation. Writing in the first person, sometimes as I, sometimes as we, underscores the field of subjectivity. As Paley engaged with play, I engage with caring, *currere*, and children becoming-other, asking how children live in the multiage childcare. I do this “to produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently” (St. Pierre, 1997, p.175), “to perform and produce realities rather than report them” (Law, 2004, p.156).

I structure the stories in the same way. Each one includes a description of the local, situated context. Each also describes the participants or story characters and stories the ordinary moment. Finally, I conclude with caregivers’ reflections about the moment.

On The Deck

Context

This story began one morning when I video recorded events happening outside on a deck. The people included two caregivers, several children and me. On a later day, the caregivers who worked in that centre and I met to discuss it and several other video clips. Following that meeting we chose this video story, *On The Deck* to take to a meeting attended by caregivers from the other three multiage centres.

A few days before the event narrated here occurred, the children and caregivers had created a pleasant oasis on a southeast facing deck by sweeping it and hanging white curtains that let in the sun, shaping an outdoor room. The deck nestled in an L-shaped corner of the building. Windows in each of the two walls that formed the ‘L’ created a visual connection with the centre inside. One window looked into the centre’s large living space and the other looked into the

adjoining kitchen area. The white curtains hung on the deck's other two sides, which opened to a large play yard beyond. Low benches, built against each wall and on the open sides, framed the deck. It faced east and on the morning of the video, the sun shone into it. To me, the place felt peaceful, warm and inviting.

The Story

Someone had placed books on the deck. I arrived mid-morning. A few children gathered on the deck in a hub of activity. I joined a group of four children - Roland, Nathan, Ethan and Adam - who were sitting beside each other on a bench on the deck. I set up the video camera opposite them and turned it on. As I did, Roland insisted that I be careful of the white things flying in the sky. Sharon (a centre caregiver) clarified for me that she thought he meant the dust bunnies. Roland further explained that if we moved around in a particular way - he stood up and demonstrated how - they would sting us. He said he knew about this because it happened to his sister.

More children joined us on the deck. Sharon said, "I notice that Roland doesn't have socks on. I'll go and look for some socks." She left the space. All the children on the deck had removed their shoes, which were lined up together at the edge of the deck. The others all wore socks.

Some children looked at books, some moved around. I sensed constant motion. Roland had on his lap a container with dirt and an earthworm in it. He remarked that if anyone touched the worm he would kick that person. Lucy, another caregiver, asked if everyone was warm enough without their jackets. The children claimed they were.

Roland picked up the earthworm, stretched it and said to no one in particular that he was stretching it a little bit. I reminded him to be gentle with it, that it was a living thing. Roland

pulled it again and said, “Look I’m making a bridge.” I again reminded him to be gentle. He continued to hold the worm in his hand. Lucy said, “Debbie is right Roland, be careful with the worm. I don’t think he likes to be held. I think it likes to be in the dirt.” Roland put the worm back in the container and peered into it.

Meanwhile Nathan noticed that I had my shoes on. He told me that I must remove my shoes because I would make the deck dirty and said (in a disapproving tone), “I just swept there.” I tried to convince him otherwise by telling him they were my indoor shoes and I hadn’t stepped in any mud. I asked him to look at my shoes to see what he thought. After he examined my shoes I asked whether or not I could leave my shoes on. He said no, so I took my shoes off. He told me he would put them away for me, which he did. He then swept hard at the place my shoes had been. He put the broom down, picked up a book and sat down. The book had parts like a puzzle that fitted into it and he began to take the pieces out and put them in.

There were now more children on the deck including two brothers. The youngest brother, Devin, was eighteen months old, his brother, Adam, was four. Nathan was not quite four; Roland and William were four and four and half years old.

Sharon had come back with socks for Roland, which he put on (over time as he moved around the deck). Roland continued to watch his worm; the brothers sat side by side on the deck surface each looking at a book. Ethan sat on the bench with a book in his hand. Roland moved away from the others and said, “He likes the sun.” Devin, Adam and Nathan all came close to the worm. As if protecting the worm from harm, Roland said, “no, no, go away don’t look.”

William approached me and asked me if I would read to him. I said I would. Lucy intervened, “I’ll do that Deb, you’re busy.” She voiced a plan for the children to sit down on the bench, which they did. William sat beside her. Adam immediately sat on her other side and

another boy sat beside William. Nathan joined them and continued to look at his book. Each child on the bench had a book; Lucy opened the one that William wanted. The youngest brother, Devin, approached her and handed a book to her. She said, "There's a bit of a line up Devin." She explained her plan for reading the books. Devin sat on the bench beside Nathan who showed Devin how to do the puzzle book.

Five children were now sitting on the bench each with a book on his lap. Roland asked Lucy, who was pointing out images to William, where he could get water. Lucy suggested that he check the tire in the yard. Roland spent some time putting on his shoes. When his shoes were on his feet, he left the deck with his bucket and his worm.

As Lucy began to read again, Adam said, "I have a sliver." Lucy replied, "You have a sliver? Let's see." Sharon asked Lucy if she would like the first aid kit. Lucy said yes and explained to Sharon which kit it would need to be. The children meanwhile began to argue. "You're squishing meeee." "You're squishing me." "Stop squishing me!" Lucy asked one, "How is he squishing you? Look at all the space." She suggested that one child move over. She began to read a book explaining vehicles. The particular page they were looking at described helicopters and contained the word 'vertical'. Lucy asked the children, "Do you know what vertical means?" A child said no. Lucy put the book down and demonstrated with her hand how planes take off comparing vertical with horizontal. Then she unzipped the first aid bag and said, "William I'm going to pause the book now and take Adam's sliver out."

Meanwhile, Sally, inside the kitchen, leaned down and smiled at Devin, who was outside. Devin and Adam were in Sally's primary caregiving group. At that moment Sally was on a break - a rest time away from the work of caring and being with the children. (In these centres, 'breaks' are carefully negotiated through union and management collective agreements. They exist as an

employee right and are argued to be important to the employee.) Sally noticed Adam's sliver. Lucy saw Sally and said, "Oh. Here she comes. Sally is coming to take Adam's sliver out." Lucy looked at me and smiled and informed me, "Sally loves taking slivers out." Sally abandoned her break and came outside. Adam left the deck and went inside with her, presumably to have his sliver removed.

Two children began the chant, "You're squishing me." Lucy said to one, "You know what, I'm going to hold your book. It keeps banging William. I'll read it when we are finished this one." She took the book and put it on her lap. She read the words on one page, explaining that helicopters can fly backwards, and stopped to ask the boys, "Do you think planes can fly backwards?" Adam came back and tried to sit down beside Lucy in a space now occupied by his brother. Lucy said, "Excuse me, Devin is there." Adam responded, "but I was sitting there." Lucy pointed out where he might sit. Adam sat down on the other side of Devin and complained that he couldn't see. Lucy showed him how he could see. Devin got up and moved to the other side of his brother, giving up his space beside Lucy. Meanwhile the children on the other side of Lucy returned to the 'you're squishing me' argument. Lucy said, "I'm going to wait until you're ready. It is really difficult for me to read the story when I hear 'you're squishing me, you're squishing me'." The children stopped, Lucy asked if they were ready.

She read for a few minutes then Roland came back and asked, "Can we eat lunch here?" (Roland was in Lucy's primary caregiving group - the children eat lunch in their primary caregiving groups). Lucy responded, "Yes we can eat here." Adam said, "We're going to eat here too." Lucy asked, "You're going to eat here too? I don't know if there is room, it might be kind of squishy. Let's check with Sharon." Lucy looked at her clock and said to the group she was reading to, "I'm going to pause the book now and we'll get our lunch kits set up and then I'll

finish the book at lunch time.” Lucy stood up and briefly discussed lunch mechanics with Sharon. She helped children put on their shoes and directed them to get their lunch kits and wash their hands.

The brothers, Adam and Devin remained on the deck for a minute, Adam showing Devin the pictures in a book. Devin handed Adam a book that Adam did not take but rather let it slide to the ground. Devin looked at the book he held and then let it slide to the ground while Adam looked at another book. In the background Lucy said, “Go wash your hands and get your lunch” to another child. Devin got up and said “Me too, I ‘ant my ‘unch.” Lucy said, “You too, you can go and get your lunch.” They left the deck. Adam put his shoes on and followed.

Caregivers’ Reflections

The conversation that accompanies this moment included five key emergent reflections. They include critical self-reflection, learning/caring discourses, beliefs about modeling, comments about the multiage advantage and evaluations of the primary caregiving practice.

Critical self-reflection. At our first staff meeting when we reviewed the videos Lucy and I engaged in critical self-reflection about this event, judging our own actions negatively. We made that judgment when as we watched we realized that although we both agreed to read to William, neither of us fulfilled our promise to do so. Possibly, a belief about the need for adults to be trustworthy in the name of children’s emotional wellbeing fueled our self-critical assessment of our interactions. However, another caregiver reacted (with some irritation) to our focus on that aspect of the video asking, “Why are we doing this?” Her question shifted our attention to other recorded events. Eventually we decided to revisit the video and at a second meeting we deliberately avoided evaluation and judgment.

Learning/caring. The moment of Roland's worm interaction received much analysis and comment. One person noted how engaged he was with it. Another pointed out that he "sometimes took care of it and at other times didn't seem to care about the worm." This person referred to his defense ("*if any one touches it I'll kick them*") combined with his ignoring my cautions as the basis of her interpretation. Many others commented on the children's apparent fascination with the worm. This evolved to an evaluative discussion about how children learn, and about "the richness when children have the opportunity to explore in a natural environment." This conversation moved into wonderings about how to show parents that this was *real* learning.

Modeling. Another conversation focused on Nathan's deck care. The caregivers met Nathan's directions to me to remove my shoes with humour. They made several references to modeling when analyzing this interaction. Many caregivers commented on Nathan's stance with his hands on his hips and the voice tone when asserting, "I just swept here!" suggesting that he "had probably seen this somewhere." Participants also credited the children's earlier participation in creating and beautifying their space as significant in the concern Nathan felt for the area. A longer discussion followed about how, when we (adults) care about the aesthetics of an environment, children notice. Several caregivers proposed that through their own enacted principles adults influence children. The caregivers implied that we (adults) hold potential to affect children's internalized values and actions and that power lies in our actions.

The multiage advantage. Caregivers made explicit reference to the advantage the multiage grouping provided by creating the context in which older children could help younger children and by providing opportunities for siblings to be together. Caregivers expressed pleasure in seeing an older child care for a younger one. For example one stated, "I just loved seeing how the big kids helped Devin and included him." This comment along with similar other

ones led to a conversation about how the multiage structure provided opportunities for older-child-to-younger-child caregiving. Most participating caregivers had previous experience working in age-segregated child care programs. They compared their current experiences with their past experiences and made tentative statements suggesting that they noticed more child-to-child caregiving in the multiage centres including younger children caring for older children.

This thinking connected to the expressed belief in the advantage of having siblings in the same centre. Many caregivers made statements about how it seemed kinder to have children together. We shared stories from our past experiences about our sadness in seeing siblings separated. However, we also noted that in this video, while Adam and Devin are in close proximity for the whole time, Adam (big brother) does not pay much attention to Devin (little brother). We noticed Devin caring for Adam by giving him the place beside Lucy that Adam so clearly wanted. Adam took the place without acknowledging Devin at all. Meanwhile, we also noted that Nathan, an older child, took Devin under his wing, showing him how to use the puzzle book when Lucy said it would be awhile before she could read the book Devin wanted.

Primary caregiving. Related to the multiage advantage, the primary caregiving practice also emerged as a topic in the discussion following this video. For most participating caregivers, primary caregiving was a new practice. While participants unanimously evaluated multiage grouping with positive enthusiasm, primary caregiving received more varied responses. Some wholeheartedly supported the practice while the caregivers in one centre had given it up. Those who embraced the practice pointed to Sally and Devin's obviously affectionate through-the-window moment when Sally interrupted her rest time to engage with him and then to remove his brother's sliver. Those who experienced primary caregiving less positively did not object to that characterization but voiced general concerns about difficulty with the practice's structured-ness.

We're All Canucks

Context

The next moment also took place outside at one of the multiage centres. The centre in this video can be described as a (usually) child-centered play-based program. The curriculum emerges in interactions between the children and the adults. Some routines initiated by an adult occur throughout the day while most other times children choose what they will do. The caregivers produce and maintain a social and physical environment; children engage with the environment as they wish. The adult caregivers follow the children's lead and engage with children either when a child violates a centre boundary (either physical or social) or when a teachable moment occurs, often both situations occur at once.

The story begins on a warm, late spring day with five children milling around outside in a small space, trying to play hockey. In that month, the city's professional hockey team was in a playoff for the Stanley Cup and excitement permeated the city. A centre caregiver, a keen Canuck fan, had brought her interest to the children during the preceding year. She regularly wore a Canuck jersey on game day; she read the hockey news to them sharing her pursuit with them. As children became curious, she taught them many hockey rules, they frequently played hockey both with her help and later without it, and with her, they maintained a bulletin board filled with hockey news about the team. The year before, the city had hosted the winter Olympics and children had followed that event as well. These two major community events collided generating a group interest in sports (particularly hockey), teams and winning. On the day of the story, the hockey-loving caregiver was present but the children engaged in hockey play without her.

A few children have gathered in a corner of the yard, near the child care building. Most

of the outside play yard is filled with sand, grass, large trees, a few embedded large rocks, bushes, shrubs and vegetable gardens. There is a raised playhouse integrated into a stand of trees. An asphalt bike path surrounds a large garden bed. The yard includes a fenced off porch attached to the building by French doors and a raised deck tucked into an alcove created by the building design. The porch, deck, a willow house and bushes surround three sides of an asphalt-paved space about the size of a parking space. The fourth side opens to the rest of the yard. Five children mill around in the space with brooms and pylons. They are producing a hockey game.

The Story

Sarah: "We're Canucks Caelin."

Tessa: "I want to be on the winner team."

Maia: "K., then you are on our team."

Tessa: "I'm on this team."

Michael: "No, I'm, I'm ... We're all Canucks."

Sarah: "Yeah we're all Canucks."

The children move constantly as they talk. They talk over top of each other. Eventually, Caelin wandered away.

Michael: "Maia, Maia, I try to score on you and Tessa tries to score on Sarah."

Tessa: "Drop the puck."

Sarah: "Wait, wait we need a referee."

Michael: "No, no. No referees."

Sarah: "Yes."

Sarah runs off in search of a referee. She comes back without one. Michael has the ball and drops it. Maia hits it and it goes through Sarah's goal. Maia, Michael and Tessa raise their

brooms and shout: "Score!"

Sarah pulls on Tessa's shirt saying, "no you're with Maia and Michael is with me."

Tessa: "No, no, no." Tessa struggles not to cry.

Michael: "It doesn't make sense. It doesn't make sense. Tessa, Tessa, Tessa I'm on Maia's team and you're on Sarah's team." Tessa wipes her eyes and says, "Yeah that makes sense right?" Throughout this conversation, the children move around and move the brooms on the ground. Sarah makes a comment.

Michael: "How can that be?"

Tessa: "Yeah, how can that be?"

Maia to Sarah: "You're on Tessa's team and I'm on Michael's team."

Tessa: "that makes sense right?"

Maia: "Yeah!" Sarah scowls and says "fine! Play then."

Meanwhile another (younger) child has put dirt on the asphalt where they were playing. They tell him, "Not on the ice rink! Not on the ice rink!"

Tessa: "not dirt, water."

Michael (laughing): "he doesn't know anything about the Zamboni anyway. He didn't go; he didn't go to your mom's work. That's why he doesn't know."

Tessa and Michael and Maia, laughing indulgently, sweep off the dirt.

Michael: "The Zamboni does not dump dirt all over the place." The children smile.

Echoes of "Yeah" can be heard. They continue to sweep the dirt off.

Sarah: "How about I be the goalie?"

Michael: "You are the goalie."

Tessa: "You are the goalie."

They sweep more the dirt from the space. The little boy who had put the dirt on the space comes back. Michael seriously but calmly explains, “No, no dirt on the ice, that’s not what a Zamboni does.” The little boy smiles at him. Tessa moves to the goal area and says again “I’m on the winner team.” Sarah holds the ball, Maia has moved in the direction of the other goal. Michael sweeps the last of the dirt.

Sarah to Tessa: “actually you’re on Maia’s team” and points to Maia. Tessa moves toward the action and says, “I’m on Maia’s team.”

Michael: “No, no.” The little boy comes with his shovel full of dirt and begins to put it in the space. All four children say, “No, no.” They rush to prevent the dirt coming on to the space. The younger boy goes away but comes back with some more dirt. The older children yell, “No, no.” One pleads, “Please stop David.”

Kristi (a caregiver) intercedes asking, “Do you have a job for David? Maybe David’s feeling a little left out.” Meanwhile David left.

Tessa asks Maia, “Are you going to be the winner team?”

Maia, calmly: “I’m going to be the Sharks.” The children begin to sort their teams again.

Michael: “I’m going to be the winner team too.”

Tessa: “I’m going to be the winner team.” (At this point, Sarah has assigned Michael and Tessa to opposite teams.)

Kristi: “What if the Sharks win?”

Michael: “The sharks have their skates on their tails!”

Kristi: “Oh” and then comments, “you could give David the job of goalie.” Sarah moves across the yard to where David is (presumably inviting him to be the goalie). Tessa, Maia and Michael continue to sweep the dirt off.

Kristi: "Are you cleaning the ice?"

Tessa, smiling: "Yes, because David put dirt on it." Sarah comes back (without David).

Kristi: "Did you offer David that suggestion?" (inaudible).

Michael: "But that's not how you clean the ice!"

Kristi: "Well how do you clean the ice?"

Michael: "Not with dirt. And we have to sweep it off, and that's not what we are doing.

We are the players of the Canucks."

Sarah: "Yeah, we are playing hockey".

Michael: "Who is going to be the other goalie?" Sarah has claimed the role of referee.

Michael walks off, possibly in search of a goalie. Maia follows him. Eventually they return with another boy.

Sarah: "I'm the referee."

Maia: "Oh", walking toward the (imaginary) goal.

Tessa: "Two boys and two girls."

Michael: "That's not fair for me and Matthew."

Tessa: "Let's all be Canucks and no other team." Sarah objects. Michael, seeming to get upset said in a loud voice, "Let's all be Canucks. Let's all be Canucks or not play this game.

THAT'S YOUR CHOICE!"

Sarah tries to negotiate. Michael replies, "Well then we're not playing. It's not fair if we're not both Canucks. It's not fair!"

Tessa "Yeah, it's not fair! We are both winner teams."

Sarah: "Who wants to be Canada?" The other four children say "meeeeee."

Sarah: "Okay Canada" (points in one direction) "and Canucks" (points in the other

direction).

Michael: "That's not fair. That's what I said."

Sarah: "They can be Canada and you can be a different Canada, that's what I meant."

Michael does not accept this. He replies, "That's not fair. That's what I said. Your choice is ... that's not fair or we're not playing".

Tessa: "Yeah, that right."

Maia: "Those are your choices."

Caelin returns. He has a pylon (aka goal post) on a broom handle (hockey stick) wiggling it. He interrupts the argument saying, "Look Sarah!" Michael ignores him and asks Sarah "What's your choice?" No reply.

Michael: "We're all going to be Canucks." Sarah hops around. Caelin wiggles his broom with pylon in the middle of the group.

Michael: "Okay then it's settled."

Caelin moves off to the side. Sarah about to drop the ball notices there is no goalie.

Michael: "Matthew is riding his bike." He calls, "Matthew." The children mill around. Sarah asks Caelin who is still wiggling the pylon on the broom if he wants to be the goalie.

Caelin, "Yeah." He puts the pylon down and moves into goal position. Matthew yells, "Tessa is going to be it."

Tessa: "I'm the winner goalie." Tessa moves to the goalie position. Caelin moves into the middle with Michael.

Sarah: "Okay Michael, which team are you on?"

Michael: "I'm on Maia's team."

Sarah: "Okay."

Caelin: "Whose on my team?"

Sarah: "Caelin you're on Tessa's team." Caelin steps into the goal position beside Tessa.

Tessa says no and pulls him by the arm into the middle.

Sarah: "Face-off, face-off where my foot is. No. No." She pulls Caelin's broom to a particular place.

Michael: "Caelin, Caelin, you hit it right here." He draws his hand along the bottom edge of the broom.

Sarah: "Ready, set, go" and drops the ball. Michael wins the face-off and hits the ball between the goal posts. The four hockey players (including Tessa the goalie who had just been scored on) raise their brooms in the air and yell "Scoooore". Sarah immediately yells, "high-sticking!"

Michael: "You're allowed to do that if you ..."

Sarah: "Okay change goalies."

Tessa: "No we're not!"

Maia: "I want to be a player."

Michael: "Okay" and moves into her goalie spot. Maia joins Caelin in the middle space. They get into position. Sarah drops the ball. Maia hits the ball into the bushes beside the hockey space. Caelin and Maia run into the bushes, Caelin comes back with the ball. Maia comes back. Caelin throws the ball on the ground and hits it toward Michael who hit it through Tessa's goal. The children raise their brooms and someone yells, "Two. Two for Tessa and Michael's team." Maia looks confused but doesn't say anything.

