The Pedagogical Disposition of the Early Childhood Educator

Jade Santos & Lynn Ragasa

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Land Acknowledgement

We want to begin by acknowledging that we work and and play on the unceded territory of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the territories of the xʷməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səl̓ílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

We want to send our full gratitude for our group of participants who came to every discussion with enthusiasm and curiosity. Thank you for your collaborative efforts and new insights that have encouraged us to think differently with each other and the children we work with.

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Our Story

He gets up, slams his hands on the table and walks away. Jade sees the frustration in his face, and she looks at the teacher who rolls her eyes. Child A has been working on the letters for a while now. The teacher walks up to him and implies that he must finish this first before he plays. He starts yelling and doesn't listen to the teacher and begins to disrupt the other children in the classroom. The educator raises their voice, forcing him to look her in the eyes, insisting that he must listen and uses the parents as a threat that they would not be happy with this. Jade hears the other educators talk and one says, "They don't want to deal with him." Jade hears in her words the frustration and fear that she holds. That educator has been working here for a while and now in a prominent leadership role, she hasn't encountered a child like this. There are many instances like this where Jade has worked in preschools and kindergarten classes, where developmentally appropriate practice or what the teacher instructs, dominates the child and is more important before educators get to know the child. Years later, Jade is back in school and continuing her studies in early childhood education. She learns about the dominant discourse in education that has shaped the view of educators, their view on themselves and the relationship it impacts with children. Jade is understanding that our network of relationships is enmeshed with historical theories and practices that have sustained in education today which have created inequalities and marginalization of who children are. It is time to ask these political questions like who is the educator and how can the educator relate to the Other, giving them a voice.

Lynn worked as team-lead and 3-5 educator working in the early childhood education field. Her fellow educators in the program persistently expressed their concerns over their day-to-day experiences. As a new year began, a child with extra support needs joined their centre, and required full-time one-on-one support. The educators took turns being his support staff, as they found him difficult to "manage" over long periods of time. This child's needs challenged the educators' standards and determination, as they were not ones common to the center. For a specific example, the child preferred to have his meals as he slowly walked around the space, examining his peers and their activities, but he always came back to the table to feed himself. The educators saw this as problematic, and the reasonings they would give were: It is not safe to eat while walking! He is going to choke on his food. The other children will copy him. The educators enforced a mealtime rule that a child who is eating, must be sitting at the lunch table. Lynn acknowledged their safety concerns, yet wondered, why it was so critical for this child (and the other children) to follow the educators' standards, especially as these children were older and were more than capable of feeding themselves. This experience reminded Lynn how the dispositions of the educator are caught up in fulfilling their duties of directing activities, managing children, and delivering to children the "correct" knowledge and ways of being.

Jade and Lynn became curious about the image of the educator as issues of race, power, and social justice have arose to the surface in these past few years. We wondered what the role of the educator was in regards to teaching children about these controversial and challenging topics. We quickly learn about the society's expectations on educators and how this influences our role with children. As we have learned in the program, education is a political institution and we wonder what the perspectives are of educators incorporating politics and ethics in their curriculum and children. We both believe that the educators' role in society is much larger than society depicts it to be, as glorified babysitters.

We looked toward the question of "**what does it mean to work with ethics and politics as an educator?**"

What are ethics in education and why does it matter?
How is ethics approached in education today?

We decided to engage with this inquiry due to our personal experiences working in the field of early childhood education and have higher hopes for the field of early childhood education, that educators will be the voices for the marginalized, often silenced and recognize the diversity of children.

During the pandemic, Jade and Lynn, together with eight adults from various backgrounds and experiences from education, political science, mathematics, and technology, have been coming together virtually to take on the notion of ethics regarding education, specifically the disposition of the educator.

To start our discussions, we worked on a weekly powerpoint presentation of the topics and questions we wanted to bring to the group and also what the group asked each other. Every week, we set slides in the beginning for a recap of the previous meetings to reflect and open up emergent topics to talk about and valued our participants engagement with. Many parts of our presentation included questions, quotes, definitions and scenarios that made us think about the different factors and relations we have as being ethical and political educators. Below are examples of what our presentations looked like and how they were able to stimulate and guide conversations.

The group was comfortable in sharing and listening to each other's responses. We would ask each other questions to elaborate on our thinking and to share examples and experiences to think about. Half of the group were educators and others were in other disciplines. It was interesting to have different perspectives from their personal student experiences.

RECAP

· Our image of the educator
· Thoughts on the term "ethics"
· Personal experiences on ethical dilemmas

ETHICS

TONIGHT'S
AGENDA

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· Our expectations on the role of educators

· Dominant Discourses, Pedagogy of Listening, & Ethics of Care

· Questions, thoughts & journal entry

EXPECTATIONS OF
AN EDUCATOR

This project takes shape through the participants constructing their understandings of various articles presented to them in regard to the disposition of the educator. It first takes place by unfolding the participants understandings of ethics and how it can be incorporated in the curriculum of education. We then looked at the dominant structure of education and how it encourages an efficient and capitalist standpoint, instead of a more relational and meaningful perspective on education that Dahlberg and Moss (2005) discuss in "Ethics and Politics in Early Childhood Education." We looked at the image and expectations of an educator to understand where the participants are coming from and how they see educators.

Jade and Lynn both realised that they could not look at collaboration without acknowledging the Other. The participants found this idea challenging as they had not encountered this term before, and we spent many conversations unfolding it. The articles speak upon a different relationship with each other and ethics through the "philosophy of the Other (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.76)," that Emmanuel Levinas proposes on how to respond and be responsible for each other. Levinas speaks on the "Other" as a human that is not part of the Same, one who we have nothing in common with and does not follow the status quo (Biesta, 2006; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). Levinas uses the strong metaphor of "grasping and making the Other into the Same" (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.78) by classifying them into particular subjects that takes away the alterity and who they are. This is the universal and normative thinking of modernity which emphasizes subjects following society's status quo. Although it was challenging for the participants, the collaboratory found a way to create a collective understanding of the Other for the group.

We read Moss' (2017) article to see early childhood education in a most post-modern perspective, where the space is open to all citizens of all backgrounds and experiences. The participants created metaphors for the disposition of the educator, which gave Jade and Lynn hope for the future of education to change in a way that is meaningful and more relatable to the times and places we are all situated in. The purpose of this research is to understand how the trajectory of the educator can be transformed.

Conceptual Essay

In today's society, there is a dominant story on the purpose of education and who the educator should be. The dominant story of the educator's disposition brings into specific perspectives on theory and practice that influence the curriculum and relationships with the children. This relationship involves a particular understanding of making ethical and political decisions for children that have led to marginalizing differences, diversity and what philosopher Emmanuel Levinas calls it, the Other and otherness (2010a). Lynn and Jade examine and explore with a group of participants, how the disposition of educators affects ethical and political decisions with children and how we see those effects in living with each other. We are challenged to think why ethics matter in our teaching and how educators can approach ethics in a different way where all the children can participate. We look deeper into how we can shift early childhood education into ethical and political spaces where all stories can be heard.

Working with a reconceptualist and poststructuralist framework, our project looks closely with the ideas of Michel Foucault, Gert J.J. Biesta, Emmanuel Levinas, Gunilla Dahlberg and Peter Moss. These researchers emphasize the importance in re-evaluating and deconstructing dominant discourses, which are ideas and beliefs that have been engrained on to us through society and institutions, like education. Foucault termed dominant discourses as the 'regimes of truth' in that they outline a singular way of being, thinking, and living in the world (MacNaughton, 2005; Moss, 2019). By looking at education in a post-structuralist perspective it encourages critical thinking, equity, and social justice in early childhood education (MacNaughton, 2005). It allows us to delve deeper into the status quos of society in regard to education and our beliefs on what education should look like. These researchers perspectives have contributed concepts, ideas and values that challenge how we understand differences and diversity, termed by Levinas as the Other, and how educators can cultivate a practice that is centred in ethics, politics and democracy with the Other. Their work challenges the belief for the absolute truths of knowledge and that knowledge is produced up of many perspectives (Moss, 2014, p. 93).

This framework presents on reconceptualizing education that resists the dominant story of technical practice, developmentally appropriate curriculum and transmitting rational and scientific knowledge as the right answers to be human. Foucault's research illustrates that these dominant perspectives are prevalent by power relations that educators take part in and through self governance and control of children, they are able to stay within these perspectives. Power is used to dictate what is believed to be truths in education as the right way and thus as the right way to be human (Moss, 2019, p.90). Educators use micropractices of power in normalisation, regulation and exclusion of children. These micropractices of power privileges a universal knowledge and way of being that separates children. They are compared, observed and limited by seeing them through specific standards. The techniques see the child as something to control, mold and thus determining the future generation (Prout, 2000: 306 cited in Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p. 58).

Within the dominant story of education, these specific views shape who the educator and child are. The image of the educator is one that transmits knowledge, provides the service and applies skills to shape a particular human. It dictates what is allowed and not allowed to be said and done (Biesta, 2006, p.14). Biesta critiques who the human is and that there is not one way to be human (Biesta, 2006). Thinking in this way, closes off the uniqueness and singularity of the Other and disregards them before they are able to show who they are (Biesta, 2006). This story reproduces a particular human. This particular human is not the solution to society's economic and social problems that we have seen in today's world. Instead of making the Other the same, the question is raised on what if we learned to live with the Other (Biesta, 2006, p.59). It is through resisting the dominant discourse, educators can reimage the child and have children become who they are.

Dahlberg and Moss introduce an alternative story to education with a relationship that welcomes the Other and engages with them. It is one that is held within care, responsibility, encountering and listening to the Other. (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). Ethics in this relationship is about taking responsibility for our actions and the actions we take with the Other (Dahlberg et al., 2013, p.165). This relationship involves an "ethics of encounter," a vision from Levinas to think beside the Other and ourselves to explore our responsibility to each other and that there are potentialities with meeting the Other (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.165).In order to break free from subjectification, Biesta emphasizes that humans have their own unique voice that arises with engaging with each other, especially with those that have nothing in common (2006, p.63). Through this, educators welcome every child who is different and for them to be their "unique, singular being" (Biesta, 2006, p.69). This requires a deep and thoughtful listening to the Other and hearing stories that have not been told. This also means that in doing so, ethics is a risk and comes with uncertainty and conflict that in turn provides possibilities to think and be with each other (Moss, 2014, p. 81). It is through engaging, provision, co-constructing knowledges and collaborative efforts to work with each other. Furthermore, the relationship includes values of "empathy, compassion and commitment," of how we can relate to the Other (Sevenhuijsen, 1998 cited in Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.74).

