

An Ethnographic Study of Immigrant and Refugee Women's Knowledge Construction in an  
Early Childhood Teacher Education Program

by

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## ABSTRACT

Immigrant/refugee women may gravitate to the field of early childhood education (ECE) to fill the national and provincial need for teachers (Beach, Friendly, Ferns, Prabhu, & Forer, 2008; CCHRS, 2009) in an occupation that is deemed to be very accessible to newcomers (Service Canada, 2011). However, provincial regulatory standards (e.g. Government of Alberta, 2012; 2013a) and early childhood teacher education programs (ECTE) are framed by an authoritative discourse (Bakhtin, 1981) which foregrounds Western child development theories and normative values; thus silencing immigrant/refugee women's experiential and cultural knowledges about how to teach and care for young children. Limited scholarship in the field tentatively suggests that immigrant/refugee teachers and ECTE students discard their culturally-constructed beliefs and practices in favour of enacting the authoritative discourse (Adair, Tobin, & Aruzibiaga, 2012; Langford, 2007; Ortlipp & Nuttall, 2011), but no study to date has included data from both coursework and field placements.

Framed by sociocultural-historical theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and concepts such as communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and dialogism (Bakhtin, 1981), this research explored how twenty immigrant/refugee women enrolled in a one year ECTE college program constructed understandings of the authoritative discourse in relation to their own culturally-formed experiences, knowledges, beliefs, and values. My research addressed the following questions: What understandings do immigrant/refugee women in one ECTE program construct of the authoritative discourse of ECE? What impact do these understandings have on their perceptions of themselves in relation to children as they negotiate their professional identities as teachers? How does their learning in this program influence their interactions with children in their field placements? Consistent with an ethnographic methodology, I immersed myself in the

participants' experiences for an average of two to three days a week during their coursework and field placements for the duration of their program. Qualitative data were collected through observational field notes, interviews, focus groups, and artifacts/documents.

The findings in this research are presented in a series of four distinct papers presented in pairs. The first paper describes the participants' recollections of how songs and oral storytelling were employed as pedagogical strategies "back home" for teaching children important cultural values and proper behaviour while conveying familial hopes for their futures. The second paper recounts how the instructors apprenticed students into the early childhood community of practice using scaffolding techniques such as bridging, structuring (Rogoff, 1990), modelling or demonstration (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1975), and explicit and implicit mediators (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 2007) to aid them in appropriating songs and story books as pedagogical tools in practice with young children. The third paper focuses on several participants' processes of learning to speak and act as professionals as made visible in their play interactions with children in their field placement sites in accredited child care centres. Although these participants were expected to appropriate normative practices, in actuality they were found to dialogically author their own hybridized professional identities informed by their understandings of education formed "back home" and the authoritative discourse. The final paper considers the dissonance between the care practices in the child care centres and five African, Muslim participants' own cultural and religious constructions of what it means to care for infants and toddlers with a focus on feeding practices. When faced with such ruptures, the participants either suppressed or rejected their own beliefs—performing as full, legitimate members of the community of practice—or subverted dominant practices to enact their own cultural practices. Two of the responses documented in this research—authoring new professional voices and rejecting the

authoritative discourse—fill the gap in our understanding of how immigrant/refugee students negotiate discontinuities between their learning in the program and their own experiences, beliefs, and values. Implications and recommendations for policy, teacher education programs, and practice arising from the overall findings in this study are included.

## PREFACE

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

Women who migrate to Canada as immigrants or refugees may be drawn to work in the field of early childhood education (or ECE) for a variety of reasons<sup>1</sup>. The national and provincial need for ECE teachers (Beach, Friendly, Ferns, Prabhu, & Forer, 2008) coupled with the overall accessibility of the field to newcomers (Service Canada, 2011) suggests that ECE can be an entry point into the Canadian workforce for immigrant/refugee women. These women might otherwise experience challenges in securing employment due to lack of Canadian experience, lack of contacts, lack of recognition for foreign experience or qualifications, or language barriers (Statistics Canada, 2007). Moreover, some women entering the field may hope to mobilize their own prior experiences working with or caring for young children in their home countries in the Canadian workplace. Enrollment in an early childhood teacher education (ECTE) program facilitates entrance to, or upward mobility within, the field.

For two years, I had the opportunity to teach in an ECTE program specifically designed for immigrant/refugee women. At the end of my first year, I was teaching the final course, *Communications*, which focused, in part, on how to talk with children and parents and defuse potentially explosive incidents using strategies such as making eye contact, active listening, and acknowledging feelings. Two unsettling encounters with students served as provocations for my dissertation research. In the first instance, Lia, a Middle Eastern immigrant, shared with the class that she was practicing the communication techniques she had learned in class with her own

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this dissertation, I refer to early childhood teachers and student teachers as “women” because women make up 96% of the ECE workforce in Canada and are the focus of this research. I use the term “immigrant/refugee” in recognition of the very different migration experiences of each group. While immigrants voluntarily chose to migrate, refugees were compelled to leave their home countries (Berry, 2006). Since some of my research participants came to Canada several decades ago, I have chosen not to use the term “newcomer”. All of my participants are first-generation immigrants or refugees who were born outside of Canada.

children. Although eye contact between children and adults is not sanctioned in her culture, she had exhorted her son to “look her in the eye” despite his obvious discomfort with doing so. Then a few weeks later, Amina, who had come to Canada as a refugee from Africa, sought me out privately to thank me and tell me how helpful the Communications course had been to her. Since Amina had raised ten children, most of whom were university educated, and had received effusive praise from her field placement supervisors, I responded that I could not imagine that I had taught her anything new. She then confided that she had never thought about her own children’s feelings when she mediated their disputes and she now realized her approach was “wrong”. Amina’s words reverberated in my thoughts as I attempted to reconcile what I knew of her as a parent and a student teacher with this statement. It seemed that this course, and by extension my teaching, had negated her own experiences and caused her to question her own ability to work effectively with children.

Conveying the memory of these encounters into my work the following year, I was more purposeful about inviting discussions of ECE theory and practice in Canada in relation to their own personal and cultural experiences, beliefs, values, and practices<sup>2</sup>. As I created more opportunities to dialogue with the students, some of their concerns about the early childhood practice they were observing on their field placements spilled out. They spoke of teachers “starving” babies by expecting them to feed themselves, of being told not to help the children put on their coats or clean their faces, of being urged to “talk more”, and of being informed it was “wrong” to toilet train infants. Their comments resonated with me as I have also lived and

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<sup>2</sup> In this dissertation, culture is defined as “the ever-changing values, traditions, social and political relationships, and worldview created, shared and transformed by a group of people bound together by a combination of factors that can include a common history, geographic location, language, social class, and religion” (Nieto, 2010, p. 136). In accordance with Nieto’s (2010) work, culture is conceptualized as: dynamic, shifting, layered, multifaceted, constructed and learned by individuals and groups, as well as influencing (and influenced by) the sociocultural-historical context.

taught in diverse contexts—in Guatemala, Colombia, Mexico, Japan, Egypt, and in two First Nations communities in Canada—and experienced similar kinds of discontinuities, though my positioning as a temporary visitor or guest usually allowed me to navigate these in a fairly straightforward manner. Despite my students’ candour, I sensed that they were reticent to be too critical of the course content lest they be viewed as being disrespectful to their instructors. As immigrants/refugees, there was also a lingering, unspoken expectation that they would adapt to the dominant society in many facets of their lives. I sought to better understand the complexities inherent in these areas of disjuncture by shifting my own positioning from instructor to researcher.<sup>3</sup> This dissertation thus explores some of the experiences of a group of immigrant/refugee women during their coursework and field placements in an ECTE college program as part of an ethnographic study that I conducted over three semesters of study (fall, winter, and spring terms).

Early on in our year together, in 2012-2013, I asked the participants why they had chosen to study in this program. Many of the women referenced their “experience”—as mothers, teachers, siblings, or familial caregivers in their home countries. More than two-thirds of the students are mothers; a third cited their experience caring for nieces, nephews or other family members, while a third of the students had worked as teachers or had at least studied to be teachers in their home countries. These experiences instilled many students with a sense of competence in their abilities as they entered their program. For instance, Christa<sup>4</sup>, who came to Canada as a refugee from the Congo, asserted: “I have experience. I like this program because I am a mom of six children. I have a big family, too—nine people!” Sharon, an immigrant from China, told me: “I have some experience in bringing up my son.” Asmaa, who came to Canada

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<sup>3</sup> I describe my positioning in relation to this research more fully in Appendix A.

<sup>4</sup> All of the participant’s names used in this dissertation are pseudonyms. With their permission, I have disclosed their countries of birth and some other general biographical information.

as a refugee from Somalia, likewise claimed that she had gained experience through caring for her young daughter, and Fatima, also from Somalia, clarified that she had learned a lot as a mother: “I’m happy to work with children all day. It’s a responsibility, I know, but I like to work with them and I have experience (laughs)—five boys, wow!” Sevinç, who was a kindergarten teacher back in Turkey, claimed: “I have experience, it’s easy for me.” Another student, Nazi, who had worked as a teacher in her home country of Iran as well as in a child care centre in Canada, declared: “I know what to do because I have experience with children.” These students initially held the belief that their practical knowledges, constructed through their personal experiences and relationships with children, would aid them in their coursework and subsequent careers in the field.

However, over the women’s three semesters of study, they grappled with unfamiliar content— child development theory, learning through play, developmentally appropriate practice, child-centred pedagogy—and prescribed ways of interacting with and teaching young children. Bahktin (1981) might have regarded this content as part of the *authoritative discourse*, ascribed with historically derived power, authority, and the tradition of theory and practice in the field and program. The students’ self-confidence seemed to be eroded, leading many of those who had avowed that they were “experienced” at the beginning of the year to question the value of their own knowledges about how to be with children. During the final interview in June, Christa confided, “even though I have six children, I didn’t know anything.” Along similar lines Sharon told me: “I learned a lot. When I began, I didn’t know anything! But now I’m very confident with child development. I’m prepared to work with children.” Nazi also affirmed: “When I started this program I didn’t have any information about kids, but now after ten months I enjoyed it and I learned so much...” Asmaa commented: “Before I came here I didn’t know this

information about the children; about what they need, and how we should teach them. I learned *everything*.” Confronted with the entrenched, codified, expert knowledge taught in the program, many of the participants seemed to come to believe that the personal and cultural knowledges and experiences they brought with them to ECTE program were irrelevant or insufficient in this new context. This situation was especially true for the women who had accrued their experience as mothers or familial caregivers. The juxtaposition between their comments at the beginning of the year and those made at the end of the year is troubling. Of course it must be noted that not all of their parenting or teaching practices from “back home” would be considered appropriate in the context of practice in Canada, but the authoritative discourse seems to wholly foreclose on diverse perspectives to the extent that alternatives are not valued as legitimate in this discourse. I wondered what happened for these women over the course of their program to transform their understandings in this way? What does this shift mean for their own identities as mothers, as teachers, as carers? How do they understand what it means to be *competent* as a professional early childhood teacher?<sup>5</sup>

These participants seemed to come to believe that they needed to change their ways of being with the children and, by extension, themselves to adhere to the authoritative discourse and be perceived as “professional” teachers. However, Bakhtin (1981) challenged the notion that a discourse can be transmitted and assumed, rather he emphasized that it must become *internally persuasive* to the individual; populated with her own intentions, meanings, and voice (see also Wertsch, 1991). I contend that, for these participants, this process of change was complicated, partial, and incomplete as the residue of their past experiences still permeated their practice with young children. In a series of four papers, this dissertation focuses on the ways in which these

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<sup>5</sup> I use the term “teacher” to maintain consistency with the literature, however, the women enrolled in this program were preparing to work in child care contexts.

women navigated the interstices between their personal and cultural knowledges, beliefs, values, and experiences and the authoritative discourse as interpreted within their program and field placement sites as they formed their professional identities as teachers.

### **About this Study**

**Purpose and research questions.** The conflict between the teachings of the authoritative discourse of ECE and culturally constructed understandings of how to be with young children has been documented by scholars in national (Langford, 2007) and international context (eg. Bernheimer, 2003; Gupta, 2006; Moles, 2014; Nuttall & Ortlipp, 2012; Wilgus, 2006). It is less clear though how these tensions enter into the day-to-day experiences of immigrant/refugee ECTE students as they negotiate their professional identities as teachers, especially since no known studies to date have researched both coursework and practicum or field placement experiences as they unfolded. My primary purpose in this study was to gain an understanding of how immigrant/refugee women experienced their studies in an ECTE program. The research questions framing my research were developed within the context of my own work with immigrant/refugee students, and were reconfigured after my pilot study conducted with a group of immigrant/refugee women employed as teachers in a child care centre:

- What understandings do immigrant/refugee women in one ECTE program construct of the authoritative discourse in ECE?
- What impact do these understandings have on their perceptions of themselves in relation to children as they negotiate their professional identities as teachers?
- Finally, how does their learning in this program influence their interactions with children in their field experiences?

**Methodology.** This study employed a qualitative, ethnographic methodology. I have outlined the methodology briefly below, as well as in each of the four papers. However, since this was a fairly complex, multi-sited ethnographic study, I have described the conduct of the study more fully in Appendix A. The reader may find it helpful to read this Appendix prior to reading the individual papers as this section will provide information about the context, the study design, and my own positioning as a researcher. Although other scholars have explored aspects of immigrant/refugee students' experiences in either the field placement site (Nuttall & Ortlipp, 2012) or the coursework (Bernheimer, 2003; Gupta, 2013; Langford, 2007, Moles, 2014), this is both the first known ethnographic study on this topic as well as the first to be situated in multiple learning contexts. However, scholarship in the field of non-immigrant students or early career teachers has confirmed that ethnography is an effective methodology for tracing professional identity construction over time (eg. Alsup, 2006; Britzman, 2003; Miller Marsh, 2003). As Quiocho and Rios (2000) explain, ethnography is used in some studies of culturally diverse teachers “in the hopes of making visible and meaningful the complexity of what is usually not seen” (p. 494). In the case of this study, I aimed to better understand the students’ experiences in the program as they transpired, and to observe how their learning was embodied in practice in their interactions with young children.