Michael: "No, two for Maia and my team." David comes back on a bike.

Tessa: "Here comes the Zamboni" and runs out of the net. David rides into the space and

says, “Here is the Zamboni.”

Sarah: “Okay switch goalies. Tessa this time you have to come out cause Caelin’s going to have a turn being the goalie.”

Tessa: “Okay.”

Michael: “Then who is going to be this goalie?”

Sarah: “Maia can you be the goalie again?” Maia agrees.

Sarah: “David, can you get your bike outta here?!” Maia moves into goal position. David rides his bike out.

Michael: “I think he thinks his bike is a Zamboni.” Sarah directs all the children to their positions. She asks, “Ready?” and drops the ball. Michael hits the ball across through the goal. All four children yell, “Scoooree.” and raise their brooms in the air. Sarah runs off to get the ball.

Michael: “Score for the Vancouver Canucks.”

Caregiver Reflections

From this moment, caregivers produced three reflective ideas: growing toward psychological maturity, learning hockey, and caring for younger children.

Growing toward psychological maturity. This story elicited much discussion from the caregivers who worked in the centre about how they understood three children, Sarah, Tessa and Michael as having mastered emotional self-regulation. They described to the listeners how each of these children had had trouble in the past containing their emotions. They described Sarah as being inflexible and wanting to control situations, Tessa as being emotional when things didn’t progress as she wished, and Michael as being impatient and intolerant. They interpreted those characteristics through this story but also noticed, with pleasure, how each child appeared to attempt to control their reactions. They commented on how Sarah scowled but accepted the other

children's understandings of the game, on how Tessa contained her tears and didn't 'lose it', and on how Michael showed anger but didn't lose control.

Learning hockey. Children's interest in hockey and in the Canucks lived in these four centres during time when this video was made. Throughout the city, team flags decorated cars, Canuck game discussions could be overheard everywhere and many people, including children who attended the child care centres, sported Canuck team jerseys. All four centres, and likely many city child care centres, experienced children playing hockey. However, in this video, the children in this centre appeared particularly engaged with hockey.

This intense engagement intrigued me and I engaged in conversations with the others about it when we met. I wondered how and why these children knew so much about hockey and were so engrossed by it. As a child, I lived in a place where winter, cold, icy and snowy, lasted for eight months. Hockey existed as a familiar childhood, backyard event. But in the city where this study takes place, winter is mild, cool and damp and lasts for only four or five months. Children do not have outdoor ice rinks in their backyards. I wondered how and why these children had become so enmeshed in hockey rather than some other activity. I asked how this had come to be. The caregivers from the centre explained how one caregiver followed hockey. She described how she often read the hockey news in the centre and the children wanted to know what she was reading. She explained that eventually her enacted interest led to children engaging with her about the game, the team, and competition. At our meeting, she depicted how she and a group of children would find a place to play hockey. She taught them rules - icing, offside, and high-sticking. During drop-off and pick-up times she engaged in informal discussions about hockey with parents who were also sports fans or who, through their children's emerging interest, became Canucks fans. As we listened to the cultural explanation, we imagined how

hockey had come to be important in the centre.

Caring for younger children. As we engaged with this story we also noted how the four older children interacted with the younger children, especially David, the Zamboni driver. David consistently interrupted their attempt to play hockey by putting dirt on the space. The patience and the amount of time the four older children invested in trying to teach him about what hockey required captured our attention. They calmly and with seeming indulgence tried to engage him in their fantasy world. He didn't seem to understand but appeared to enjoy their concern. The caregivers, who viewed this video, including those who worked in the centre, responded to this aspect of the video with pleasure, attributing the behaviour to the multiage grouping.

Summer

Context

Early one summer morning, someone had placed a hose on the roof of a small shelter in a sandbox. Water ran out of the hose forming a waterfall about four feet high into the sandbox. The sandbox was filled with several children each using the water but without much interaction. The weather was very warm and most children were barefoot and wearing light summer clothes.

At the time of this recording, I worked as a senior supervisor in this centre. This meant that I supervised other staff, led the program and worked directly with the children and for some children I was the assigned primary caregiver. On this morning, I was extra, not part of the scheduled staff. I arrived at the centre early and noticed the water running from the roof. Assuming that this arrangement would attract children I set up the camera on a tripod near the sandbox. Most of the children ignored my presence except for one very persistent boy. Since it was summer time, many children had begun their vacation and the group size was smaller than usual. Most of the children were playing in the yard at that time.

The Story

A three-year-old girl, Nilda sat on a large toy digger truck. She moved it around in the sandbox, manipulating the scoop on the front of the truck. Mark, a boy soon to be four years old, caught water from the hose in a plastic bucket. Another little girl, Ali who had just turned two, dug with a plastic shovel in a corner of the sandbox. Bill, four and a half, asked me, “What are you doing with that?” I answered that I am taking pictures of the children in the sandbox. He asked, (touching the tripod), “Debbie? Is that yours from home?” I answered, “yes.” He questioned, “How did you get it? Did you buy it?”

Me: “mm humm.”

Bill: “How did it come? In a package? Or in a big box?”

Me: “In a box.”

Bill: “Did you buy it?”

Me: “Umm, actually my daughter bought it and my husband bought the camera.”

Meanwhile, as Bill and I talk and watch, Mark explained to Nilda how to dig in the water and another girl, Greta, who had just recently turned two years, joined the group. Greta held a toy stroller in the air, Ali walked over and put sand in the stroller and walked away. Greta dumped the sand out of the stroller. Ali approached with fists full of sand; she looked under the stroller, which Greta had turned over while dumping. Ali looked on the top, found a satisfactory space and put some sand on the stroller, then walked away. Greta turned the stroller over and dumped the sand.

Bill asked, “Are you making a movie?” I replied, “Yes”; he asked, “So this is a movie camera and a picture camera?”

Me: “Mm Hmm.”

Bill: “Oh. What is that red light for? So where do you put the battery in?” I pointed to the spot.

Bill: “Oh, well my dad has one of those but it’s in the attic and I can’t go in there ‘cause there’s no floor so my dad has to walk on the walls. He can do that.”

Me (incredulously): “Your dad can walk on the walls?”

Bill: “Yeah, because there are little climbing things.”

Me: “Like a climbing wall?”

Bill: “Yeah and he puts his feet there.”

Me: “Oh, so you’ve seen him do it?”

Bill: “Yeah, I had to stand on a ladder.” Bill mumbled something. Then told me that he is going to a learning class where he learns how to throw. I asked him where the learning class was and he told me it was really at home and his dad taught him.

While we talked a dispute developed in the sandbox. Mark had been brushing a push toy with an old paintbrush that he dipped in a bucket of water and then brushed over the toy. Without appearing to notice what Mark was doing, Ali put sand in the bucket with her hands. Mark said, “No sand.” Ali tried to do it again. Mark, more forcefully, again said, “No sand!” and moved the bucket. Mark began to wash a toy truck. Ali reappeared with more sand. Mark said “No that’s mine.” Ali approached. Mark said, “No that’s mine.” Ali brought her sandy hands to the truck. Mark said loudly, “No more sand! No more sand!” Ali put the sand in the bucket that was inside the truck. Mark yelled, “No sand!” and picked up the bucket and threw it. He went to retrieve the bucket, brought it back and yelled at Ali: “No sand! Never!” Ali watched with her lip quivering. She said quietly, “It’s not funny.”

Ali stood for a moment. She turned. She turned back. She looked down. She bent her

head toward Mark and said, in a conciliatory tone of voice, “You can put water in it again, is that okay?” Mark didn’t respond. She watched him for a minute. Nilda continued to play under the hose with the digger. Greta who had left the sandbox came back with a bucket. Eventually, Mark left and Ali picked up the bucket. She took it to where the water was flowing. Nilda got off the digger and Ali filled the bucket with water and carried it out of the sandbox. Greta also left the sandbox. Bill, still standing beside me, said, “Nothing is happening in the sandbox.”

Nilda and Ali re-entered the sandbox. Nilda sat down and began rubbing sand on her legs. Ali returned to the hose and refilled her bucket that she had emptied somewhere in the yard. She walked away. Nilda returned to the hose and moved the digger she had been sitting on out of the way. She scooped up some wet sand from the puddle, walked over to the edge of the sandbox made from wooden landscape ties and spread sand on the wood. Ali returned to the hose and filled up her bucket. She dumped the water in the scoop of the digger. Nilda rubbed the sand on the handle of the toy stroller that Greta had abandoned.

Bill continued to pepper me with questions about the camera and what I was filming. He wanted to know when it would be finished. Nilda ran back to the puddle, got more sand, ran back to the stroller and rubbed more sand into the handle. Ali refilled the bucket and poured it into the scoop. Bill asked me, “What happens if you touch the green thing?” He pointed to the level on the tripod. I, paying attention to the girls in the sandbox, responded inattentively to his question, “Nothing.” He asked, “Why is it green?” I replied, “I don’t know.” Meanwhile, Ali continued to fill the bucket and empty it into the digger. Nilda stopped rubbing sand and looked off into space. She was very close to Bill and me and noticed us. She looked directly at us and asked, “What’s that, pointing.” I answered, “ A lever.” She said, smiling into the camera, “And what’s that? “And what’s that?” I said, “That’s the view finder.” She picked up the stroller and went

back to the hose where Ali was still filling her bucket and emptying it into the digger. Nilda rubbed her hands under the running water. Ali waited. Nilda pushed the stroller away and left the sandbox. Ali refilled her bucket, dumped it and left the sandbox.

The yard was filled with children playing by themselves or in small groups. Five adults plus me were in the yard in different locations, most sitting with children; one watered plants. A girl, Sylvia, who was four and half, climbed on a railing of a little footbridge through a garden in the middle of the yard. She put her foot on the railing and looked around the yard looking toward some children who were riding tricycles around the garden. Tall sunflowers grew up beside the railing. She climbed on it and hung on it, resting on her tummy with her legs dangling. She touched one of the flowers turned it, looked at it. She hung on the railing for a few minutes as children played and people talked. Eventually, she climbed down, looked around and walked off the bridge.

Several minutes later, the sandbox was full with children again. Bill and Mark worked together, Bill smiling directly at me (or the camera) sometimes. Greta and Ali returned and another girl their age, Leda, also entered the sandbox. Someone had moved a very large yellow bucket under one stream of water. Bill, Mark and Greta left the sandbox. Ali had a paintbrush in hand and dipped it in the water that collected in that bucket. She walked out of the sand box to where Mark was playing with a truck. Ali brushed the wet brush on the truck. She returned to the sandbox, running a little and dipped her paintbrush in the water. Leda sat on the top step leading into the sandbox, stripping bark off a stick. Ali walked back to where Mark was working. He also had a paintbrush in his hand and he walked into the sandbox with it. Ali rubbed her paintbrush on the truck. Mark dipped his in the water. Ali and Mark continued to work together painting the truck until the group went in for lunch.

Caregiver reflections

This story led caregivers to three reflective areas: children's age, emotional self-regulation and discussions of natural environments/real childhoods.

Children's age. In this story questions and comments, about children's ages, frequently appeared. Many caregivers expressed curiosity about the age of the group in the sandbox. Many expressed the assumption that the children were young because they appeared to be engaged in what the observers named as parallel play. Some caregivers compared what they saw with what they had observed in their own centres or in previous work places and reflected that usually older children who had sand and water and buckets and diggers would engage in cooperative dramatic play (e.g., K.: "usually the kids in our centre when they are in the sandbox together, they are so busy interacting with each other, so I assumed these children were younger."). The comments reflect the dominant developmental discourse in which we work where even play is understood through a developmental stage lens.

Others interpreted the actions of the girl who poured sand on the boy's truck as confusing because her height created an assumption that she was older but her behaviour they interpreted as being that of a younger child.

The children in this moment included four two year old girls, a four year old girl and two five year old boys. It was the first time in a long time that water had been brought into the sandbox. The sand pouring girl was two but taller than most children her age. She had an older sister and a parent who was a sometime stand-up comic. As we discussed all these invisible variables, we slipped into other non-developmental, or not exclusively developmental, explanations, ones that included context: effects of novelty, unique growth patterns, living with siblings, and home experiences.

Emotional self-regulation. The interaction between Mark, the boy with the truck, and Ali, the girl dumping the sand ignited a discussion about emotional self-regulation that connected to age. Many who observed the video noted that Mark tried hard to negotiate and didn't lose his temper until Ali ignored him several times. We considered Ali's motives but interpreted her as not noticing Mark's gradually increasing frustration. That interpretation confused those who thought she was three or four years old. When they learned that she was two they decided that she was not teasing but instead guessed that she believed she was playing with Mark in the way he wanted. Most commented on Mark's ability to control his frustration. We also noted how Ali seemed to calm her self through self-talk. Someone commented that at first they had thought she was insisting that Mark's reaction to her wasn't funny but later thought that Ali was explaining to herself that her own actions weren't funny - a little self lecture. That caregiver then interpreted Ali's self-talk as her voicing her immediately unfolding learning.

Natural environments/“real” childhoods. The sounds - running water, shovels digging sand, far-off voices, and the sights - busy children, dressed in easy, minimal summer clothes, the light, the garden, the green spaces and wooden structures, inspired the caregivers to reflect nostalgically that this moment reminded them of their own summer childhoods and constituted real childhood or 'what child care should be'. They responded particularly to the quiet moment, in which a girl climbs on a railing, lies in the warm sun and engages with a big beautiful sunflower, with pleasure and satisfaction. Many commented on the 'rightness' of the natural (earth, sand, grass, plants) garden environment compared to the hard surfaces and constructed apparatus of a man-made playground. They seemed to equate childhood with nature or living growing things rather than with non-living, not-growing things. They implied that more natural environments produced more natural, healthful, perhaps better environments for children.

Rhizomatic Stories

The three stories reveal small moments in the multiage child care centres along with the unfolding thinking of the centre caregivers. In *On the Deck* we see a moment when a place, previously transformed by the centre inhabitants, becomes a space of complex messy interactions between children and adults, children and each other, children and place, and children and a worm. *We Are All Canucks* also focuses attention on place, as well as on children's construction of a playworld. Finally, in *Summer*, we can see an emerging and familiar construction of children and nature as beings and places of innocence. In the next chapter, I add to these stories by engaging with three rhizomatic lines of flight: caring relations, dwelling and becoming.

Chapter 5: Thinking with Theory: Caring Relations, Dwelling, Becoming

In this study I examine how children and caregivers lived in four multiage child care centres. Along with asking how do children live their lives in these centres, the multiage practice provoked three questions: what characterizes relationships in the centres; how do children negotiate through the curriculum in the centres; and how can change in children be conceptualized? Each question necessitates interrogation of particular theoretical perspectives.

The question addressing relationships in the centre requires a conceptual examination of care, the second of curriculum and the third, transformation. In Chapter 2, I followed a path in the language of a dwelling perspective (Ingold, 2010), or a rhizomatic line of flight (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) to the concepts of caring relations (Held, 2006), dwelling (Ingold, 2010) and becoming (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Along that path, three analytic questions emerged: *How can caring relations be conceptualized in the context of these multiage centres? What affordances appear while children are dwelling and wayfaring through the centre? What becoming-other possibilities for children emerge through living in multiage child care centres?* To address those questions I intersect the three concepts, caring relations, dwelling and becoming, with the three unfolding stories, *On the Deck*, *We Are All Canucks* and *Summer*, told in Chapter 4.

In this chapter I analyze the stories through the three analytic questions produced when thinking with particular theories. In the first section, I examine the three stories through a caring relations lens asking: *How can caring relations be conceptualized in the context of these multiage centres?* This produces a focus on relationships between people, children and adults, between children and more-than-human living beings, and between people and more-than-human places. Next, I work with the stories and the dwelling concept to consider postdevelopmental

curriculum in the second section asking: *What affordances appear while children are dwelling and wayfaring through the centre?* This concept also engages with place, with materials and with the centre inhabitants. Finally, I think with the concept of becoming to consider children, adults and place becoming-other asking: *What becoming-other possibilities for children emerge through living in multiage child care centres?*

Caring Relations

How can caring relations be conceptualized in the context of these multiage centres?

As I note in Chapter 1, including very young children in a setting licensed as a group care program for children over three years of age challenged our accepted theories and practices. Introducing a primary caregiver system for all aged children into those centres created a context that made developmental assumptions about caring practices visible. Previous to our introduction of multiage groupings, we relied on child development theories to explain and guide caring relations and practices between children and adults and perhaps failed to consider caring relations amongst and between other living beings and non-living aspects. Those developmental theories produce different understandings about caring relations between adults and children under-three years of age than about caring relations between adults and children over three years of age, may allude to caring between children, based on development and position children as learning to care about and for their environment from a human centric and developmentally appropriate standpoint.

Our initial responses when we view *On the Deck* highlight how we also theorized care and evaluated behaviors as caring or not, through psychological developmental perspectives. During the initial meeting Lucy and I both focus first on our own caring actions and the potential negative impact those actions might have on a child's psychological wellbeing. Through

attending to those actions rather than others, we privilege that aspect of the story over all others and judged ourselves harshly. Privileging our own actions and focusing our judgment on them implies that we believed that adults' behaviours importantly influence children's development. Given the significance many child development theories place on the role of adults, our theory makes good sense from a developmental perspective and places Lucy and me in the position of aware, albeit deficient, developmental workers. However, from another perspective our theory trivializes other caring relations because it positions adults as the central active agents in children's emotional development situating children as passive recipients of good or bad care and renders all other caring aspects invisible. The protocol used in generating the pedagogical narrations provokes us (eventually) toward taking into account other facets of caring relations.

Considering caring relations broadly turns the focus to how such relations could be otherwise conceptualized. The stories through a caring relations lens can be understood in many ways. For instance, they highlight caring relations between people and place, between people and living non-human others, between children and caregivers, and between and amongst children. As I assert in Chapter 2, caring include responsiveness, responsibility, attentiveness and reciprocity (Held, 2006; Tronto, 1993); pushing those concepts to their limits makes it possible to think expansively about caring relations. The juxtaposition of the stories and the concepts inspires contemplating caring relations with place, with non-human living beings, with other children and with adults.

Caring Relations With Place

While caring relations certainly occur between people in early years settings other ways to understand caring relations emerged in our research. The stories that unfold in the pedagogical narrations show relations of care between people and place. Rose (2004) pointed out that our

vocabulary does not help us talk about relationships to place. Yet in *On the Deck*, the ambience, or the emotional tone, of the place makes the experienced moment possible. Although not a concrete entity, ambience can be sensed somehow by the caregivers, who after watching the video, noted it and commented on it. One caregiver remarked, “The curtains add such a good feel to it”.

Care of place, or responsibility for place, contributed to that particular emotional tone. The day before this event, the children and caregivers worked together to take care of their place by creating a particular kind of space. They cleaned and swept, added cushions and curtains and created codes of conduct for using the deck. This care by the centre inhabitants for the deck presents an instance of caring relations between people and place. The children and caregivers care for their place and their place responds by offering to them a particular emotional tone - an instance of reciprocity.

Rose (2004) argued for a decolonizing ethical presence-to-the-world, situated and available, further characterized by relation, connection, mutuality and commitment. She suggested that “we acknowledge our place in and of the world and we accept that we live and die with the world” (2004, p. 214). She presented a possibility for ecological responsibility through such an ethic in relation to place. Mutuality, connection and responsibility characterize caring relations. Relating ethically to place with responsibility as Rose advocated, positions those relations as caring relations. The caring actions of the children and caregivers combined with the response of the deck can be conceptualized as caring relations between the humans and the deck.

Caring actions produce and are produced in caring relations. Caring for place with children in a child care centre may introduce children to knowledge of relational ethics with place. Additionally, the caring action can be understood as contributing to the adult caregivers’

connection to the place where they work and through that a connection to those children and families whom they care for in that place. The relationship with place also leads to connections amongst people. Entering into ethical caring relations with place produces for these children and adults an experience of their place responding reciprocally to their care with their comfort and pleasure.

In *We Are All Canucks*, the children also care ardently for their place - a place to play hockey. They regularly and unitedly fend off the actions of a younger child who tries to put dirt on the “ice”. They take care not to harm him while resisting him; meanwhile, the place receives much attention and caring defense. Like a play within a play, the children’s actions of caring for this place together takes up a significant amount of the time in the video. In fact these children spend very little hockey-playing time actually playing any version of hockey. Instead they negotiate positions and teams and spend a great deal of time cleaning and fixing the area in which to play hockey. I suggest the place becomes a group member in caring relations with other group members. As the children create their hockey rink and take care of it, the place responds by providing them with space for play and pleasure. Further, I also suggest that caring for the place together contributed to a caring relationship amongst the children in the group. Caring for place engaged the children with their place and with all the living beings and non-living elements of their place.