These main concepts show how the dominant story of education influences the educator's image of children that refuses to acknowledge the plurality, differences and otherness in which the world is made up of. It also shows how the dominant story is heavily put onto educators to teach a certain way and to maintain it. Dahlberg and Moss call us to consider an alternative way to approach education's purpose and our own as educators. When we begin to resist the dominant story and welcome and listen to other stories, we are creating spaces of ethical and political discussions that are needed to become a democratic community. This alternative story of the educator's disposition shows ethics is a vital part in our relationships with the children. Being ethical in the care, responsibility and encountering with the Other, encompasses what it means to live well with each other. With a commitment to become aware and discuss different perspectives, these weekly encounters challenge our knowledge about education and lead to reimage the educator's part in participating and creating spaces that hold ethical and political learning with each other.

We are inspired by Dahlberg and Moss' quotes about the current state of Early Childhood Education that helps us wonder and reconfigure our roles as Educators.

"The prospect of preschools being sites for producing predefined outcomes, mainly through the application of technical practices to the efficient governing of children," (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.4)."

"In our view, preschools should be understood as a public good, of great social, cultural and political importance. They should be viewed as part of that wider network of public provisions that makes society meaningful and creates possibilities for solidarity and democracy. Rather than competing with each other within a market, preschools should work together collaboratively (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p. 29)."

We want to engage how the role of the educator takes part in this process and how we can transform into something more than just a generalized and assumed role. Someone who can make a change that moves towards a more relational education that reflects the people, places, and predicaments of its society. Where multiplicities and alternatives can occur and be welcomed.

So we ask,
"What does it mean for educators to work with ethics and politics? And how does it transform the purpose of education?"

Education as a Factory: Staying Within the Lines

"Preschools (and other 'children's services') assume a role of social regulation, intended to bring technical fix to bear on the wider societal consequences of the economic deregulation demanded by neoliberalism (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.41)."

In an early discussion, the educators and non-educators conversate on what the purpose of education is and the main narratives of how educators play particular roles in this story, as being knowledge providers and caretakers of children.

We talk about how this narrative of education as a factory, derived from Sir Ken Robinson on RSA Animate's video, explains the structure of education as a whole system that is set up to engrain specific expectations for society, and how education defines success for the greater society and turns into a dominant discourse. We examine how knowledge and power are connected to keep this story being told. We discuss if there are ways we can tell other narratives where educators can resist these discourses and why.

The Leading Narrative of Education

Hearing the common perception of how success is found, only by receiving an education, emphasizes society's habit of maintaining a singular way of being. These expectations of having an education are enforced to the point that it controls who we are as individuals. Amina's statement coincides with the notion that society has been socialized to be accustomed to the dominant discourses by perceiving that this is what it is to be considered normal (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017).

For some of our participants the word "discourse" was a new term. We termed it for them as "dominant discourses make assumptions and values invisible, turn subjective perspective and understandings into apparently objective truths and determine that some things are self evident and realistic while others are dubious and impractical" (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.17). To help their perspective on the main and strong ideas in society, we asked several questions about education, society and the image that it has about children and what educators do because of this image of children.
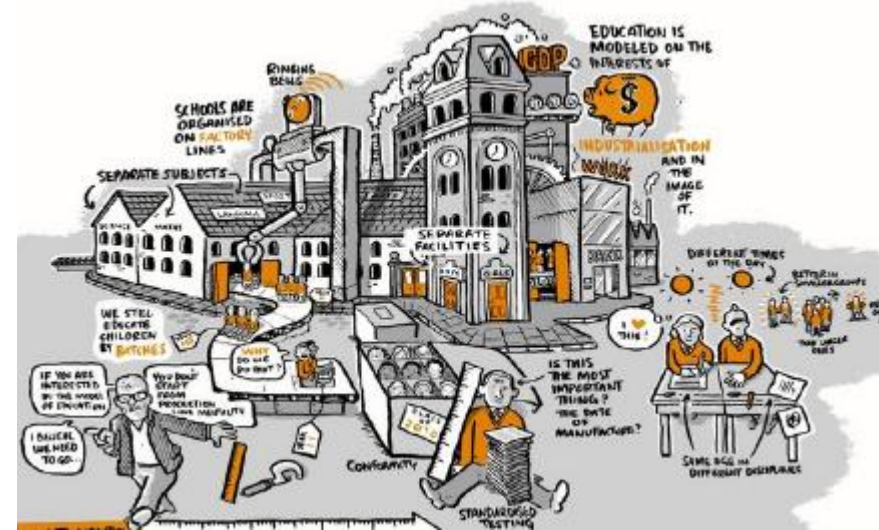
(RSA, 2010)

We asked the group, what does education say on how a human should be? What are society's beliefs that we conform to? Or resist to. Some of their thoughts included:

Bianca says "Western colonialist ways of being and knowing especially in the education system where **certain knowledges are valued over others**".

Jenn says, "**Daycares seen as a service**, parents see educators as babysitters, when we do much more than just watch the children play. We have gone to school for it and there is much more that we do."

Lora says, " Early childhood education is seen as a **service**."

We touch upon the connection of the dominant discourse to neoliberalism, and the capital foundation of early childhood education as a service to best apply a technical practice on children achieve this predetermined subject (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). This subject "seeks to fix the wider societal consequences of the economic deregulation (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.41)."

Education emphasizes a creation in a subject, or student, that is docile, rational, passive and law-abiding (Biesta, 2006). Students are told not to question what they are taught, but by doing so it reinforces the cycle of the dominant truths and knowledges of society, and can lead into excluding other people, ways of being, and doing.

From hearing the participants speak about early childhood education as a service, we brought forward the concept of the education system being structured like a factory line, where the educators are the factory workers, and the students are the products (Biesta, 2006; Jardine, 2013).

We watch a video titled "RSA ANIMATE: Changing Education Paradigms" which gave a brief history on the creation of education and the ways in which it needs to change.

Amina shares saying, "I really resonated with the part where he mentions that we think if we do well in school and get a good job, then you're set for life. That's sort of how I was raised as well, especially since my parents are first generation immigrants. They came here for better opportunities for their children and **this idea of doing well in school was forced down your throat or else you won't go anywhere in life**."

Lynn replies, "I think a lot of us who are children of first immigrant parents can relate to that, especially when you're the eldest one. There's **this immense pressure on you to do well** so that your parents don't have to worry about you. I think this system of education focuses on getting children to be well-rounded and ready for the world. And completely ignores any unique abilities they have, their personalities, any interests they have."


(RSA, 2010)

To think more with our ideas about how they we see education as a factory, we turn to Michel Foucault and his research on knowledge and power that help dominant discourses become prevalent in society.

We watch a video called "Understanding Why Knowledge is Power - Michel Foucault." We discuss how natural it has become for educators to play this role in the factory because of the application of "techniques of power" that we use on children (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.16). These practices help normalise, exclude and separate children. Often, these practices categories them and oppresses who the children are.

In the next discussions we look more deeply on who the educator is within this factory and from our own experiences with educators.
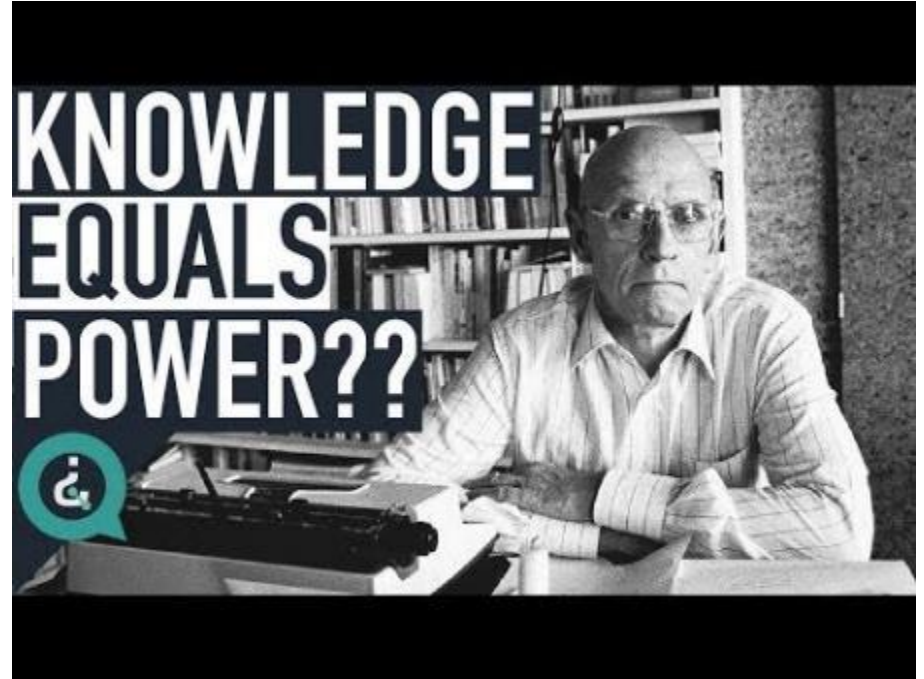
(Waldun, 2018)

"All view the teacher as someone who knows the one right answer to every question, as the privileged voice of authority with a privilege relation to the meaning of knowledge; and the complementary image of children as receptacles for the teacher's explanation and transmission of reconstituted and unquestionable knowledge (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.95)".

Educator as a Stagnant Technician

Education has become a place of economic transaction between the educator and student, where it is no longer about learning but instead insisting that educators provide education as a commodity of knowledge (Biesta, 2006). Jacqueline brings us to the point that "[education's] technical approach is diversionary. **It focuses attention on parents and children, whilst distracting attention from the power relations that create poverty and inequality in the first place** (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.42)." It is a system that is competitive and individualistic which is connected to control (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). Through neoliberalism it "spreads its values and practices (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p. 39)."

We see that the dominant discourse of education is perpetuated to **maintain a power imbalance and status quo in society.** It is the idea that the more "correct" knowledge one has, the more powerful they are in society. We talk about our own power, and how we are influenced through this power to use on children (governmentality) and are shaped by social forces, school, family and friends. Dahlberg & Moss (2005) write that these techniques of powers do not happen by themselves but work in a system that has prevailed to form the dominant discourses in education. School retains this purpose of a child that is normalized through supervision and judgement to be on good behaviour that is set in education's beliefs (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005).