**Methods.** The primary site for the research was a single class in an ECTE program in a community college in a mid-sized city in western Canada. I collected data for at least two to three full days a week for three semesters (fall, winter, and spring) in many of the students’ formal and informal learning spaces within the college—in the classroom, computer lab, library, cafeteria, and hallways and other common areas—near the college (in the street, coffee shops, restaurants, or grocery stores) and in field placement sites—four accredited ECE centres.

Qualitative data were collected in the form of observational field notes, interviews (between two and six 20-60 minute interviews per participant), focus groups (two to four one hour meetings per participant), informal conversations, spatial maps, document collection (such as learning materials, handouts, evaluations, class notes, assignments, assessments, artistic creations, and class work), and analytic memos. Four Canadian instructors and twenty students originally from China (5), India (1), Turkey (1), Syria (1), Ethiopia (1), Eritrea (2), Somalia (4), Sudan (2), the Congo (1), Iran (1), and Iraq (1) consented to my classroom observations and one interview, while sixteen of these students then agreed to focus groups, field placement observations, document collection, and additional interviews. I analyzed the data by familiarizing myself with the data, chunking the data into categories, developing a coding framework, engaging in focused-coding of the data, and completing a pattern-level analysis to identify themes.

### **Statement of Problem**

Immigrant and refugee families form a substantial, and growing, portion of the population of Canada (Statistics Canada, 2010). The 2006 census revealed that the number of people speaking a mother tongue other than English and French constituted 20% of the total population of Canada (Statistics Canada, 2006). Statistics Canada (2011) has foretold that the ethnocultural diversity of Canada's population will increase dramatically by 2031: 29 to 32% of the population is projected to be from a visible minority group<sup>6</sup>, and 25 to 28% of the population may be foreign born. The percentage of immigrants/refugees in Calgary was close to 24% while in Edmonton the percentage was 19%. Consistent with national figures, by 2031, more than one in four Edmontonians are projected to be visible minorities; in Calgary, this ratio is estimated to be more than one in three (Statistics Canada, 2010). Moreover, more than a third of these

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<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that Statistics Canada does not consider members of First Nations groups to be visible minorities and does not include them in these figures and projections.

members of visible minority groups are expected to be under the age of 15. In short, Alberta cities, already culturally and linguistically diverse, will demonstrate further growth in the representation of visible minorities, disproportionately high numbers of whom will be children. The diversity of the ECE workforce should be reflective of the diversity of the population as a whole (OECD, 2004), thus it is important to recruit and retain teachers who represent these groups (Souto-Manning & Dice, 2007). However, immigrant/refugee women entering ECE programs and workplaces must operate within an authoritative discourse which foregrounds Western concepts of normativity (Jones Díaz & Robinson, 2006; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2007) and reproduces dominant Euro-North American societal values. Culture is merely appended to this existing discourse (Fleer, 2006) even though extensive sociocultural research into cross-cultural development and learning has constructed a basis for alternative ways of knowing and being. Therefore, the problem is that immigrant/refugee women may enter ECTE programs in which the professional knowledges and skills they are expected to acquire are in conflict with their own culturally constructed values and beliefs about how to teach and care for young children. The elision of cultural perspectives from the authoritative discourse and the construction of the early childhood professional creates a need for research on how to bring difference into ECE theory and practice (Langford, 2007) so immigrant/refugee teachers are not viewed as unprofessional if they bring their cultural knowledges into their work with children (Adair, 2009).

### **Overview of the Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

**Socio-cultural historical theory.** The study is framed by sociocultural-historical theory<sup>7</sup> as well as by related concepts, the most pertinent of which is *communities of practice* (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Sociocultural theory, as informed by Vygotsky (1978), is premised on four

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<sup>7</sup> Sociocultural-historical theory is typically referred to as “sociocultural theory”. I use both terms, but not with any intention to downplay the fundamental importance of historical context.

central assumptions about learning pertaining to this study: 1. the individual develops or learns through active engagement with others within a particular sociocultural context, 2. expert peers or adults facilitating learning within the learner's zone of proximal development (ZPD) assist them in achieving competence in skills and knowledges valued by the community, 3. human actions and interactions are mediated by tools and signs that shape human consciousness, and 4. the mastery or appropriation of these tools is a central goal of learning.

In contrast to constructivists such as Piaget, who advanced the notion that knowledge is built incrementally inside the individual's mind through interaction with objects, a sociocultural epistemology views knowledge as being actively constructed by learners as a result of their interactions with others in meaningful activities. Vygotsky (1978) proposed that human cognitive development is reliant on both biological and cultural (or social) lines: it is a *sociogenetic* process (Blanck, 1990). Therefore, the unit of sociocultural analysis is human action and interaction, rather than isolated individuals or environments (Wertsch, 1991, p. 8). Wertsch (1998) posited that such analyses aim to examine the “relationships between human action, on the one hand, and the cultural, institutional, and historical contexts in which this action occurs, on the other” (p. 24). In this study, for example, learning occurs primarily, though not exclusively, within institutional settings (a college and four child care centres) having existing structures, systems, histories and purposes. As Shotter (1978) explained: “what we have done together in the past commits us to going on in some way in the future...although there may be an intentional structure to institutional activities, practitioners of institutional forms need have no awareness at all of the reason for its structure—for them it is just ‘the-way-things-are-done’” (cited in Rogoff, 1990, p. 45). Consequently, this study does not simply consider what happens in the classroom and between individuals, but dissects this notion of “the-way-things-are-done”

within the larger institution and the program to understand the authoritative knowledges and skills which are valued and promoted there.

A sociocultural perspective thus situates learning processes within a larger ecology of interrelationships; that is, the individual acts and learns alongside others before internalizing their new understandings. Vygotsky (1978) addressed the social dimension of learning as follows: “Every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first *between* people (*interpsychological*), and then *inside* the child (*intrapsychological*)” (p. 57). The concept of the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD) emphasizes the important role of experts in guiding the learner toward the ultimate goal of independent performance of the task or activity. Often misconstrued as an instructional strategy, the ZPD was defined as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86). Many subsequent theorists have applied the notion of ZPD to instructional approaches such as scaffolding (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976), apprenticeship and guided participation (Rogoff, 1990), cognitive apprenticeship (Collins, Brown, & Newman, 1989), collaborative instruction (Lampert, 1986), and reciprocal teaching (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). Wood et al’s contention that the expert’s intercession, through the application of different scaffolding strategies, enables the learner to “solve a problem or carry out a task or achieve a goal which would be beyond his (*sic*) unassisted efforts” aptly characterizes the type of instruction offered within this particular ECTE program (p. 90). The problem or task itself is not simplified, but rather the learner’s role is altered to facilitate their attainment of the goal (Daniels, 2007).

If contextualized human action is the unit of analysis, then mediators or mediational means connect the actions of individuals and groups to these settings; shaping both human consciousness and action (Wertsch et al., 1995; Wertsch, 1998). Therefore, the individual can never be studied in isolation, but only as an “individual-operating-with-mediational means” each in irreducible tension with the other (p. 26). Tools and signs serve as mediational means that contribute toward the construction of higher psychological structures by altering the flow and structure of mental functions (Vygotsky, 1986, 1981). In the context of this ECETE program, examples of tools and signs included teaching or play materials, songs, children's story books, mnemonic devices, handouts and other written texts, artistic creations, notes, diagrams, charts, and drawings. Vygotsky (1978) positioned language as being the most significant tool and the instructors in this program strove to teach students two distinct genres of language: English and the professional language used in the ECE field. Smagorinsky (1995) explained the relationship between tools and signs as follows:

A tool such as speech can create *signs* such as words that serve to structure the developmental environment of an individual. Through this structuring, signs potentially serve as tools for regulation and mediation. The cultural values of a people are represented in the sign systems they use to order their activity and relationships (p. 194).

Tools and signs then differ primarily in terms of their mediating functions, as tools mediate human activity or action while signs mediate “human social processes and thinking” (Vygotsky, 1981, p. 135). Signs are imbued with meaning in accordance with the values of the community (Smagorinsky, 1995).

Wertsch (2007) has identified two types of mediation in the context of learning: explicit and implicit. Explicit mediation occurs when a learner or skilled partner intentionally introduces

a non-transitory and concrete mediating device into on-going activity. Implicit mediation, however, involves bringing more fleeting and transitory mediational means, such as spoken language, into the individual's stream of consciousness. Moll (1990) contends that the instructor's role is to foster "the collaborative use of mediational means to create, obtain, and communicate meaning" (p. 13). When new tools are introduced, mediated action is transformed and these tools might create affordances or introduce limitations for the learner (Wertsch, 2007). It is hoped that the individual achieves a certain level of proficiency or mastery in using the mediational means, and eventually appropriates them or makes them their own (Rogoff, 1990). As cultural and historical products, tools and signs reflect the values and beliefs of the culture, exist only through continued use within the culture, and constantly evolve in use (Cole & Gaidamaschko, 2007). Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989) explain that the conditions and possibilities for using tools develop within the context of the larger community, the activities in which members engage, and their worldviews. When the learner actively uses tools, they "build an increasingly rich implicit understanding of the world in which they use the tool and of the tools themselves"; they are enculturated into specific ways of understanding the world (p. 33). Lave and Wenger (1991) have further developed this notion of learning as situated within a community.

**Communities of practice.** Consistent with sociocultural perspectives of learning, Lave and Wenger's (1991) *communities of practice* forms the overarching conceptual framework for this study. It was initially defined as a "set of relations among persons, activity and the world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice" (p. 98). ECE is commonly conceived of as a community of practice in scholarly studies (e.g. Egan, 2009; Fler, 2003; Horsley & Bauer, 2010, McConnell, 2006; Noble, 2007). Although I too refer to

ECE as a community of practice, in actuality it is a *constellation of practice* comprising various interconnected and overlapping ECE communities of practice—such as ECTE programs, schools, preschools, child care settings—that may share common historical roots, discourses, styles, jargon, artifacts, working conditions, and members (Wenger, 1998). Practice and identity form the two main components of the community of practice.

***Practice.*** Wenger (1998) connects practice with the experience or negotiation of meaning involving two constituent processes—participation and reification—that converge, thus forming a duality that permits such negotiation. Moving away from the idea that one learns by acquiring information transmitted by the expert or teacher, Sfard (1998) asserts that situated learning perspectives reconceptualize learning as a participatory process of becoming a member of a community through engagement within that community. Participation extends beyond taking part in specific activities or practices with specific people, but rather involves “the negotiation of meanings in the context of our forms of membership in specific communities” (Wenger, 1998, p. 57). An ECTE student, for example, might engage in practices in the classroom, but then might implement these in field placement or home contexts as part of her sense making. As she participates in the community, her own experiences—and her identity—are shaped, but the community is also transformed as a result of her participation. Participation in the activities of the community allows the individual to gain access to the skills, understandings, tools, and knowledges—the “culture of practice”—needed to move from being a peripheral participant to a legitimate member of the community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). As will be seen in the second paper of this dissertation, in an ECTE program, the instructor and field placement supervisors (“oldtimers”) provide the access to practice necessary for ECTE students (“newcomers”) to learn to speak and act as full members.

The other process, reification, is “the process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into ‘thingness’...we create points of focus around which the negotiation of meaning becomes organized” (Wenger, 1998, p. 59). Reification thus presumes that communities take abstract ideas, concepts, tools, symbols, terms, and stories and convert them into a more concrete form. In relation to this study, concepts such as “learning through play,” “child-centred practice,” and “developmentally appropriate practice” (see Flerer, 2003), as well as many of the pedagogical tools, stories, and artifacts reify western notions about the “right” way to teach and care for young children as operationalized in the authoritative discourse. In this manner, reification provides structure to participation, shaping the student's experience in the program and her eventual practice. With respect to learning, practice is always temporal, evolving, and shifting therefore the connections between participation and reification can function as sources of memory and can establish continuity across the boundaries between related communities of practice.

Wenger (1998) ascribed three main characteristics to the relationship between community and practice. First, the participants are mutually engaged in practice; they have classes together, form relationships, work on projects and assignments together, and negotiate meanings. He emphasizes that there may be disagreement, conflict, and tension within a community of practice as the participants often bring diverse beliefs, values, experiences, skills, competencies, and interests to their encounters. Certainly this was true of this particular group of students. In fact he notes that: “rebellion often reveals a greater commitment (to the community) than does passive conformity” (p. 77). Second, participation in a joint enterprise provides coherence to the community. This joint enterprise, or common purpose, is communally negotiated and defined by the participants through their day-to-day engagement. For instance, the ECTE program under

study evolved from a larger institutional, historical, social, and cultural context. Yet the students decided which of the program and professional normative expectations to submit to and which to reject, thus authoring their own understandings of this enterprise. As Barab and Duffy (2012) demonstrate, joint enterprise presents potential challenges because communities and members do often bring multiple competing purposes “which can undermine the community and the power of the community model for supporting learning” (p. 43). Since enterprise is negotiated, it creates relations of mutual accountability to practice influenced both by regulations, policies and standards governing the field and institution and by the participants themselves. Finally, over time the community develops a shared repertoire of routines, tools, practices, stories, concepts, discourses, and actions. This repertoire derives from regulatory frameworks, standards, and other authoritative texts, but also shifts and is re-shaped by distinct ECE communities of practice. That is, the students in this ECTE program imprinted their own interpretations on existing repertoires to generate new ways of engaging in practice with young children. As newcomers to the community, ECTE students must have opportunities for mutual engagement with members and access to the negotiations of the joint enterprise and the repertoires in use if they are to become accepted as legitimate members.