Caring For A Non-Human Living Being

Roland, a child in the video, *On the Deck*, watches his captive worm. He moves away from the others and said, “He likes the sun”. When the brothers, Devin and Adam, and another boy, Nathan, come close to the worm, Roland says, “No, no, go away don’t look”. When the caregivers viewed this moment, many commented that Roland appeared to be trying to protect

the worm. The worm's wellbeing concerned him. He entered into a caring relation with the worm, responding to, attending to and taking responsibility for the worm. However, as the caregivers' also noted, he sometimes appears uncaring, using the worm for his own pleasure (stretching it, shaping it into a bridge) even when I suggested that he stop. His caring for the worm, while apparent, seems ambiguous. In this moment, the worm can be understood as transforming Roland. The child begins with curiosity about the worm, becomes protective, remains curious and a particular Roland-subject emerges. This Roland-subject is not now fixed as a worm protector (curious but restrained). Instead the subject is a becoming that will continue to become.

Reciprocity - the worm accepting Roland's care - is less visible, leaving one aspect of caring relations unfulfilled. It is easy to imagine the worm slipping away from, maybe escaping from, Roland at the first opportune moment, thus avoiding an ongoing relationship. Such avoidance would suggest a lack of caring relations – the worm may even experience Roland's caring as a dangerous threat. However, it is also possible to theorize that the worm received Roland's care by staying alive in the face of worm mishandling. In this case Roland's caring concern, his willingness to become responsible by following Lucy's directions not to stretch it, and his action to protect by preventing the others from touching it, resulted in the worm not being handled to death and can be construed as a caring relation between Roland and the worm.

Children In Caring Relations With Children

Siblings in caring relations. The possibility of keeping siblings together motivated and contributed to the original argument for creating the multiage programs. Over the course of many years working in child care centres, I have observed siblings separated throughout the day, a separation based on their age. Often this did not appear to create problems, but sometimes I

judged it to be a sad, artificial construction. I have memories of a young child struggling to touch her brother's finger through a hole in a fence and of another child bursting into tears when catching a glimpse of her sibling. We intended with the multiage model to be able to offer families the option of having both, or in one recent case three, children in one centre. The moment in this analysis includes two brothers, Adam and Devin.

The relationship between the brothers appears complex. Devin, the younger brother, seems sensitive and caring toward Adam, the older brother. Adam, however, seems insensitive and uncaring toward Devin. One videoed moment cannot be made to define a whole complex interpersonal relationship that exists beyond the time and space of the moment. Adam's engagement with the world around him and our interpretations of his vacillation between dominating and ignoring his brother could be attributed to many factors, not-caring-about-Devin, being just one possible factor.

Adam's demand, that Devin give up the space on the bench next to Lucy, exemplifies our evaluation of him dominating Devin. However, his motivation could be a sincere strong desire to sit beside Lucy. Perhaps his wish to sit close to Lucy simply overrode his caring relation with his brother. However, later Adam ignores Devin's attempt to engage him with a particular book suggesting unconcern with Devin's interests. Nevertheless, Devin never responds to Adam's provocations and continues to care for Adam and appears satisfied with their relations. He gives his space next to Lucy to Adam even as Lucy attempts to thwart Adam's attempt to make that happen.

Considering this interaction through a caring relations lens allows us to imagine that Devin's caring for Adam maintains caring relations between them. Through this lens we imagine that Adam desperately desires something that Devin perhaps desires less. Adam does not politely

or gently make a request; rather he tries to use his size to persuade. Maybe Devin notices Adam's desire (attentive); perhaps he then makes a decision to move (takes responsibility to care about Adam) and then moves (responsive to Adam's feelings). Adam takes up or accepts Devin's caring action (receptive) allowing us to interpret that a caring relation exists between these brothers. Further, challenging developmentalism, Devin is the younger brother, theoretically the less developed, less emotionally mature child. Yet in this instant he displays maturity, and possibly more empathy than his older brother.

Children caring for other children. While Adam does not appear concerned with Devin, Nathan takes time to care for him. Devin asks Lucy to read a particular book but Lucy is already reading a different book to the group of boys and she explains that he would need to wait. He does not object but moved away from the group (and his book which was now on a pile of books on Lucy's lap). Devin wanders over to where Nathan was sitting and sat beside him. Nathan, looking at a puzzle-book, immediately began to show Devin how to use it. Nathan allows and encourages Devin to engage with him and the book. This short simple moment positioned Nathan as caring for/about and with Devin and Devin as receiving Nathan's care. When the adult caregivers watched this moment they explained it as a 'multiage moment' in which an older child cares for a younger one.

Caring about and for each other circles around throughout *We Are All Canucks*. For example, Tessa frequently expresses her desire/wish to be on the winner team. In a possible caring-for-her moment, the others, Maia, Michael and Sarah, quickly reassure her by positioning them as all Canucks (and therefore presumably all winners). A requirement for the existence of a losing team seems to disappear. However, perhaps understanding that there must be two teams in a hockey game, Sarah attempts to introduce an acceptable logical position with a seemingly

caring intent by offering two desirable teams - the Canucks and the Canada team - an idea the others accept enthusiastically at first. But eventually, Tessa realizes the possibility of not being on the winner team with that arrangement and holding back tears, she objects. Michael passionately supports her and vehemently resists Sarah's idea while Maia mildly offers her support for Michael's argument. Michael and Maia protect (care for and about) Tessa but must oppose Sarah to do so. Sarah, by scowling, indicates her displeasure but accepts their plan. In our initial viewing of the video, the caregivers who worked with Tessa noted how she "held it together". Using a developmental lens, they understood this as her "coming a long way [toward having self-control]". With a caring relations lens we can understand Michael, Maia and Sarah as in a caring relation with Tessa. They notice her distress, and take responsibility for it and respond to it. Tessa completes the relation by accepting their care.

However, the children do not show any concern for Sarah's annoyance and move on with their game. Yet, when Maia expresses her desire to be a player instead of a goalie, Michael readily accommodates her wish and switches roles with her. Caring ebbs and flows between the children. Sometimes they attend to another's desires and wishes and sometimes they do not.

The children can also be understood as in a caring relation with David, a younger boy playing alongside but not exactly with them. While the children focus more on their desire to keep the place clean than they do to David, they are kindly to him. In their play, they have given him a Zamboni driver role but cannot convince him that his function is to clean dirt from the ice not to bring dirt to it. They energetically maintain their place, but remain patient in their dealings with this younger child. For example, Tessa explains "not dirt, water" to him. Michael laughs in a friendly indulgent way while he cleans explaining to the others why the younger boy doesn't know the task of a Zamboni driver. I comprehend their tone and approach as caring for

David. They try to describe the role to him rather than yelling at him or threatening him; they fix the place rather than fight with him. They attempt to care for him while caring for the place by preventing him from destroying it. He responds to their care by smiling and moving away implying that the caring relations extend to him even though he does not understand the intricacies of the group's play.

The children seem to wish for harmony while trying to play in a competitive game whose inherent logic requires disharmony. Their concern for (caring about) each other usually prevails suggesting that they disregard the logic demand and choose instead to exist in harmonious relations of care, however in other moments they also choose to ignore another's (for example, Sarah's) claims. They have constructed some way to decide when to concern themselves with another's feelings and when to not to be concerned.

In *Summer*, Mark and Ali become embroiled in a dispute in the sandbox. Mark's frustration escalates, as Ali keeps dumping sand in his water bucket. Ali may have thought she was playing in a "proper" way. She seems to finally understand that Mark wants her to stop when he shouts at her, and she quietly says to herself that it's not funny. As a group, we initially heard her statement as an assertion directed to Mark. We thought she was defending herself by telling Mark that his shouting at her wasn't funny. But another possible idea positions Ali as explaining to herself that what she is doing is not funny. In the first interpretation in which we understand her as challenging Mark, we situate her as already understanding that he has a different desire than her. In the second interpretation, we can imagine her as gradually discovering that he sees things differently than she does. These two interpretations invite different understandings about the caring relations between these children.

Taking up the second interpretation, we can then position Ali as attempting to enter into caring relations with Mark. Held (2006) explains caring relations as first involving attention to another's perceptual world and then responding to that perception rather than simply imposing a personal truth. In this vignette, Ali could be noticing Mark's desire, and perhaps explaining to herself. Understanding the relation in this way makes her statement, to Mark about being able to put more water in the bucket, a statement of concern, responding to his emotional state. She can be conjectured as trying to reassure Mark, to be expressing concern for his concerns. She notices and responds to him and attempts to take responsibility for his concerns, components of Held's caring relations. Mark does not acknowledge her attempt and does not respond to her, but he also does not continue to yell at her. To claim that he receives or responds to her caring may be exaggerating his response, but he does not reject her attempt. We can imagine Ali and Mark at the beginning of a caring relation.

Inserting a caring relations concept into the stories makes it possible to theorize these moments between children beyond developmentalism. Elaborating the moments with caring relations allows different understanding relationships to emerge. Thinking with responsiveness, responsibility-taking and reciprocity as Held describes, we understand Nathan and Devin, Tessa and the others, Ali and Mark, as in a relation of caring. We see caring occurring between and amongst children. While I have not produced evidence that the multiage practice produces better caring relations between children or accelerates development of caring at earlier ages, I suggest that neither do multiage environments prevent their existence or the possibility of such relations. Thinking with a non-developmental theory produces a non-developmental understanding about relationships between children. Further, thinking with caring relations expands conceptualizing relationships between children and adults.

Children Caring for Adults

In *On the Deck* Nathan cares for and protects the deck when he requires that I remove my shoes. He takes seriously his deck caretaker role and rejects my attempt to keep my shoes. Yet, he buffers his demand when he offers to put my shoes where they belong - perhaps an act of caring for me. That action could be explained through developmentalism, for example as Nathan demonstrating knowledge learned through modeling. It is certainly possible to assume that others - parents, siblings, caregivers, or older children - may have performed similar care-taking actions for him, that he learned the behavior through modeling and that he is now putting that knowledge about helpful acting to use. However, that learning explanation masks the caring relation. Focusing on the feelings of the moment - Nathan's concern for the deck, my empathy for his concern, his sensitivity to my comfort - highlights the multiple caring relations of the moment. Nathan and I respond to each other in relations of care. Characterizing the moment as caring relations does not dismiss a developmental, learning explanation but rather includes and goes beyond it. It also highlights how children care for others, including adults. The moment demonstrates that caring in child care centres can be conceptualized as multi-directional including but not only directed from an adult toward children.

Adults Caring For Children

Fears about adults being able to adequately care for children within these large group-sized multiage child care centres motivated the implementation of the primary caregiving strategy before the centres were given permission to open. The fears connect to the challenge of, what Osgood (2010b) describes as, the emotional labour involved in caring for children – a challenging, demanding labour. A desire to ensure “well-managed and appropriate emotional

practice through daily professional interactions” (Osgood, 2010b, p.131) led to the enactment of the primary caregiving strategy.

However, as the project evolved, one centre eliminated the strategy. To be able to do so, both the licensing officer and the project coordinator (me) required that the centre supervisor explain why, and describe and demonstrate how, they would engage in caring relations with children. The explanation and demonstrations provided exemplified the thinking and practices of a critically reflective emotional (professional) caregiver. The following analysis engages with both primary caregiving and other incidents of adults engaged in caring with, for, and about, the children in their care.

Primary caregiving. As I describe in Chapter 1, we proposed and later implemented a primary caregiving practice in the multiage centres. Accepting the developmental perspective that very young children have many needs, we intended with the practice to safeguard the youngest children. Moving beyond a developmental perspective, we decided that older children would also benefit from having one adult assigned to ensuring their needs were met. In these stories, we can perceive two instances that highlight the caring relations between primary caregivers and the children assigned to them.

In one occurrence we catch a glimpse of a moment of mutual affection between Sally and Devin. The brothers, Adam and Devin, who appear in *On The Deck*, are both in Sally’s primary caregiving group. As the older boys jockey for position around Lucy, Devin notices Sally through the kitchen window. Sally, on a lunch break, also notices Devin. He looks up at her smiling and she, smiling at him, leans down so that they are eye to eye. She puts her finger on her side of the window and he put his finger on his side. Our observation of this affectionate moment generated our acknowledgement of the relations created through primary caregiving

practices. Sally and Devin appeared to us to be connected in a mutually affectionate relation. Many of participant caregivers commented on the efficacy of the primary caregiving practice in facilitating the development of caring relations. We discussed our belief that affection springs up between adults and children without the practice but that primary caregiving seemed to work to accelerate its' development and intensify commitment.

Another moment reveals how the practice works. As Lucy reads to the boys, Roland comes back to her and asks if they could eat lunch on the deck. In day-to-day practice, the primary caring giving groups usually eat lunch together. As a child in Lucy's group, Roland knows that she would be the adult who would make this decision. In a caring relation with Roland, Lucy takes his request seriously and agrees that they could eat lunch there. When Adam, who was in a different group, states that their group was going to eat there too, Lucy neither denies nor agrees. Rather she defers and redirects Adam to the adult responsible for his group. This interaction illuminates the intricacy of caring relations in the centres. Caring occurs between all centre members but a focus, and particular caring actions and relations, exist between primary caregivers and the children in their primary caregiving groups.

Adults caring for and about children. Kristi, the adult caregiver in *We Are All Canucks*, concerns herself with David (the Zamboni driver)'s feelings. She attempts to negotiate a role for him and explicitly directs the children's attention to his feelings. She offers a suggestion about how to include him without interfering with their pleasure. This small interaction suggests that caring relations exist between this particular adult and both David and the other children, and that she wants them to be in caring relations with each other. She brings her expectations about care and caring relations to their consciousness, in an attempt to teach caring. She places enough importance on caring about and for others to give voice to it.

Illuminating Tronto's (1993) theory about ethics, care and obligations, she attempts to teach the older children about caring obligations. In this case, living in multiage child care creates a context that pushes her to teach older children to care for younger ones. She proposes that they make room for him by creating a role in the play and that they teach him the role. While the play does not take that direction, her attempt to introduce the idea suggests that she values caring relations. Likewise, during the research meetings, conversations revealed the importance other caregivers placed on children learning how to function well in a group by caring for others and as well on learning to self regulate.

Other small moments highlight adults' engagement in caring for children. For example in *On The Deck*, Shannon can be understood as being in caring relations with Roland when she notices his bare feet and takes responsibility for his comfort. A small moment, easily overlooked, I argue events like this one characterize the caring involved in child care. The moment quietly demonstrates attentiveness and responsiveness. It shows how those caring relations qualities live in the multiage centres. Even in the midst of multiple demands, adults attend to children's comfort and wellbeing. The relationships between adults and children involve care.

Similarly, when Lucy reads to William, when she listens to the boys, she exemplifies caring, in these moments caring about their desires, their emotions and their curiosities. Our critical self-reflection referred to earlier can be understood through this lens. In a caring relation, another's need demands our attention, responsiveness creating a responsibility. When we perceive ourselves as failing to fulfill William's desire to be read to, we perhaps understand this not just as a failure to foster development of his self-esteem, but as a failure in maintaining caring relations.

Non-Caring

Responsiveness of the cared-for to the caring is an important theoretical construct of caring relations (Held, 2006). One-caring is not enough to constitute relations of care. The cared-for must receive the care for caring relations to exist. In an analysis of these ordinary moments, many instances of caring can be inferred. However, for caring relations to be present those actions of caring-for must be met with a response. When Roland accepts the socks from Shannon and puts them on, we can imagine that Roland and Shannon exist in that moment in caring relation. Roland could just as easily, take the socks and not put them on, rejecting Shannon's care. But he does not reject the care; he accepts it. Similarly the other moments described end in reception of care rather than rejection of it.

However, other events reveal possible resistance to the offered care. When the boys repeatedly interrupt Lucy in her caring - her action of fulfilling their stated desire to be read to - they may be disrupting the caring relations. They wish; Lucy fulfills; they disrupt. This interaction holds complexity regarding caring relations. Has Lucy not understood their wish? Does their wish include the desire to jostle for position? Is jostling for position pleasurable? If jostling for position is pleasurable is Lucy still in a relation of caring when she attempts to stop it? Considering this interaction filtered through a caring relations lens illuminates the intricacy of caregiving. Lucy may be trying to care for the boys - and her later negative judgment of herself suggests that she was - but are the boys receiving her care or are they constructing another kind of relation? Additionally we could ask if these boys care about Lucy. Their disregard for her intent could be understood as non-caring.

Similarly in *Summer*, it is possible to see how personal goals and plans blind us to others, limiting the relation of caring. Watching *Summer* allowed me to see myself in that moment and

analyze my actions from an exterior rather than interior position. At the same time I can remember the interior position that focused my attention on becoming an unobtrusive video recorder and camera. Meanwhile, Bill expresses enormous curiosity about the camera and what I might be doing with it. He makes several attempts to engage me in his curiosity but I don't engage. I remain connected to my own concerns. Only his story about his dad walking on walls contains enough power to draw my attention to him. When I finally pay attention, I listen and question, I become responsive but I do not take the care required to enter into a relation of caring with him, at least not at that moment. I listen for bit but return to my, for me, more pressing task.

I had a history of caring with, for and about this boy. He was in my primary caregiving group. But in this moment, I choose to stay with my own project and not engage with his desire to explore my material camera and tripod. This brief encounter highlights the complexity of caring relations. They are not fixed. Those in caring relationships do not always engage in caring. In this moment, I modify my relationship with Bill. I still care about him, and will in the future be in a caring relation with him, but at that moment, our relations are characterized by my inattention and non-responsiveness, while he appears to be completely oblivious to my goals. We are each engaged with our own interests not with each other.

Caring Relations In Summary

Examining the recorded events while thinking with caring relations allowed both an extension of our earlier interpretations of the moments and an expansion of our conceptions of caring relations. Caring relations can be conceived beyond the understanding of familiar adult caregiver, child care-receiver, focus. Caring relations can also be understood as children's caring relations with non-living spaces, with living but non-human beings, with siblings and with caregiving flowing from child to adult. The non-caring moments function to bring the caring

relations moments into sharper focus. Considering the stories through a caring relations lens makes visible the complexity of such relations.

Weaving a theoretical concept – caring relations – into these stories makes possible conjectures about caring relations between children, between adults and a group of children and between humans and places. All these relations contain mutuality. This analysis extends the stories, producing an image of caring relations in the multiage centres as complex, complicated living experience connecting place, materials, living beings, child and adult.

Dwelling

What affordances appear while children are dwelling and wayfaring through the centres?

A focus on children's lived experience in multiage child care centres introduces a phenomenological consideration of the centres' curriculum. Ross and Mannion (2012) pointed to Tim Ingold's (2000, 2010) concept of dwelling, to think about curriculum and curriculum making. They argued that from a dwelling perspective a lived curriculum is "an on-going process, an improvisation, a response to a context inherent in the relations among people, places, materials and activities" (Ross & Mannion, 2012, p.307).

I mean a perspective that treats the immersion of the organism-person in an environment or lifeworld as an inescapable condition of existence. From this perspective, the world continually comes into being around the inhabitant, and its manifold constituents take on significance through their incorporation into a regular pattern of life activity.

Ingold, 2000, p. 153

In this quote Ingold (2000) described his dwelling perspective of knowledge generation. This perspective offers ways to reconsider early childhood curriculum beyond developmentally appropriate practices. Early childhood settings, such as the multiage centres in this study, can be

conceptualized as lifeworlds immersing in relation, the inhabitant children and adults as well as all the living and non-living constituents of the environment. For those inhabitants, knowledge specific to the particular place comes into being. A dwelling perspective includes the ideas that persons are immersed in lifeworlds; that person and world continually come into being together; that cognition means a focus on a whole body in the world-dwelling process; that landscape signifies the lived-in world known by those in that place; and that immediate experience creates knowledge (Ingold, 2000).

Lifeworlds

Thinking with the dwelling concept together with the multi-age centre stories focuses attention on how these children and their caregivers perceive their inhabited place in the present and how the centres and their components unfold together. Understanding child care centres with this perspective forces a rupture in thinking about what might constitute the curriculum of high quality child care - a familiar but contested concept in early childhood education.

In their critique of early childhood quality evaluations, Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (2007) pointed out that rather than accommodating diversity and complexity, quality has come to mean “a universal, knowable and objective standard” (p.105). Standardized child care quality measures foist one size-fits-all child care environments on communities. Like one-size-fits all clothing, one-size fits-all child care does not include all, suits some more than others, perhaps fits some places better than others. Regulated child care standards, emerging from desires to protect children and influenced by quality claims, both impose and exclude cultural beliefs, values and practices.

However, beliefs about best practices or what constitutes high quality child care environments lead to regulations about child care structure and organization. Regulations in

British Columbia exclude multiage groupings of children in child care centres, with intent to produce good environments for children. A dwelling perspective invites consideration of the worth of non-standardized, non-prescribed, non-outcome-driven child care. Instead of measuring quality through the criteria of structures, processes and outcomes, exploring the multiage child care stories with Ingold's (2000, 2010) dwelling perspective directs thinking toward those centres' persons and worlds coming-into-being with the understanding that the coming-into-being cannot be foretold.

The stories considered here provide a way to revisit events while thinking with the concept of dwelling. In each story, lifeworlds unfold, affording particular perceptual possibilities. As unique moments, the stories show that different perceptions and different knowledges become available in each site. Within this perspective, curriculum cannot be contained in a developmentally appropriate package but instead becomes that which the place has the capacity to afford combined with that to which the inhabitants attend. For example, in one story a boy attends to worm life; in a second, four children work with game-playing complexities; and in the final one, a flower, a railing, warm weather and a girl intersect to produce a quiet contemplative moment. No one planned or likely even imagined either the curriculum or the learning of those events. Yet, from a dwelling perspective, knowledge grows in and through these moments. The lifeworld forms the curriculum.