The dominant image of an educator as a technician has become this passive factory-line-worker. One who merely observes children from the sidelines, providing knowledge and reinforcing dominant ideas, like the importance of having an education, as they were taught before. However, children are not just mere objects who learn individually. Learning and understanding requires multitude of interpretations from others, including the educator.

Lynn's younger twin brothers were often left to play with one another, and from this they were diagnosed with a speech delay. However, as Lynn understood the education system and its practices more, she understood that since no adults actively participated in their conversations, it did not allow her brothers to learn or hear how others spoke.

Students and children need active teachers who will participate, question, challenge, and explore with them especially in times of hardship.
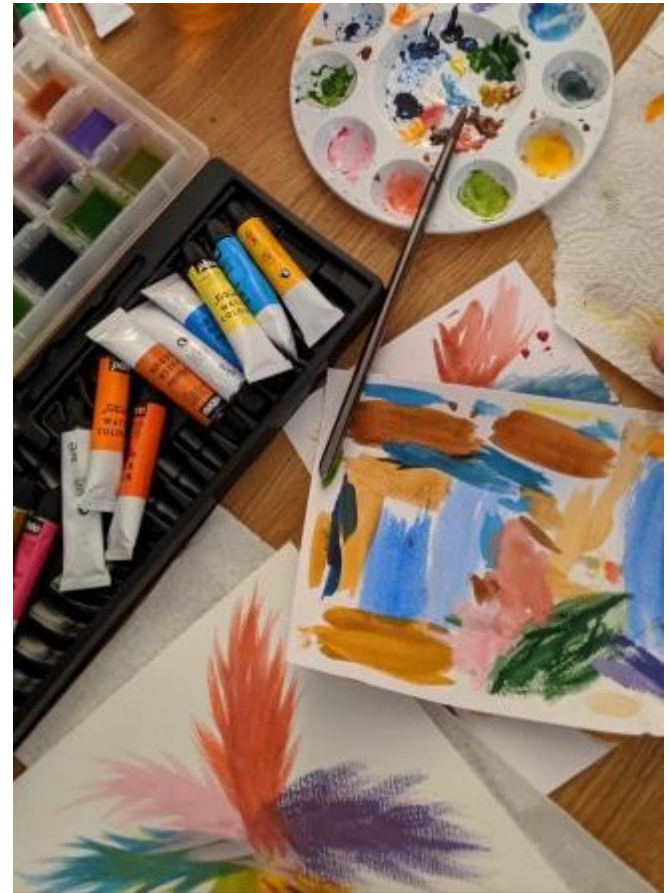
From hearing the conversation around how public education is structured like a factory line, Jacqueline says,

"**Public education perpetuates the illusion of fairness in a capitalist society.** It gives the people the idea that public access to education offers equal opportunities. This is not true. For example, richer neighbourhoods have better schools as they are better funded. Public education also allows for the government to decide the material students learn and what philosophies to instill into peoples minds. Like the capitalist government can glorify capitalism and demonize socialism (covertly of course), keeping its citizens from critiquing the system. **We're indoctrinated to believe the ultimate goal for going to school is to find a job, and to earn money through that is to be our "dream"**.

From this, there is one reality that society has set for children to work and invest back to society. We recognize now that there are many realities and ways to live in our society. We also recognize that this intersects with the ideas of the "uncertainties and opportunities There is not just one way to be successful. What can be changed in the way society sees each other is care and consideration towards others that can lead to justice and equality (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.11)."

The collaboratory dabbles into how much the education system influences us subconsciously and if has continued. A bit of a discussion was going on around the topic of when we form our own opinions and beliefs, and if they change from attending multiple years of education.

Jacqueline says, "I think it's a lot better in university. Both because professors decide their own curriculum (i.e. not pre-structured by education board) and because students are more mature and are better critical thinkers. But at that point, **a lot of their opinions have already been formed by their K-12 schooling years**."

Everett says, "I actually think that **opinions aren't formed in K-12, but rather that we're echoing the opinions of others that have been passed onto us, either willingly or unwillingly.** The formation of our own opinions, I would argue, actually form in college where we listen to others and are allowed to think more outside of a "standardized" bubble."

Jade replies in response to Everett, "A lot of the things that we've known to be true are actually being unlearned. What you mentioned too is, that there's a lot of stories and perspectives that we're told and that we have to listen to."

Lynn adds, "I feel like children learn a lot in their early years from like early childhood education to elementary school. You learn a lot about yourself and what others like and don't like because you're testing the waters. I think educators are there not to necessarily guide but conversate with children on what's going on around them. But maybe this learning is ongoing like what Jade said, we start to realize that some of the things we learned early on is not something we completely agree with."

Resisting To Be Constricted Educators

When hearing about when opinions or knowledge is formed for an individual and each participant was asked, "What does it mean to resist the dominant discourse as educators, which are ways of "think[ing], talk[ing], and act[ing] as if they represent the incontrovertible truth, as if they only provide the only valid meaning (Moss, 2019, p.90)" especially when realising how structured the system is?"

Our comments below show that to acknowledge children for who they are, we have to be able to reflect on the power we have that controls who and what children should be. These ideas also show that becoming aware, investigating, questioning and learning into the dominant stories of education and why these beliefs are still valued in society, we begin to change our perspective on ourselves, the educators and the relationships with children.

This also entails what the project proposes on inquiring more and learning the underlying beliefs of our field that intertwines curriculum, society and our relationships with each other.

Amina mentions, "I should be like this - **taking a step back,** and reciprocity, working through things, not fighting this child for their power. What your idea of the child should be? If you think children are less capable, children are blank slates."

Lora says, "To be aware of the dominant discourses in education and think of ways in which educators engage with them. The power struggle - **knowing what the dominant discourses are**. DAP (developmentally appropriate practice) and engaging with parents; [and understanding] every child learns and grows differently."

Jade says, "We're unaware that we have this power to control what we are taught to be right and we put that control on to others. We have to try to resist the power to normalise and classify children into one that welcomes what they have to say and who they are."

Emerging Images of the Educator

Education was and is still based on individual emancipation, in that it focuses on the trajectory of a student from the beginning to end of their education with the emphasis of teachers being the factory workers to create specific human beings (Biesta, 2006). **Educators have been governed to be a certain way in order to fit into society's image**. Through subjectification educators shape themselves to be "a certain kind of subject who will govern herself or himself (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.20)." The dominant image of an educator has constantly been this passive being who recycles and reiterates knowledge to produce capable citizens of the future.

This is what we expected to hear from the participants but instead we were very surprised to hear how postmodern the participants' image of the educator was. It went past the dominant discourse of an educator of being passive, authoritative, and all knowing. Instead it incorporated an educator who was focused around **collaboration, relationships, and being personable**; a shift toward an educational relationship arose which involves trust and responsibility (Biesta, 2006). By looking and questioning the "familiar, unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought [and] practices [that] we accept" (Moss, 2019, p.97) a shift in education can begin.

By seeing how the participants were moving away from the educator who focuses on developmental practices and being all knowing, we wondered what was next for the future of the educator. How will collaborative and personable relationships impact education and the educator?

We were curious to see what the participants would bring as their images of the educator and asked what values they see in one.

Lynn says, "I picked the image with the different wheels because **the teacher has different parts and roles** they need to live up to that are all interconnected. Teachers are not just knowledgeable, but to be a teacher you need all of these different parts and roles."

Jenn says, "Teachers are not looking for the answer. I see educators that are **engaging, and listening to the children**."

Everett says, "My favourite teachers have all been connected with being super funny, middle-aged people, one of my high school teachers I had a **very positive relationship** with him. All the teachers that I've had looked like him and were all super likeable. They have all looked like that."

Jacqueline says, "Mine was one of my math profs from university. She was really eloquent and knowledgeable but also just **incredibly nice and cared for her students.**"

our image of the educator

We talk about our image of the educator and the main perspective that shone through was the idea of educators being supportive and working in collaboration with children, families, and their community. The participants saw an educator who was **flexible, supportive, and collaborative;** one who "consider[s] many different perspectives and engag[s] with the complexities of practice in a spirit of experimentation that is local and respectful (Province of British Columbia, 2019, p.12)."

Educators can work in relationship with children and other adults as "a collaborator who creates conditions so that children can invent, investigate, build theories, and learn" (Province of British Columbia, 2019, p.18). The participants saw the importance of educators critically thinking about their practice by engaging in collaboration, dialogue, and listening with others and their community. "The task before [educators] today is not that of reproducing the past, but rather that of asking how [educators] should respond educationally to the questions and challenges that are facing [society] today" (Biesta, 2006, p.100). Educators who challenge the dominant practices in education, are taking a risk, to create these spaces where new ways of being, thinking, and doing can occur. "Rather it is an early childhood education that is committed to re-building the values of cooperation, mutuality, democracy and sustainability, and that rather than future-proofing children to be neoliberal subjects, works with these values to contribute towards 'future building' (Moss, 2017, p.24)."

Our Image of the Educator

We were intrigued by our participants' images of an educator so the question of "**What are the expectations of an educator?**" arose.

Bianca says, "**Supporting** children and families and **fostering safe spaces** for guiding by example also working in collaboration! I feel like fostering positive relationships are important too."

Amina says, "Provide wide range of experiences. **Helping build start the beginning of empathy and kindness**, and help them walk in the world."

Lora says, "Safe spaces to be themselves to learn from each other. Provide new experiences and **a space for children to be themselves and guide them.** To **learn from each other**, learn with children, children learn with educators, contest and question ideas and notions."

Everett says, "Not to teach what is right or wrong. **To provide, all viewpoints**, have children come to their own conclusion. It's complicated."

Rebecca says, "Engage in active listening, **supporting and collaborating**. Bringing awareness to alternative perspectives and new ways of doing things."

The Relationship Between Ethics and Educators

"We often associate ethics in making the correct choice. However, "with choice comes responsibility. And if choice is inevitable, responsibility is unavoidable (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.70)."

Due to our previous discussions the topics of ethics continually reappeared, the collaboratory decides to dive into the definition of ethics, to further understand what it means for each other and within society. We look with Dahlberg & Moss, about the foundations of Ethics, called Universal Ethics and its influence in relationships that educators have.

We then look towards a more post-modern approach to ethics in understanding that there are more options than the binaries of right and wrong (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). It allows the participants to gather together why ethics is critical in the role of educators.

The participants provide their own metaphors of ethics and experiences of their own educators making ethical choices.