***Identity.*** Identity formation is closely tied to membership in the community of practice. Wenger (1998) has described an identity as a “layering of events of participation and reification by which our experience and its social interpretation inform each other” (p. 151). As one engages in practice and negotiates meanings, one is also constructing an identity as a member. When individuals negotiate membership in a community, they are also “fundamentally constituted through their relations with the world” and with others (Barab & Duffy, 2012). In accordance with a sociocultural view, as Vygotsky (1978) claimed: “the basic characteristic of human

behaviour in general is that humans personally influence their relations with the environment and through that environment personally change their behaviour, subjugating it to their control” (p. 51). Thus people are constructed by the contexts in which they live, but also author their own identities (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000). Wenger (1998) states that identity formation is temporal, ongoing, and shifting because it is constructed within social contexts that are also undergoing change.

Developing an identity as a member of a community of practice is inextricably linked with gaining competence in the skills and knowledges required by that community, “with the former motivating, shaping, and giving meaning to the latter” (Lave, 1993, p. 65 in Brown, 2012). A participant can become a member of a community by learning to act and “talk from within practice instead of from outside it” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 105). Learners are conceived of as following various possible non-linear trajectories that have implications for their identity formation (Wenger, 1998). For instance, a peripheral trajectory may provide some access to the community of practice, but does not lead to full participation and membership. A learner in an inbound trajectory is invested in, and moving toward, achieving an identity as a full member. Such a student has access to the shared repertoire or “sources of understanding” (Lave & Wenger, 1991) of the community and achieves competence in, and accountability to, its joint enterprise. The instructors, as old-timers in the community, are instrumental in providing students with such access.

Furthermore, Wenger (1998) emphasizes that identity formation occurs within a nexus of multi-membership in many different communities of practice. Moving from one community of practice to another, as was the case for the students in this study, involves an active process of reconciling different beliefs, meanings, and practices and is “intrinsic to the very concept of

identity” (p. 161). Maintaining one's identity across the boundaries of different communities, then, involves bridging between the “landscapes of practice” (p. 161). In view of the tensions produced by this diversity, at times individuals choose not to participate in (or are excluded from participating in) some of the practices of the community. This non-participation can lead to the individual being peripheral or completely marginalized which then has implications for their efforts to realize an identity as a member. Packer and Goicoechea (2000) posit that the “community defines the modes of appropriation and recognition that (one can) obtain, and the kinds of relationships in which recognition can be achieved” (p. 233). Therefore, in becoming part of a community, one might also be ontologically divided from themselves; split between the individual self and social self, between their own cultural and familial practices and the practices valued within the community of practice. Alignment between sets of practices allows the kind of coordination that fosters belongingness within the community (Wenger, 1998), which has implications for immigrant/refugee students.

### **The Context of ECE in Canada**

In Canada, regulated ECE services are under the purview of the public education system (kindergarten and early learning programs) or of the provincial child care legislation (regulated child care centres, family child care, and school-age care) (Doherty, Friendly & Beach, 2003). The Alberta government, for example, situates school-based programs with the Ministry of Education and child care programs under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Human Services. In Canada, as in many countries, there is a distinct separation between teachers who work in school contexts and those who are employed in preschools, child care centres, and other early learning settings. Teachers who work outside of the school system earn less (Miller, 2008), generally

have less formal education, and may not have opportunities for formal professional certification (Fenech, Sumison, & Shepherd, 2010).

Since child care is a provincial concern, there is no national coordinated approach to early childhood services in Canada (Ferns & Friendly, 2014). In a UNICEF (2008) ranking of early childhood services in twenty-five OECD countries, Canada was ranked second last, achieving only one of the ten benchmarks (50% of staff in accredited centres holding relevant qualifications). The benchmarks Canada failed to achieve included: 80% of ECE staff being trained and the provision of subsidized and regulated ECE services for 25% of children under three and 80% of four year olds. More recent studies measuring inequality and child poverty, respectively, situated Canada below the OECD average for children's material well-being in household income and living space (UNICEF, 2010) and in the lower third for child poverty (UNICEF, 2012). The 2010 report cautions that the benefits of quality early childhood programs are greatest for children from disadvantaged homes, thus more equitable access to these programs is essential (UNICEF, 2010). However, in 2012 there was less than one regulated child care space for every four children in Canada, and the number of regulated child care spaces increased less than 1% between 2010 and 2012 (Ferns & Friendly, 2014).

Overall, women's participation in the Canadian workforce has increased from 30% in 1976 to 75% in 2009 creating a need for early childhood programs (Service Canada, 2011). Alberta has consistently had one of the strongest labour markets and highest employment rates in the country (Statistics Canada, 2015). Beach et al.'s (2008) overview of the context of child care in Alberta indicated that there were 541,400 children between the ages of birth to twelve, 342,100 of whom had mothers in the paid workforce. There were regulated child care spaces for fewer than twenty percent of these children and in Alberta the number of spaces dropped

between 2008 and 2012 (Ferns & Friendly, 2014). Given the large numbers of families seeking child care, the need for regulated ECE programs and teachers to staff them is acute.

Recruitment and retention of qualified teachers is a significant issue in ECE, both nationally and provincially. In a 2009 nation-wide survey of ECE employers administered by the Child Care Human Resources Sector Council (CCHRSC), over 50% stated that recruiting qualified teachers was a human resources challenge they had faced in their work over the past year. Furthermore, 65% of employers maintained that high rates of staff attrition and turnover had been an issue in the past two years. The staff turnover in Alberta was reported to be higher than the national average (CCHRSC, 2013). The general lack of public respect for ECE as a profession, also reflected in the compensation offered, was perceived as a barrier to recruitment and retention; many new teachers used ECE as a springboard to more socially recognized and valued professions. In 2012, for example, the median hourly wage in Alberta was below the national average at \$15.33. In 2008, the Alberta government commissioned a study on staff recruitment and retention in child care (Massing, 2008). Questionnaires were issued to all staff in Alberta child care centres, family day home agencies and out-of-school care centres as well as to second year ECE college students and about one quarter of these (2,661) were returned. Although 75% of respondents reported being satisfied in their work, overall some of the areas which they felt would improve their satisfaction included better wages and benefits, more recognition, improved working conditions, and access to more training or education. The Government of Alberta (2014) has since introduced a variety of initiatives for accredited child care programs including wage top-ups, bursaries, and professional development funding. The Staff Attraction Incentive Allowance was established in 2009 to monetarily lure experienced staff back into the field and reward new teachers once they have worked a year.

While the requisite qualifications for early childhood educators vary from province-to-province, the Government of Alberta (2014) has delineated three levels of qualification. To attain the first level, as a Child Development Assistant, one must complete a 58 hour government-sponsored orientation course, an equivalent high school course, or a 45 hour college-level child development course. In licensed centres, Assistants comprise 41% of the staff (Muttart Foundation & Langford, 2014). The second level, Child Development Worker, requires a one year ECE certificate from an Alberta college or the equivalent (nursing, medicine, physical education, and arts or sciences are considered equivalencies). Finally, to achieve the third level, Child Development Supervisor, an individual must hold a two-year diploma from an Alberta college or the equivalent (any education degree, a social work degree, child and youth care diploma or degree, or class A or C out-of-school care certification). People who have completed their education in a language other than English or French must have completed a college-level English or French course and have attained a minimum CLB (Canadian Language Benchmark) score of seven. At the Worker or Supervisor level, applicants must also have successfully completed a college or university level English or French course. In Alberta, then, educational credentials and experience with young children in one's home country and languages are irrelevant unless one can demonstrate proficiency in one of the official languages.

Immigrant/refugee women living in urban centers in Canada are often motivated to further their education by enrolling in ECE diploma or certificate programs (Langford, 2007). Some women work in the field for awhile before pursuing their studies, while others enter these programs directly. Both nationally and provincially, 60% of women working in centre-based ECE programs have a post-secondary credential (Service Canada, 2011; CCHRSC, 2007). For many new immigrants, though, knowledge of English or French is still the most significant

barrier to accessing further education and among the more serious barriers to gaining employment (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2010). The Government of Alberta recently funded a pilot for a two year program to bridge immigrants/refugees employed as early childhood educators into the Alberta post-secondary system, but the funding was not renewed upon completion of the program. The high cost and time commitment necessary to obtain an ECE diploma can also serve as an impediment for new Canadians (CCHRSC, 2009). However, despite these obstacles, if one is able to meet the language requirements, there is a substantial wage incentive attached to completing a diploma or certificate program.

Although it is unknown exactly how many immigrant/refugee women are employed in Alberta child care centres, a walk through centres in Edmonton or Calgary would suggest that the numbers are fairly high. A staff recruitment and retention survey revealed that among Alberta ECE teachers more than 50 non-official languages were spoken at home (Massing, 2008), and an unofficial estimate suggests that approximately 60 to 70% of those individuals applying for certification were born outside of Canada. However, immigrant/refugee teachers frequently work as child development assistants, lacking the power to influence policy or programming. When they achieve the English language skills to further their education in an ECTE program, they encounter additional barriers such as unfamiliar content, theories, and pedagogical approaches.

## **Literature Review**

**The authoritative discourse in ECE.** Students entering ECTE programs are confronted by a well-established body of knowledge and skills which permeates the field. The text *Developmentally Appropriate Practices* (DAP) is commonly believed by teacher educators, teachers, and scholars to be symbolic of the authoritative discourse of ECE. Published and sold by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the ECE

professional organization in the United States, this text (and many others like it) undergirds many of the ECE diploma and degree programs in North America and in global contexts. The original version of DAP (Bredekamp & Copple, 1987), and subsequent renditions, have been problematized by reconceptualist scholars for its overemphasis on child development knowledge.

The positivistic body of knowledge embodied in DAP proposes a universal, decontextualized, and essentialized childhood experience whereby all children progress through the same developmental stages at the same ages. DAP derives its authority from scientific research conducted by Western developmental psychologists such as Piaget and Erikson. However, most of this research was undertaken with a limited sample of white, middle-class Euro-North American children and is neither reliable nor generalizable in predicting the course of development of all children (Katz, 1996). DAP thus prioritizes a Piagetian focus on the individual over the group (Silin, 1995); failing to acknowledge the familial, social and cultural contexts in which children live their lives (Lubeck, 1994; Ludlow & Berkley, 1994). Critics argue that children's behaviour and development only takes on meaning within these various contexts; culture and individual development are mutually constitutive (Bowman & Stott, 1994; Delpit, 1995; Hyun, 1998). There are no spaces for teachers to bring in their own understandings of the sociocultural contexts in which they, and the children with whom they work, live (Bowman & Stott, 1994; Silin, 1995). Culture is likewise reduced to individual characteristics and play materials in a food, fun and fashion approach, thus presenting culture as static and immutable instead of fluid, shifting, and contextualized (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999). These issues are especially salient when considering immigrant/refugee teachers who work with children from similar backgrounds. As higher status, technical knowledge (see Apple, 2004), developmental psychology ascribes legitimacy to ECE and situates expertise outside of the field.

Despite several decades of criticism, the NAEYC's (2009a, 2009b) essential frameworks for teaching and learning have not been significantly altered. For example, the second NAEYC (2009b) professional standard exhorts teachers to know about and understand diverse families and to engage them “through respectful, reciprocal relationships” (p. 12). The fourth standard then states that teachers are to connect with children and families using “developmentally effective approaches”, thereby connecting DAP to working with children and families (p. 14). Yet the current version of DAP still promotes a deficit view of “minority” children and, by extension, parents and teachers from similar backgrounds. A close reading of the text reveals that “children of colour, children growing up in poverty and English language learners” are conceived to “lag significantly” behind their peers in foundational skills required for school success (that is, academic achievement) and are “most likely to fall farther behind with time” (NAEYC, 2009a, p. 6). Therefore, these particular “subgroups”, as they are deemed to be, of African-American and immigrant children are positioned as disadvantaged. The word “subgroup” is pejorative; defined by Merriam-Webster (n.d) as “a subordinate group whose members usually share some common differential quality”. This DAP construction of alterity is employed to define otherness in these children; they are pathologized as different and lesser than, lacking the competencies needed for school success. Yet numerous studies have limned how the discourses valued in schools and ECE settings are compatible with white, middle-class ways of being, knowing, and developing thus ensuring that diverse learners will be disadvantaged (e.g. Delpit, 1995; Heath, 1983; Brown, Souto-Manning, & Laman, 2010).

In Alberta, the authoritative discourse is defined both by regulatory frameworks and accreditation standards.<sup>8</sup> The Child Care Licensing Regulation sets the minimum standards for

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<sup>8</sup> At the time of data collection, there was no early learning curriculum framework in Alberta. Where possible, I reference the standards, regulations, and documents in use when data were being collected.

settings, emphasizing health and safety, staff certification and requirements, space allocations, administrative requirements, and ratios (Government of Alberta, 2013a). Produced by the Accreditation of Early Learning and Care Services, the accreditation standards advance Euro-North American ways of communicating with, teaching, and caring for young children. While the standards position families as children's primary caregivers holding expertise that should be acknowledged and respected, those related to working with the children contain only cursory mention of “inclusion” of children's home experiences and cultural backgrounds in daily experiences and play materials (AECLS, 2004). The updated standards extend these somewhat by adding text about “respecting diversity” (Government of Alberta, 2013a). Paralleling the language in DAP, the Government of Alberta (2013b) platform on early learning suggests that the developmental difficulties, poor health, and lack of school preparedness that children exposed to trauma, family violence, abuse, or neglect may experience “is compounded for some Aboriginal, new Canadian, and lone parent families” (p. 6). Although the intent may not be to deficitize these children and their families, the implicit construction of Aboriginal and immigrant/refugee children as being “at risk” is strongly implied. The document’s focus on learning and school preparation is reflective of recent developments in the early childhood field as a whole.