Immersed in these multiage centre lifeworlds, the children and the caregivers each continually come-into-being in the centres. As lived-in worlds known by them, the centres exist as shared landscapes in which immediate experience creates their unique and local knowledge(s). In this way, we can understand the multiage centres as places with perceptual affordances for all, young children, older children and still older adults. This understanding contrasts with a

developmentally appropriate understanding, which suggests to best support learning, environments will be matched to the learners' (children's) developmental capacity where age predicts that capacity. In a dwelling perspective, persons will always be learners, and landscapes will always be places where learning always occurs. The requirement for matching environments to learners evaporates.

Ingold (2000) describes the things and beings of a world as constituents of that world. Thinking of persons and other living beings, such as flowers or worms, as continually coming-to-be can be comprehended by thinking of life and life cycles. A person is born a baby, becomes (usually) a child, a young person, an adult, perhaps an old person and will eventually die. Other living things follow their own life cycle. Particular situations and events create unique stories for each living thing and the concept of life includes the idea of constant change or of continual coming-into-being. However, thinking non-living things coming-into-being cannot be understood in this way. It is more difficult to conceptualize non-living things as continually changing. A chair is a chair and remains that chair until it is destroyed and perhaps reworked into something else. How can we think of it as continually coming-into-being? However, from a dwelling perspective, people and non-living things and living beings in a place emerge into being inseparably as a shared lifeworld, chairs included.

For example, in each of these centres sits a rocking chair big enough to hold an adult and two or three children. The chairs come to be relational places of comfort, refuge, closeness and also at times places of playfulness, noisiness and imagination. In each centre, the inhabitants come to understand their rocking chair in particular ways. As time goes on, some ways of knowing the chair become part of the centre's inhabitants' shared world. The chair unfolds with some place-inhabitants, as the place where a particular child falls asleep held by her caregiver. In

another relation, in a daily ritual, a parent may read a book to their child in the chair before leaving for the day. For some children it becomes a rollicking place to take a risky ride. The chair itself becomes other through these interactions. It begins to wear, it begins to creak, it begins to take the shape of those who sit in it. The chairs have multiple known but continually changing meanings that emerge through the perceptual world of the inhabitants. In the stories, places of non-living things in relations with living things such as people, flowers, worms, include the wooden deck floor in *On the Deck*, the brooms and the pylons in *We are All Canucks*, and bridge railing in *Summer*.

The four centres began with similar floor plans, furniture, written philosophies, staffing structures, age combinations and outdoor environments, but gradually and while retaining those similarities, they became different places. Likewise, the centres started with the larger organization's culture and gradually became unique within the organization while still reflecting the organizational vision. Additionally, the organization exists within the larger world of early childhood care and education containing standards, regulations, and practice guidelines and frameworks all of which became connected to the multiage sites. Yet in the midst of all this sameness, different, unique, local places formed, reformed and continue to reform. The place in which the inhabitants dwell in relation with each other and with the place constituents forms a specific lifeworld.

Person And World Coming to Be

In these centres, outdoor world exploration forms a curricular context or from a dwelling perspective, a lifeworld. The centres' physical and social world, its landscape, includes dirt, sand, water, plants, insects, rocks, branches, pieces of wood, hut-like structures, built environments, books, other creatures, other human beings, relationships amongst all those

constituents and an emotional tone that expects and encourages exploring. From this perspective we can understand a child as making her way along paths, wayfaring through a particular place apprehending what her world affords, rather than receiving or constructing knowledge. Along the way, things happen, she sees, hears, touches, tastes, smells - perceives - and her life at the centre unfolds and emerges as she does. She becomes knowledgeable with understandings shared with others in that place and perhaps also with some unique private understandings. At the same time the world and its components unfolds, perhaps influenced by its encounters with the child. Each element: child, being, material comes into being alongside the other elements.

Through interacting with an earthworm, one child, Roland takes up the curriculum, or from this perspective makes his way along a path available in his lifeworld. His changing perception of a world coming into being constitutes his learning when thinking learning within a dwelling perspective. This learning image differs from the images contained in other curriculum orientations such as a developing-cognitive-processes orientation or of a means-ends orientation, as described by Eisner (1970). A developing-cognitive-processes orientation holds that knowledge pre-exists but must be constructed, positions learners (in this case children) as constructors of knowledge and understands teachers (adults in child care places) as designers and planners of an educational space in which the required knowledge can be constructed. In a technical-instrumental or means-ends curricular orientation, knowledge also preexists but this orientation situates teachers as knowledge holders and tellers, while learners receive the desired knowledge through instruction (Eisner, 1970). In contrast to these orientations, from a dwelling perspective, knowledge does not preexist but comes into being through a world perceived by a being or learner who is simultaneously coming into being in relations with other beings and things also coming into being (Ingold, 2000, 2010).

In thinking with the dwelling concept, adults in a child care setting neither plan the learning environment for children nor instruct children (although they may understand themselves to be doing so). Rather, with a dwelling perspective, they can be conceived of as perceiving worlds coming into being alongside children who also perceive worlds coming into being. Being situated in the same place, with similar affordances and with communication, makes possible for the inhabitants (the children and adults) similar perceptions of the local world or, in other words, a shared knowledge base. Children and adults, entering a shared perceptual world in the childcare centres have the opportunity to explore perceptions together. The adults may be, but do not need to be, positioned as instructors or experts. They may point out information, or demonstrate skills or be the knowledgeable leader and act as teacher, guide or coach. However, in other moments, they may dwell alongside children as learners, followers, and partners.

The three stories each offer moments in which we can image or position adults in these various roles. When Nathan and I discuss and debate whether I should wear my shoes on the deck we exist in a moment that cannot be understood as a preplanned teaching moment. What occurred between us cannot be considered curriculum from a technical/instrumental orientation. Neither pre-established goals nor objectives existed eliminating any possibility of measurable outcomes. I cannot be considered as in the role of teacher although perhaps Nathan can be. Regardless, even understood as teacher, Nathan did not preplan a lesson. We both enter the moment without teaching goals. The moment unfolds and in the end I take off my shoes because he asked me to and I accepted his wish. We dwell together on the deck and agreed to maintain it in a particular way. Lesson plans, lessons and skills assessment may be present in the dwelt-in

world but understanding curriculum through a dwelling perspective means the wayfaring, the paths and the perceptions that will emerge can be neither predicted nor controlled.

Yet, the moment could be explained through a cognitive processes orientation, in which Nathan and I could both be understood as constructing understandings. Similarly, the moments when Roland, the worm, Lucy and I interacted could be explained through that orientation. In a cognitive processes orientation, children are understood as learners, who explore environments, constructing knowledge and adults are positioned as curriculum planners or designers who create opportunities for certain knowledges to be constructed. Long before the moment occurred, I engaged with others to design the yard, taking care to create a place that afforded many opportunities for what we conceived as playing in a natural environment. The day before the moment, Lucy and the children recreated the deck space and that morning she had placed certain things on it, likely with intent to provide particular kinds of opportunities. In addition, this early childhood educator team maintained the natural environment with the desire that children would have moments with non-pet living beings like worms.

However, in a dwelling perspective, Roland's worm knowledge comes into being as he perceives the world around him. Understanding curriculum through a dwelling perspective suggests not construction of already pre-existing knowledge but apprehension of particular local knowledge as it comes into being. When I remind Roland to be gentle with the worm, I offer him direction and information. I intend at that moment to influence him toward caring for/about a living thing. Within this perspective, our relationship can be conceptualized as one in which we each afford the other perceptual opportunities. Roland's action with the worm challenges me to consider my ethical teacher responsibility, to decide what is most important in that moment. My directions offer Roland information about worms and about our shared lifeworld's cultural

values. At the moment, he engages with the worm physically in a way that allowed him to gain worm knowledge but his perceptual world also contains a relation with me. In addition, another adult Lucy enters into the relation and adds more to our unfolding worlds. His world, in that moment, contains many learning possibilities. He has information from the worm, from Lucy from me, and from the place, the deck and the yard. In the moment he lives in relation with us all.

Thinking this event with a dwelling perspective points to the coming into being of Roland, Lucy, me and of our perceptual worlds. Our worlds collide and then overlap when Lucy engages with Roland and me. Ingold (2000) suggested that people dwell in relational contexts engaged with their surrounding and describes learning as occurring through education of attention. Each person involved in this interaction - Roland, Lucy, me - dwells in a perceptual world that includes the other people, all other living beings and non-living components along each of our wayfaring paths. As we make our way, we become attuned to some aspects along the path. In this moment, worm characteristics, words, place ambience, the other people present, the temperature, our histories and our hopes come to be our worlds as we come in to being in those ever-changing worlds.

The lifeworld in the moment holds all at once, Lucy's and my pedagogical intents and values, Roland's curiosity, and the caring relations between Lucy and Roland, along with the books, the deck, the worm, the yard, the water or in Ingold's (2000) terms, the landscape. The perceptual world contains not just the physical affordances but also our perceptions, and our relations with that which we perceive in our world. Thinking curriculum with this concept creates another way to think about multiage child care, about all child care settings. If we think of curriculum as *currere*, as running the course, as an emerging lifeworld we cannot plan for age-

appropriate outcomes. What comes about will depend on the lifeworld in the moment and that world will always be local and unique and changing.

Cognition Embodied

Ingold (2000) regarded, “embodiment as a movement of *incorporation* rather than inscription, not a transcribing of form onto material but a movement wherein forms themselves are generated” (p.193). A dwelling perspective positions cognition as embodied, as a process in which a world-dwelling body perceives and thinks with and through those perceptions. In *On the Deck* the interactions amongst the group of reading children invites consideration of embodied cognition. We can see them piled against each other, in physical contact and in psychological contact, perceiving. Embedded in a landscape, in the world, cognition occurs through their sensed perceptions, including the touch of others.

In this instance, the children and Lucy endeavour to read a book requested by a particular child. The non-fiction book provides opportunities for discussion which Lucy attempts. However the children’s world also focuses their attention on their bodies’ physical relation to other bodies. A whine of “you’re squishing me” dominates the event that lasted for about fifteen minutes. Even though these children appear to want to listen to Lucy as she reads, they constantly interrupt with the squishing complaint. The physical connection, the touch and weight of another’s body, overrides the sound and meaning contained in Lucy’s voice. Touch demands attention more than sound and hearing does. In this moment, the children’s dwelt-in world contains bodies crowding each other in competition for a desired place near Lucy. As they make their way through the moment in that particular place, they perhaps create conceptual knowledge about squishing, jockeying and positioning. Attending to this moment reminds us that cognition always occurs embodied. Our bodies perceive our worlds through our senses.

The story, *We are All Canucks*, also demonstrates the embodiment of cognition while bodies world-dwell. In this story, as watchers and listeners, we can envision children as constantly grappling with meaning. We see Tessa struggling hard to maintain emotion, understand hockey, and play hockey while listening to other children explain. As they talk and plan; they continually move. Tessa's conception of winning and winner teams appears to connect not with goal scoring but with being part of group, in this case the fantasy Canucks. Both Michael and Tessa claim to be making sense. As I listen and when the caregiver research group listened to their exchange, we have difficulty discerning the sense or logic. In our worlds, a competitive game between teams logically produces a winning team and a losing team and each player, at least during a game, stays on the same team. In their game, this logic seems less certain. Their whole body immersion produces a different understanding about their game.

Ingold (2000, 2010) contrasted cognition understood from a dwelling perspective with cognition understood from a building perspective. From a building perspective, we construct or build knowledge. Cognition then is constructing. In this perspective an educator will provide a learner with materials with which to build. The educator will try to match the provided construction materials with what the educator believes to be the constructor (child/learner)'s constructing skill. For example, in *On the Deck*, an adult had "set-up" the deck with picture books and puzzles that range in complexity, likely with the intent that the materials interest and challenge a group children understood as having a range of cognitive development. Similarly, in *Summer*, an adult had created a waterfall in a sandbox, likely with an intent to provide an open-ended learning environment.

A dwelling perspective invites understanding cognition as perceiving through the senses. Understanding cognition as emerging from perceptions leads to thinking curriculum as what

Ingold (2000) describes as landscape. If learning proceeds from sensing and perceiving, a curriculum will be the landscape, a place of perceptual affordances. Our task as caregivers and educators then becomes attending to what the landscape affords.

Landscapes

The landscape, in short, is not a totality that you or anyone else can look at, it is rather the world in which we stand in taking up a point of view on our surroundings. And it is within the context of this attentive involvement in the landscape that the human imagination gets to work in fashioning ideas about it. (Ingold, 2000, p. 207)

For Ingold (2000) landscape was not land or nature or space. Rather he explained landscape as “the world as it is known to those who dwell therein, who inhabit its places and journey along the paths connecting them” (2000, p.193). As lived-in worlds known by the children and caregivers who inhabit them, the centres exist as landscapes in which immediate experience creates the knowledge(s) of the dwellers.

For example, in the video *Summer*, we see a girl, stopping for a moment on a bridge that goes through a garden. The moment conveys warm sun, a place filled with moving children, growing flowers, and the stationary bridge. The girl climbs on the bridge railing and hangs on it for about a minute, touching and looking at a yellow flower. The moment is brief; she climbs off the railing, looks around her and wanders off. Most who view this moment respond to it emotionally. When the research group discussed it, many comments focused on the peacefulness of the moment, on the beauty of an unhurried child, on their own memories of childhood summers. Others made positive judgments about the moment being available to her, perhaps making quality evaluations about the processes and pedagogies of that centre. A dissenting voice questioned the lack of adult involvement. The comments contained judgments about good

childhoods, good child care practices and good child care environments. However, thinking with the dwelling concept, the yard and all it contains can be understood as a landscape, as an unfolding world known to those who dwell there. It represents neither an example of universal high quality child care (multiage is good) nor a missed opportunity for an adult to explore deeply with a child (multiage is bad). Unique and local, the landscape provides a particular experience at that moment to those who inhabit it.

In this way the multiage centres can be understood as worlds coming into being with the people who inhabit them. A developmental perspective of learning can be included but does not need to be the only, or the most important, explanation of what can or should be learned. In this described moment, the world coming-to-be included a girl and a flower. We do not know what she learned or thought or felt in that moment but we can believe that she learned and thought and felt. She attends to the flower with two senses - touch and sight - and perceives what she feels and sees.

Neither her age nor her development requires this particular lived-in moment. A good childhood can be had without it. The experience does not need to be a universal. It does not belong to an essential curriculum for five-year olds. It happened; watching it evoked pleasurable memories of childhood for many and provoked a question for one. Thinking with dwelling enables thinking curriculum as multiple, unique, local and occurring in present time. Multiage centres offer different, neither necessarily better nor worse, curricular opportunities than centres with more narrow age ranges do. Each centre, each day in each centre, each moment in each day provides a different, unknown until it happens, lifeworld or unfolding curriculum.

We Are All Canucks also occurs through a particular landscape known by those children in that place and at that time. Michael, Tessa, Sarah and Maia imagine a rink. I watched them

play hockey several times and at our meetings their caregivers described how they played hockey often and in many places. The rink did not exist as a fixed place. Any part of the environment could become a rink. However, during this moment this little asphalt patch functioned as ice and they acted as if it was a rink. Watching them do this contributed to my ongoing interpretation of cognition and children and fantasy play. My perceptions suggest to me that these children simultaneously know the asphalt as ice rink and as not ice rink. They understand the younger boy's shovel as Zamboni and as shovel, the boy as a Zamboni driver and as not-knowing younger child. They apprehend their landscape together in a particular way. We watched them on the video and perceived them enacting a shared understanding but we do not perceive the landscape, either virtually or actually in the way that they do.

While their landscape offers up particular concrete entities that the children apprehend in particular ways, it also offers up particular histories, relationships and memories that they share and which become woven into the hockey game. They use a hard surface, brooms, physical boundaries, pylons and a ball. They weave into their play their prior hockey knowledge, their desires, their perceptions of each other and their relationships with each other. They dwell in this place. As a lived-in place that they know, they play this game, learning to be with each other, to think about other's feelings, to work with concrete materials to make real something they imagine.

This story juxtaposed with the dwelling concept invites us to wonder about play, and about what we might mean by our mantra: children learn through play. In Chapter 4, I described this centre as one that identifies as play-based and child-centered. I suggest adults' desires for children to have moments like those in *We Are All Canucks* influence the emphasis on and defense of play. However, often when we (the caregivers in this child care service) discuss play,

especially informally in the centres, we focus on how to convince others, especially parents, about play's importance. To justify a play-based program we point to evidence that children learn skills such as language, social, and physical ones. We may make claims about children's emotional and physical well-being as benefits of child play. Finally, we often emphasize the importance of play for creative and cognitive development. We may even go so far as to point out which important concepts play reveals. In this story we could identify one-to-one correspondence (the goals on net), attributes of physics (what happens when one hits a ball with a broom) or the logic of winning (one stable unified team scores more goals than the other - more vs. less). We could describe the emotional growth (Tessa holding it together) and the observed social skills (all the negotiating).

However, from a phenomenological perspective we cannot know that those concepts will actually be learned. Thinking with dwelling means that before the play begins we cannot know, predict or control what will happen, be experienced or learned. The landscape will offer particular affordances and each child will perceive what he or she perceives. Children will learn as they play; however we cannot know what they will learn. They will learn what their perceptual landscape affords and what they perceive. Thinking from a dwelling perspective denies the possibility of being able to appropriate play as a pedagogical teaching tool in which an adult can teach a specific predetermined concept to a child. Thinking within a dwelling perspective creates implications for addressing power asymmetries, perhaps suggesting a decentering of the adult, making visible other landscape features. Children inventing a hockey game can be understood as a world unfolding and with it unforeseen perceptions made possible.

In the story, *On the Deck* a previous event - when the centre inhabitants (children and adults) cleaned and prepared the deck – likely encouraged Nathan to perceive the deck as a

clean, maintained place. When he insists that I remove my shoes and points out that he had just swept there, he chooses to teach me about the deck, how it should be kept and how much work he had put into keeping it clean. His deck knowledge conflicts with my deck use. I try to dwell with the deck in the way that suited me but our paths intersect and he successfully introduces his deck-truth into my perceptual awareness. His disappointment in my shoe wearing, his examination of my shoes and my comprehension of his seriousness convinces me to adopt his truth. As we dwell in relation together on the deck, his deck care changed my knowledge of it. My perceptual landscape shifts in response to him and the landscape becomes shared place knowledge.

Knowledge Born In Lived Experience

When Roland cautioned that I be careful of the white things flying in the sky he shares with me knowledge learned in his past lived experience. He *knows* dust bunnies as stinging insects and further that flapping around causes stinging insects to sting. He clarifies for me how he knows this: it happened to his sister. His knowledge both about dust bunnies and about stinging doesn't match my own. I believe that dust bunnies are not insects (a perception I assume shared by other people). I also do not believe that flapping around causes stinging insects to sting in spite of many others, beside Roland, telling me that flapping does indeed cause stinging. My own lived experience has taught me to believe stinging things sting with or without flapping provocation.

Intersecting Ingold's (2000) dwelling concept with this moment highlights how our immediate world, as we live in it, conceives or changes or solidifies our knowledge. In the future, Roland will likely change his knowledge base and understand dust bunnies as other than stinging insects. I may eventually come to believe that insects sting in self-protection not evil

intent. However, in the immediate moment analyzed here, our knowledge about the dust bunnies and stinging insects does not change. The dust bunnies don't sting Roland but he still believes in the possibility. Perhaps saying the words and explaining the concept physically even strengthened his stinging-insect-dust-bunny truth. Nothing happened to convince me that dust bunnies would sting or that flapping caused stinging. The actual lived moment maintains for both Roland and me our different understandings. I, as a more experienced person, a teacher, could have chosen that moment in our shared world-dwelling to explain to Roland that dust bunnies aren't insects but I don't and he continues to know dust bunnies as stingers around whom we should take care.

This tiny exchange that happened without plan evokes contemplation of what it means to teach when conceptualizing curriculum as *currere* and learning as apprehended, as coming about through dwelling. I don't try to teach Roland about the difference between dust bunnies and neither does Sharon. My videoing task absorbs me and she acts to ensuring his comfort by finding his socks. When viewing the video, the caregivers focused on how he knew what he knew. Lucy explained his sister's powerful influence on Roland's thinking. No one implied that either Sharon or I should have taught. If pressed, it is likely that all would agree that Roland will come to this knowledge on his own without direct or indirect instruction. However, reviewing the moment while taking a phenomenological perspective introduces questions about how, when, and what we choose to teach, to explain, or to point out and about what the learner subsequently learns or apprehends. To think that learners apprehend through their lived experience - wayfaring through a landscape - leads to the conclusion that teachers teaching must be understood as one of many perceptual events in the learner's landscape. In this way all inhabitants in the landscape continually become different.

Becoming

What becoming-other possibilities for children emerge through living in multiage child care centres?