Universal Ethics Within Educator's Relationships

We ask the participants to read a chapter titled, "What Ethics?" from "Ethics and Politics in Early Childhood Education," by Dahlberg & Moss (2005), to examine how their ideas and beliefs on ethics came to be. We discover that these ideas and beliefs are heavily influenced by Universal Ethics in which, the "totality of rules, norms, principles equally applicable to everyone and acceptable to every rational thinking person (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.66)." To begin our inquiry around the idea of an ethical and political educator, we ask the participants on what they think "ethics" is and why. The words we discuss first are: **morals, feelings, and rights.**

We reflect that ethics includes the individual perspective on how we treat and are treated by others.

What are Ethics?

Bianca says, **"Ethics are one's own beliefs and values** but ethical practice is a standard held by a group of people or board. In science, they can choose not to have studies because of ethical practice because it can cause harm to somebody. It can be strict, but it can also vary across the board."

Jacqueline says, "Reflections of **what is good or bad** for individuals in situations."

Justin says, "Principles that influence **how one acts**."

Everett says, "I've always seen it as just the study or idea of **what is right and wrong**."

Jade says, "Ethics guide **how we act**, and how we **relate to each other**."

Rebecca says, "What you feel the **right thing to do verses the wrong thing**. It is the boundary of morals and influenced act - based off of your values and beliefs."

Ethics in this way are seen as binary. We begin to wonder what does this mean in relation to the human subject?
How should we think and act? What does it mean to have "good" and "bad" ethics? We recognize how this way of seeing ethics lies in Universal Ethics.

We stem our conversations to reflect on the word *rights,* as it made us ponder what is considered *rights* and that it was discussed there are assumptions that everyone is able to make these ethical choices. As we know, choices are guided by beliefs and do not stray away from biases. We saw that the idea of ethics was quite binary in that there was a consensus in what is right and wrong.

With these answers, we connect it to Universal Ethics, which focuses on duties defined by right and wrong that is decided by powerful members of society (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). Ethics is understood here as the "should" question: from a normative and universalist perspective, how should we think and act?," (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.66). These qualities of what is considered "good" and "bad", "right" and "wrong," begin to create a subject (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). In relation to education, it creates a particular view of the educator and child. We look more into this in the next discussions.

Many of the participants also talk about human rights and laws; that there are certain laws in society to keep us safe but also that there are a spectrum of conditions that result in a final consequence for everyone. With Lora's response, it shows that right or wrong is more complex than society deems it to be. Lynn's perspective made us think that right is an action and thus we all can do something in ethical and political situations.

Lora says, "Justice - What is fair, what is fair in the situation, how would you determine what is fair. Human rights, then justice. **Not necessarily what's right or wrong, fairness. responsibility. Action, to act on, act upon. Democracy - when it comes to rights.**"

Jacqueline says, "What a **collective society considers individuals should be allowed to do.**"

Lynn: "Right is **the ability to do something."**

Our conversations shows us how ingrained this discourse is and we decide to unfold ethics further. We examine these concepts of universal and post-modern ethics. We ask the group to work with the chapter on understanding together what universal ethics is, how it is intertwined in the education field, and how the values are believed into creating the particular human.

Bianca's comments show that in the field, policies are implemented with an end result for all circumstances of ethical situations. We are learning that that universal ethics approach doesn't treat each situation individually but generalizes it. This way of seeing ethics is also seen with the relationships of education with educators and educators with children. A strong agency in education make these policies that determine what is right and wrong. The active technical practice that education enforces are expected of the educator to prescribe these legislation.

Immanuel Kant, founder of Universal Ethics, viewed that "being a moral person is, almost by definition, linked to the ability and the authority to exercise rights and fulfil obligations. Moral dilemmas take the form of conflicts between rights claim" (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.67). When we relate this to educators and students, the ethical relationships is how someone can do the right actions and expectations balanced with rights and responsibilities (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005).

Bianca says, "A universalistic ethical approach underlies much policy and practice in the early childhood field. There is a search on for universal codes that will govern practice and evaluation, "a totality of rules, norms, principles equally applicable to everyone and acceptable to every rational thinking person" (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.66). "These codes take the form of curricula, goals and targets, standards, quality measures, standardised measures of assessment" (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.67). Why are some universal ethics regulatory practices like ratios class size or are based on educators judgement. Is there a way to monitor ethics of care?"
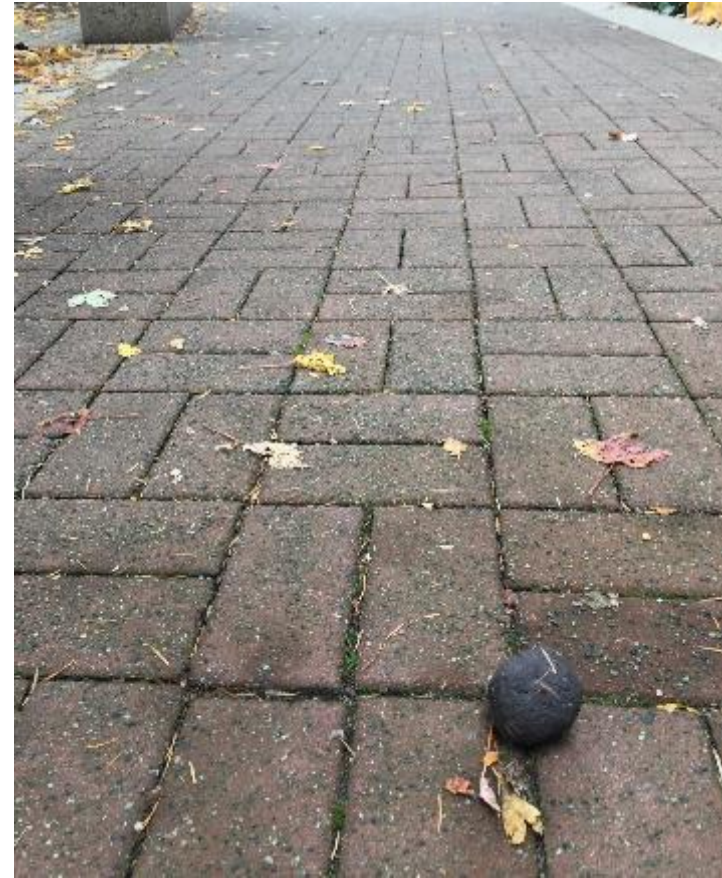
With policies and curriculum, we cannot base every child under those circumstances because each child is going to come with different experiences, backgrounds, and personalities.

It begins with the qualities of educators like being open, welcoming and listening.

The conversation continues on in unfolding universal ethics. Lynn prompts us back to looking at how we choose to make our decisions by not following the standard rule book that is given out to society in order for individuals to conform to these expectations, but instead situating ourselves and recognizing the people and places we are surrounded by (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). Amina also reminds us that these expectations are placed on everyone in a certain group and those who fit in it. These dominant ideas are embedded in the system of Early Childhood Education and are not stopped to be questioned.

Lynn says "These choices we make in the field, and how we choose to response to what we do matter. Human centeredness makes us selfish and hyperfocus on ourselves but in reality it affects everything and everyone else."

Amina says "Universally understanding - where everyone has the same opinion."

Our discussions on understanding Ethics has left us wondering more about how we can approach ethics now. We consider that ethics is not linear, that there are many different factors because we all have different perspectives on how to handle an ethical situation. We agree that our thinking on ethics comes from our values, beliefs and morals. We take on the word, "rights," as a responsibility to take action and that we are our own individual with differences.

Universal Ethics has been replaced with "order, rules and regulation," (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.69). Which we have discussed is evident in education today where there are norms on how children should learn, behave and be. In the chapter Bauman proposes with the idea that ethics can "involve practice to decide what is best in a concrete situation," (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.69). Lynn brings up an example where the situation of the person whos steals because they are hungry, we then can consider what is best for that person in that situation before sending them to jail instantly without knowing and discussing the context. Rather than having concluded an ethical situation with one answer that is deemed correct, Bauman suggests that "we must take responsibility for the choices we make" (quoted in Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.71). This recognizes the agency of each human and that "we are our own moral agents" without complying to a universal code (Dahlberg & moss, 2005, p.71).

Dilemmas, in it self, "have no ready-made solutions," and there is no guarantee of the goodness or intention of the results (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.71). It comes with uncertainty, risk and needs provision and negotiation (Foucault, Dahlberg & Moss). With this turn in ethics, we question how can we change our ethical relationships into one that acknowledges each person and welcomes who they are. Our group explores Postmodern Ethics with the main philosophies of Joan Tronto, Selma Sevenhuijsen, Emmanuel Levinas, Zygmunt Bauman, Hannah Arendt, and Jacques Derrida.

The question of "**How do universal ethics guide us?**" arose.

Jacqueline says, "I think thinking about ethics serves a different purpose for the self vs a society. An individual should think about ethics to be a better person, or to "care" for others, as Tronto said, "a society should think about ethics to determine "universal ones" which then are applied to create laws for the society." I think the individual should think about and come to their own conclusion on the matter"

Amina says, "There are laws that we have, like not to kill people."

Bianca replies saying, "There are scenarios where others get to choose if someone dies. For example for death row inmates, an entire of board of members have to agree if the inmate will get the death penalty. They won't go through with it if not everyone agrees. So we can see that the death penalty law is not absolute, it changes based on others deciding."

Lynn curiously asks, "Can we agree that we see stealing as a bad?"

The participants unanimously agrees.

Lynn continues, "What if someone is stealing food because they have to in order to survive? Is that considered ethically wrong? What if they have no other choice?"

Bianca replies, "That example makes me question whether that person is supported in other ways like food from food banks or other resources. Because if the person has other means of getting food, and still chooses to steal, then I think that's a different story."

Jade says, "We can't get away from universal ethics because they are embedded in ethics. Kant's universal ethics says there has to be a background of universal ethics in order to move to a more post-modern perspective of ethics."

The Complex Network of Ethics

We ask our participants to bring or draw an image of ethics based on the conversations we have been having around universal and postmodern ethics as explained by Dahlberg and Moss (2005).

It is now clear to us that early childhood education and school settings are "places of dialogue in which community members discuss, share, and debate the values they hold about knowledge, education, and how to live well together in ways that are respectful, local, and meaningful (Province of British Columbia, 2019, p.12)." Here educators, children, parents, and community members are able to openly discuss their beliefs or interpretations, and they are welcomed and encouraged in order for marginalized voices to be heard to create a more holistic understanding of the community.