**Tensions between education and care in the authoritative discourse.** The field of ECE has long been characterized by disparate settings, curricula, goals, teacher qualifications, and educational levels. Several decades ago, various scholars sought to assess the ways in which ECE did or did not fit the standard definitions of a profession (Katz, 1988; Peters, 1988; Spodek & Saracho, 1988). Some of the agreed-upon criteria included controlled entry to the profession through licensing and credentials, prolonged training, some form of self-regulation (procedures,

ethical standards, or a code of ethics), a shared knowledge and skill base, autonomy, and being altruistic in its motives. Yet, in many OECD countries, the low pay and marginalized status associated with being an ECE teacher has made it difficult to realize many of these criteria. In the Canadian context, the regulatory standards and certification and educational requirements vary widely from province to province. The authoritative discourse has increasingly been mobilized as a tool for creating a standardized and rigorous expert knowledge base in the field with the goals of professionalizing the workforce and improving the status of the profession. However, as will be explained in this section, this shift within the field has simultaneously marginalized teachers' own practical knowledges and experiences, especially in relation to care, and impeded their abilities to adapt their practice to the local context.<sup>9</sup>

ECE has increased in priority in global and national policy agendas as ensuring children's well-being in the critical early years has come to be seen as contributing to a nation's economic competitiveness (Moss, 2006). In recent years, neo-liberal discourses circulating both locally and globally have resulted in a plethora of policies and regulations designed to ensure program quality (Woodrow, 2008). Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence (1999) problematized the concept of quality for being overly invested in measurability, standards, and control, while Tobin (2005) added that quality standards are decontextualized, inflexible to the needs and demands of local settings. Van Laere, Peeters, and Vandebroek (2012) explain that such policies and practices are "schoolifying" the field as "ECEC is increasingly conceptualized as preparation for compulsory schooling and the didactics of compulsory schooling therefore tend to determine ECEC programs" (p. 527). When school-readiness is a central curricular goal, it enhances the urgency for professionalizing the field through the preparation, recruitment, and retention of

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<sup>9</sup> In this dissertation, the definition of a "professional" is linked to the notion of attaining competence or legitimized membership in the ECE community of practice.

qualified teachers to ensure program quality (Dalli, 2008; Musgrave, 2010; Urban, 2008). It should be noted that studies finding a positive correlation between teachers' education levels and program quality (e.g. Goelman, Forer, Kershaw, Doherty, Lero, & LaGrange, 2006) generally employ western measurement tools such as ECERS and ITERS<sup>10</sup> thereby promoting the notion that teacher preparation programs situated outside of the authoritative, western discourse are not considered to be equally efficacious.

In the context of “schoolification”, the prevailing image of the teacher becomes that of a *technician* (Moss, 2006). She engages in what Taggart (2011) denotes as “performative professionalism” whereby the “correct action is determined in relation to universal competence standards and codes of practice” (p. 88). For example, the NAEYC (2009b) professional standards for ECE teachers prioritize knowledge of child development theory. Competence is explicitly linked to teachers' application of developmental knowledge in observations, assessments, and planning. As Sisson and Iverson (2014) found in their research with teachers, these bodies of knowledge functioned as “externally validated or objective markers of ‘professionalism’ that represented ‘best practice’” (p. 220). With the supremacy of developmental psychology in the field, the teacher is excluded from the production of knowledge governing the field which erodes their authority and professional status (Langford, 2010; Krieg, 2010). Accordingly, the text DAP is presented as a binary between “appropriate” and “inappropriate” teaching and assessment practices, laid out in juxtaposition on the same page. With “appropriate” practice being so clearly outlined, it is difficult for teachers to bring their own knowledges and experiences into their teaching practice. Paradoxically, though, the overall

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<sup>10</sup> ECERS—the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale—and ITERS—the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (Harms, Cryer, & Clifford, 2014; 2007)—are widely used nationally and internationally to assess program quality through the physical environment, basic care, curriculum, interactions, schedules and program structure, and parent and staff education. The indicators defined in the scales are consistent with publications, policies, regulations, and standards within the authoritative discourse.

notion of teachers as experts holding specific technical knowledge simultaneously reinforces the marginalized position of parents.<sup>11</sup> While standards frequently make reference to respecting parents as primary caregivers, developing reciprocal relationships, and including and involving families (eg. Government of Alberta, 2013a, 2013b; NAEYC, 2009), in practice few meaningful concessions can be made to parents' home practices and knowledges of their own children within the existing frameworks. Parenting practices that are situated outside of the norm are thus positioned as inadequate (Chan, 2011). As Cannella (1997) poignantly reminds us, this privileging “has resulted in the silencing of human voices that are not ours”; children, parents, community members with rich and diverse cultural strengths and life histories (p. 3). ECTE students or teachers with prior parenting or caregiving experience thus risk being viewed as “unprofessional” if they draw on this expertise in their field placements.

The dual focus on teachers' technical knowledge and children's preparation for schooling elides teachers' own practical knowledges (McLaren, 1989) emerging out of their personal experiences and relationships with children; as mothers, grandmothers, aunts, siblings and teachers. Although ECE has traditionally been conceived of as a care profession—an extension of the mothering role—care is generally excluded from regulatory and policy documents. It cannot easily be measured or defined (Osgood, 2012) unless one were to simply assess managed, predetermined, routinized care for children's physical needs—eating, dressing and undressing, diapering, toileting, and napping (Rockel, 2009).<sup>12</sup> In spite of this, teachers still emphasize the importance of love, care, intimacy, and emotion in their work with young children (Dalli, 2008;

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<sup>11</sup> The Government of Alberta (2013) plan affirms that Alberta parents need access to “leading edge early years information and practical tools that help support their child's development” which in essence means that parents lack the “right” kind of knowledge (p. 3).

<sup>12</sup> Van Laere et al (2012) state that the European Commission and UNESCO recognize that education and care are inseparable, though technical conceptualizations of the professional teacher means this caring dimension is marginalized in practice.

Colley, 2006; Harwood, Klopper, Osanyin, & Vanderlee, 2012; Madrid & Dunn-Kenney, 2010; Quan-McGimpsey, Kucznski, & Brophy, 2011). However, teachers may cite the need to restrain and manage their emotions in order to display professional behaviour (Colley, 2006; Vincent & Braun, 2010). References to care in their work may utilize less emotion-laden terms such as “presence”, “connection”, and “relationality” (e.g. Dalli, 2008; Harwood et al, 2012; Urban & Dalli, 2012; Warren, 2014). These terms imply care and openness for others—part of the affective dimension of professionalism—without excessive emotionality. As Moyles (2001) found in her study with early childhood teachers in England, they feel unprofessional when they take on a caring or maternalistic role— even though it is integral to their work—as they are “convinced that what is inside them is not valid, only personal and equated with emotional responses” (p. 89).

The division between education and care in constructions of the professional teacher creates a hierarchy of knowledges and skills that values knowledge about learning and child development over knowing how to care for young children (Manning-Morton, 2006; Urban & Dalli, 2012). As Taggart (2011) commented, the absence of care in professional codes has led to it being regarded as “part of a taken-for-granted assemblage of lower skills which acts as a platform upon which the higher skills of professionalism can be built” (p. 87). Van Laere et al (2012) point out that when policies and regulatory frameworks privilege the educative over the caring role, it also trivializes the contributions made by teachers working at an assistant or auxiliary level who may be more engaged in these “care” activities than “teaching”. Further muddling the debate, when care is overemphasized, it may undermine or jeopardize teachers' efforts for improved professional standing and pay (Dalli, 2008; Goldstein, 1998; Manning-Morton, 2006). Since immigrant/refugee teachers' own experiences as parents are not seen as

valid or “professional”, they are believed to shed their parental beliefs and practices in the workplace (Adair, Tobin, & Aruzibiaga, 2012; Hujibregts, Leseman, & Taveccio, 2008), and actively distance themselves from the practices implemented by parents from similar backgrounds (Wilgus, 2006).

Due to this tension between how care work is perceived within and outside of the field, various scholars have been attempting to vision a synthesis or reconciliation of care and education primarily through consideration of ethics of care. For example, Brannen and Moss (2003) differentiated between care as ethic and care as simply attending to children's needs, stating that in this view “care is inscribed in all relationships” (p. 39). Following Moss (2006), Rockel (2009) enjoins that pedagogy should encompass both care and learning “with consideration of the theoretical, ethical, and philosophical aspects of teaching” (p. 7). Osgood (2006) maintains that teachers can mobilize care as a counter-discourse in defiance of the authoritative discourse and the language of “quality”. Professionalism, she believes, should be dialogically negotiated and socially constructed to create spaces for teachers’ own “professional integrity, experiential wisdom, their belief in an ethic of care, and the importance of emotion” (Osgood, 2006, p. 11). Extending this idea, Dalli (2008) posits that discourses of love and care need to be reconceptualized so they can become political and pedagogical tools for teachers. Taggert (2011) proposes an alignment between professionalism and ethics of care brought into the political arena as a social principle and not just a gendered disposition or extension of women's domestic work. The thoughts expressed by participants in Harwood et al’s (2012) comparative study of teachers in Canada, South Africa, and Nigeria lent support to the inclusion of ethics of care. To varying degrees, these conceptualizations honour the teacher’s own agency

in using her professional judgement, her experience, and knowledge of the children, advancing what Osgood (2010) refers to as “professionalism from within” one’s practice (p. 747).

After documenting the “day in the life” of a single teacher or director in each of six countries, Miller, Dalli, Urban and their collaborators (2012) concluded that:

Professionalism in early childhood practice cannot be defined in simple universalistic and immutable terms, or through finite lists and attributes. Rather...professionalism is something whose meaning appears to be embedded in local contexts, visible in relational interactions, ethical and political in nature, and involving multiple layers of knowledge, judgement, and influences from the broader societal context (Miller, Dalli, & Urban, 2012, p. 6).

This commentary resonates with Oberheumer's (2005) vision of a democratic professionalism that is dialogical in nature, collaborative, and grounded in a knowledge base that acknowledges multiple ways of knowing. Each individual community of practice constructs and enacts ways of being a professional that are influenced by the macro-contexts, but are also (re)interpreted within the micro-context of that community through dialogue. These discussions on the nature of professionalism unfurl many complex issues, not the least of which relates to individual interpretations of what it means to be a professional and to teach and, especially, to care for young children. For example, as will be amplified further in my fourth paper, understandings of care are both personally and culturally constructed. Recognition that professionalism is to be locally defined is a first step, but many questions about whose knowledges and experiences are to be included and how this is to be accomplished remain.

**The authoritative discourse in ECTE.** ECTE programs similarly privilege technorationalist views of teaching and learning—with a concomitant concern for quality, standards,

and accountability (Novinger & O'Brien, 2003)— over affective, experiential, and practical knowledges. Knowledge of child developmental theory undergirds the majority of programs (Muttart Foundation & Langford, 2014), providing a validated, technical knowledge base that is to be internalized by students (Langford, 2007). Programs are traditionally monological in nature, bestowing authority on professors and texts so that students come to “accept a subtle message that there is a specific protocol or procedure for each situation” instead of taking cues from the local contexts of practice (Souto-Manning, Cahmann-Taylor, Dice, & Wooten, 2008, p. 311). Such an approach is more likely to promote universal, normative practices. The image of the teacher as a technician also adheres to the notion that professional identity is something that is fixed and static, to be readily assumed by the student (Britzman, 2003), rather than constructed in dialogue between one's own personal and cultural beliefs, values, and experiences and her learning in the program, field placement sites, or workplace.

Yet, like many practicing teachers, students often reference their love or passion for children as their primary motivation for entering the field (Langford, 2007; Murray, 2013; O'Brien, Novinger, & Leach-Bizari, 2007). In fact, the ECTE students interviewed by Vincent and Braun (2010) emphasized intuitive, common sense knowledge and practical experience over the abstract theoretical knowledge taught in the program. Discourses of care are thus omnipresent and ingrained in their own understandings of what their work will entail. Further to this, students enter their programs with other deeply entrenched beliefs about how to work with young children based on their personal histories and theories (Lopes & Pereira, 2012), experiences as school children (Brown & Feger, 2010; Furlong, 2013), previous work with children (Horsley & Bauer, 2010), experiences as parents or caregivers (Osgood, 2012), depictions of teachers in the media (Alsup, 2006; Ryan & Grieshaber, 2005), and cultural

background (Gupta, 2011). Many students find there are discontinuities between technical and practical knowledges, but this situation is compounded for immigrant/refugee students.

In a framework where immigrant/refugee children are constructed as lesser than their peers and teaching is viewed as a technical endeavour, it is hardly surprising that there is little or no value attached to the cultural and linguistic knowledges held by immigrant/refugee teachers or student teachers. Many ECTE programs are indeed concerned with preparing students to work with culturally diverse children and their families. Popular approaches are very loosely situated within a multicultural education paradigm and involve stand-alone diversity courses; guest speakers; or field trips, practica, or immersion experiences in culturally and linguistically diverse community or school settings (see Howry & Whelan-Kim, 2009; Keengwe, 2010, Owen, 2007). Their intention is to help white middle-class students gain cultural competencies they can apply to their work with children from diverse backgrounds (Nuttall & Ortlipp, 2012). These additive approaches are superficial and risk essentializing cultures. In sum, cultural competence becomes yet another technical skill students must acquire. Ironically, though, students who come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are not recognized as possessing this competence because their skills and knowledges are marginalized in the authoritative discourse. The existing framework for ECTE must be reconceptualised in such a way as to situate these students as the holders of knowledge instead of the theorists and experts who are detached from the realities in the field (Wilgus, 2013a).