Becoming is certainly not imitating, or identifying with something; neither is it regressing-progressing; neither is it corresponding, establishing corresponding relations; neither is it producing, producing a filiation or producing through filiation. Becoming is a verb with a consistency all it's own; it does not reduce to, or lead back to, "appearing," "being," "equalling," or "producing." (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p.239)

This third analysis considers children, adults, and place becoming-other while living, playing, learning and being in multiage child care centres. Understanding becoming as becoming-other, not becoming the other opens analysis of the stories to thinking change as neither reliant on developmental truths nor as literally becoming an-other. Rather than knowing what an outcome will be, thinking change as becoming suggests not knowing and remaining open to what might become. Not knowing means an impossibility of predicting what is to come; it means we cannot say that x produced y. Instead a becoming analysis stays in the present avoiding either confirming developmental theories or making claims about outcomes of multiage practice for developing children.

I organize the analysis through three ideas, place becoming-other, adults becoming-other and children becoming-other. I understand these complex becomings as an assemblage of multiplicities, place multiplicities, adult multiplicities and child multiplicities. The assemblage concept puts boundaries around each multiplicity but allows each one to be ever-changing stories or assemblages. In these assemblages, that are multi-linear systems, "everything happens at once" (Deleuze & Guattari, p. 297).

Place Becoming Other

Beginning again with place, I consider *On the Deck*, *We Are All Canucks*, and *Summer*, with the concept of place-becoming-other. Before the recording of the ordinary moment of *On the Deck* occurred, the deck altered becoming-other. The caregivers and children transformed the deck from a place that received mud, sand, sticks, toys and other elements to a place offering refuge from the busy, messy, sometimes wet and mucky, yard. The people, children and adults, in the centre enacted the transformation, but through their interactions with it we can understand the deck as becoming-other on a line of flight (along with the children and adults on other lines of flight). At one point the deck existed as stuff receiver. At the second point the deck had become a sanctuary. A becoming line of flight occurred in between those points: the changing deck.

The different ambiances and purposes of the same place illuminate the becoming concept. We can imagine both scenes - a messy chaotic place containing the forgotten treasures of busy children who move objects around a yard and a orderly calm place filled with light, softness, books and puzzles and quiet children absorbed in sedentary activities. Once the transformation occurred, the line of flight changed. The messy busy deck deterritorialization stopped. The deck reterritorialized as a calm place. However, understanding that the deck, a materialized place, has changed even while remaining structurally the same, opens the possibility to think of the deck as still/ever changing, even without human actors' planned undertakings. For example, in this story, the place offering quiet refuge becomes a site of struggle and strife as the boys jockey for position beside Lucy. Simultaneously, it becomes a place where brothers evolve their relationship. The place, deck, constantly and continuously transforms becoming a deck multiplicity.

Place becoming-other also emerges in *We Are All Canucks*. In that story, children work hard to create a place to play hockey in a small corner of the yard. Meanwhile a younger child regularly disrupts their plan, maybe mischievously, maybe innocently. A developmental explanation might describe this event through types of play where some types are understood as more typical for particular aged children. For example Parton (1932) described six types of play: unoccupied, onlooker, solitary, parallel, associative and cooperative. She explained that individual children engage in all these types but that the more social play types, associative and cooperative, most typically occur in groups of older children (Parton, 1932). In this case, the play of the younger child who added dirt to the place could be described through Parton's types, as engaged either in solitary play if he was oblivious to the hockey game or in associative play if he was aware of the game. The five-year-old hockey-playing children could be described as participating in cooperative play, a play type considered typical for their age. Understanding children's play as developmentally typical and fitting particular play categories produces understanding children's play places as developmentally appropriate or inappropriate environments.

Additionally, early childhood education theories often position or describe place as an environment that can be rated in terms of early childhood education quality Rating scales such as the ECERS-R (Harms, Clifford & Cryer 1998) and the ITERS-R (Harms, Cryer & Clifford, 2006, 1990) reflect developmental theories by creating one scale for children over-three years of age and one for children under three years. Having different environment quality rating scales for different-aged children implies a normative developmental discourse. Beliefs about difference based on age produced two different scales. However, differentiating quality environments by age normalizes children according to age while marginalizing other differences between

children. As part of a developmental discourse, these scales suggest that children can be known by age and that such knowledge can be used to create specific kinds of places that match normal for age development. Understanding environments as developmentally appropriate or inappropriate conceptualizes place as a tool to support children's development.

In the previous analyses, when thinking with caring, I position place as an object that can be engaged with ethically and when thinking with dwelling, as an agential subject affecting events. Thinking place with becoming evokes place as continually becoming-other rather than as subject or object with a fixed identity. Instead of an environment in which high quality or low quality child care can be found, through thinking with becoming, place shifts conceptually making quality difficult to measure.

Similar to thinking place with dwelling, Reggio Emilia inspired early childhood education scholars sometimes describe the environment as a third teacher, a subject, alongside child and adult (Cadwell, 2003, Fraser, 2006, Strong-Wilson & Ellis, 2007). In this analysis, I extend that metaphor and suggest that place, like children and adults, continually changes and can never be understood as providing a singular experience or as teaching specific concepts. A place can be an object that committed people care for and it can be an agent interacting with the people in it. With the concept of becoming it can also be understood as a continually changing contextual multiplicity. Place becomes other as new elements come together to make it. As new things, material, people come to it place re-assembles becoming-other. This makes thinking developmentally appropriate environments illogical and impossible as both the children developing and the place becoming constantly shift making planning a controlled appropriate match impossible.

For example, when building the centres we deliberately designed the outdoor spaces without climbers, swings and slides - items often found in child care play yards. We did not completely abandon the developmentally appropriate play spaces concept but rather pushed the boundaries making room for non-developmentally predicted play activity. Developmentally appropriate (known through age) implies that children of particular development need particular materials in their environment so that they can be both safe and challenged in their environment. A developmental discourse troubled our environment planning as the multiage practice removed the knowledge foundation on which we had previously relied. Questions about climber height and perceived threats to young children around swings used freely by older children prompted us to eschew that equipment. We had easy access to those familiar pieces of playground equipment in near-by play spaces and the licensing body permitted us to build yards without climbers and swings. We looked beyond the familiar to different elements.

Unable to completely abandon our foundation we attempted to reproduce the opportunities assumed to be provided in developmentally appropriate - (normal) - early years play spaces. We introduced materials found in the near environment such as large rocks and logs for climbing. We added swinging components with garden swings and we made use of loose parts to mimic slides and climbers. However, after the centres opened, the outdoor places as well as the inside spaces, took on ever changing place-becomings as materials and people intra-acted. The hard, unmovable features came into being with the children and caregivers in unpredictable impossible to pre-plan ways. The place-becoming exists in relation with ever-changing elements - people, living beings and materials.

In these stories, children played in those places that had not been matched to their predicted developmental needs and requirements. We can make interpretations of cooperative

and associative play (e.g. *We Are All Canucks*), parallel play (e.g. *On the Deck*), and solitary play (e.g. *Summer*). However, thinking place with becoming disrupts habitual developmental thinking. A line of flight erupts deterritorializing conceptions of place that quickly re-territorialize in new formations. Extending thought, conceiving place as becoming introduces understanding children's places as continually changing rather than as fixed. This requires abandoning single explanations about children's relation with place. Additionally a becoming place concept disrupts the possibility of comparing sites as elements emerging come together in different forms. It becomes impossible to predict appropriate.

In *Summer*, a girl hangs on a railing. That event can easily be explained developmentally. She is tall enough, strong enough, coordinated enough, *old enough*, to manage the action; the environment matches her cognitive development offering her opportunities to construct knowledge. The caregivers who viewed that moment mainly responded with pleasure referring to their own memories of warm, lazy, free childhood summers. One person commented that this was exactly how it [childhood and/or child care] should be that the moment exemplified what childhood experiences should be like. The moment matched that caregiver's image of childhood and childhood's developmental needs.

However, other (unrecorded) moments reveal different bridge possibilities. The place does not have a given known identity. I have observed that same bridge as a site where adults exert control over how it is used, for example children are not permitted to ride tricycles across it as initially many children had accidents when they did. I have also observed children falling off the railing, hurting themselves (no ensuing rule). Likely the caregivers, who enjoyed the moment of the girl hanging on the railing touching a flower, would not enjoy watching children hurt themselves. They might also object to adults interfering with children's freedom by making rules

about bridge bike use. They perhaps would not have enthused that those events were exactly how it should be in children's places. Place-becoming means that elements in the place merge in continual becomings. Elements include the discursive such as rules, beliefs and values, as well as the material such as things and bodies.

The story contains other place-becoming conceptualizations. The slow, lazy image spoke of summer memories for many participant caregivers and revealed desires to produce similar experiences for children - normalizing and idealizing both childhood and summer. This summer image includes a whisper of developmentalism: children should be allowed to be children, and shouldn't be rushed and hurried toward adulthood. The image also contains a romantic or nostalgic, idealized vision of childhood. Yet, relaxing in the sun's warmth is not essential to childhood nor typical of a particular age nor denied to adults.

Thinking with becoming and this pleasing moment when the girl hangs on the bridge creates a beyond-developmentally appropriate understanding of place. We watch, as she seems to stop time for a moment. Draped on a wooden bridge made warm by the sun, she gently and slowly touches a tall wispy flower. Moments before she had been engaged with other children, moments after she re-engaged with them. But in that moment, the place, the flower, the railing, the warmth seemed to invite her into a different relation. For a moment, this place entrances and absorbs her. The fleeting intersection between her and the bridge produces a rupture in thinking about place and her. A line of flight emerges creating different thinking. We no longer imagine her as developing child but as a summer dweller, as a part of this landscape connected to the railing and the flower. The bridge changes identity from a convenient path through a garden to place with agency that entices her to stop and touch a flower.

These children's places change over time and exist as multiplicities within time. Place shifts continually becoming-other in relation to the children and adults living their lives in that time in those places. Thinking with becoming, means thinking places continuously becoming intersecting with beings continuously becoming, or thinking emerging assemblages produced through their intersections. Places don't pre-exist, they emerge as a consequence of the continual interacting of ever-changing constituents. In one story we can see a deck-becoming, intersecting with Lucy becoming-other and some children also becoming-other. In another story we watch children becoming-other shaping a place to play hockey, or perhaps the place-becoming calls the children becoming-other to play. Finally the brief moment when a girl hangs on a bridge railing takes the observing caregivers to memories of their childhood places revealing previously unspoken desires for these current child care places. Each place can certainly be understood as offering developmental opportunities. However, each place exists as a multiplicity, one that includes developmentalism, but also as in a state of constant becoming, of constant emergence. Within the assemblages, places-becoming intersect with children and caregivers, also always becoming.

Adults Becoming-Other

On the Deck makes my becoming-other visible. I entered the deck with a video camera that the children and their parents had given me permission to use. I frequently entered this centre and in the process become-other. When in relation with children, adults often become-other: teacher, carer, knower, or guide. In that relation, children become learners, cared-for, innocents or followers, penitents. However, in this story the roles reverse and Nathan and I both become-other. I become follower; he becomes authority.

With Nathan becoming-deck-keeper, I transform, becoming-unknowing-innocent-deck-guest. In my transformation, I become the penitent asking for permission to keep my shoes. In the moment, no longer holding authority, I accept Nathan's rule that the shoes must come off. This story could be understood as pretend or role-playing rather than transformation or becoming-other. Adults in child care centres sometimes take roles in fantasy play with children and accept an assigned role, acting as a child directs. However, in this case, we do not pretend. Nathan manages my behaviour, I take my shoes off, he puts them where they belong and we go about our business - he engages with a book-puzzle and I set up my video camera and tripod. Pretend fantasy roles do not dictate our actions. We each began the moment with an unfixed identity; our identities momentarily become other but do not stabilize. Rather, thinking with becoming our identities continuously unfold in relation to our situation.

In this story, the other adult, Lucy, also shifts. She begins in a familiar position, book-reader. She engages with the book and the children in the mode of good early childhood educator (Langford, 2007) pointing things out, asking questions, offering information but the children continually interrupt her, disrupting her attempts to read. They appear to have a different agenda, one that involves maintaining personal space. In the story we recognize Lucy becoming-book reader, becoming-leader, becoming-mediator, becoming-meal planner, becoming-first aid attendant, becoming-carer, and sense her repeated attempts to remain book reader, to resist becoming-other than good early childhood educator. Her many responsibilities call out for many identities that shift rapidly from one to the next. From this perspective, we can understand Lucy as constantly becoming, rather than as in a fixed and known identity of good (or bad) early childhood educator.

Apprehending the complexity of her position clarifies our initial distress when we viewed the video. Thinking within the good early childhood educator discourse, we noticed that William never had his simple request - to engage with an adult and a book - met, an event not included in the good educator discourse. Lucy cannot be a good early childhood educator without reading to him but she also cannot be a good early childhood educator without responding to all the other demands. Thinking with the becoming concept invites a challenge to that discourse. The unpredictable becoming-other movement shatters the good early childhood educator image. We apprehend Lucy as becoming-other beyond good or bad educator. She becomes responsible carer and sister dweller.

In *We Are All Canucks*, Kristi can also be perceived as attempting to remain good early childhood educator when she tries to intervene in the play on David's behalf. She expresses concern about him feeling left out and makes a suggestion about how to include him. However, the continual becoming of the group disrupts her attempt. The children have already been engaged with David, trying to explain to him the purpose of a Zamboni and its driver. As we engaged with the stories, Kristi self-reflected and re-evaluated her actions. Her initial concern for David's feelings positioned her comfortably as a good, caring, early childhood educator. After viewing the video she re-positioned herself as an interfering, unaware (bad) early childhood educator. Her self-reflective evaluations situate both self-versions within the good early childhood educator discourse, one successful self, the other a failure. Thinking with becoming forces reconsideration of the evaluations and of a requirement for a fixed good educator identity. With becoming, we can think Kristi as another character in the *We Are All Canucks* story. She becomes a character who contributes ideas based on particular ethical principles - her contribution neither right nor wrong, and she neither good nor bad early childhood educator.

Rather she becomes-other, toward uncertainty, curious and understanding, open-minded and strong-willed, responsible and responsive. Understanding Kristi as continuously becoming-other situates her as a multiplicity. To paraphrase Deleuze and Guattari (1987), she is a crowd of becomings.

Finally, in Summer I resist being caregiver, and try to be video-recorder. I typically worked every day as the senior supervisor in the centre where this video took place. In our organization, a senior supervisor role combines caregiver, supervisor and team leader responsibilities. In my position, I usually worked alongside the other early childhood educators with children all day most days. However, as researcher, I enter the centre with a camera and tried to not be caregiver or supervisor or leader. I attempt to become invisible videographer and researcher. However, Bill, a boy in my primary caregiving group, engages with me in our usual relationship. In particular, he wants to discuss, learn about, and interact with, the video camera and me. He asks many questions. I, aware that our conversation is being recorded, keep trying to disengage and answer him with brief responses. He persists disrupting my becoming researcher intent. Eventually his questions intersect with my thinking process, rupturing it, generating a line of flight. When Bill states that his father walked on walls, he startled me. I take my attention from my attempt to record a “real” moment and join in a conversation *really* happening. I am, in that moment, becoming-present with him when I had been previously been absent.

Engaging with these stories and the concept of becoming reveals the impossibility of fixed adult identities in early years settings. The good early childhood educator becomes book-reader becomes caregiver becomes authority becomes cared-for becomes reflective becomes distracted becomes researcher becomes listener becomes. Like place, adults in early years centres exist as multiplicities. This analysis points to the difficulty of being and remaining a particular

identity, for example, the good early childhood educator or the non-disturbing researcher. Unique events and interactions continually disrupt an ideal vision producing continually changing identities. This becoming educator conceptualization makes it impossible to describe appropriate adult behavior, responses, or skills required for either narrow age-ranged child care centres or multiage child care centres. Place and context continually change and the adults in the place continually change. Similarly the stories arrest in a threshold, moments of children becoming-other. In these stories we can perceive children also as multiplicities alongside place and adults.

Children Becoming-Other

The only way to get outside the dualisms is to be-between, to pass between, the intermezzo - that is what Virginia Woolf lived with all her energies, in all of her work, never ceasing to become. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p.271)

Thinking with becoming produces thinking about unlimited, unpredictable (rhizomatic) transformations of people and of places. For example, in *On the Deck*, Roland can be understood as becoming-other and other and other through complicated, complex, continual transformations. Within minutes he becomes many, contradictory others. He becomes protector (of me) and attacker (of other boys interested in the worm), caregiver (of the worm) and tormentor (also of the worm), leader (of would-be worm scientists) and loner (alone with his worm). These becoming-other subjectivities could be explained through developmental theories, but they can also be understood as not necessarily normative or universal, just other. Neither age nor stage describes the many unstable Roland transformations.

Lucy-becoming-other and Debbie-becoming-other interrupted Roland-becoming-tormentor. That interruption intersected with his stretching-worm experiment, ruptured the

moment and created a deterritorialized line of flight: Roland-becoming-other-than-tormentor. On the one line, Roland can be interpreted as a curious young boy experimenting with the natural world. On another line of flight, Lucy and I engage in teaching with a moral code that negatively judges hurting living things producing obligations for adults to teach that code to children. When those lines intersect, a new line erupts producing different ways to think about the moment.

Roland's worm experiment involves a living thing and it involves inflicting damage on a living thing. We could position Roland as an innocent child, doing what innocent children do - acting as a little scientist. This characterization engages with age (young) to explain behaviour. In that version of events, as adults, our responsibility is to teach the innocent child about his responsibility to another, in this case, the worm.

However, when examining the event from Roland's perspective we can perceive a different line of flight. When we requested, and then required, that Roland stop hurting the worm, we enacted a component of a moral code and attempted to teach Roland that code as well while stopping Roland's experiment. Two lines of thinking collided creating a rupture. The intersection of those two stratified lines - the line of innocent curious experimenting child and the line of do-no-harm morality - interrupts Roland's becoming-tormentor. On a line of flight created through the rupture, Roland becomes-other, with his curiosity and with a newly encountered moral code interacting. The connection of two previously stratified lines of thinking: "I will stretch the worm to make something new" + " Lucy says it will hurt the worm to stretch it and that I must not hurt it" puts on hold Roland's actions and perhaps makes new thought: "I will learn about this worm without hurting him by watching him".

When Nathan insists that I remove my shoes, he takes responsibility for the deck. In that instant he takes up a role often associated with adults or with older children rather than with

children who are under age three years like him. In child care centres adults may assign children, even children not yet three, simple responsibilities such as tidying up their own toys or putting their boots in their cubby or packing up their own lunch. These responsibilities generally connect in some way to the individual child - toys with which they have played or with their own clothes or lunch. In this case however, Nathan takes responsibility for keeping a shared place intact by making sure that I follow the shoe-removing rule and by sweeping away any dirt that I may have tracked onto the deck. Eventually he takes responsibility for me by putting away my shoes. From innocent, possibly mess-making, playing child he becomes-other; he transforms into responsible keeper-of-the-deck.

The children in *We Are All Canucks* also shift becoming-team through a complex shared process. This video captured a small component of a much larger complex becoming. These children, with their caregivers, particularly one adult, had learned and lived hockey throughout the year. They followed a team, they learned the rules, they played hockey with brooms and balls. In that context, together they become-team or perhaps, become-community. As participants building pedagogical narrations, the adults who viewed the video interpreted moments of caring and concern, such as the children's concern for Tessa's seemingly desperate desire to be on the winner team. For her, affiliation seems to be far more significant than goal scoring. Perhaps being included has more meaning for her than the actual game. Whatever her wishes, the other children work hard to comfort her and to help her maintain composure, an event noticed and commented on, when we watched the video. We also noticed Kristi's emphasis on inclusion, when she coaches the group to find a role for David. The hockey game forms the context in which the individuals become-group and team and community. While we recognize

community becoming, it is a particular becoming-community with unique characteristics privileging, for example, inclusion.

The girl becoming-other in *Summer* could be seen as a multiplicity. Preceding the moment she engaged as a group member in a play event that swept across the play yard - a group of older children engaged in fantasy play, talking and moving and negotiating with each other. When we watched the video we could not hear their words so must attend to other details to theorize our stories. As a group we produced no explanation about why she suddenly disengages and becomes-railing dweller. We noticed it, we wondered about it, we even worried about it, making interpretations and asking questions, "She seems lonely. I wonder if she is lonely?" Thinking with becoming offers an image of her becoming-other.

Multiplicities

Uniqueness underscores the concept of becoming. Within this philosophy we, and all living beings and non- living things, constantly come to be, become. However, we do not become according to predicted patterns. We become in relation to the multiplicities that surround us. Each becoming emerges with all that is present, ideas, values, beliefs, knowledges, events, things, material, living beings and human beings. The elements constitute an assemblage that emerges through intersections of the element. Those elements also construct the assemblage boundaries.

Becoming is also characterized as provisional and unstable. It is always in-between, intermezzo (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Becoming does not secure or settle identity, and we cannot preplan or control which becoming-other happens or will happen. For example, in the future, near or later, through other intersections, Roland-becoming-not-tormentor may follow a different line of flight, becoming something other than tormentor and other than not-tormentor.

Nathan's relationship with the deck may transform him further. The team in *We Are All Canucks* may dissolve. The places, the deck, the hockey space, the bridge will continue to reterritorialize and deterritorialize constantly becoming-other. Each caregiver will encounter different segmented and stratified thought lines, such as developmentalism, as well as disrupting lines of flight, that will produce continual becoming-other.