Jenn explains why she chose the image with the questions marks and says, **"I think that's just kind of what I see in education today. You're just pretty much taught, like this is right and this is wrong. There's no gray area, but then as you get older, you see that there are gray areas."**

This reminds us of how Dahlberg and Moss (2005), explain how in post-modern ethics, we can no longer follow a narrow minded rule book to apply to all situations. Instead, we must situate ourselves in the places and people we are surrounded by in order to make an ethical decision.

Rebecca's perspective reflects post-modern ethics in that decisions are made based on the people and places one is situated in. Post-modern ethics "engage[s] with particularities and emotions rather than seeking the dispassionate application of general and abstract principles. They recognize the uncertainty, messiness and provisionally of decision making (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p. 69)."

Rebecca creates two images for the question of "what is ethics?" and described the metaphors that they represented,

"I represented ethics in kind of a little bit of a reciprocal way, in that there is a choice to water flowers or water plants. You're making that choice to let them flourish and, and be able to develop into their own and each flower is unique. So I metaphorically represented the children as flowers, and in our field as educators we also can learn from them and we can gain from them as well.

When making ethical decisions, the decisions may look differently. It's all unpredictable to where it's coming from. It's rooted beneath the surface and you can't predict what's going to be coming up ethically. The decisions that you have to make, and then it's kind of the ethics of encounter that we were reading about, once you encounter it, or once you are faced with something, it's kind of like the crossroads of the route, then you have to make a decision."

Importance of Educators Working with Ethics

With the ongoing conversations about ethics, we decide to ask the question, **"Why Is Ethics Important in Education?"** The common concept that came from this conversation was the notion of critically thinking and understanding that there are multiple possibilities. British Columbia's Early Learning Framework (2019) explains that critical reflection should take part in education to challenge the dominant knowledges as a way to discover various understandings and worldviews. By partaking in critical reflection educators are making ethical decisions in education to acknowledge that some truths are silenced and kept away from society in order to maintain a status quo. It begins the process of questioning why certain knowledges are upheld higher than others, and being the voice for the marginalized.

Justin says, "I think ethics is an important in making sure that learning environments are inclusive and available to everyone. I also think that teaching ethics is also important, not just for reasons we've covered it already, but **to introduce kids the opposing views of viewpoint and critical thinking**."

Lynn replied to Justin's perspective and says, "I think that critical thinking is something we often miss when we talk about education. Because often we are given a problem to solve and sure. Education encourages critical thinking, but when it comes to ethical situations, we really have to think out of the box and situate ourselves to make a decision. **It says critical thinking, but if they've already given us ways to solve it in that, it's not really thinking out of the box or looking at a bigger picture of what's going on**."

Lora says, "Ethics plays an integral role and making decisions requires ethics to take into account when dealing with situations. So many factors come into play in certain situations and you cannot have **education without ethics as education is political** and it requires educators to guide navigate situations or pedagogical decisions that do not have black and white answers. **It helps us shift our paradigms to critically think**."

Jade includes, "Children can learn imposing views because everyone is different. So I really like that they can **co-construct knowledges together.**"

Educators Making Ethical and Political Decisions

We ask our participants **"Can you recall a time where a teacher or educator made an ethical or political choice?"**

There are many stories and recollections of times where a teacher or educator had to make an ethical/political choice. Jacqueline and Everett have similar experiences where their teachers allowed them to see both sides of a story or opinion. We saw this as crucial in allowing students in making their ethical and political choices regarding topics and what they deem as the truth. "Meaning making and knowledge construction occur in this relational activity, in a continuous process of formulation and reformulation, testing and negotiation (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.102)." The educators in these stories chose to challenge the dominant truths of the world by providing multiple perspectives in order for students to form a more well-rounded perspective on a topic or opinion. Education be a space where multiplicities of knowledge can arise, discussed, and be welcomed (MacNaughton, 2005).

Everett says, **"When my high school teachers discussed politics they would always try to get multiple articles that argued for both sides and allow us to discuss and form our own opinions instead of getting ones that only supported one side."**

Jacqueline says, **"I think our school district let our teachers choose at least some of the readings, and one of my English teachers who was a big advocate for LGBTQ and women's rights would give us ones that discussed issues in those areas, which I think especially at our age then would greatly influence us and our ethical/political opinion."**

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Justin's memory made us remember that in making ethical choices, there are responsibilities tied to them. His story catches the collaboratory's attention as his teacher made an ethical decision knowing the insurmountable responsibility he had making the choice to have students at his house on a weekend. Yet, this teacher stuck with his decision as he wanted to see his students succeed, and understood he was responsible for them even more so for making this decision. This type of responsibility is embedded in Levinas' ethics of encounter with the Other, in this case the Other being the students, as "the emphasis is on obligation to the Other without expectation of a profitable return. Rather than a calculated relationship of reciprocity, there is an unconditional responsibility (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.29)." Some individuals would say that this choice was unethical, but we can see that this teacher felt like it was their responsibility to do more for the students outside of what his job asked for.

Justin shares, **"Not sure if this really counts but my AP Euro teacher in high school hosted mock AP tests in his house on weekend mornings to help us prepare. He didn't have to do so and wasn't getting paid for it but he wanted to see us pass and that stuck with me for a while."**

Lynn replies to Justin's answer and says, "Your teacher went out of his way to help his student succeed. I think that he went above and beyond his job description and shows how much he cares for his students. I feel like many teachers would have trouble doing this in fear of doing something wrong or being questioned for doing something suspicious."

The next conversation follows Bauman's idea of 'an ethics of care' as "ethics as a creative practice, requiring the making of contextualised ethical decisions, rather than following universal rules or codes (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.73)." The participants understood that when making decisions in the field we have to include "attentiveness (to the needs of others), responsibility, competence and responsiveness (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.74)."

Amina and Bianca share the importance of seeing and discussing new perspectives and ideas as educators by not pushing away what might be different from the status quo.

Lora's personal experience examples 'an ethics of care' as she reexamines the situation and realises that the late fee charge does not apply in this setting even though it is outlined in her centres' guidelines.

"An ethics of care as 'a practice rather than a set of rules or principles … It involves particular acts of caring and a "general habit of mind" to care that should inform all aspects of moral life.' [Tronto] defines caring as 'a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue and repair our "world" so we can live in it as well as possible' (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.74)."

We asked the question of "**what do 'ethics of care' ask of us?**" and "What does it mean for teachers and educators?"

Amina says, "I think it encourages us to be collaborative by getting together and talking about how the classroom should be run. It also allows us **to see the differences of opinion**."

Bianca says, "When working in this field, there are **many different scenarios that can happen - and these may not have been explicitly discussed in class beforehand for example**. There's also a line between collaboration with educators and caregivers. For example, if there is a child in danger (maybe at home), then the educator has a responsibility to report this to child services without first confronting the caregiver."

Lora replies saying, "Ethics of care are situationally based when making decisions by looking at the contextual parts of a situation. For example a parents car broke down and was late to pick up his child. At the centre there is a rule is to charge him if he comes after 5:30 for late fee. I wouldn't charge him **because that situation was out of his control**."

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Educators Encountering the Other

"Pedagogy as a relation, a network of obligation, a radical form of dialogue with the Other; and institutions for pedagogical work as sites of obligation and loci for ethical practices, whose purpose is not to make the Other into the same but to work alongside the Other in a relationship where neither is the master and each listens to the thought of the Other (Dahlberg & Moss, 2013, p. 43-44)."

The collaboratory spent a while uncovering the Other as presented by Dahlberg & Moss (2005). The questions that came up were "What and who is the Other?" The participants also offered up their own interpretations of the concept in order to co-create an understanding of it.

Amina shares her personal story of being Othered and how it becomes part of the curriculum at a centre to how she discusses her difference with the children.

We read an article titled, 'Darkside of Daycare' (Quan, 2018) and begin unfolding where educators must engage in collaboration, radical dialogue,and a pedagogy of listening (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). The collaboratory explains how these concepts are intertwined with one another when educators and individuals engage in ethical decisions.

Discovering the Other

We begin to discuss the Chapter 3 titled 'What is Ethics?' in Ethics and Politics in Early Childhood Education by Dahlberg & Moss (2005). A conversation arose around the concept of the Other.

Jacqueline asks, "**What is 'the Other'?**"

Amina says, "Whenever I saw the word Other, I saw it from a racial lens as people who were not Caucasian were discriminated against in really awful ways, depending on how far back you go into history."

Everett replies, "I didn't fully understand what Levinas meant by 'alterity' is not the same as 'difference.'"

Justin replies, "My interpretation was [that] alterity means that the other person is fundamentally different in a way that's beyond their physical traits like skin color and that they're culturally **different in a way that you can never fully understand**."

Lynn says, "I was going to say something similar Justin. In that every individual is unique and although we can see them and try to understand them, we will never be able to grasp their whole life stories of where they come from and what makes them this way. It is almost impossible to truly know someone. I guess an example would be a set of twins, we expect them to be exactly the same. However, although they may have the same DNA and grew up in the same household, how they view and perceive the world is very different from one another. **We can't treat them the same, as they are individuals** and I think that's what Levinas meant by 'alterity.'"

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Recognizing Who is the Other?

Jade then asks, "Who is marginalized and oppressed in our society as the Other?" and "**Who is the Other?**"

Amina says, "By race, someone different from what society is used to. Especially in education if you have a physical or learning disability you are placed in an entirely different program or class from the rest of the school."
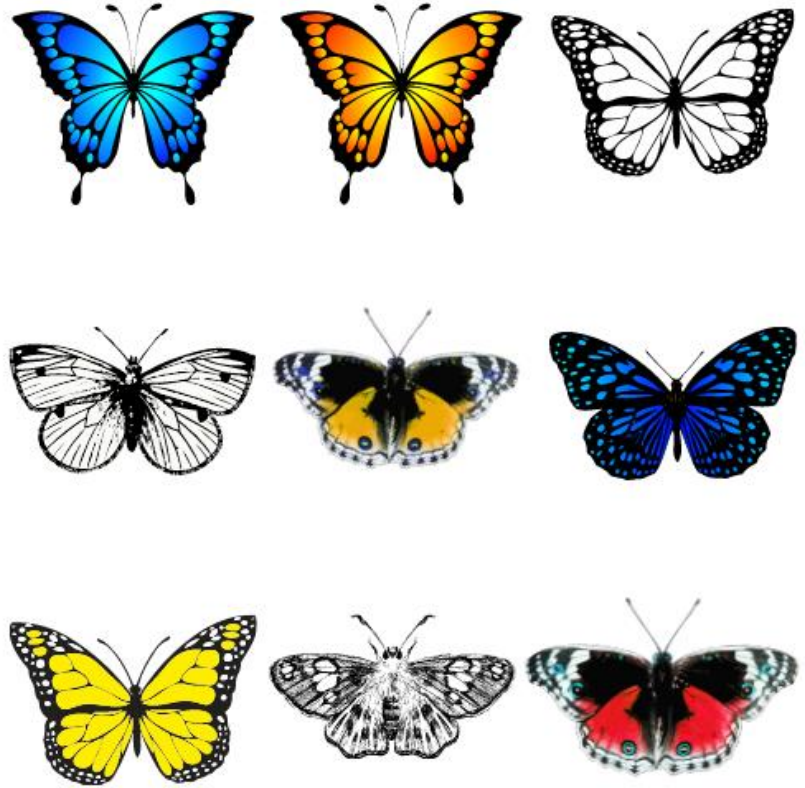
Lora says, "Someone who is not from the dominant discourse."