There is a dearth of research related to immigrant/refugee ECTE students, though there is a more expansive body of literature on internationally educated teachers (IETs) in elementary and secondary education<sup>13</sup>. Related to the notion of competence, many tensions stem from the

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<sup>13</sup> Walsh, Brigham, and Wang (2011) define internationally educated teachers as “people who have immigrated to Canada, who have completed post secondary education outside of Canada and whose teaching experience is

conflict between the theory in the program and students' own knowledges and experiences. IETs, in particular, often have established professional identities in the contexts of their teaching experiences "back home". Yet they encounter many unfamiliar concepts such as child-centred and play-based approaches to teaching that they are expected to learn (Myles, Cheng, and Wang, 2006). In the New Zealand context, Moles and Santoro (2013) interviewed recent ECTE graduates about their experiences in programs and placements. As students, many said they felt reluctant to voice their opinions and participate in class discussions because their prior experiences and knowledges were unacknowledged in course content therefore their views were "different" from those of their classmates (see also Moles, 2014). While instructors are better positioned to draw students' knowledges into coursework, they themselves often do not attach any value to doing so (Lobman & Ryan, 2007). ECTE instructors participating in Langford's (2007) Canadian study even used child development theory to suppress students' own culturally informed practices with the expectation that they would conform to "universal" constructions of the good teacher. Martinovic and Dlamini (2009) commented that IETs consequently "get the sense that they are inferior to their peers, experience exclusion from important learning activities, such as group presentations, and overall, experience the sense of not belonging" (p. 136). Diverse ECTE students in Guyton, Saxton, and Wesche's (1996) Canadian study all suffered some form of prejudice or racism in their interactions with classmates and placement supervisors that they felt their instructors did not adequately address. Programs thus need to be more flexible in responding to students' diverse range of prior knowledges and experiences (Schmidt, Young, Mandzuk, 2010).

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international and/or Canadian" (p. 658). I draw somewhat upon the Canadian scholarship on IETs, but with some caution. While there are some parallels in their experiences, they come to the field with teaching experience and established identities in a profession that is accorded more respect and compensation than ECE. They are also less likely to access care discourses in working with older children.

The practicum experience is especially underexplored in research. When interviewed after graduation, participants in Moles and Santoro's (2013) study seemed to experience isolation, confusion, and a sense of inferiority when they compared themselves with non-immigrant classmates because so much of the theory and practice was unfamiliar to them. Play-based learning and implementing child-centred pedagogies were specific areas of concern due to their own personal experiences with teacher-directed approaches. Nuttall and Ortlipp (2012) completed a small-scale study of culturally and linguistically diverse ECTE students, analyzing practicum documents and interviewing three students and four supervising teachers. The practicum documents were virtually silent on the subject of student diversity, focusing instead on how to work effectively with children and families from diverse backgrounds. Interviews with placement supervisors yielded multiple contradictions. Supervisors characterized the students' difference as "useful", attempted to normalize the student through erasure of difference, or offered assistance to compensate for perceived shortfalls (Ortlipp & Nuttall, 2011). Another student was moved to a new placement as a pre-emptive measure against the racist discourses expressed by the supervisor (Ortlipp, 2005). These findings are echoed in discussions of practicum experiences in teacher education programs. Participants in Cho's (2010) study revealed instances of racism expressed both by placement supervisors and the children even if students were proactive in sharing about their home countries, cultures, and languages. Walsh, Brigham, and Wang (2011) reported that IETs who "looked white" seemed to be more accepted in schools, while IETs in other studies affirmed that they too had experienced racism and discrimination in schools (Block, 2012).

Finally, many immigrant/refugee ECTE students also experience unique learning challenges related to their acquisition of academic and oral language skills. When Gupta (2006)

researched her immigrant/refugee students' encounters with child development theory, many expressed that they struggled with reading, writing, and public speaking in English. Concerned about her students' very basic skills in reading and writing in English, Bernheimer (2003), like Gupta, worked to connect them with resources and create assignments to use these skills in context. Kennedy (2008) surveyed her ECTE students who also voiced anxiety, nervousness, confusion, and fear over the academic writing required in their programs. Consequently she encouraged small group discussions in their home languages as part of the writing process. Wilgus (2013b) also found that writing assignments with a social component, and especially those involving writing about "real" children were most meaningful to students. These students are especially anxious because, as Martinovic and Dlamini (2009) explain, they are not only learning a language, but also a culture "and in that process occupies an uncharted territory that is 'in-between' the languages (i.e. the old/home and new) and 'in-between' the cultures (i.e. the old/home and new culture)" (p. 137). To varying degrees, then, when students make decisions about using language in specific ways in the field or the classroom, they are simultaneously negotiating with their own cultural ways of speaking and being. In a Bakhtinian sense, their words are half their own and "half someone else's" (cited in Wertsch, 1998, p. 77).

In the field, it can also be especially challenging for English language learners to record formal observations of the children, as Ortlipp (2005) recognized, because when they concern themselves with spelling and grammar, they fail to see many of the children's actions. On placements, Cho (2010) recounted that IETs' linguistic capital was viewed as a deficit, and some placement supervisors degraded their accents and questioned their abilities to model "correct" English for younger learners. Notably, the accents of students from countries such as Britain and Australia were not deemed problematic, only those of students originating from Asian countries.

Certain immigrant/refugee groups, as Walsh, Brigham, and Wang (2011) also confirmed, are thus preferable to others. Myles et al (2006) commented:

The movement toward full participation in a community of practice is jeopardized not by the interactions with students, but the fear of not communicating in enough of a native-like way to satisfy the old-timers. This was a no-win situation for many of the candidates who struggled along or became silenced in fear of saying the wrong word in the wrong way... (p. 241).

Hence, developing academic skills and language proficiency aids immigrant/refugees students in learning to speak, write, and act as legitimate members of the community. However, studies to date have not delved into the processes of learning other skills such as how to use conceptual and pedagogical tools.

The existing literature proposes various ways in which the students and/or instructors responded to these tensions in their practice. In her work with her own child development students, Gupta (2006) found ways to incorporate their funds of knowledge into the existing developmental framework through sharing personal recollections and stories. More typically, though, students repressed their own practices to pass their coursework and placements. Langford's (2007) analyses of student assignments over the course of their program suggested that many had "successfully shed cultural practices particularly related to beliefs about raising and teaching young children..." (p. 346). These students also articulated that they felt more competent once they mastered and adopted child-centred pedagogy and developmentally appropriate practices. Positioned within a discourse of "difference-as-deficit", the student in Ortlipp and Nuttall's (2011) research stated that she had emulated her supervisor's ways of speaking and teaching, becoming "someone she would not be in real life" (p. 57). Consistent

with the findings in most of the studies exploring the experiences of practicing teachers, conformity is the dominant response when confronted by tensions between cultural and professional understandings. Since the data for these studies are derived from student assignments or interviews, in practice these students may have actually retained more of their cultural practices than they themselves perceived given that there is generally a gap between what teachers or student teachers say they do and what they actually do. The purpose of this study, then, was to elucidate the experiences of immigrant/refugee women throughout their coursework and field placements in one ECTE program to deepen our understanding of how their learning in the program was actualized (or denied) in practice as they negotiated their professional identities.

### **The Structure of this Dissertation**

This dissertation is organized into four distinct papers presented in pairs. The first paper describes the participants' recollections of how songs and stories are employed as pedagogical strategies "back home", while the second recounts how the participants learned to use songs and stories as pedagogical tools in the Canadian ECE context. Together these two papers illumine the interplay between the participants' own culturally-based pedagogical practices and those advanced by the authoritative discourse. The third and fourth papers are also paired and focus, respectively, on education and care discourses. These papers illustrate how the participants accessed multiple discourses as they constructed their identities as teachers, and their ways of working with young children in the context of their field placements shifted depending on the children's ages. That is, these women accessed discourses of caring formed through their own experiences as mothers, aunts, sisters, or familial caregivers when working with infants and toddlers under the age of three. When they were placed in rooms with children between the ages

of three and five, they drew upon their own educational experiences in school back home as they had no prior knowledge of institutionalized programs for preschoolers.

**Chapter two (paper 1).** The first paper elucidates the participants' funds of knowledge as made visible through their songs and oral storytelling. This paper utilizes data from northeast African immigrant/refugee participants in my main study and in the pilot study that I conducted with a group of immigrant/refugee women employed as teachers in a child care centre. The participants recalled how songs and oral storytelling were used in their home countries as pedagogical tools for teaching children important cultural values and proper behaviour while conveying familial hopes for their futures. Aspects of this paper were presented at American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting and the Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) Canada Annual Conference in 2012. It was published as a chapter in the text *Immigrant and Refugee Students in Canada* (Brewer & McCabe, 2014).

**Chapter three (paper 2).** This paper considers the lived experiences of immigrant/refugee women ECTE students as they strove to successfully achieve the knowledges, skills, and experiences needed in order to be deemed full, legitimate members of the ECE community of practice. This paper delves into how the instructors apprenticed students into the early childhood community of practice using scaffolding techniques such as bridging, structuring (Rogoff, 1990), modelling or demonstration (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1975), and explicit and implicit mediators (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 2007). The ways in which the participants used these pedagogical tools in practice with young children suggest that they uncritically appropriated dominant ways of using these tools in order to be viewed as competent, legitimate members of the community of practice. Nevertheless, the findings accentuate how scaffolding strategies—in particular those that construct bridges between practices back home and those in

the new context— are crucial to aid immigrant/refugee learners in gaining access to the authoritative discourse. A version of this paper was presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting in 2015.

**Chapter four (paper 3).** In the third paper, I consider how six participants from Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, and Syria constructed understandings of the authoritative discourse in their program in relation to their personal and cultural knowledges and beliefs about how to teach young children. This paper focuses on the participants' processes of learning to speak and act as professionals as made visible in their play interactions with children in their field placement sites in accredited child care centres. Although these participants were expected to appropriate normative practices, the findings clarify how, in actuality, they dialogically authored their own hybridized professional identities informed both by their own understandings and the authoritative discourse. Various iterations and aspects of this paper were presented at Annual Meeting of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (2014), the International Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Education (RECE) Conference (2014), and the National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators (NAECTE) Fall Conference (2014). It was recently published in *Canadian Children*.

**Chapter five (paper 4).** The final paper considers the tensionalities in caring for infants and toddlers in ECE settings when the mandated practices conflict with one's own understandings of care. This paper focuses on the field placement experiences of five of the participants who constitute a culture-sharing group; all are mothers, Muslim, come from similar socio-economic backgrounds, and originally migrated to Canada from Ethiopia, Sudan, or Somalia. The findings, which centred around mealtime and feeding practices, implied a profound dissonance between the care practices in the child care centres and the participants' own cultural

and religious constructions of what it means to care for infants and toddlers. Feeding practices were inconsistent with their own understandings of care as encompassed in two main categories: care as ensuring children's health and well-being and care as conveying religious and cultural values. When faced with such ruptures, the participants either suppressed or rejected their own beliefs—performing as full, legitimate members of the community of practice—or subverted dominant practices when they were not under surveillance. Versions of this paper were presented at the American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting in 2013 and at the Association for Childhood Education International Global Forum in 2014.

**Chapter six.** The final chapter provides an overview of the main findings of the study in relation to each of the research questions and to the theories and concepts framing the study. Implications and recommendations for policy, teacher education, and practice will be advanced.

**Strengths and limitations of the paper-based dissertation format.** The paper-based dissertation—which typically consists of between three and five publishable papers—has several distinct advantages. As a beginning scholar, I derived substantial benefits from presenting the papers in national and international forums and sending papers for peer review prior to completing the dissertation. The comments and questions I received from audience members and the anonymous reviewers assisted me both in refining my thinking and in organizing my ideas within each of the papers. Moreover, early presentation and publication of my work has allowed me to begin to establish myself within the scholarly community. The completion of a paper-based dissertation has prepared me for the publishing requirements entailed with a tenure-track position. I concur with Adams (2008), who has written that the paper-based dissertation allows one to approach a single topic using multiple perspectives; in my case I was able to draw from different concepts in each paper, blending those that best fit the thesis. Also, she affirms that one

can address multiple audiences, thus encouraging broader dissemination of the research than the traditional dissertation.

One of the main issues with the paper-based dissertation is the repetitive nature of the written work in its entirety; the reader must endure multiple iterations of the contextual information, literature review, and explanations of the methodological and theoretical underpinnings of the study. Furthermore, the findings are scattered across the different papers, each presenting a narrow perspective on the broader topic framed by one or more of the research questions. The overall effect is such that any attempts to clearly delineate the answer to each individual question are obscured with one leaking into the next. Thus, the concluding section (Chapter 6) is particularly lengthy as I attempt to address each question in turn, drawing upon the data to bolster my claims. Some of the papers are a better fit with the research questions than others. While Chapters 4 and 5 touch on all three questions, Chapters 1 and 2 make more tenuous connections. Yet each paper contributes to our overall understanding of life within this particular community of practice as experienced by immigrant and refugee women.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### **Using Songs and Oral Storytelling as Pedagogical Tools “Back Home”**

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a field which is believed to be very accessible to the growing numbers of immigrant/refugee women (Statistics Canada, 2011) as their first point of entry in the labour force in Canada (Service Canada, 2011). These women might reference the knowledge of children they have gained as mothers, aunts, siblings, or teachers in their home countries. In the Alberta context, they typically take a 58-hour course (online or face-to-face) or ten-month certificate program to obtain the lowest level of certification, and some enter diploma or degree programs when they have the language skills (Government of Alberta, 2013). Both in their courses and in the field, they are required to follow the expectations made explicit in the authoritative discourse of ECE (Bredenkamp & Copple, 2009). This discourse derives its authority from the research of Western developmental psychologists, and emphasizes that all children progress through universal stages of development regardless of the social, cultural, and personal circumstances of their lives. Despite two decades of critique on the part of reconceptualist scholars (eg. Cannella, 1997; Mallory & New, 1994; Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999) and the preponderance of research focused on the role of culture in development (Nsamenang, 2004; Rogoff, 1990, 1995, 2003), this discourse still governs the field.