Thus, the children, adults and places in these stories can each be understood as continually becoming-other. The becoming-other children interact with becoming-other people and becoming-other places and with other living beings and non-living elements to create assemblages. With the becoming concept, we can interrupt and disrupt knowing through either developmental or cultural explanations of change, and make room for not knowing: who a child is, who she will become, how a particular type of person can be produced or why a particular event, behaviour or development occurred.

Chapter Summary: Stories Becoming

Through this analytic process the three stories, already recreated through the caregivers' reflections expand, becoming pedagogical narrations. With the concepts, caring relations, dwelling and becoming, the stories take on a new shape. Engaging with different concepts would extend the stories differently. What the stories can tell depends on the conceptual lenses the listener/reader uses.

In this telling, the stories each show instances of caring relations with place, and with other living beings. Sometimes the living beings are other children; sometimes they are adults while in one story a boy exists in caring relations with a worm. Thinking with different, non-developmental theory allows understandings about care, caring and caring relations to emerge. Those understandings may include child development ideas but also highlight many other ideas.

This analysis includes concepts located in non-psychological theories. For example, the dwelling concept situates in an anthropological theory. This concept incorporates psychological theory, in particular understandings of perception, but does so to consider the emergence of shared cultural knowledge. With the analytic concept dwelling, I attempt to shift attention from each individual child toward the group, or the little culture of each of the multiage child care centres. Dwelling points to lifeworlds, coming-to-be, embodied cognition, landscapes and knowledge from lived experience. It attends to difference. Finally the philosophical concept, becoming invites consideration of becoming-other, including place becoming-other, adults becoming-other and children becoming-other. The transformations happen in relation with other transformations such as girl-becoming-other and bridge-becoming-other together. Through the pedagogical narrations process, the three concepts together with the three moments and the caregivers' reflections produce particular stories about living in these four multiage child care centres.

Chapter 6: New Stories

This dissertation story began as a response to a local problem: a desire of the institution where I work, to create multiage child care, a grouping not permitted by regulations. The dominant discourse of developmentalism grounded the regulations. Those responsible for the overseeing regulations agreed to a pilot project if the institution researched the program. The resulting research project has formed this dissertation. I ask in this research how do children live their lives in multiaged child care?

I engage with ethics of care theory, an anthropological idea, and the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari to develop a postfoundational framework to consider that question and three others that emerge through it: a) What characterizes relationships in these multi-aged centres? b) How do children negotiate through the curriculum in the centres? c) How can the children's transformations be conceptualized in postdevelopmental theory/practice? The theoretical framework includes three very different theoretical orientations that link through each ones' emphasis on relations. I explore ethics of care to consider relationship characteristics and to attend to values and practices of caring. That exploration leads to the analytic concept, caring relations from the work of Virginia Held. Asking how children negotiate through the curriculum leads to reconceptualized early childhood education curriculum theory and, from there to Tim Ingold's concept, dwelling which means to wayfare through a landscape. Finally to think about children's transformations without developmentalism, I work with the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari, particularly the concept of becoming.

The postfoundational methodology explains the pedagogical narrations process that stories, through a re-telling, critical reflection, and thinking with theory, three ordinary moments. The analytic process, thinking with theory, described in Chapter 3 and put to work in Chapter 5

plugs-in the three concepts, caring relations, dwelling, and becoming, to the stories, producing beyond-developmental understandings of children, childhood, and child care.

The analysis highlights that child care structures such as age groupings, require situated ethics of care and responsibility, as well as, an early years reconceptualized curriculum that resists universalizing and normalizing practices in favour of situated ones. Considering caring relations, in spaces for young children, provides a context for thinking beyond simply, and only, adults caring for children, to thinking of children in relations of care with place, other non-human beings and non-living things, as well as other people, including other children and adults. Thinking with the dwelling concept encourages an attention to the present in early years settings, allowing more-than-developmental interests to flourish. Thinking becoming means thinking becoming-other, and positions subjectivities, including those of children, caregivers and place as unstable, shifting, and in relation.

To conclude, I discuss two important insights this study produced. First, challenging developmentalism and normalization yields new child care theorizations and new child care practices through revealing previously unimagined questions, ideas and possibilities. A second, connected, insight underscores the idea that while new ways to think about children create new ways to care for, with and about children, not every idea necessarily produces ethical practices. Caring requires ethics and ethics require careful, continual thought.

To engage with these ideas, I take two approaches. I begin by parsing the research question and I end with three more short stories. I deconstruct the research question to highlight the multiplicity of meanings that emerge through the study. The process underscores the idea that words hold meanings that mutate and these mutations produce novel thoughts and more questions. In the second section of the chapter, *Gardens: Trees, Taproots, Rhizomes* describes

how the project expanded my thinking. *I Don't Want It To End!* explores how it impacted our pedagogy. Finally, I conclude with *Jessie and Olivia: A Story*, which presents what the caregivers came to call a multiage moment. With this moment I do not mean to imply an obvious transparent truth that speaks for itself. Rather I wish to conclude with an illustration of what our multiage practice made possible but always open to interpretation.

Playing Seriously

We Are All Canucks stories a moment of children playing seriously. They pretend to be “the players of the Canucks”. Many people take hockey playing seriously, for example, the caregiver, in that story, who brought her interest in hockey to the children. Some adults actually *play* hockey professionally. In this story, these children play being professional hockey players. They play; they pretend; but they do it seriously. They interrupt the game frequently, stepping out of their player roles to protect their place. However, the asphalt patch never stops being an ice rink in their expressed collective reality. Their shared world remains a serious event.

In the same fashion, in this section I play seriously with the main research question – how do children live their lives in multi-aged child care? I do so by teasing out the question’s implication(s) through playing with different words as rupture points, where thought lines of flight erupt:

- *How* do children live their lives in multi-aged child care?
- How do *children* live their lives in multi-aged child care?
- How do children *live* their lives in multi-aged child care?
- How do children live their lives in *multi-aged* child care?
- How do children live their lives in multi-aged *child care*?

This questioning sentence can be imagined as a segmented line such as those described by Deleuze and Guattari (1987). The emphasized words form potential destabilizing rupture points. In the first section of this chapter, I follow each line of flight that erupts from those points.

How

Asking how differs from asking why, when, where or who. The question ‘*how* do children live their lives in multiaged child care?’ produces a different rupture than the other questions would. *How* asks a concrete rather than an abstract question. However on this rhizomatic line of flight, thinking about the connotation of how invites contemplating those other interrogative words.

Asking *why* do children live their lives in multiage child care focuses on the conditions that produce the structure as well as the purpose of the structure. This philosophical question attends to the developmental challenge that I introduce in Chapter 1. It also points to the political conditions that create the desire for particular structures, conditions that may include financial and accessibility considerations as well as the nature and quality of children’s experiences. Any proposal to engage in a multiage structure requires a careful interrogation of intent. However, asking why also invites *why not* into the conversation. This question demands an ethical examination of underlying desires but it also raises questions about how we have constructed the beliefs and truths our current regulations enact. Why and why not ask important questions for all rules, regulations and practices including those based on age.

A question asking *when* do children live in multiage child care focuses on temporal aspects. It induces questions about why now? These questions highlight comments expressed both within the pedagogical narrations by the participating caregivers and beyond the project by interested others. Those comments often contain approving messages that position multiage child

care romantically as a natural, family-like structure from past times, “*like how we used to live*” or offering moments that reflect “*how child care should be when the natural order of things takes place*”. Pushing thinking about when to the limit, challenges us to consider the romantic belief that suggests children should be cared for in family-like structures, with many aged people included. This study neither makes that claim nor disputes it, but thinking when produces a question about the underlying assumptions contained in multiage theory/practice.

Asking *where* do children live in multiage child care positions place, community and culture as important considerations. It invites reflection about where in the larger world this occurs, but also about which places, in our local context, group children by narrow age ranges and which do not. Typically in the city, province, nation in which this study takes place, schools, organized sports, and other extracurricular activities group children together by age. Children live in multiage environments with their family, in unorganized neighbourhood play, and/or other events such as festivals, and parties that children attend with friends and families. Thinking about where children are grouped by age and where they are not provokes consideration of purpose. In places where we wish to educate children about something particular, we often organize them by age. I suggest developmental assumptions guide these structures, i.e. children of the same age are assumed to usually be of the same developmental level, and so the content, instructional pace, and pedagogical practice can be more or less the same.

Examining which places segregate children by age underscores an assumption of education as the purpose of such segregation. Unmasking that assumption invites a challenge to the connection between age and development and education. However, it also introduces a question about the purpose of the child care centres. Are they schools? Should they be schools? What does it mean to be a school? If not schools, what are they and what should they be? Each

of these questions invites ethical choices into child care practices including age segregation practices.

The question *who* produces thoughts about who fits and who doesn't. When we proposed the multiage structure we avoided this question. We have positioned eighteen months and kindergarten age loosely as age boundaries but we have enrolled children who are fifteen and sixteen months so that they could be with siblings and we have had at least one child stay past the kindergarten-starting age to accommodate her family's plans. When we push our boundaries we discuss the implications and revisit the inherent developmental questions that the boundaries contain. Asking for whom will multiage centres be suitable opens a space for developmentalism to reemerge.

Interestingly, suitability challenges have emerged from unexpected quarters – other caregivers in our organization. Beyond the multiage centres, our system includes centres for children between ages three and eighteen months, twelve and thirty-six months, and eighteen and thirty-six months. Child Care Services enrolls ten children maximum in the infant centres and twelve children maximum in the two toddler centre types. We have found that our infant-centre colleagues sometimes suggest, to parents of children in their centres that, due to temperament, or personality, or development, their child would fit better in one of the toddler centres than in a multiage one. While we hotly dispute this idea, the recommendation points to the belief, of at least some, that the multiage structure may be *too much* for some children, too much *what* and for *whom* remains unclear. The question, “*Who lives in multiage childcare?*” produces queries about who doesn't; who lives well there; and who lives there poorly.

With the intent that no child should live “poorly” in a child care centre, our regulatory body answered our challenge to the age-segregation rule by agreeing to allow our proposed pilot

project but tied their agreement to a requirement that we research experiences of living in multiage child care. The word, *how*, addresses that stipulation. The question, *how* do children live their lives in multiage child care, requests descriptive stories of concrete experiences. This dissertation's pedagogical narrations present a few *how* stories; many more remain untold.

The ideas I have raised through replacing the word *how* include considerations of political conditions, of intentions, of assumptions, of context and of suitability. These considerations weave through *how* questions. In this study asking how do children live in these centres creates concrete, local, personal, situational event descriptions. Local conditions, specific intentions, theoretical assumptions, particular contexts and individual characteristics engage with each other to produce very particular *how* stories. Within the study's theoretical conceptualization and methodological philosophy, *how* stories can only be unique, non-replicable moments.

Chapter four contains the three stories in which the question, *how*, focuses on particulars. Some children of many ages live together in *On the Deck* and engage in looking at picture books, examining a worm, wearing no shoes, jostling for position. In *We are All Canucks*, a group of same aged children pretend together. They include a younger child: they negotiate with each other; they engage with the interests of their larger cultural world (hockey obsessions). Children of a wide age range, fight, problem-solve, interact with a camera, work with sand, and absorb the sun's warmth in the final story, *Summer*. Answering how produced descriptions, albeit subjective rather than objective ones. The question did not produce explanations about best caring practices or about learning outcomes or even about the benefits or hardships of multiage living. The stories illuminate how some children and a few adults live in particular times and places of multiage child care. They show *how* in these three centres, in these three moments, living in multiage

child care is possible, interesting, safe, challenging, and perhaps, similar to other kinds of child care, filled with many (extra) ordinary moments. They do not tell the whole story of how all children in all times and places live or would live in all multiage child care.

Children

The concept, children, invites interrogation of who we think children might be/become. Emphasizing the word, *children* in the question, *how do children live their lives in multi-age child care*, makes a place for developmentalism to re-emerge. However, now developmentalism enters child care not as the truth, but as one truthful story alongside many others (Blaise, 2013; Taylor, Blaise & Giugni, 2013; Walkerdine, 2009). The word, *children*, as a rupture point, produces a line of flight that invites reconsidering our understandings both of child and of childhood. Walkerdine (2009) suggests that we go beyond developmental approaches, that we displace “the binaries of interior and exterior, individual and social, psychology and sociology” (p. 123). *Children* as a word shines a light on our assumptions about age, needs, and care amongst many ideas. Any child care *best practices* beliefs, including age-determined ones, assume given knowledge about what all or most children require for a good childhood. Those beliefs also contain assumed knowledge of what constitutes a good childhood. Segregating children by age implies that we know, through developmentalism, what a child of a particular age can say, do and be and what comprises a good childhood for children of that particular age.

Focusing on the word *children* introduces questions about how we can understand children transforming and aging, without developmentalism. When does a child cease to be a child? Is it at an age, a particular stage, or a specific physical, cognitive or emotional development? Is it when we deem them old enough to babysit, to go to jail, to work, to drive a car, to marry, to vote, to buy alcohol? How is it different to be/become an adult than to

be/become a child? Does neediness define children? Are we children again when we become old and reliant on others? Does ability (or lack of) explain the concept of children? As I layer these questions on each other, it becomes apparent that the category, children, shifts depending on context. Some people are unambiguously understood as children while some are understood as not children. However, in between, describing the difference becomes elusive. The border between child and adult moves depending on situation.

In English there is a word, adolescent, that attempts to name this border age range (Lesko, 1996). However, that concept does not solve the definition problem of what the word children means; it complicates it. More, new, boundaries rhizomatically erupt between children and adolescents and between adolescents and adults. Schooling structures create even more. Public schools in British Columbia provide education for children from age five to eighteen, a group that includes children and adolescents. Licensed child care overlaps the school system for some (five to twelve year olds) but not others (under-six and over-twelve year olds). Even the boundary between school-aged children and preschool-aged children blurs with five year olds, and some four year olds, in both the school category and the under six category. Adult/adolescent, adolescent/child, school-age/not-school age: age alone cannot define the boundaries between these categories. Nor can age define who *the* child is.

However, in this study's context, licensed child care, child age strictly bounds who may be in a group. Transgressing the boundary requires a bureaucratic engagement with regulations, explaining why a child should be in the wrong-aged centre, how that wrong-aged child will be cared for, and how the right-aged children in the group will not be compromised. Assumed age-based knowledge of children, of childhood, and of child care needs forms the regulations' basis.

Child care regulating bodies exist to protect children. Age-based regulations position age as marker of danger, something to which child protectors must attend. However, in our project, having a wide age range does not appear as dangerous. Rather, it offers pedagogical complexity, which neither guarantees good, better or best practices, nor predicts bad, worse, or harmful practices. Individual children simply become not known by age. The danger becomes instead a difficulty. How do we know how to care for, to live with, children if we do not know them and the risks to them, by their age?

Additionally, learning to not-know-children-by-age reveals the many other ways that we assume we know children –gender, culture, race, and ability and on and on. Such assumed knowledge holds the potential to harm or limit children. *Knowing* children through preconceived categories becomes the potentially harmful danger; not knowing them becomes a challenge. Our multiage child care project underscores the impossibility of knowing children. Instead of understanding age as a border that separates individuals as belonging or not, multiage childcare makes it possible to conceive of aging as an unpredictable becoming with children dwelling in their own particular landscape (Ingold, 2000, 2010) or dwelling with/in naturecultures (Haraway, 2008, Taylor, 2013, Taylor & Blaise, 2014, Taylor & Giugni, 2012). The binary, adult/child, begins to dissolve. Children become, as Cannella (1997) names them, younger human beings. Answering the question how do *children* live their lives in multiage child care becomes impossible. The question fractures into many.

Live

Returning to the research question, I now emphasize, how do children *live* their lives in multi-age child care? The verb in this sentence, *live*, invites ontological/epistemological questions into the world and work of child care. What does it mean for a child to be or become in

multiage child care? What and how should a child know? It produces echo questions: *How do children live their lives in non-multiage child care? How do children live their lives without institutional child care? How do children live their lives?* In my analysis, I employ a dwelling concept (Ingold, 2000, 2010) to think about what it means to live in the multiage centres.

Thinking to live as meaning to dwell places emphasis on the present and keeps the future open. In Ingold's (2000, 2010) terms, the landscape continually produces what is possible to be apprehended or learned. It determines the possible nature, number and specificity of relationships. As Ingold describes it, in a dwelling perspective wayfarers wander through the landscape. Living becomes wayfaring. Understanding living in this way expands this question's multiplicity. We must now ask how does this child or that child or that other child live in this multiage child care centre or that multiage child care centre, at this time or in another time, in this place or in another place. Following this thinking eliminates the danger present through attempting to make all children over into the one, or the multiple, correct child(ren) through prescribed best practice or practices. As always becoming and unknown, each person, thing, moment, place, and event requires, in a child care centre, caregivers' attention and curiosity.

However, with no direction to the good life, to good care, to a good education, the danger becomes the risk that anything goes. In these multiage child care centres, anything did not go. Further, I suspect that, even in the most laissez-faire child care centres, anything does not go. Adults, or other children, will object to specific behaviours at certain times based on particular values, reasons and desires. For example, in my own practice in the multiage centres and previously, I inevitably object and become engaged when a child physically hurt another child, no matter my espoused belief in teaching children to solve problems themselves. I do not expect children to learn (discover) problem-solving skills without guidance and regardless of what they

learn, I do not accept physical violence toward another as permissible wherever or whenever I supervise/educate/care for children. Similarly, in these multiage centres, many ethical dilemmas occur, requiring decisions.

An ethics of care provides some direction. As Sevenhuijsen (1998) pointed out a feminist ethics of care focuses on responsibility, relationships, and concrete situations and does not prescribe principles. Such an ethical orientation means that actions must always be provisional, and contextual and continuously determined. Within this ethics, decisions and actions require careful consideration, as predetermined directions do not exist.

The multiage structure adds complexity to the already ethically complex practice of caring for children in group child care centres. Expanding child care multiplicity through expanding the age range works to invite attention to boundaries. Ingold (2000) pointed out that in a dwelt-in landscape, borders and boundaries do not actually exist as they do on maps. In his conception, a landscape is not the map or representation of a place, it is the actual place. Landscape boundaries such as doors, fences, ditches and rivers mark borders out but they can be crossed. In child care centres, boundaries also exist and can also be crossed or, in Deleuze and Guattari (1987) terms, deterritorialized.

In this project, we crossed or erased the age border, deterritorializing, but hold other boundaries in place, maintaining striated space (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). For example, although we challenged the age structure, we created other structures to replace the one we challenged and we live within those boundaries. We reterritorialize (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) and stick to our group size, we adhere to our proposed age structure, we maintain ratios, we insist on caregivers obtaining infant/toddler education. We limit materials; we guide behaviour; we provide some activities and not others. We adopt many of the practices found in age-segregated

centres and eschew others. We live in our structures: we do not, cannot transcend them. With these new boundaries, ethical complexity increases reflecting the responsibility inherent in caring.

However the children, and their parents, who enter our programs with no previous experience in child care centres, do not necessarily have historical knowledge or preconceptions about living in age segregated centres. Instead, they live, make their way, in the centres in which they find themselves. They do not carry with them a prescribed way to do it (live in child care). They make their way through their actual life, not the virtual one we proposed or that I describe in this writing. Yet, they cannot compare how they live in the multiage centres with how they would have lived in other centres and neither can I. How they live in the centres and how I have describe their living, does not form a multiage map for others to follow, each living is unique to itself.

The possibility exists that those who experience these centres, the children, parents, and caregivers, may now romanticize multiage child care understanding it as more homelike or more natural or better than age segregated centres. Choosing creates conditions in which parents and caregivers may come to believe their choice the one right one, the best one. In this research, I have not positioned multiage as better but rather as possible and as ethical. I do not suggest that it is either better and ethically superior or worse and ethically inferior to age-segregated child care. Each multiage context produces particular living conditions.

Like the words, how and children, a focus on the word *live* complexifies the question and points to the impossibility of a generalizable answer. Living means not transcending messy complexities but rather involves engaging with them and responding to them. The question

becomes, how do *these* children live *their* lives in *these* multiage child care centres (and maybe on this day in this moment)?

Multiage

The idea multiage initiated this study. Creating a multiage environment where children of four sequential birth years spend their days together provoked the research project. The undertaking began with challenges. We (the child care service) questioned existing age-segregating practices and I argued that developmentalism rooted the practices, an idea I continue to challenge. Our plan entangled us with existing regulations.

Evaluations of early years environments often name as important three structural features – adult/child ratio, group size and required level of caregiver/educator education (Dunn, 1996, Goelman, Foyer, Kershaw, Doherty, Lero, LaGrange, 2006; Phillips, Mekos, Scarr, McCarthy & Abbott-Shim, 2000; Scarr, Eisenberg, & Deater-Deckard, 1994). As I outlined in Chapter 1, in British Columbia, child care licensing regulations address these features. Two possible age groupings for licensed child care exist for children under age six: infant/toddler child care for those under three years, and over-three group care for those between three years and six years (Government of British Columbia, 2009). As I have described, each license type requires a different ratio, group size and adult education level.