Justin says, "Cultural differences."

Jenn says, "Cultural & race, different view from you because they are not the "same.'"

Everett says, "In some extremist wings of cultures, the 'Other' tends to be synonymous with 'enemy.'"

Lynn says, "Those who do not follow society's dominant ideas or beliefs."

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Encountering the Other

As we elaborate on who the Other is, we start to shift our own ways of being an educator in relationships that are open to the Other. We take on this idea of "ethics of encounter," of Levinas, in which we think to encounter the Other as someone we cannot grasp or know (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). Our inquiries show that with certain values that we have discussed, such as listening and co-constructing, are made possible by engaging with each other. This important work resists the idea that we know who a person is, in this case the child. That we are unable to see the child as "contractual and calculable" in our relationships in which education as a factory sees them as (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.77). Levinas bases his ethics on "encounter" with the Other on the state of being different and not knowing the Other (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). Our group sits with Levinas' concepts of knowing this Other as a person who is part of our world and that we can strive to work with them with their differences and diversity. He heavily contests the totalisation of making the Other into the Same, a common thread that our group has been discussing of how education tries to make children a certain subject. By pushing children into becoming the same, we have been getting the same results in society and in turn not respecting who the child, who the Other is. Foucault is alongside Levinas that the Other is "pushed aside," because they are different and "devalued as [Western] cognitive machinery does its work (quoted in Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.78). No child wants to feel unworthy for who they are. There is also no right way or wrong way to know the Other. Levinas adds that there is a responsibility that comes with the encounter to feel inside ourselves a willing to engage with the Other because we live with them. This relationship turns into one that is welcoming and responsive to each other.

Amina's Brings Light to the Darkness

The collaboratory explain how complicated making ethical decisions are, especially when Amina shares her story about talking to children about the colour of her skin and why she wears a hijab. Educators cannot decide on these decisions alone, it requires involvement from the individuals they are connected with. This could be the children, parents, families, community members, and fellow educators. The participants saw the importance of having these challenging topics embedded into curriculum as it will allow multiplicities of being to flourish and give children a comfortable space to wonder, question, and see new perspectives.

Amina shares her personal experience being Othered at a centre, and explains how it became incorporated into their curriculum.

"At my very first practicum was at this preschool, with three to five-year-olds. On my first day, I walked into this classroom, and suddenly all the kids are asking all these questions like, **"Why are you brown?" "What's that on your head?" "Why do you look so different?"** Since everyone else in the school was either Caucasian or Asian, I guess the kids hadn't seen black people before.

At that time it was my very, very first practicum. So I didn't really have a lot of experience with 16 children asking me about my skin color and the hijab on my head. So I was really at a loss and I sort of just like brushed their questions aside. I was like, "I don't know. I don't know how to deal with this."

So I ignored it. But the teachers at that practicum said, "No, this is a really great opportunity to talk about the differences in people and to talk about our different cultures." They thought that it would be a really great learning experience for the kids. We did their whole curriculum that they had planned for that month to focus about human beings in different skin color and different people in the world and the different cultures we have.

The kids were really, really excited about it. Everybody got to take different things from their culture at home to bring in and talk about and share. I learned two really, really valuable things.

One of which was, I know now how to explain my skin color to kids.

I say that I am darker because I have more melanin in my skin. When they ask like what's melanin and I say, "It's like sunscreen for yourself. The more sunscreen that you have inside of your body, the darker you are, the less sunscreen you have, the lighter you are, but no matter how much sunscreen you have in your body, you still have to wear it. It's still very, very important, but that's just why people are darker and lighter than each other. It doesn't really mean much."

To be honest, I don't really have like a good explanation for my hijab quite yet. **It's kind of a tricky thing with kids, the whole concept of God and religion and Islam**. When a child ever comes up to me and asks, "What's that on your head?" or "Where's your hair?" I say, "This is my hijab. I wear it because I'm Muslim. If you see other people walking around with hijabs on their head, that means they're Muslim too." Usually the next question is, "What is being Muslim?"

I usually reply by saying, "That's something you need to ask your parents about." I still don't really have a good response for that either. But for when they asked me why I wear a hijab, I'm usually say, "**I wear it because I like it. And it makes me happy**."

My hope with that is that if they decide that they want to wear something that makes them stand out a little bit, they'll hopefully decide that when they look in the mirror even though it makes them think, "Oh, I don't know if I should wear this. Maybe people will stare." They'll decide that, you know what I like it and it makes me happy, so I'm going to wear it.

These conversations are really, are really hard. I will say and simply by walking into the room, I usually spark a lot of conversation with the kids eventually once they're comfortable enough. I really love that, but **I'm not going to say that it is easy, even though I'm used to it at this point, it's really, really hard.**

I think that that's the point. These conversations are not meant to be easy at all. They're meant to be very, very difficult because these are uncomfortable things to talk about and that sort of the society that we were all raised in**. It's really important for kids to feel comfortable to talk about the differences and other human beings**. So that when they grow up, they understand that these differences are not bad. There's simply differences that make us all very unique. So I try to keep that in mind, whenever I'm working with kids and they start asking questions, and I hope that all other educators do the same."

Lynn responds to Amina's personal experience being Othered and says, "Thank you for sharing that with us Amina. I admire how strong you are in sharing that but I also commend the educators from your practicum for incorporating it into their curriculum when they saw how intrigued the children were. I just want to ask the group now, how can educators incorporate these challenging topics into their curriculum? So that it doesn't just happen when situations arise, but where these topics can happen in all aspects of curriculum."

Lora says, "Educators should include social justice topics like race and gender in their curriculum and have these conversations with the children and families."

Jade says, "Educators should incorporate a pedagogy of listening and an ethics of care in order to create those spaces in their centres to have these topics brought up in curriculum."

We share a newspaper article with the participants to provide an example of a situation where an ethical choice was made, and wonder what their reactions will be towards it. We also wonder in what ways does the education system need to change in order to address these challenging topics and situations.

Expulsion of the "Othered" Child

We take a look at the newspaper article,"The Dark Side of Daycare," by Douglas Quan from the Vancouver Sun. We bring this article to them to show and examine the realities of the dominant discourse and how it validates how children should be. There are other factors and participants that play the role into following these dominant stories told in education. We question, what could have been done differently that would support the discussion. We also listen to their personal experiences of similar situations as a child care manager, co-worker, and educator.

The article looks at different families who experience expulsion, accusations and termination from daycares where their child goes to. The reasons are, "typically due to behavioural issues or special needs, and how they were offered little or no support after they were given the boot," (Quan, 2018). In doing so, families felt "anxious and vulnerable" (Quan, 2018). This article also says that to even find a new daycare, there is competition because of the limited spaces. Childcare services adhere to policies that services can be terminated for several reasons, including if the child is severely disruptive or physically threatening to other.

(Quan, 2018)

Levinas argues that education assimilates and makes individuals into an autonomous and rational subject, and if they cannot fit into these universal ideals, they will be treated as the Other (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). Many of the participants were shocked at the decision that the childcare centre chose to terminate the family's contract due to a child's challenging behaviour. The collaboratory state that termination would have been the last option they would have looked at in this scenario; some share their own personal experiences that were similar to the article and saw how different perspectives were involved like the centre's, educator's and parent's. As when educators encounter the Other, Levinas explains that it requires respect and responsibility for the Other so that they can be heard just as loud as the dominant discourses (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005).

Many of the Collaboratory saw that there were other options, routes to take, and wanted to discuss these alternatives with families. The participants also share that they would have worked with the family in seeing what would work for the child, family, and educators, in order to understand where the disconnect between them is. From reading the article and seeing how the participants would look for other solutions, we ask, "**What do we value as educators and adults?**"

Justin says, "The **importance of education** especially for children. We believe that all children should have access to it."

Lora adds, "As education is a right, **childcare should also be a right**."

Lynn includes, "We value **a relationship with the families**. I feel like we shouldn't just give up on a child if it's challenging."

Jade says, "**Working in collaboration** with those we work with to ensure that they are taken care of."

Rebecca adds, "I think we want **what's best for every child** and are willing to find ways to support them."

Welcoming Collaborative Ethics

As the word collaboration came up a lot, Amina's image of what ethics meant to her resurfaces and she explains by saying, "I saw ethics like a large cork board where people would post things on to it. We make ethical decisions based on what we see around us. We take what we believe is the right choice and then make our ethical decision that way. **It's sort of collaborative where everyone leaves things and take things that they like**. Does that make sense?"

Lynn responds saying, "**It's where you make a collaborative decision based on what the group agrees on and what the group disagrees on**. But again, that's going to be a challenging way to get a group decision. The more people involved the more difficult it is to set something."