Immigrant/refugee educators, parents, and children are perceived to be deficient as teachers and as learners in the authoritative ECE discourse (Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). This discourse is strengthened and legitimized through well-established processes in the field of ECE such as accreditation and licensing. ECE certificate and diploma programs and professional development sessions in the field generally reproduce dominant ideologies, upholding the notion that the educator must be equipped with a specific skill and knowledge set—child development

theory and developmentally appropriate practices—s/he can apply toward the goal of producing positive academic outcomes in young children (Grieshaber, 2008; Moss, 2006; Lobman & Ryan, 2007). An educator's technical knowledge is prioritized at the expense of her or his practical, experiential, and cultural ways of knowing and being. Therefore, immigrant/refugee educators are required to work and interact with children in prescribed ways that are often in conflict with their own culturally constructed beliefs and values (Bernheimer, 2003; Gupta, 2006). The limited scholarship in this field suggests they shed their own personal theories and cultural understandings to be seen as professional (see Gupta, 2006; Langford, 2007; Nuttall & Ortlipp, 2011). This framework silences the cultural knowledges these women bring to the field (Adair, 2009), but these knowledges could support the transitions of growing numbers of immigrant/refugee children and families into early childhood settings or the Canadian school system (Statistics Canada, 2010).

Research in the area of literacy likewise positions immigrant/refugee educators, children and families within a discourse of cultural and linguistic deficit (e.g. Stanovich, 1986). Notions about which literacy practices contribute to success in reading and writing are narrowly circumscribed; thus immigrant/refugee families are presumed not to have the capacity to provide the “right kind” of literacy environments, resources, and experiences for their children (Dudley-Marling, 2009; Grieshaber, Shield, Luke & Macdonald, 2012; Hsin, 2011; Marshall & Toohey, 2010; Reese & Gallimore, 2000; Rivera & Lavan, 2012; Solero-González, 2009). Since songs and storybook reading are conventionally employed to teach language, vocabulary (in English), rhyming, sequencing, phonological awareness, and awareness of word and print (Tomlinson & Hyson, 2009) in ECE settings, immigrant/refugee educators' familial and cultural practices are marginalized or absent. Sociocultural researchers have long problematized these traditional

notions of literacy (Gee, 1996; Street, 2001), illuminating the rich and complex literacy practices of immigrant/refugee and minority group families (eg. Heath, 1983; Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines, 1988; Gregory, Long, & Volk, 2004). However, with some exceptions (Bigelow, 2010; Perry, 2009; Roy & Roxas, 2011), African immigrant/refugee literacies are still underexplored in research. In this paper, it is my intention to uncover some of the literacy *funds of knowledge* African refugee women working or studying in the field of ECE might bring to their work with immigrant/refugee children from similar backgrounds (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005).

### **Purpose and Research Questions**

The data for this chapter were drawn from two related ethnographic studies. In the first, an exploratory pilot study taking place over the period of one year, data was collected during a series of professional development sessions I facilitated on communication and guidance in a multicultural child care centre attached to an agency serving immigrant/refugee families in a mid-sized Canadian city. The purpose of the sessions was to simultaneously expose the women to dominant practices to help prepare them for their centre's upcoming accreditation review and elicit critique of these practices from their personal and cultural perspectives. Ten immigrant/refugee women, employed as early childhood educators in the centre, participated in this study. In the second study, I sought to gain an understanding of how nineteen immigrant/refugee women experienced their studies in a one-year early childhood education certificate program in the same city. For this paper, I focus on exclusively on the eleven participants who are from Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, or Sudan, are first generation refugees, and are mothers (eight women are from the first study and three from the second). Two questions guided my inquiry in the larger studies:

- What understandings do immigrant/refugee women construct of the dominant discourse in ECE?
- What impact do these understandings have on their perceptions of themselves in relation to children as they negotiate their professional identities as early childhood educators?

In this paper, I concentrate primarily on the women's recollections of the ways in which storytelling and songs were used in their families and cultures.

## **Methods**

Both studies employed a qualitative, ethnographic methodology as I sought to study the culture of the ECE community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and how it is experienced by women from diverse cultural backgrounds. As a participant observer, I was situated in multiple, overlapping contexts of their learning and practice: the workplace and professional development sessions in the first study and the college classrooms, common areas, library, computer lab, and external field placement sites (all child care centres) in the second. I spent over a year with the participants in the first study, but quite intermittently depending on schedules and availability, and an average of three days a week (five hours a day) over a period of ten months with the group in the second study. Data collection methods included field notes, spatial mapping, artifact and document collection (especially class notes, handouts, textbooks and teaching materials, assignments, assessments, and field placement evaluations), photos, focus group sessions (each participant took part in three or four 60-90 minute sessions), and semi-structured interviews (between two and six 30-45 minute interviews per participant) or contextualized conversations (Stage & Mattson, 2003). During the focus group discussions, I utilized an adapted form of multivocal visual-cued ethnographic methods (Spindler, 2008; Tobin, Husueh & Karasawa, 2009; Tobin, Davidson, & Wu, 1989). I showed the participants video clips from typical ECE

teaching videos to elicit their cultural and personal perspectives and critique of dominant practices. One of these clips depicted a teacher reading a book to a group of children which led to discussions on literacy practices. I recorded and transcribed the focus group discussions and interviews verbatim and then reviewed them line-by-line with the participants to see if there was anything they wanted to add, change or delete. I assigned codes to common viewpoints in transcriptions across the data sources, combined similarly coded data into categories, and clustered like categories in order to interpret the data (Angrosino, 2007).

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

My work here is theoretically grounded in a sociocultural-historical framework. Street (2001) theorized that the autonomous model of literacy presumes that literacy, congruent with the authoritative discourse, is a universal, technical skill which can be taught and is transferrable to other cognitive processes and contexts. In contrast, in the ideological model of literacy, literacy practices are both socially constructed as we act and interact with others, and inextricably linked to the cultural, historical, and social contexts in which they develop and are used (Street, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) emphasizes the role of experts in guiding a learner, through interpersonal interaction, to achieve more than they could on their own. With respect to this study, experts (adults) guide children in understanding and using cultural tools (songs and stories) which can then be employed as mediational devices in learning; they might create other possibilities or introduce new limitations (Wertsch, 2007). In this manner, children gain access to culturally valued knowledges, skills, and understandings that transform their actions and behaviours in certain ways (Wertsch, 1998, 1991). Songs and stories, as cultural and historical products, reflect the values and beliefs of the culture and constantly evolve in use. For instance, the story

draws in elements from the context as well as the values and beliefs of the storyteller to transform as it is told and retold; such transformation has specific implications in the context of immigration. However, as Smythe & Toohey (2009) maintain, children do not necessarily have equal access to the resources which are esteemed in the dominant culture, and cultural resources are not all deemed to hold equal value in a society or community. Therefore, literacy resources and practices which have evolved in the context of the dominant culture are privileged in schools and early childhood settings while those originating in diverse cultural contexts are marginalized.

Consistent with sociocultural-historical theory, Bakhtin's (1986, 1981) conceptualization of *voice(s)* connects the individual's mental functioning with communicative processes in the social context (Wertsch, 1998). Words, or utterances, never belong to an individual speaker, Bakhtin believed, because they emerge from a larger, collectively developed system of language. When an individual speaks, then, an utterance is always “half someone else's. It becomes one's own when the speaker populates it with his (*sic*) own intention, his accent...” (as cited in Wertsch, 1998, p. 77). So an utterance represents the intermingling of the individual's own voice with the voices of others in the sociocultural context. *Heteroglossia* denotes the form which governs the meaning in any utterance. Songs and stories, for example, emerge from a context and a tradition and not just from the individual who shares them. Within that specific socio-cultural context, the words have more power; their meanings may be altered or diminished when they are detached from their original context and re-introduced in another (Bakhtin, 1981). Finally, *dialogicality* implies the social nature of all language; two utterances meet and individuals both contextualize the utterance and orientate themselves to it (Wertsch, 1991). Hall, Vitanova, and Marchenkova (2005) describe dialogue as the moment when the historical and the present converge in an utterance. Within the social context, an utterance is imbued with

meanings bestowed upon it by the group or by tradition, but people (re)interpret manners of speaking in deeply individual ways as well.

Conceptually, this research is also informed by *funds of knowledge*, which is defined as the “historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992, p. 133). Since literacy is envisioned as situated within, and emerging from, particular socio-cultural and historical contexts, it is crucial to uncover the knowledges, experiences, and practices of immigrant/refugee families. Familial funds of knowledge, as embodied in their practices “back home” and here, become resources (Wright, 2001) or cultural tools which, once identified, can be utilized to support teaching and learning in school and ECE settings. This concept has often been used to frame studies of immigrant/refugee children and their families (eg. DaSilva Iddings, 2009; Smythe & Toohey, 2009), however, the focus in this study is on the educators (and future educators) themselves, who come from the same cultural backgrounds as the children with whom they work and exemplify the use of such cultural practices as singing and oral storytelling.

## **Findings**

The songs and stories shared in these sessions originated from various sources. Some could be characterized as personal stories invented by a family member and shared with the children. Other songs and stories were passed down from generation to generation, as Helen expressed: “When I was young my mom she was singing some kind of song . . . like how they do it when she was young. Her dad taught her and she was singing it for us. . . .” (Helen, interview, February 12, 2012). Still others were borrowed from other cultures; perhaps the remnants of colonization. For instance, a group of women sang “Frere Jacques” to me in Amharic and

mentioned hearing stories such as Little Red Riding Hood, the Little Red Hen (focus group, October 23, 2012), and Cinderella (Bijou, Interview, May 31, 2013). I have merged the themes for songs and stories for ease of explanation and because they are used for similar purposes in many cases. In addition, most of the women contended that they and their family members sing stories aloud, thus the two are often intertwined. As Sara, originally from Eritrea, explained, “My mom didn't go to school. She just knows that story. She listen to it, remember it and she sing it to me, to tell me, she's singing. Some people read a story” (Interview, February 21, 2012).

I develop three main themes here: the use of songs and stories to teach cultural values, to guide children's behaviour, and to convey encouragement or the adult's hopes for the child. Although I present the commonalities, there was also a difference between songs and stories as songs were associated with enjoyment and pleasure in the participants' memories.

**Teaching cultural values.** A dominant theme running through the discussions was the importance of teaching cultural and familial values, especially respect. Respect was overwhelmingly viewed to be the deeper value underlying proper behaviour. As a foundation for teaching the correct ways of behaving, the women felt strongly that the family must instruct children how to respect their elders. As Akeda, an Eritrean grandmother, said, “they have to learn at home, not outside.” (Akeda, focus group discussion, October 13, 2011). Amina, from Somalia, explained several of the conversational and behavioural norms for demonstrating respect, which each of the other East African women felt applied to her culture as well: “When the child tell you something, he can look at the adult, but if the adult is angry or they get mad or something like that, the child give the respect, he look down” (Amina, focus group discussion, October 20, 2011).

Stories, in particular, often contained messages enforcing respect for one's elders, as Helen remembered from her childhood in Eritrea:

. . . respect for people who are older and, you know, for example older people they cannot carry something, they cannot work or you know, whatever, you have to help them. So we need to help them, they (the parents) teach us. They told us the story (to teach us). (Helen, interview, February 17, 2012).

Amina confirmed that since they did not have books back home, elders' stories were both a source of information and a means of enforcing respectful listening: “Back home we listened to the older people, what they said . . .” (Amina, focus group discussion, October 17, 2013). Bijou, from Sudan, recalled one example of a story her mother told them to teach respect:

Another story she used to tell me was about a grandma, but she could be an evil grandma... She loves all her grandchildren, but often she gives them something and they get sick and she's the only one who can heal them, she took them to the hospital and nothing would work. Only her, she can heal those children by singing her magical saying ... I used to tell my mom ‘I don't want to go to my grandma’s house’, and my grandma came and gave us some stuff and I didn't want to eat it! The story was to teach you to respect your grandmother otherwise she will be(come) evil (Interview, May 31, 2013).

Fatima, a refugee woman from Somalia, told her own five sons stories about how her mother modelled respect for others regardless of the circumstances of their lives. For instance, Fatima's mother used to invite homeless people to eat lunch with them and the children would express disgust at having a “dirty” person in their home. She told them a story about how she fed a

homeless family for a period of time and then, when their fortunes changed, the family gave her honey and butter from their farm. She described the moral of the story as follows:

. . . she said “we are same (as) this person. We came from (the) same, God made us both. He give us, he doesn't give him to show how we help each other . . .” That's what she did. Yeah, because she always tell us “God, he has power to give everybody everything, but why (does) he give some people some and he didn't give the other one (any)? He's going to see how we help that person.” And (it's) still in my mind. I tell my boys too “if you help the poor, God give you more. If you didn't help them maybe he can put you his place.”