In our multiage child care, we carefully decided how to weave local regulations into our planned innovation. That complex creation produces a particular structure to which we adhere. We designed our weaving apparatus with a very specific arrangement, or warp and weft in weavers' language. We chose the group size legislated for over-three group child care minus one (twenty-four), the caregiver/educator education required for infant/toddler child care and a ratio

constructed from both groups². Into that warp, we wove a particular age grouping: three children from the youngest birth year, five from the second youngest year, eight from the third and eight from the fourth. This regulation/ age weave produces a multiage child care structure unique and meaningful for our child care centres.

As I have argued, while this woven structure works in our context, it cannot be understood to be a model for all contexts. Our experience and our research do not provide a standard for those wishing to engage in multiage age child care. The understandings produced do not define best practices. In a similar situation, Hodgins (2014) describes being questioned about her conclusions, about gender and care in early childhood, while conducting a postqualitative research study that included diffractive analyses of dolls and toy cars. As she conducted that study she fielded questions, from interested others, that she could not answer about whether or not these toys were acceptable materials. Likewise, as I have engaged with this project, many have asked me what I can say about how to “do” multiage child care. As Hodgins, I cannot give a simple, clear, definitive answer.

Usually the questions I am asked either explicitly or implicitly query how multiage compares to “regular” centres. Since I employ a postqualitative methodology that does not compare anything I cannot answer the question. I often deflect it with an argument that a similar study could be done in a centre in which every child enrolled had been born in the same month of the same year - a uni-age child care centre. I conclude my argument by suggesting that developmentalism as the way to understand or explain difference would become impossible in that study. Whereas, the study I actually conducted in a multiage centre shows that developmental theories can exist alongside postdevelopmental ones without dominating.

² One adult to four children under-three years, one to eight for children over-three years or one to six for children in mixed groups that have two children under-three years of age and four over-three years.

Sometimes others' questions focus on how to do multiage well; what might be the best practices. However, not only does this study methodology not measure and compare, it also does not provide interpretations and evaluations and I have no answer for those questions either. My responses and non-responses highlight how multiage as a concept faded into the background in this research and in the ongoing pilot project. Instead of the subject, it became the context of the study and of our child care work. The line of flight, provoked by the term, *multiage*, flew in an unexpected direction.

Further along this multiage line come questions and thoughts about events. Sometimes these questions become visible in the study's pedagogical narrations, many times they do not. For example, within the narrations we see storied moments, in which children of many age groups play and interact, as well as an event in which a group of same aged children play together interrupted by a younger child. In most cases, the caregivers who view these video stories see multiage stories and perceive evidence that multi-age works and actually promotes interesting play while enhancing learning. Often, reflecting the findings of Edward, Blaise and Hammer (2009), developmental explanations lurk just below the surface of these perceptions. For instance, in the story where the younger child interrupts the hockey game, the caregivers interpret the multiage experience as successful. They describe the moment both as demonstrating developmental age differences and as a multiage success story because the older children understand and accept the developmental difference, caring for and trying to teach the younger child.

However, outside the pedagogical narrations, but in the project, live on-going questions and struggles not recorded in the videos and later conversations. I continue to coordinate the pilot project and to work with the caregivers as they struggle with competing demands that can easily

be interpreted as resulting from different developmental needs. For example, recently we have re-addressed the commotion that ensues around differing sleep, bathroom and mealtime routines. Often a diaper-wearing (usually younger) child will need to be changed in the middle of a story-reading time or a young child will need to sleep in the middle of the morning when an outing has been planned for her group. Especially within the mixed age primary caregiving groups, these apparently contradictory requirements produce pedagogical practice challenges. These questions do not emerge through the pedagogical narrations of this dissertation, but nevertheless, live in the project.

I suggest that the conflicting care demands are not unique to our multiage project but exist in all situations that contain more than one person, particularly in child care situations. We can imagine a pregnant mother of a young child experiencing the competing claims of her expected baby and of her present child, as well as her own physical and emotional needs. We can easily conjure the multiple demands occurring in three-to-five centres when children who require extra support attend centres without extra support(ers). I believe many centres cope with that particular constraint. Even when extra support does not appear to be required, centres that operate with a one to eight adult to child ratio often face juggling the perceived needs of many children. I propose that rather than know these as insurmountable problems, we begin to question how we situate needs, and when needs immediately unmet might indicate a crisis, when they might predict trouble, and when they might offer opportunities. We could reposition the known truth about neediness to a position of one truth among many. Such repositions may perhaps allow other truths to become visible in order to engage with the complexities and responsibilities produced when engaged in caring for children. Our multiage project has not solved the problem

of conflicting demands; however, it has made space to challenge assumptions about children's needs and age.

This study does not explain all or best multiage child care practices and it does not compare multiage to other age groupings. Rather it maps a line of flight in which living in multiage child care breaks down unnecessary practice restrictions produced by unchallenged developmentalism. The rupture point, *multiage*, intersects with thinking about child care truths. It highlights that rules and regulations have been constructed from beliefs about good childhoods not from an absolute truth about good childhood. Engaging with multiage child care has produced, for those of us who work there, new beliefs, new truths, new rules and regulations and a line of flight. It did not produce *the* truth or the *best* way to provide child care and over time the line of flight has reterritorialized in newly segmented lines called multiage child care. Our new beliefs will need regular challenge and consideration in order to maintain pedagogical openness.

Child Care

Biesta (2010) asks what constitutes a good education and what is education for. He suggests that education is a process with a purpose and argues that we should be concerned with what that purpose is. He proposes that a good education “entails an orientation toward *freedom*” (p. 129) but that freedom does not simply mean, “just doing what you want to do” (p.129). Biesta's questions about education inspire me to ask, what constitutes good child care, and what is child care for? His thinking also suggests to me that freedom to do child care differently does not translate to freedom to do whatever we want to do.

To extend Biesta's questions, to consider what constitutes good child care and what is it for, complicates the rupture point, *child care*. On a line of flight initiated by the words, *child care*, we might ask what is child care for. Inquiring what constitutes good child care places us in

the murky mucky water of child care quality judgments and evaluations, a dominant discourse questioned by Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (1999, 2007). Their challenge encouraged my initial reconsideration of developmentalism and age segregation. However, probing what constitutes good child care underscores the question, what are the regulations about age groupings for? Perhaps Biesta's (2010) argument, that valuing what we measure is not the same as measuring what we value, offers a way out of these muddy waters. He connects valuing what we measure to what he names the 'learnification' of education (Biesta, 2010). The outcomes (the learning) we can measure become what we value. Other values, perhaps not easily measurable disappear.

I suggest that when we attempt to identify particular specified achieved child outcomes as the measure of child care we perform a similar move. What we can measure becomes the measure of good child care and what we end up valuing. Care becomes what we can measure through health and safety practices, such as hand-washing routines, or heights of climbing equipment. Safe, clean environments come to mean good care. Education is measured by providing developmentally appropriate learning opportunities in which particular measurable learning outcomes can be achieved. Valued child care becomes safe, clean, developmentally appropriate environments. Focusing on what lies behind our health and safety rules and regulations, including age segregation, and behind our developmentally appropriate practices known through child age, makes room for us to ask if normalization and learnification are really what we value. Has applied developmental psychology and early childhood education produced the outcomes and practices that we can measure and have come to value?

Multiage age child care interrupts this evaluation process by making the provision of safe, healthy, learning opportunities different. The question refocuses on purpose. Changing direction, beginning with what we value, before we attempt to measure highlights the importance

of ethics in our evaluations of what child care is, and what it is for. It asks which ethics. Care ethics and ethics of responsibility may often implicitly inform caregivers' actions. However, disrupting a practice structure such as age groupings works to also disrupt taken-for-granted assumptions about care and responsibility. Disrupting the practice makes the question of which ethics explicit. It also invites an examination of how our ethics engage us in relations of caring.

How Do Children Live In Multiage Child Care?

In this section I have deconstructed this question, positioning the words as rupture points that produce thought lines of flight. These lines of flight create an assemblage in which the complexity and multiplicity of all child care including multiage child care becomes visible. Interrogating the words shows that to think *how* includes why, when, where, and who, in any discussion about living in child care. This study speaks to a particular context. The multiage plan emerged in response to a local problem, occurring at a particular time in a particular place and includes specific people. The words, *children*, *live*, and *multiage* emphasize the idea that the practice is contextual along with the understanding that practices and structures produce ethical responsibilities. A focus on *children* and *multiage* produces first, a reemergence of developmentalism and then, the reintroduction of the challenges to developmentalism that I introduced in Chapter 1. I connect the word, *live*, to the dwelling concept explored in Chapter 2. Examining the concept, *child care*, focused on how actions require ethics along with understanding purpose, and values. Finally, *child care* points to valuing caring relations.

Folding and Flattening: The Field of Subjectivity

Azocar (2014) suggested that poststructural stories as research produce situational fictionalizations that illuminate subjectivities. In Chapter 3, I explained how Jackson and Mazzei (2012) offered the figuration of folding to partially illustrate a field of subjectivity in a research

assemblage. This figuration positions the researcher as being folded into the research, becoming-other through the process and becoming implicated in it, while flattening refers to the flattening of binaries (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). In this section of this last chapter I tell two more short stories. Azocar (2014) proposed that, “the narration of a story implies making a choice to highlight events that give meaning to our past and our knowledge” (p. 180). With these stories I hope to give meaning to my (and our) recent past in this research project and to engage with the very local, contextual knowledge and subjectivities the folding and flattening generated.

With these two stories I underscore two key ideas yielded through this research. In the first story I highlight how a challenge to a dominant discourse cannot be understood as simply reversing a good/bad binary. We did not demonstrate the superiority of one way (multiage) over another (age-segregation). Rather, through challenging developmentalism, we created a rupture that allowed us to experiment with a new structure - multiage child care. We successfully demonstrated the possibility of implementing the structure but other thorny challenges, theoretical and practical, also became concrete. For example, we did not consider group size in our multiage centres, however, I suggest the concept/practice needs review. Questions that evolved with the project, such as what pedagogy for a range of children, and what constitutes caring, while explored, remain open. Like all child care, ethical dilemmas appeared at both expected and unexpected junctures. Holding closure and judgment at bay means lines of flight continued to destabilize my thinking and disrupt everyone’s theory/practice.

Engaging with Azocar’s thinking about stories’ capacities, I tell these next stories intending to illustrate our emerging, shifting subjectivities. In the first story, I focus on my unfolding understanding that rhizomatic thinking, like all ideas, cannot be positioned romantically but requires ethical engagement. The second story describes our ongoing

experience with pedagogical narrations and how we hope to engage with this practice in the future. I start with a story about me and conclude with a story about us.

Gardens: Trees, Taproots, and Rhizomes

This story explores my researcher self folded into the research assemblage as Jackson and Mazzei (2012) described. They explained that researchers are implicated in what they do and what they write. At the same time, the research, the conversations, the data, the contexts change and become entangled in the researcher's becoming subjectivity. That image effectively presents my position in this research story. Folded into the assemblage I lived and continue to live in every aspect of the project, including the conception, the construction, the coordination, the practices, the research and now the conclusion/new beginning. The assemblage also lives in me permeating all aspects of my life.

Before I began this consuming project, I spent time gardening. I live with a very small backyard, that over the last twenty-six years transformed. When I first met the yard it contained a cement patio, a carport, a low fence, some grass and a few small cedars. It went through involutions that included my children's sandbox that became a vegetable garden that became a cedar deck and a sunny flower garden that over time became, through the growth of a tree I planted, a shade garden. The carport became a garage covered with ivy. The garden grew (with my husband's help) a tall fence and a large cedar deck. I created a secret garden that was a get-away place for me. The yard became a garden that I tended, cared about, relaxed in.

When I first encountered the Deleuze/Guattari rhizome concept, I pictured thought as irises - hundreds of irises wildly producing more irises down many lines of flight. I responded with satisfaction to this description of thought, as I believed it described my thinking style - somewhat undisciplined. I love the tree in my garden; it blossoms profusely in the spring,

bringing pleasure after the dull grey coastal winter, but I only have room for one. Picturing thought as a tree, as only one truth, even a beautiful tree/truth does not inspire me. I also like my roses very much, although I find the taproot hybrids finicky and prefer my single root, old-fashioned climbing-rose that (perhaps in rhizomatic fashion) produces masses of flowers and grows frenetically. The critical hybrids require me to respond to them in their own fussy way, creating a few beautiful flowers but only through a lot of (my) work. I plant mainly bulbs, rhizomes and other spreading plants. A lazy and frugal gardener, I enjoy flowering plants that can make it on their own once I plant them. The idea of thought as a wild garden of irises (pretty thoughts I suppose) grabbed my imagination. Envisaging thought as rhizomatic appealed to me; the image seemed to value creative undisciplined thinking, as I believed I did.

Now, this research project, especially the writing, absorbs all the time that I previously spent in my garden and has for several years. As I write, I watch out my window as each year rhizomes, and plants that behave like rhizomes, gradually take over my garden. But these plants are not pretty irises. They are bamboo and ivy and buttercups and blackberries and they are not benign. They choke out all the other plants; the bamboo threatens the lives of the roses; every year the ivy crawls further up the tree's trunk; and the blackberries have made the secret garden dangerous to enter.

Did I mention the rats? I live in a very beautiful, rat infested city. This includes the alley behind our garden and sometimes the rats attempt to enter our space. Perhaps it would be better not to bring it up, rats fill most people with revulsion. But pointing out that rhizomes include the best and the worst, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) state, "rats are rhizomes" (p. 6). Rhizomes fill my garden inviting me to think about my infatuation with them, both as pretty plants, and as an exciting way to position thought. However, rhizomatic thought does not guarantee only beautiful

iris-like thoughts; they could be aggressive, dominating bamboo-like thoughts; they could be complicated, thorny, delicious blackberry-like thoughts. They could even be swarming, darting, revolting rat-thoughts.

Thinking rhizomatically does not mean all problems will be solved. It does not mean that all new ideas and theories about child care will bring good, progressively better or more successful child care practices. In this project, it does not mean that we figured out through imaginative thinking how to 'do' multiage child care. Each thought, each idea, requires careful, ethical engagement. However, thinking multiage produces theories that free us to reconsider some careless, habitual, thoughtless practices, like unchanging schedules and purposeless lessons, masquerading as developmentally appropriate activities. In our practice we reconsider all those common sense rules and limits. The difficulties and possibilities that the enacted multiage structure throws up push us to reposition developmentalism, the previously taken-for-granted single truth about children. It does not mean that anything goes. I would not argue that all our previous rules and regulations, theories, and practices should be dropped. On the contrary, this research that engages with pedagogical narrations suggests that each rule and regulation should be continually considered, reconsidered and considered again.

Working with pedagogical narrations creates surprises. We began quite focused on our topic but the open-ended approach introduced, rhizomatically, many ideas, concepts, theories and opinions into our discussions. After each meeting, I would think about the ideas that had emerged. For example, at one meeting some participants engaged in a deep, passionate, somewhat personal, discussion about adults' roles in child care. This conversation led me to reflect on our purpose. Were we educators? Were we caregivers? Are we both? What's the difference? What should we be? What should we be doing? Other discussions focused on

individual rights and responsibilities, on child-centred pedagogy, on learning, on teaching, on caring, on groups, on community, on democracy, on what group child care means. After our meetings, the conversations, discussions and questions would follow me to work the next day, causing me to reexamine and rethink our practice. The project did not produce answers to these questions but supported other scholar's ideas about theory-practice intra-activity, a concept that challenges theory/practice binaries (see for example, Lenz-Taguchi, 2010). The research process triggered me to think more carefully.

This project led to an unexpected curiosity for me. As I worked to guide the endeavor I began to consider how we might bring research practices into our child care work in the multiage centres and, as well, in the original centres and all the newly created centres that make up our organization. I could see the commitment, passion, excitement, and thoughtfulness that being part of a new idea, a new practice, and a research project, generated for those of us involved in this research. Emerging from this process, along with other circumstances, I have become a manager responsible for program development in the child care service. This means stepping away from my position working directly with children every day into a position in which I focus on many centres. In this new role, I am able to engage others in research practices as we explore, examine, and develop our pedagogy. New practices and possibilities encompassing our whole organization appeared, partially from the multiage research project.

I end this story with thoughts about how this research project affected my ongoing becoming. Obviously, my job changed. Beyond that, new ideas grew. The new practice, multiage child care, engendered theoretical reconsiderations before, and during, the research and continues to provoke questions. Yet, new practices become familiar, and lines of flight reterritorialize into segmented lines (Parr, 2005b). I do not ask whether or not our multiage child care, a five year-

old practice no longer new to me, will work. I began the project believing we could do it, but with nervous wonderings about whether we could *really* do it. I no longer wonder. Yet I continue to think about the details, the procedures, and the pedagogy. Multiage child care, like other child care, can be thought as a multiplicity (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). It can also be thought of as a lifeworld (Ingold, 2000, 2010) where inhabitants dwell, wayfaring through a landscape.

The pedagogical narrations methodology that entered our centres' practice through the research project has become the new wondering for me. Pedagogical narrations hold potential to maintain openness, to avoid foreclosing thought, to keep decisions tentative (Berger, 2013; Hodgins 2012, 2014; Hodgins, Kummen, Thompson & Rose, 2013, Kummen, 2013). However, as I have described, it also is a partial process that did not, does not, will not finally reveal the complete right truth.

Working with pedagogical narrations connects to thinking with the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and means coming to grips with their multiplicity principle. Thinking beyond the multiple opens up new territory to consider child care's purpose. The garden image that includes trees, hybrids and rhizomes allows me to carefully consider child care, including multiage child care. Child care *kinds* perhaps exist as multiple: preschool, group care, toddler centres, infant centres, school-age, family care, multiage. However, each actual centre exists as a multiplicity and, as such, as a distinct assemblage. Context, families, community, environments, materials, children, purpose all live together in actual places, at specific times, with particular values. In addition the idea, child care, is also a multiplicity. The concept contains complex, connected and disconnected notions, like child, children, care, caregivers, education, educators, learning, teaching, caring, playing, needs, wants, desires,

family, relations, ethics, service, value, values, and pedagogy. These ideas produce complicated conversations that generate new theory/practice requiring engagement with ethics.

“I Don’t Want It To End!”

As I have described, the data generation process, occurring during the second and third years of our project and lasting for a period of six months, transformed us. I expected change; after all, it was an action research project. However, I did not predict, or expect, or know what that meant and was unprepared for the messy, exhilarating experience. I suspect the other participants were even less prepared. This phase included six large group meetings, or, as we knew them, pedagogical narrations meetings, (described in Chapter 3). With the CCRD (MacDonald & Sanchez, 2010), with which a few of us had had previous experience, we extended the video stories into pedagogical narrations by connecting our reactions, thoughts and interpretations about events in the videos to the stories.

The CCRD unexpectedly moved us quickly into unsettling, destabilizing, maybe even thrilling and risky, discussions and thinking. Somehow, the protocol speedily pushed us into seeing, exposing, and discussing our differences. Our everyday work usually involved us in collaboration that often meant either following a leader or engaging in agreed upon practices. Discovering our thinking, assumptions, and beliefs and then revealing them to each other generated, as intended, diversity. Yet, we did not expect the feelings and experiences those diverse revelations created: they felt unnerving while producing space to (re)think.

We realized how anxious the actual videoing made us feel. As the one with the camera, it became apparent to me that the adults ran away from it while children ran toward it. The camera itself became a presence and active player in the stories. It caused some to move out of view and some to engage directly with it. In one story a child, Bill, made numerous attempts to engage me

in a conversation about the camera. In the vignette introducing this dissertation, three children immediately connect with the camera's tripod. When I viewed that clip I zeroed in on my voice tone that I thought patronizing, and on my safety concern, first for the tripod and then for the children, which I judged as trivial and condescending and in the wrong order. Throughout the process in all the centres, the children did not appear wary about what the camera would do, but the adults, who made many nervous jokes about how they looked (or their hair or lack of make-up), clearly feared judgment.

As we progressed, we often judged ourselves negatively, as I did about myself in the opening vignette. In contrast, our expressed judgments about each other tended to be only positive. Aware that the camera affected what occurred and that our desire not to hurt each other affected what was spoken, we proceeded. It could be argued that the intrusion of the camera and our reluctance to voice judgments means that the data are neither valid nor truthful. Still, following Azocar (2014), I believe the data, as situated fictions, illuminate our subjectivities and create a useful story. Additionally, our self-consciousness raised awareness inviting us to consider ideas previously un-thought. Each meeting produced new thought.

However, we did not engage with all topics. We readily engaged in discussions about responsive curriculum and practices. We explored disagreements about responsiveness and indirectly approached the idea of child centred practice and what that meant. We tackled developmentalism head on. Yet, we avoided discussing the primary caregiving practice that we promised to initiate. Texts about ECCE frequently recommend primary caregiving but my experience suggests that practitioners rarely adopt it. The concept/action illustrates an interesting theory/practice divide in ECCE. I purposefully chose to include primary caregiving when planning the centres. In this project, three centres continued the system but one dropped it. Even

though outside our meetings, those who implemented it expressed curiosity about why the one did not (and was not required to), no one questioned, commented or discussed or otherwise mentioned the practice, or lack of, during our pedagogical narrations meetings. This avoidance points to a challenge when engaging with pedagogical narrations. It offers other questions: What stops discussions about particular issues but not others? What makes it comfortable and permissible to argue about some ideas but not others?