Jade replies saying, "Your picture reminds me of Dahlberg and Moss' idea of **encountering with the Other and having that sense of collaboration like you mentioned**."
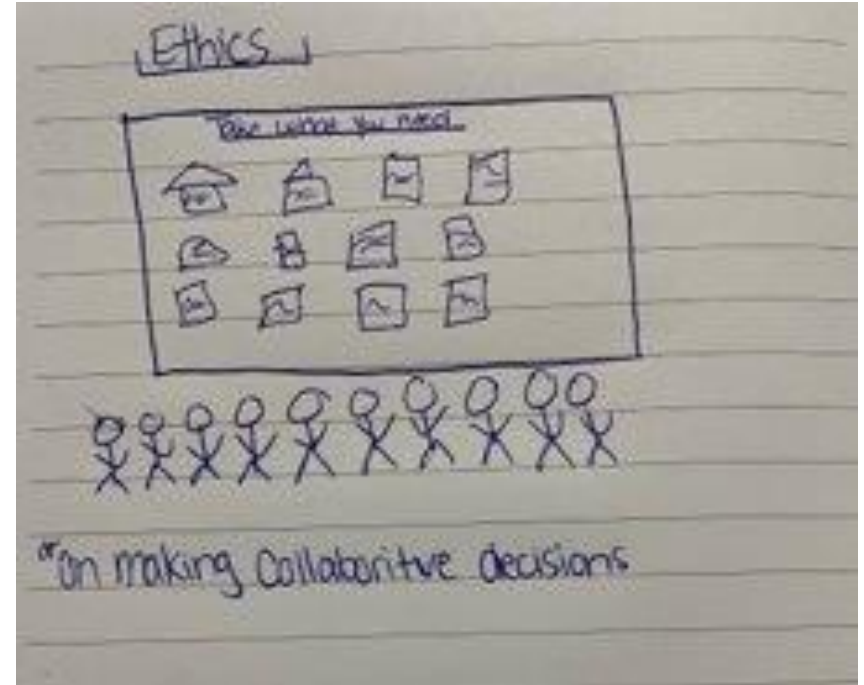
Based off the discussion from the article titled "The Dark Side of Daycare" and Amina's drawing on how ethics involves collaboration; open communication and dialogue came up in order to understand where parents and families are coming from and what they are dealing with. The participants explain how working in collaboration with parents, families, and children would be the most ethical step when encountering challenging conversations.

From that Lynn asks, "**What does collaboration mean?** How do you interpret that word?"

Rebecca says, "Reciprocally working together, through actions, perspectives and learnings."

Lora says, "Listening to each other's perspectives, and learning from each other in collaboration."

Amina says, "Working together to come to an understanding of each others perspective."

Jade says, "Working together towards a similar goal."

Jacqueline says, "To develop a sort of ethical culture for the children, one that is (usually) in harmony with the community's."

Acknowledging Each Other In Radical Conversations

The group seemed to agree that collaboration was necessary when making decisions with others, and that educators constantly have to make these decisions. Jade remembers that these collaborations cannot happen without having conversations, specifically having radical dialogue.

"Radical dialogue [is] based on listening, as a teacher you have to participate together with the child, entering a space together where both teacher and child are actively listening and trying to construct meaning out of the situation (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p. 101)." It becomes a space where challenging conversations can happen without judgement and bias to be present. Where the participants cannot guess what the outcome of the exchange between individuals will do or present.

We then wonder, "**What does radical dialogue look like?**"

Everett says, "Respect on both sides. Constructive, if you know what you are talking about. If you manage to have these radical dialogue it is being productive, not just the lecturer talking to the students. The article likens a "lecture" to "the child seen as a container to be filled," while I think that radical dialogue is more of where both sides are kinda mixing drinks together and **they both end up at a point where neither side is what they originally were but rather they absorbed new ideas** and came out as a new 'drink.'"

Jacqueline includes, "Kind of a back and forth. The teacher can recognize what the student is missing and offer insight, **student thinks critically of what they're receiving** from the teacher."

Rebecca adds, "Teachers not giving them the answer, questioning, asking the questions back, opening up their dialogue that becomes to discussion, **not just a fixed conversation**."

Lynn says, "It is like having a conversation with 7 friends about where to have dinner. It requires listening and **understanding there will be different opinions to the situation**."

Justin says, "For me radical dialogue is close to a conversation where **both sides interact with the other** and there is listening from all parties."

Jade adds, "Not being afraid of conflict and differences, **going through the uncomfortable situations** or else things will stay the same."

The conversation seems to revolve around the notion that in order to have collaboration in decision making, the individuals involved must have a radical dialogue in which everyone is heard and the conversation is not completely guided by a dominant idea or belief. It becomes a space where everyone is heard, but with the understanding that the discussion may not come to a consensus as it will be challenging and difficult with multiple perspectives taking part. It requires listening from all parties as it is not easy. "It requires a deep awareness, and at the same time a suspension of our judgements, and above all our prejudices; it requires openness to change (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.100)."

During these conversations, Jade realizes that in order to have radical dialogue in education, educators must include a pedagogy of listening in their practice which is described as "Listening as a metaphor for having the openness and sensitivity to listen and be listened to – listening not just with our ears, but with all our senses … Listening as welcoming and being open to differences, recognising the importance of the other's point of view and interpretation (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p. 99).

As children and Others may express themselves in different ways instead of verbally or through words. Educators have to realize that communication can happen in many ways. The participants read 'Towards a pedagogy of listening' (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005) and came back to discuss their understandings, interpretations, and realizations of 'a pedagogy of listening'.

The participants image of the child coincided with a pedagogy of listening in order for children's and the Other's opinions to be heard.

Justin responds saying, "In the chapter [referring to Ethics and Politics in Early Childhood Education by Dahlberg & Moss, 2005] they spoke about **children as being capable** and I liked this perspective because it also matched with my view on children. If adults could just listen and **see children as people too**, I think that would help change how education is. My quote was, "Respect for an absolute Other means a respect that must precede grasping: the child speaks and is doing, and we have to take what the child says and does seriously (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.100)." Which is also along the same lines I feel where **children should be respected just as children respect adults**."

Lynn replies, "The dominant view on the image of the child was always seen as this vessel that needed to be filled up with knowledge. It is almost as if children could not form their own opinions on things without going through education."

Jacqueline says, "I liked this line in the text, "To listen means being open to the Other, recognising the Other as different and trying to listen to the Other from his or her own position and experience and **not treating the Other as the same** (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.100)." I think in this case children are the Other and educators should honor their differences and different ways of being."

Rebecca adds, "I think the pedagogy of listening is **reciprocal and an openness to learning**; where the teacher can be open to learning from children, especially the perspectives of children. It opens up a whole dimension and complexity for listening, a new way of thinking about it. As it intertwines and has layers, teachers are exposed to hundred languages, and it is a whole layer of cues to pick up on when you're listening."

Through a pedagogy of listening and collaboration the Other can be heard and included in radical dialogue. This type of "listening means being open to others and what they have to say, listening to the hundred (and more) languages, with all our sense… Listening legitimizes the other person, because communication is one of the fundamental means of giving form to thought. The communicative act that takes place through listening produces meanings and reciprocal modifications that enrich all participants in the type of exchange (Rinaldi quoted in Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.97)." By doing so educators are faced with challenging their beliefs and values by being open and truly responding to what the Other has to say and interpret about their perspectives.

Everett states, "Personally, I think a pedagogy of listening is where the teacher and student actively listen and talk through ideas with each other to "construct meaning out of the situation.""

Justin adds, "It seems that in order to have a pedagogy of listening, you have to work with the other concepts as well. It's like a cycle almost. To truly listen you have to be open to what others have to say and have these difficult conversations which are called radical dialogue. But within radical dialogue you are working together through collaboration. That's just my take on everything so far."

Lynn replies, "Honestly, now that you mention it, I think I have to agree. It's almost as if you can't have one concept without the other concepts. They're like a package deal."

Possibilities of Education

"A teacher who is sometimes the director, sometimes the set designer, sometimes the curtain and the backdrop, and sometimes the prompter . . . who is even the audience – the audience who watches, who sometimes claps, sometimes remains silent, full of emotion, who sometimes judges with scepticism, and other times applauds with enthusiasm' (Rinaldi, 2001b: 89)."

Coming into the last meetings, our perspectives of the educator have shifted and are emerging into different directions on what our role can be.

The group comes with metaphors of the educators that reflect our responses. We asked what teaching is and see that teaching reflects the guidance, reciprocity, growth like vines and connecting to new ways of thinking together.

Rediscovering The Purpose of Education

As educators we have seen the practices shifting between child centered to teacher centred. However, what are children learning from these practices? What are educators facilitating through them? The emphasis of education has constantly been students and children being taught something instead of understanding the intent and value of what is being taught. The language of education is more than just teaching, it is disrupting and bringing something that was not seen before.

What happens if we focus on the purpose of learning or teaching in a way that is more than just facilitating or controlling students or children? Children are not objects but subjects of authority and relational encounters when adults deem it necessary.

It is shown that these reasons for education have put into children to be in a society based on individualism, and that there is a right way to be and think with each other. It also does not consider who a child is when they are raised to be in the norm. If we are aware of the purpose of education, we can start to think how do we affect the children? How do we acknowledge who they are in a room full of difference?
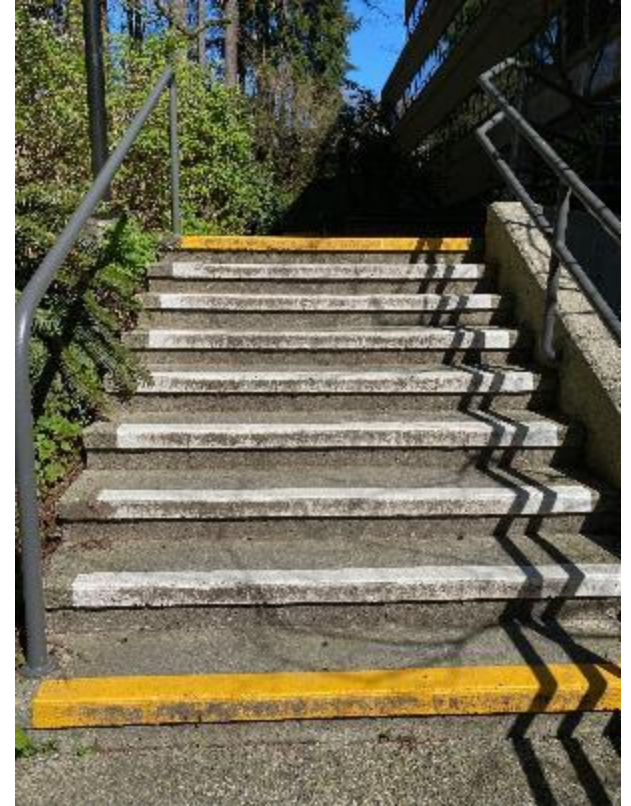
What Can Teaching Be?