While it was not common in their parents' generation to ask questions of the storyteller as a means of showing respect, several women mentioned that this cultural practice was changing rather than static. For instance, Simret recalled how when her grandmother told them bedtime stories back home in Ethiopia “maybe we might ask her lots of questions but when she was a child she was not asking any questions, but we asked questions and we had fun” (Simret, focus group discussion, October 23, 2012).

**Guiding children's behaviour.** The participants shared that in their cultures, songs and storytelling were a means of teaching children how to behave and of reminding them what to do or not to do. This was prioritized in the early years as children were expected to know how to act by the age of seven. As Sara put it, they “just come like adult . . . they know everything” (Sara, focus group discussion, October 13, 2012). Katrina added: “from seven and up they are old enough to understand. From seven they go to school already and they know what's wrong and what's right” (October 13). Amina recalled how grandmothers and grandfathers told stories about “scary things” to frighten the children into coming home early: “Always we were going

outside to play but when it's night time . . . we came back home” (Amina, focus group discussion, October 17, 2013; see Heath, 1983, p. 188 for a similar example). Some of the Eritrean and Ethiopian women remembered a popular song intended to teach children healthy habits. Used by family members and teachers alike, Simret translated the words of the song into English: “last night when I slept, I dreamed about my science class . . . I washed my hands, I had my breakfast and this reminded me of my science class” (Simret, focus group discussion, October 17, 2013). The children themselves sometimes adopted this practice, using song to scold recalcitrant peers. Helen explained: “There is a song, sometimes when you do something wrong, some groups they sing about what you do—the bad things . . . they sing a song ‘you are a bad person and you are doing this thing and this thing. . .’” (Helen, interview, February 17, 2012).

**Conveying encouragement or hopes for child.** Growing up in war-torn Eritrea, Sara gathered strength from her mother's personal stories which she described as "something like encouragement". As she explained, “My dad passed away when I was young. She (Sara’s mother) told me stories, ‘You can grow up, you can do everything.’” Sara escaped the interminable strife in her homeland, lived in a refugee camp for eleven years, and then was able to come to Canada. Carrying these stories with her throughout her journey, they assisted Sara with the transitions as she struggled to cope with single motherhood herself: “Now I am strong. When I came here I didn't feel scared. I didn't feel afraid” (Sara, interview, January 12, 2012).

Similarly, Simret and Muna asserted, and the Eritrean women concurred, that “honey and milk” was a prevalent theme in songs, signifying goodness and sweetness in one's life. Childhood, Muna further clarified, was a special time, as symbolized by honey and milk. Parents

and grandparents reminded children to take pleasure in the present in this popular song (translated by Muna):

*Oh children, oh children!*

*Let's play as much as we can*

*Once childhood passes, it doesn't come again*

*My childhood, my childhood*

*My honey and milk* (Focus group discussion, October 23, 2012)

Not only was the idea of honey and milk invoked to exhort children to enjoy themselves, but it was used to give them hopes for the future. Closely tied to the teaching of behaviour, one song promises children a good future if they accomplished certain tasks now. Singing to me in Amharic, Simret translated the following song into English:

“Honey and milk is, like, you will have something very good in your life. You'll have something nice so that now you have to get up in the morning, go to school instead of waiting for your parents. You can do it by yourself.” So this is like encouragement. (Simret, focus group discussion, October 23, 2013).

Helen shared that her father told personal stories about his own life in order to convey his hopes for her future (see also Roy & Roxas, 2011). Her father, one of twelve children from a farming family, did not have the opportunity to go to school because his help was needed at home. “So, always he was telling me stories, ‘you need to learn. I didn't learn so I feel like I don't know anything. So be straight for your education...you have to go hard, hard.’” Being “straight” was a path that he felt included eschewing an early marriage in favour of further education. These stories deeply affected Helen, who described how she moved to Ethiopia to

continue her education and then, after settling in Canada, studied English and Early Childhood Education at a local college (Helen, interview, February 17, 2012). Asmaa's mother likewise told her children a story with a moral to encourage them to get an education:

She talk(ed) about man and his son. They were farmers, they live on a farm far from the city...They have a neighbour... He also has a farm... And the man that had a son, he woke up early every day, and his son doesn't want to go to work with his dad. And he says “come, we need to work, we need to put seeds, we need to grow food. Wintertime we want to eat something.”. . . He made everything, he put seeds, he put water. And the other man, every morning he comes and he says “today I want to make this side and tomorrow I will make that side.” He didn't make anything. He talks only. He goes his home and he sleeps. This man (with the) son, his farm grows everything... wintertime this man has food and that other man didn't have anything. Only he talks, he didn't act. If you come to school every day, you read something, you learn something, but if you come here and say “Today I read this page and tomorrow that page and I will finish that” but then you didn't read anything...If you read, you read, you read, you finish and you go to university, you go everywhere. My mother she was telling me this... She said, “I never went to school, but I need you to go to school and to learn everything, to learn, to write Quran, everything.” So she told stories to encourage us.

While Asmaa was unable to complete her studies back home, she too enrolled in an ECE program at a Canadian college.

Finally, name songs were important in some of the participants' cultures. In Sudanese families, for instance, Achi detailed how name songs were often sung by grandmothers or

mothers to the children and accentuated the characteristics of the child and the adults' hopes for them in the future (Achi, interview, January 16, 2012). In the Eritrean tradition, name songs are then sung to the child on important occasions "We do a song. There is meaning in each name...and sometimes they tell them what is the meaning of the name from the Bible so they know, they understand what it mean" (Helen, interview, February 17, 2012).

## **Discussion**

The concept of transcultural capital considers how migrants might activate and use their funds of knowledge, skills, and networks from "back home" in their new places of residence, thus transforming disadvantage into benefits for themselves, their families, and their communities (Triandafyllidou, 2009 cited in Hope, 2011). Hope (2011) suggested that refugees may be well-situated in terms of connecting their transnational capital to literacy learning in the new context. Supporting the findings of Monzó & Rueda (2003) and Adair (2009), this study reveals some of the instructional and cultural funds of knowledge immigrant/refugee educators bring with them to Canada which could be operationalized in their work with immigrant/refugee children. These women may offer a unique, dual-focused view of cultural and familial literacies as cultural insiders and as educators who are well positioned to gain insights into dominant values and beliefs. In this sense, they could act as cultural brokers, interpreters, and resources both for newcomer families and for their Canadian-born colleagues.

Since many of the women's own parents were "illiterate" (as defined by autonomous model of literacy), stories were often memorized, transmitted orally from previous generations, or invented, based on personal life experiences and circumstances of the family member, rather than read from books. As Ahmed (n.d) elaborated, oral stories, in the Somali context, are

representative of the cultural values which are to be transmitted to children “and the experiential wisdom inherent in them ensured the survival of tradition in the minds of the young” (cited in Bigelow, 2010, p. 37). Thus these stories contained rich insights into the values, behaviours, and knowledges of the family and the culture (Brown, 2011); insights which the women were also trying to pass along to their own children (see also Taylor, Bernhard, Garg & Cummins, 2008). However, integrating these songs and stories into early childhood settings can be problematic, according to these women.

Each of the participants has been educated into the dominant discourse of ECE, through their enrollment in certificate programs, where storybook reading and singing English songs are prioritized as being the literacy practices “worth knowing” in the Canadian context. In Bakhtinian terms, they constitute the *authoritative discourse* infused with historically derived, scientific (developmental psychology, in the field of ECE) power (Bakhtin, 1981). These books and songs are written texts, rather than simply oral, which serves to further bolster their perceived weight of authority (Ong, 2001). During my fieldwork in the ten month ECE certificate program, for example, I observed that my participants spent an average of twenty minutes a day learning to sing songs in English and had several storybook reading assignments each month. In this manner, the instructors prepared them for working in the field. Participants in the workplace site were similarly exhorted to embrace dominant practices in order to pass the accreditation review. Yet Simret argued, and other educators agreed, that the overemphasis on reading in North American schools and child care settings leads to the exclusion of the literacies of many immigrant/refugee parents and educators: “I see it here with teachers. You have to read the book every night. But maybe the family, they don't have the experience with reading, but

they have another way of telling stories” (Simret, focus group discussion, October 23, 2012). Herein lies the conflict for immigrant/refugee women working in the field of ECE.

Immigrant and refugees often experience tensions around such juxtapositions as maintaining home and cultural literacy practices while fully participating in dominant practices or wanting their children to be successful in school while affirming connections to their families and communities (Bloome, Katz, Solsken, Willett, & Wilson-Keenan, 2000). In my fieldwork, I observed the early childhood educators in the workplace and the ECE students on their field placements in child care centres. My observations of the participants in the workplace or on field placement revealed that stories and songs from one’s home culture were rarely shared with the children, in English or the home language, even if the children came from the same country as the participant. Acutely aware of literacy “best practices” in schools and child care settings, these participants helped children gain access to the “culture of power”, to use Delpit's (1995) words, by reading story books to them (see also Gee, 1996; Heath, 1983). The ECE students, especially, entertained children in field placement sites with the simplistic, silly, and often irrelevant rhyming songs they memorized in college. The educators very occasionally shared their own songs imbued with deeper meanings and intentions, though stories were always read from books. Therefore, dominant practices almost always prevailed over cultural ones. Consistent with Bakhtin's theorization of *voice*, the words in these cultural songs and stories are deeply rooted in the sociocultural context in which they were collectively developed and voiced; they not only lose meaning but power when they are transferred to the Canadian context. As a result, these educators often struggle to overcome their voicelessness by adopting the language and words—the songs and stories—which are closely connected to the new context. Bakhtin (1981) contended that discourse must be *internally persuasive* to us, “tightly interwoven with

one's own word"; creating new meanings for the individual (p. 345). For the individual, there is discord between the discourses, or voices, which are wrestling for supremacy (Platt, 2005).

Reconciling the two necessitates authoring new voices which connect the contexts of back home and here (Vitanova, 2005), which is challenging in view of the pervasive authority of dominant literacy practices.

When the knowledges and practices of “differently literate” families are subjugated to dominant literacy discourses, the discontinuity between home and school/ECE setting can have devastating effects on the immigrant/refugee child's personal and cultural identity construction (Dudley-Marling, 2009; Reese & Gallimore, 2000). If educators are able to activate cultural tools to mediate children's understandings and bridge these literacy practices, then the children are better supported in their transitions and parents can be “present in their absence” (Vandenbroeck et al, 2009). This notion of presence resonated with the educators who lamented that, in Helen's words, “they (the children) stay here with us most of the time” (focus group discussion, October 13, 2012). Furthermore, when educators are fully able to mobilize their transcultural capital, immigrant/refugee children's literacy learning “benefits from the blending of pre-migration histories with future possibilities” (Hope, 2011, p. 91). Gregory, Long, & Volk (2004) proposed that *prolepsis* (see Cole, 1996) functions as “the cultural mechanism that brings the end into the beginning” (p. 183). The educators' memories of the past are carried into literacy events (Heath, 1983) with children in the present, assisting them in building cultural resources for the future (Espinoza-Herold, 2007). Therefore, it is essential to expand our understandings of literacy to legitimize cultural values and practices, or cultural models (Gee, 1996), which are normally excluded from institutional settings, and position them as “best practices” in a linguistically inclusive pedagogy (Taylor, Bernhard, Garg, & Cummins, 2008).

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## CHAPTER THREE

### Learning to Use Pedagogical Tools in the Community of Practice

Early childhood teacher education (ECTE) programs are commonly conceived to be sites where instructors and field supervisors assist their students in gaining the skills and knowledges needed to become full, legitimate members of a community of practice (Fleer, 2003; Egan, 2009). The concept of the community of practice was defined by Lave and Wenger (1991) as a “set of relations among persons, activity and the world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice” (p. 98). Within this set of relations, practice is characterized by the mutual engagement of participants in joint enterprise with the goal of developing a shared repertoire of actions, styles, theories, discourses, concepts, artifacts, stories, and tools over a sustained period of time (Wenger, 1998). This repertoire varies to some extent from program to program. In general, though, it is underpinned by the authoritative discourse (Bakhtin, 1981) of early childhood education which foregrounds western child development theories and developmentally appropriate practices (NAEYC, 2009) and is operationalized in the regulatory, policy, theoretical, and curriculum frameworks governing practice. One produces an identity as a teacher as one gains competence in practice (Wenger, 1998), thus students must learn and be able to actualize this repertoire of knowledge and skills. Competence in the use of pedagogical tools is one example of a skill or task a student must demonstrate to be construed as a professional teacher.

Grossman, Smagorinsky, Valencia (1999) delineated between two types of pedagogical tools: conceptual tools and practical tools. While conceptual tools include broader principles, frameworks, and theories, practical tools are “classroom practices, strategies, and resources that...have more local and immediate utility” (p. 14). In the context of an ECTE program,

practical tools might include language (specific ways of speaking as a professional); written texts such as children's books and song lyrics; musical instruments; toys; learning materials such as puzzles, manipulatives, and blocks; games; songs; and song or story props such as puppets, toys, or felt cutout characters. In this paper, I concentrate on two types of practical pedagogical tools: children's picture books and songs and the practices associated with their use. As cultural and historical products, the ways in which these tools are used embody the values and beliefs of the culture (Cole & Gaidamaschko, 2007) or the community of practice. Abstract notions about how to teach and interact with young children are therefore reified or congealed into concrete form in accordance with the goals of the community of practice (Wenger, 1998). For instance, a picture book reifies western practices—ways of sitting, holding the book, and interacting with and teaching children. Therefore, a student does not simply need to memorize a song or learn how to pronounce the words in a picture book, but must master the accompanying practices such as how to use props and actions to engage or build upon children's interests. These two types of tools intermingle, then, because the ways in which practical tools are used are imbued with many of the theories and principles constitutive of conceptual tools. The learner may be inhibited in learning to use practical tools if they do not comprehend these underlying conceptual frameworks.