To create a comfortable ambiance, I hosted our sixth and final meeting at my home rather than in our usual meeting place - the seminar room at our work site. I chose to do that for two reasons: I wanted to thank the participants for their time, commitment and risk-taking; and I wanted to read to them a paper, about the project, that I soon would be presenting at a conference. I thanked them with a dinner and a social event. I read to them because I wanted them to know what I would present and I wished for their last minute edits to my paper. Additionally, this meeting, while not the end of their project participation, finished their involvement in the researching component. We discussed the paper and our experience with some pleasure. But one person suddenly and passionately pleaded, "*I don't want it to end*". I didn't really want the research experience to end either. The process stimulated, challenged, and provoked.

Some of the caregivers, who worked in the multiage centres, continue to push me to keep the process going. When I enter the centres, they often pepper me with questions about what the research will "say" and what will happen when I finish. They have helped me bring our practice to others in our organization, and recently some of us have, together, begun to bring our collective practice to those outside the organization. We continue to meet to discuss pedagogies and troubling issues and we are planning a new project for the multiage centres.

Our latest venture concerns a garden. Several months ago in the early spring one of the four multiage senior supervisors³ brought a proposal to the other three and me. She wanted to create a project that extended the sense of community amongst the four programs. She proposed to expand on an idea put forward by one of her centre's caregivers: creating a garden outside their fence. She thought we could build a community garden. She and the other senior supervisors also wanted the others in the centres to take responsibility for the project. Thus, initially the idea contained many aims including staff development and community building alongside vegetable production.

Recently, old student housing that had been very near the centres has been torn down. Eventually this place will be redeveloped but, in the near future, will remain unused. The gardeners seeded it with lawn seed creating grounds with open spaces – fields – surrounded by small wooded places. It does not belong to our programs or to Child Care Services. Nevertheless, we approached the director and asked if we could use it. While she could not actually give permission, she encouraged us to go ahead with the idea. We discussed placement of the garden boxes with the gardeners. One person ordered wood for the boxes and each centre's children and caregivers built and painted a box. The gardeners brought earth to fill the boxes and the children and caregivers planted them, each centre doing something different.

The project brought values clashes, particularly about educational purpose and pedagogy. Some caregivers wished to directly teach the children what to do to successfully grow vegetables and flowers. Others wanted a researching-with-children pedagogical approach to the process. Leadership style became an issue, with some adopting a directive style urging others to get on with it that some others experienced as *too* directive. Some wanted the process to be democratic while others focused more on success. Interestingly, the ethics surrounding squatting has not

³ In our organization, senior supervisors are the leaders of the program and they are the person responsible to the licensing body.

come up as a discussion topic. Discussions about rats in community gardens were minimal. Revealing omissions highlighting that only some things get debated, while many things go unsaid, unnoticed or avoided.

We will meet again as a large group to discuss our multiage project and to plan its future. Those who engage with this process voice curiosity about where we will go next. They wonder: What will become of us? Will we become permanent? Will multiage exist? This final *we* story shows how these caregivers continue to engage with each other in pedagogical explorations. The courageous leap that each took into the project resulted in a more or less safe landing. The process has created an opportunity for us. We are producing a becoming-methodology. Can we now extend ourselves to ask the difficult questions, to explore that which we have avoided, to expand our process beyond what we have done?

I began this chapter with the suggestion that while exploring a particular question, instead of a single answer, more questions rhizomatically erupted. In particular questions about what goes, and what does not, emerged, focusing attention on which ethics will guide our decisions and which conditions, purposes and values support a multiage structure. In the end, the original question remains, how do children live their lives in multiage child care? This question will live in our project for as long as we engage in the multiage practice. Our ethical endeavour will be to never stop asking, to never assume that now we know, to continue to listen for “the tangled tellings of the other stories that get told in the unuttered zone” (Mazzei, 2009, p.59).

Multiage Becoming: An Epilogue

I conclude this dissertation with one last short story, a story not recorded during our research project, but rather a story constructed from my memory. Azocar (2014) stated, “the fictionalization of educational data becomes a form of representation and advocacy that honors

the condition of the Other and the Self” (p. 169). I do not mean for the story to speak a self-evident truth neither do I offer an interpreted evaluative truth. I tell this story not to finally tell a conclusive truth but to show potential enacting. This story recounts a moment that caregivers who work in these centres name as a multiage moment. It is an iris story but, remembering the rats, I caution against romanticizing it.

Jessie and Olivia: A Multiage Moment

Jessie, a five-year old girl has been coming to the centre since she had been in utero. Her big sister Tessa, who we met in *We Are All Canucks* and who is now seven, had been enrolled as a two year old when the centre opened. Jessie was born shortly afterwards. From another country, Jessie’s family has been in Canada for several years. All family members speak fluent English as well as their first language. Just over eighteen months of age, Olivia, has been attending the centre for a few weeks. Olivia’s parents come from a different country and, although highly fluent in English, speak a different language to each other and to Olivia. While she has begun to speak her own language, Olivia is not yet able to communicate in English. Sylvia and Nisha are caregivers in the centre. At the time of this story, Nisha has worked in the centre since it opened five years ago and Sylvia has worked there for about two years. Both Nisha and Sylvia immigrated to Canada several years ago and both are fluently multilingual.

On this summer afternoon, as children who had been sleeping gradually awakened, Jessie follows Sylvia and Olivia, into the bathroom. In the bathroom, Sylvia changes Olivia’s diaper on the diaper table. At the snack table, a few children gather and Nisha offers them some food. Meanwhile, in the bathroom, Sylvia lifts Olivia off the table and places her on her feet on the floor. Sylvia turns to the diaper changing area to clean her hands and the change table. Jessie approaches Olivia who was trying to put on her pants. Jessie holds the pants as Olivia puts her

legs in them and then Jessie pulls up the pants. She struggles a bit to get the waist up over the back of Olivia's diaper. When the pants are successfully pulled up, Jessie puts her hand on Olivia's back and gently guides her to the low child-sized trough sink where Jessie turns on the water for Olivia. Jessie demonstrates how to wash hands. Sylvia leans down to help. She smiles at the girls but does not speak.

After the girls dry their hands on paper towels, Jessie takes Olivia's hand. They walk together to the snack table. She lets go of Olivia's hand to find a chair. Jessie looks up and notices that Olivia has walked over to a group of chairs that had been pushed off to the side. She leaves her chair and walks over to Olivia saying gently, "No, no". Jessie takes Olivia's hand again and walks with her to the table. Jessie pulls out a chair that was at the table and helps Olivia to sit in it. Jessie then walks back to her chair and sits down. Nisha, who has waited for Jessie to come back, asks her what she would like from the plate of food. Nisha then shows Olivia the food plate and points to different food items asking Olivia what she would like. The snack time continues and I leave the centre.

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Appendix A



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Parent Information Letter and Consent Form

CONSIDERING RHIZOMATIC CURRICULUM IN MULTI-AGE EARLY YEARS SETTINGS

To the Parents/Guardians Children Enrolled in the Multi-age Childcare Centres at UBCCCS:

Your child is being invited to participate in a study entitled “*Considering Rhizomatic Curriculum in Multi-Age Early Years Settings*” which is being conducted by me, Deborah Thompson. I am the senior supervisor at Auklet Childcare Centre at UBCCCS and a graduate student in the School of Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria.

Beginning in January, 2009, UBCCCS launched a pilot project involving four childcare centres to consider the possibility of providing childcare in a wider age range groupings than currently allowed by provincial legislation. With the permission of the director of UBCCCS, Ms. Darcelle Cottons, I am using this opportunity to merge this workplace initiative with my degree at UVic. I am conducting this research as part of the requirements for the degree of Ph.D. in Child and Youth Care under the supervision of Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw.

The children will not be required to do anything that they do not do in the regular activities of the day. They will only be observed in the childcare setting while engaged in regular daily activities. You are being asked for your permission to allow me to use the observations (written notes, photos and videos) of your child for my research project at UVic. Your consent to allow me to use these observations is entirely voluntary. Whether you choose to grant me consent to use this information will have no effect on how you or your child will be treated at the daycare.

The purpose of this project is to develop understanding of how children and caregivers create and live through daily curricular experiences in these four childcare centres at UBCCCS. Influenced by a growing body of literature that re-conceptualizes early childhood education, the pilot project challenges the idea of organizing early years settings through reliance on age-related theories of child development to inform practice and instead provides childcare structured in multi-age groupings.

This research is important for the potential to contribute to greater understanding of how curriculum in early years settings can be generated and about what role child age plays in the generation of curriculum. It will provide UBCCCS and the early childhood educators of the four centres, including me, with knowledge about practices, experiences and curriculum development in the four multi-age programs.

Description of the research project

The research will include analysis, by participating educators from the multi-age centres, of observational material that will be collected by me. The observational material will include documentation, similar to that which staff typically collects, such as written records, photographs, video and audio recordings, of daily experiences of the children and staff that occur in the childcare program. Following the recording of observations, I will select particular observations for analysis by the staff of that centre. Children whose activities have been documented in those particular observations will have the opportunity to view the visual material and will be asked permission to use it. With permission, the documentation will be posted in the childcare centre similar to current practice.

The analysis involves a process in which caregivers of the child's centre interpret the observation using the British Columbia Early Learning Framework and their own beliefs and understandings about the observed event. Participating caregivers from the observed centre will then present the observations and interpretations to participating caregivers of the other centres for analysis of curriculum meanings and possibilities. This analysis will follow a guideline called Protocol for Educational Dialogue. Caregivers may choose to incorporate ideas generated by these analyses about curricular events into the daily practices for further observation and interpretation.

The collection of observations will begin by after March 1, 2011 and will be completed by Oct. 31, 2011. But the inclusion of the observations for my research project will not occur unless I have your permission to do so.

Your and your child's permission to use the observations for my research research must be completely voluntary. If you decline permission now or if you later withdraw your permission, I will do my best to crop or blur your child's image from photos videos and will refrain from using observations of your child in the research.

Children, whose guardians have given consent to participate, may object to being photographed or video-graphed or may object to such activities on particular days but not others. If children indicate, either verbally or non-verbally, that they do not wish to be recorded on any particular day I will not record them. Consent from children of such a young age will be difficult to obtain but the children will be introduced to the research project during a group time. They will be informed that they can choose to be part of the project or not and that they can choose to participate on some days and not on others or not at all. On the days that I will be observing in their centres they will be informed by their caregivers that I will be observing. Their caregivers will remind them at that time that they can decide if I can or cannot take pictures and videos of them on that day.

Inconvenience, risks, benefits, & implications of participation/non-participation

The only inconvenience for your child will be the possible interruption that taking photographs and videos will create. Since both media are used in the centres currently, the main interruption will be my presence collecting the observations. It is expected that this will initially be a novel, and therefore, interrupting event but will eventually become familiar and not overly intrusive.

The only potential risk to your child for participating in this study is that caregivers from other centres will observe the documentation, possibly compromising privacy.

The potential benefits of your child's participation in this research include increased knowledge about providing curriculum in multi-age childcare, benefiting all those who may experience that type of childcare including your child and his or her caregiver.

You may withdraw your child from the study without explanation at any time without any consequences. If you withdraw from the study as a result of leaving the childcare program I will ask for your consent at that time to use previously collected data.

There are no consequences that arise from giving or withholding your permission for your child to participate in this study. A choice to not participate will not negatively impact the research. Should you feel that there are pressures or unanticipated consequences as a result of participating or not, you are free to contact the child care director, Ms. Darcelle Cottons (604-822-5343), the research supervisor, Dr. Pacini-Ketchabaw (250-721-6478), or the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545) to have your concerns addressed.

Anonymity/Confidentiality

To protect your child's anonymity, his/her name will not be revealed in transcripts, reports or publications without your consent and any information that you provide will remain anonymous. I will change such things as names, details and any kind of information that identifies individuals. The research results will not reveal your child's identity. However, caregiver participants involved in the focus group sessions may be able to recognize your child. I will ask that all participants in the focus group respect the confidentiality. I cannot guarantee that all group members will keep everything that is said in the group confidential. The confidentiality of the data will be protected by means of storing all files and data in a locked filing cabinet and password protected computer files in my (Deborah Thompson) home office where data will only be accessible to me. Data will be stored for a maximum period of 5 years. All forms of data will be destroyed by Oct. 31, 2016. Electronic data will be deleted, paper copied will be shredded and audio and video recordings will be erased or burnt.

To insure knowledge of your continued consent, I will post monthly notices in each centre reminding participants of the ongoing project and that you may withdraw your child at any time.

Dissemination of results

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: directly to participants including caregivers, children and parents, in a Ph.D. dissertation and defense, as a report to UBCCCS administration, and as a report to Vancouver Coastal Health, Community Care Facilities Licensing, and potentially as presentations at scholarly meetings and conferences and in early childhood education courses.

Before your child's image is used in disseminated material, I will seek your consent to do so and I will not use his/her image without consent.

Contacts

You are encouraged to ask any clarifying questions with regard to your participation in this research and I will answer your questions to the best of my knowledge and your satisfaction. You may contact me at (604) 827-2020 or via e-mail deb.thompson@ubc.ca. You may contact Dr. Pacini-Ketchabaw at (250) 721-6478 or via e-mail at vpacinek@uvic.ca. You may contact Ms. Cottons at (604) 822-5343 or via e-mail at darcelle.cottons@ubc.ca. In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATION in the “Considering Rhizomatic Curriculum in Multi-Age Early Years Settings” RESEARCH PROJECT

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of your child's participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

Name of Child

Name of Parent/Guardian

Signature

Date

Consent for Visually Recorded Images/Data (please initial):

Photos may be taken of my child for:

Analysis _____

Videos may be taken of my child for:

Analysis _____

I understand that I will be contacted for consent at a later date should visually recorded images/data of my child be considered for purposes of dissemination (please initial) _____

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Appendix B



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Practitioner Information Letter and Consent Form

CONSIDERING RHIZOMATIC CURRICULUM IN MULTI-AGE EARLY YEARS SETTINGS

To the Early Childhood Educators of the Multi-age Childcare Centres at UBCCCS:

You are being invited to participate in a study entitled “Considering Rhizomatic Curriculum in Multi-Age Early Years Settings” which is being conducted by me, Deborah Thompson. As you know, UBCCCS has launched a pilot project involving four childcare centres to consider the possibility of providing childcare in a wider age range groupings than currently allowed by provincial legislation. I am using this opportunity to merge the pilot project with my degree at the University of Victoria. As a graduate student in the School of Child and Youth Care, I am conducting this research as part of the requirement for the degree of Ph.D. in Child and Youth Care. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw and with the permission of Ms. Darcelle Cottons, the director of UBCCCS.

The purpose of this project is to develop understanding of how children and caregivers create and live through daily curricular experiences, in a pilot project involving four childcare centres at UBCCCS. Influenced by a growing body of literature that re-conceptualizes early childhood education, the pilot project challenges the idea of organizing early years settings through reliance on age-related theories of child development to inform practice and instead provides childcare structured in multi-age groupings.

This research is important for the potential to contribute to greater understanding of how curriculum in early years research is important for the potential to contribute to greater understanding of how curriculum in early years settings can be generated and about what role child age plays in the generation of curriculum. It will provide UBCCCS and the early childhood educators of the four centres, including me, with knowledge about practices, experiences and curriculum development in the four multi-age programs.

You are being approached to participate in this research project because you are an early years practitioner in one of the four childcare centres involved in the pilot project.

Your participation is important because your interpretations of the ongoing curricular experiences of children who attend the centre extensively contribute to the development of curriculum within these programs.

Description of the research project

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your involvement will include three levels of participation.

The first level will be documentation created by me in your childcare centre that may include your image, voice or actions. The documentation will include written records, photographs, audio recordings and video recordings of daily curricular events such as activities, routines, and transitions. The documentation may be posted in the centre, similar to current centre practices. This level will not require any extra time commitment or change in current practice from you.

The second level of participation will include level 1 participation and contributing to the initial interpretation of the documentation of curricular events in your setting. It will occur during regularly scheduled staff meetings and will involve interpretation of the observation both with the British Columbia Early Learning Framework, and your own knowledge and beliefs. These sessions will be audio-recorded. This level will not require any time outside work but will take time from your scheduled staff meeting.

The third level of participation will involve participation in level 1 and level 2 and in an ongoing focus group made up of practitioners from the four multi-age centres. It will involve meeting outside of work hours. In this component of the project we will use the Protocol for Educational Dialogue in which staff members from one centre present documentation from their centre to staff members from the other centres. Through the process further interpretations and analysis of the documentation are made. The focus group sessions will be audio-recorded. Participants, at this level of the research, act as co-researchers in the research project.

You can choose to participate or not participate at level one as a participant in documentation, at level two as a participant in documentation and in within-centre interpretation or at level three as a participant in the documentation and within-centre analysis and as a co-researcher in the focus group involving members from all four centres.

Inconvenience, risks, benefits and implications of participation/non-participation

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. Your decision to participate or not participate in this project does not affect your employment or opportunity for advancement at UBCCCS. While I will not be able to guarantee complete confidentiality with regard to your level of participation as other participants will be aware of your level of participation, the director of UBCCCS, who makes decisions regarding employment and advancement, will not be informed of your level of participation by me.

Your involvement in the third level of participation will require a time commitment outside of paid work hours of three hours per month for a maximum of eight months. This may mean taking time away from family, and or other activities.

Depending on at which level you choose to participate, your participation will potentially offer you increased understanding of providing curriculum in a multi-age childcare centre, increased understanding of analyzing curriculum, increased understanding of the British Columbia Early

Learning Framework, increased skills using documentation of curricular activities, and increased skills in researching your own practice.

You are under no obligation to participate in the research project and your participation must be completely voluntary. My role as your supervisor or colleague can have no bearing on your decision to participate. For those whom I supervise, your level of participation will have no impact on your work assignment or any evaluations of you that I may be required to do. There is no risk and no benefit to your employment based on your participation, and the director and her staff will not be informed about your level of participation. Further, the planned design of research project does not necessitate the participation of all members of the childcare centres and any particular caregiver or child can choose to not participate without limiting or impacting the research.

A choice to not participate will not negatively impact the research project. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without explanation or consequences. If any of the issues discussed during the sessions make you feel uncomfortable you may leave or stop the discussion at anytime without consequence. If you withdraw from the project, data that involves only you will only be used after you sign an authorization form. However, please note that it will be very difficult for me to remove what you have said during the focus group sessions. This is due primarily to the fact that after removing one person's dialogue in a discussion, the group conversation may not make sense. I will however minimize your personal data while ensuring that I can still gain a good understanding of other participants' experiences and insights.

To insure knowledge of your continued consent, I will begin each staff meeting and focus group with a reminder that you may withdraw at any time.

Anonymity/Confidentiality

To protect your anonymity, your name will not be revealed in transcripts, reports or publications without your consent and any information that you provide will remain anonymous. I will change such things as your name, details about you and any kind of information that identifies you. The research results will not reveal your identity. However, participants involved in the focus group sessions will be able to recognize you. I will ask that all participants in the focus group respect the confidentiality of the group by not revealing participant information of other participants. I cannot guarantee that all group members will keep everything that is said in the group confidential. Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by means of storing all files and data in a locked filing cabinet and password protected computer files in my (Deborah Thompson) home office. This is a secure location where data will only be accessible to me. Data will be stored for a maximum period of 5 years. All forms of data will be destroyed by Oct. 31, 2016. Electronic data will be deleted, paper copied will be shredded and audio and video recordings will be erased or burnt.

Dissemination of results

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: directly to participants including caregivers, children and parents, in a Ph.D. dissertation including an oral defense, as a report to UBCCCS administration, and as a report to Vancouver

Costal Health, Community Care Facilities Licensing, and potentially as presentations at scholarly meetings and conferences and in early childhood education courses.

Before your image is used in disseminated material, I will seek your consent to do so and I will not use your image without consent.

Contacts

You are encouraged to ask any clarifying questions with regard to your participation in this research and I will answer your questions to the best of my knowledge and your satisfaction. You may contact me at (604) 827-2020 or via e-mail deb.thompson@ubc.ca. You may contact Dr. Pacini-Ketchabaw at (250) 721-6478 or via e-mail at vpacinik@uvic.ca. You may contact Ms. Cottons at (604) 822-5343 or via e-mail at darcelle.cottons@ubc.ca. In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca)

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATION in the “Considering Rhizomatic Curriculum in Multi-Age Early Years Settings” RESEARH PROJECT

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by me.

I agree to participate at Level 1 of this project: _____ Yes _____ No
Consent for Visually Recorded Images/Data (please initial):
Videos may be taken of me:
Photos may be taken of me:

If yes to above,
I agree to participate at Level 2 of this project: _____ Yes _____ No
Please initial
I agree to have the meeting audio-recorded:
I wish to review the transcripts of the meeting:

If yes to above,
I agree to participate at Level 3 of this project: _____ Yes _____ No
Please initial:
I agree to have my focus group audiotaped:
I wish to review the transcripts of the Focus Groups:

Name of Participant *Signature* *Date*

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.