As dominant society understands that one of the duties of an educator is to teach, and we decide to ask, **"What is teaching?"**

We saw that the participants reflected back two responses, one following the dominant discourse of educators being the ultimate source of knowledge, and a more postmodern perspective where teaching comes from learning from one another and allows for more than one answer to be present. Although we have had discussions on the dominant discourse of education, we can see how ingrained the idea of the educator being the all knowing being in the classroom is in our society as it has been passed down from generation to generation. In order to begin deconstructing this idea, we must question ourselves (MacNaughton, 2005; Moss, 2019). Who is being silenced or gaining power from these ideas? Where do these ideas come from? Why do I believe in this idea?

Justin says, "A way to **impart knowledge and principles**, and how to live in society. What that knowledge is can vary a lot."

Jacqueline says, "**Teaching to me is a teacher filling gaps in a student's understanding** of a concept."

Rebecca says, "Supporting children to learn mean a bunch of different things. Children learn differently as in a hundred languages. **Teaching can be flexible, engaging, and includes collaboration**."

Jade says, "**Different ways of thinking, knowing and doing things**. The way we support children, is also the way we can support children in making decisions- related to ethics."

Transforming Our Disposition of Educators

During our final meeting, we ask the participants to bring metaphors on their disposition of the educator based on what they know and what we have discussed throughout the weeks. Three themes arose from these metaphors, teaching as vines, teaching as guidance, and teaching as reciprocity.

We recognize that educators have a much more complex task at hand than society perceives. Educators may now "turn away from the search for certainty and order, unity and closure, into a **recognition of multiple perspectives and ambivalence, provisionality and contestation** (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p. 63)."

Lora says, "The role of a teacher or the disposition of the educators are **like vines**. There are just so many things intersecting, like questions and values. **It's ever changing and it's ever evolving and it's always learning and twisting**. There's so many twists and turns around learning. I put some words on the vine like reciprocity, tensions, responsibility, perspectives, bunch of dispositions, educators entails collaboration."

The next concept that arose was teaching as guidance, where teachers guide children/students by showing them the world, yet allowing the child make their own decisions. This encompasses the disposition of the educator to be participants of co-creating understandings and knowledge with children, and no longer being just a mere observer of what children explore and question (Province of British Columbia, 2019).

Rebecca says, "Teachers as a pair of shoes. I chose a pair of shoes for a couple of reasons. The first would be that they are what supports our feet from the ground. So I feel that's kind of what teachers do for children. They support them in various ways. Also, if say children are represented as feet and they're the shoes, **they help with the support, but the children get to choose their path** in guidance with the shoes. It's kind of that back and forth as well."

Jenn brought her image titled "teacher as compass" and says, "Teaching or how I see the role of an educator is the educators being that compass as like a **guide for the children in their learning journey**."
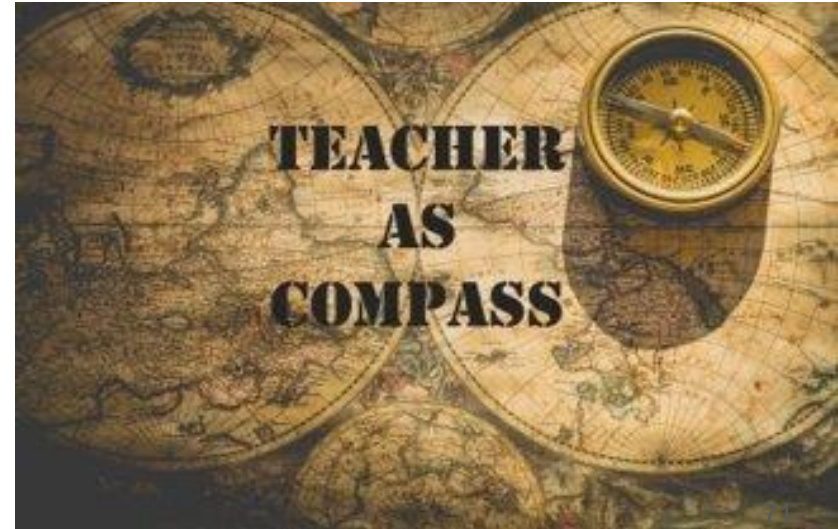
Teaching as reciprocity was evident as Amina and Justin spoke to how learning does not come from one authority figure. "The teacher is not removed from her role as an adult, but instead revises it in an attempt to become a co-creator, rather than merely a transmitter, of knowledge and cultures. As teachers we have to carry out this role in full awareness of our vulnerability, and this means accepting doubts and mistakes as well as allowing for surprise and creation (Rinaldi quoted in Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.97)."

Amina says, "Teaching as a pendulum. As you know how when you pick one up and then it moves the other ones. I think of it as the **teachers giving out their ideas or their view of the world and the children are sort of taking that, absorbing it and bring it back**. It gives you like this whole back and forth movement between the children and the teacher." Furthermore, acting ethical in our relationships is being attentive to what the children are saying and doing and acting upon that in a reciprocal process. Amina's example also shows that in order to move, to work, it takes different parts and in our case different people to do so.

Justin says, "Teaching as a cycle, where **teachers are giving and educating their students but are also listening and learning from their students in turn.**"
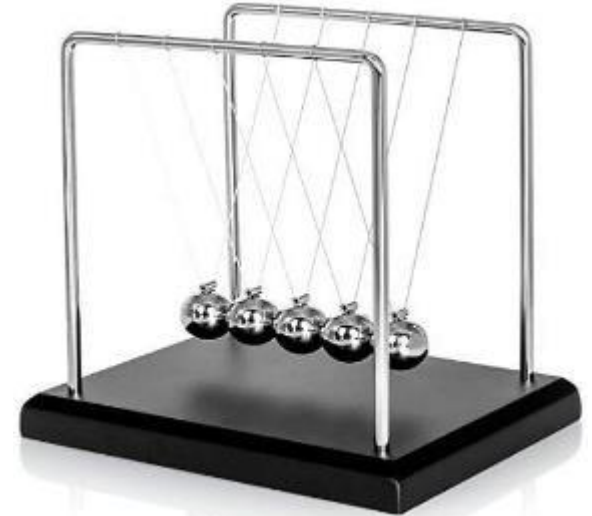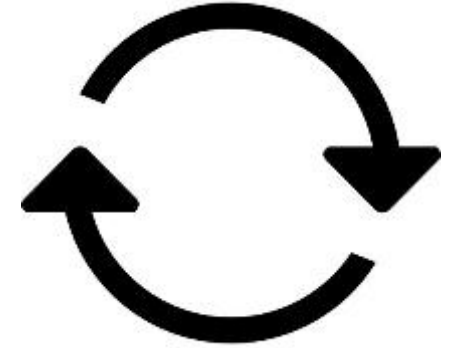
Closing Thoughts

Throughout our time together, we have collected our distinctions on ethics and what we are choosing to move forward with, with these new knowledges and perspectives. We focus on the educator and child relationship, where children spend most of their time growing up with and the school community. We confront the dominant stories that are in education and society that link to the processes of a particular subjectification which has led to ways of injustice, marginalizing and oppression that we've seen and some of us have experienced in society (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p. 15). We recognize the importance of resisting the dominant stories of the child being equipped with knowledge and ways of being from a capital and individualistic view that have shown to separate each other.

Reflecting on our discussions on the turn of ethics, we are understanding that it is more of the community accepting the different "social experiences identities and standards of truth, moral rightness and beauty" that is in every person (Seidman, 1998: 347 quoted in Dahlberg & moss, 2005, p.61).

A strong part of our inquiry was acknowledging our own right, agency and responsibility we have for each other. The basis of the foundation of ethics in our relationships is to take active responsibility for the choices we make with children. Acknowledging that we have agency is thinking and reflecting our choices. The type of responsibility we discuss is not about power and knowledge in the way that is projected in societal structures but the possibility to make free choices and act upon our own thinking (Taguchi, 2010). It is about the changes, encounters and actions we take on and risk.

We create an understanding that if education is a place that opens up ethical and political decision making with children, children will then have the opportunities to take on their own responsibility for their own choices with others. This space also shows children that there are many possibilities and meanings in life. Children can work together to negotiate their understandings and this conceptualizes a new way of understanding knowledge and how we share it. We have formed understandings that the tasks of the educator is to create a space where children's presence and values are legitimized and listened to. They are respected for their otherness and are part of the collaborative learning that they have a right in.

This also means as educators, we are not imposing our own moral values and basing children's learning on them but rather engaging in radical dialogue and a pedagogy of listening to create new meanings, choices and knowledge together with children. The collaboratory emphasizes that collaboration in education is working together towards something, towards a goal. It also takes part of exploring, inquiring, challenging each other in a safe space where all perspectives are heard and valued.

We also recognize that this process entails awareness, fears, resistance, and changes. We recognize the relations we have with the children, families, community and society and that beginning this work is hard and it will take time and work to make it possible. With more of a collective learning environment, children learn how to make decisions upon where they are situated and with educators there to guide them through the context. This also extends to the community they are in.

This inquiry project has encouraged us to become conscious of the way we look at children and how we can decentralize knowledge and power as the main values in our relationships to become a collaborative relationship that we put into practice. By doing so, we hope that children learn to work together, be open to the differences and create an empathetic society that collectively respects each other.

We hope that this project has opened other perspectives into what we can be as educators. We look forward to teaching, learning, and continuing to inquire what we know and what we can achieve together. We carry on to question **what will education look like in the future for our ever changing society? How will new ways of being, knowing, and doing be engaged? Will the disposition of the educator alter and become more than just a technician?**

Epilogue

Reflecting and thinking with the project, we look back into our own intentions with it and how we are passionate to bring forth these ideas during the times we live in. Last year, we were moved by many of the challenges and uproar of inequalities and injustices made against the Black lives. We were constantly discussing these issues in and outside of our collaboratories. Racism, privilege, and systemic discrimination were happening in a sensitive time of health, global and environmental issues that has put the world in danger. It was not something that could be ignored.

These issues helped us understand that we share a responsibility for one another, and in turn our decisions affects others. We thought about what we wanted for the children we work with and for generations to come. We both did not want to grow in a world where this was enabled and continue to happen. This showed us division, hate and pain on the way we are made differently; and differences are what makes us unique singular beings. We wondered as educators for young children, what would it mean if we could bring children to work with us and each other.

Who could our children be if we change our spaces to invite the many ways humans can think, act, and live alongside each other? What if the values we hold closely, like compassion, kindness and empathy, could be translated into our teaching and more specifically into ethics in our relationships?

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