The field of ECE attracts proportionately greater numbers of immigrant/refugee women as it is viewed as an accessible occupation for newcomers (Service Canada, 2011). Enrollment in an ECTE program is viewed as a means of improving one's qualifications and meeting quality standards limned by regulatory frameworks (Massing, 2015; Nuttall & Ortlipp, 2012). Although very few research studies focus on immigrant/refugee ECTE students, findings have suggested these students experience a dissonance between the expectations of their program or field site

and their own culturally-constructed understandings of how to teach young children (Langford, 2007; Massing, 2014, 2015; Moles, 2014; Ortlipp & Nuttall, 2011). While various tensions between cultural and professional practice have been identified, little attention has been given to the pedagogical strategies instructors might employ to aid immigrant/refugee students in learning the content and skills required to successfully complete their programs. For instance, students who have been raised in North America have some degree of familiarity with the practical pedagogical tools they encounter in their program, but the immigrant/refugee students may ascribe different meanings and uses to these tools. Thus, it is not only the content, context, and vocabulary of the picture book or song that are unfamiliar to these students, but also the ways of using them as pedagogical tools. Since the appropriation of pedagogical tools is highly dependent on the tool's continuity with the learner's own values, beliefs, and experiences (Grossman et al, 1999), these students may come to inhabit peripheral positions in the community if they cannot use them in their practice. As Wertsch (2007) theorized, one's "expertise is reflected in the ability to use these tools flexibly and fluently" (p. 190).

### **Purpose and Research Questions**

The overall purpose of this study, then, was to inquire into the experiences of immigrant/refugee women enrolled in an ECTE program at a college in a mid-sized Canadian city. Three questions framed the overall study: 1. What understandings do immigrant/refugee women in one ECTE program construct of the authoritative discourse in ECE? 2. What impact do these understandings have on their perceptions of themselves in relation to children as they negotiate their professional identities as teachers? 3. How does their learning in this program influence their interactions with children in their field experiences? This paper focuses on the processes and strategies that the instructors in one ECTE program for immigrant/refugee students

used to scaffold their students toward the appropriation of songs and picture books as pedagogical tools. The paper commences with an overview of the theoretical perspectives of scaffolding and mediation as well as a review of previous studies on scaffolding in teacher education programs. After describing the design for this study, the trajectory toward appropriating each pedagogical tool —picture books and children's songs—will be developed in turn with a specific emphasis on methods used by the instructors.

### **Scaffolding and Mediation**

Scaffolding is an instructional approach informed by Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which refers to the distance between the learner's current level of competence or development and the level they could potentially achieve with guidance from an expert. Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) contended that this intervention of the expert “involves a kind of scaffolding process that enables a child or novice to solve a problem or carry out a task or achieve a goal which would be beyond his (*sic*) unassisted efforts” (p. 90). Some of the common methods of scaffolding originally identified by Wood et al (1976) included recruitment (or engaging the learner's interest), reduction in degrees of freedom (simplifying the task), direction maintenance (keeping the learner motivated), marking salient or relevant features of the task, controlling the learner's frustration, and demonstration or modeling. In addition, Rogoff (1990) elucidated two related processes that take place during scaffolding; structuring and bridging. In the first, the expert structures the aspects of the tasks or joint activities valued in the community through their choice of materials, processes, and partners. Bridging is described as drawing on the learner's past experiences (such as those in one's home country) to “provide a familiar anchor from which to develop a new idea” (p. 72). Guided participation incorporates elements of both strategies; the expert structures the learner's participation to build bridges from

past and current to new understandings and skills. Rogoff (2003) and others have asserted that the learner sustains an active role throughout this process by mutually structuring both meaning and participation, and negotiating their involvement. Ideally, the instructors or peer expert should gradually withdraw their support as the learner gains competence in completing a task or, in the case of this study, using a pedagogical tool in defined ways. Instructors should then have the goal of scaffolding their students along a trajectory of independent use of the pedagogical tool in their practice with children. While Vygotsky (1978) was concerned with internalization of the tool, subsequent theorists contend that *appropriation* more accurately reflects the learning process (Rogoff, 1995). As Rogoff (1995) explicated, internalization suggests a transfer of knowledge, while appropriation suggests that students achieve a measure of intersubjectivity with their instructors, co-construct shared understandings, and achieve an understanding of the tool reflective of their mutual engagement.

The introduction of mediators<sup>14</sup> or mediational devices into activity also supports the learner's mastery of tools (Smagorinsky, 1995; Wertsch, del Rio, & Alvarez, 1995), therefore enabling their full participation in the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). As Daniels (2007) stated, the instructional focus is "the creation, enhancement, and communication of meaning through the collaborative use of mediational means rather than on the transfer of skills from the more to less capable partner" (p. 318). According to Wertsch (2007), mediation is explicit when a non-transitory, material and concrete mediator is intentionally introduced by the instructors into on-going activity. In the context of this program, some examples included learning centres, videos, song recordings, props, song lyrics, pictures in children's books, drawings and diagrams, and musical instruments. Implicit mediation is more nuanced, drawing

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<sup>14</sup> In accordance with Vygotsky's theory, mediators are also considered to be tools. The term "mediators" has been used, however, to differentiate them from pedagogical tools.

transitory mediational means such as oral speech (ie. verbal prompts, rhyming words), actions, or gestures into the learner's stream of consciousness. Once appropriated by the learner, mediators are transformed into psychological tools that shape the mind and create affordances or constraints for their practice (Wertsch, 1998, 1991). For instance, written song lyrics bestow an explicit organizational structure and order on the activity and help students learn the words to the song. Similarly, a gesture might be used as a more implicit mnemonic device that facilitates the student's recall of a particular word or song learned in the program. In the program under study, explicit and implicit mediators also operated as scaffolds mobilized by instructors to aid students in mastering pedagogical tools for use in their field placements.

While scaffolding is positioned as an important pedagogical strategy that teachers and student teachers might use with children, fewer studies delve into the role of scaffolding in teacher education programs. Several studies explore some methods of scaffolding used by instructors. Engin (2013; 2014), who examined the use of questioning in a Turkish program, established that students with little or no prior teaching experience usually benefitted from instructors modeling or demonstration as it simplified the task of teaching and furnished a basis for comparison for them. However, following Mercer (1995), she cautioned instructors to be attentive to the manner in which they structure such demonstrations so as to avoid prescribing narrow, predetermined notions of how to be a “good” teacher, thus propelling students along a particular learning path (Engin, 2014). When studying scaffolding in a reading methods course, Kindle and Schmidt (2013) illuminated how using strategic prompts and asking guiding questions in instructional dialogues allowed an instructor to relocate authority with her students as they moved toward independence. In their study of ESL preservice teachers, Johnson and Dellagelo (2013) discussed how instructors modeled several pedagogical tools—paraphrasing,

orienting, and predictability—then used verbal prompts, interjections, questions, and reinforcements to mediate students’ understandings of how to use the tools. They concluded that introducing mediators into coursework activities could allow students to function at levels beyond their current level of performance, but the quality and type of mediation used is also critical. Katic, Hmelo-Silver, and Weber (2009) studied how students were aided in using material tools in the area of mathematics education to mediate and support their processes of problem solving.

Overall, researchers seem to concur that instructors should be attentive to the differing levels of support needed by their students and should structure their classes accordingly. As Engin (2014) stated, instructors need to be sensitive to shifts within the learner's ZPD as “students have differing levels of awareness and abilities and therefore need differing guidance and support” (p. 52). Edwards’ (2014) research with preservice teachers similarly confirmed the necessity of mentors who could scaffold within each learner's own ZPD, especially when there was incommensurability between the *scientific* concepts taught in the program and the student’s own *spontaneous* concepts formed in everyday experience. In relation to mediation, Johnson and Dellagnelo (2013) further emphasized that students follow different learning trajectories and benefit from use of mediators in varied ways therefore instructors need to be very attentive to each learner’s own ZPD. Therefore, instructors need to adopt multiple approaches to scaffolding their students’ learning to meet their variable needs and these must be customized according to the learner’s own zones of proximal development. Nevertheless, none of these scholars have conducted their research with immigrant/refugee learners, nor is it clear how the use of mediators might enhance other forms of scaffolding.

## **Methodology**

Ethnography was used in this study in order to focus on the multiple, overlapping contexts of immigrant/refugee women's learning through three semesters of study in an ECTE program. The main research site was a mid-sized, urban college in western Canada, and I also observed seven of the participants on their field placements at four, accredited small to mid-sized child care centres. Four instructors (Alisa, Nadine, Susan, and Hannah) and twenty immigrant/refugee women enrolled in the program participated in the study. The student participants originally came from the following countries: Somalia (4), Sudan (2), Congo (1), Eritrea (2), Ethiopia (1), China (5), India (1), Iran (1), Iraq (1), Syria (1), and Turkey (1).

As a participant observer, I was situated within the students' daily experiences in this program for two to three days a week from September until the end of June. I collected qualitative data through observational field notes, interviews (between two and six 20-60 minute interviews per participant), focus groups (two to four one hour meetings per participant), informal conversations, spatial maps, document collection (evaluations, class notes, assignments, assessments, artistic creations, and class work), and analytic memos. I took an inductive, or "bottom-up", approach to the data analysis by familiarizing myself with the data, chunking the data into categories, developing a coding framework, coding the data, and searching for patterns or themes (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010). Through individual readings of each data source, I developed broad coding categories (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) into which I sorted all of the data. Once completed, I used open coding, reading the data in each of the categories line-by-line several times, jotting down ideas, notes, and developing an extensive list of possible codes and subcodes. Then, I engaged in focused coding, hand-coding the data as I reviewed it again line-by-line. I completed a "pattern-level analysis", examining the codes to understand how they were

related, assembling the various parts to discern how they fit within the whole (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Finally, I concluded with a more theoretical analysis (Angrosino, 2007) by relating the patterns to the literature and trying to explain and understand their existence.

## **Findings**

The instructors expected the students to independently achieve specific tasks involving pedagogical tools. An independent level of performance with regard to using picture books involved sitting at or close to the children's level, holding the book up so the children could see the pictures, engaging their interest using props (puppets, felt board/characters), actions, and one's voice, asking open-ended questions, and encouraging pre-reading skills. In the case of songs, students were expected to memorize the words and also to sustain the children's involvement using props, actions, gestures, and one's voice. Moreover, songs and picture books were to be connected to the context; produced as a thoughtful response to the children's interests and actions and appropriate to the child's age.

**Using picture books.** Analyses showed consistency in terms of the instructors' patterned ways of scaffolding students toward mastering the task of using picture books as pedagogical tools. Demonstration or modeling preceded most individual or paired readings of a picture book. In the following example, after Alisa finished reviewing a handout outlining how to read to children at various ages, she showed the students samples of appropriate books:

Alisa shows them an example of a “silly” book titled *Whose Bottom?* She waggles her backside to demonstrate what the word “bottom” means. As she models a reading of the book, many students laugh and, drawn into the telling, try to guess. She is very animated in her reading and all but two of the students respond positively to her excitement. She gives a few suggestions about how to read the book aloud, modeling how to ask the children

questions “what do you see on this page?” “What do you think will happen next?” She lets them know that there are many ways of enjoying the book and that they might ask questions or talk about the pictures instead of reading. “Look at the book as a tool for you,” she declares (FN, October 14, 2012).

The handout itself was fairly dense, but Alisa clarified several salient features of storybook reading—such as asking questions—in order to simplify its complexity and model key strategies for involving the children. The action of turning her back to students and shaking her backside not only attracted students’ interest, but also implicitly mediated their understandings of the text, allowing them to construct meanings of the word.

In another instance, Nadine read a picture book, *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, to the class, changing her voice for each of the characters as she modeled the use of homemade puppets. She then concluded the lesson by having the students produce their own story props and assisted them in using the puppets to practice with a partner (FN, January 31, 2013). Once introduced into the activity of reading a story, these props functioned as explicit mediators that brought the meanings of the story to life, connecting words to actions. Frequent references to how the children might respond or be involved in the activity also guided the students toward attaining an understanding of how new approaches to storytelling would be operationalized in practice.

As described by Rogoff (1990), bridging links new content with the students’ past experiences. As English language learners, the students often found the vocabulary in texts and songs to be challenging, especially since picture books are contextually situated (Johnson & Bainbridge, 2013). In this excerpt, the instructor, Susan, read aloud the book *My Sister Ate One*

*Hare*—a counting book about a girl who eats a series of animals in succession—to the students in the following manner:

Susan asks if they know what a polliwog is and Jasmine answers, “It is like a frog”. Susan affirms her answer, adding that it almost looks like a fish before it turns into a frog. She writes the words “polliwog” and “tadpole” on the board and draws little pictures depicting the life cycle of a frog, explaining as she does so. Rawya asks if it lives in the ocean. Susan replies, “It lives in ponds and streams. Are there a lot of streams in Somalia?” Rawya answers, “we eat fish from the ocean.” Susan explains, “okay, you probably wouldn't eat tadpoles because they are very small...” (FN September 17, 2012).

This particular book introduced a variety of animals that may not have been found in all of the students' home countries, thus Susan infused explanation of the vocabulary into her reading to simplify the task for students. The diagram of the polliwog's life cycle operated as an explicit mediational device facilitating both comprehension and recall of vocabulary. By aiding Rawya in forming connections to places back home, Susan was also able to contextualize the vocabulary for her and give it more personal meaning.

The instructors gradually withdrew their support by structuring the learning activity while turning over some responsibility to the students. Working in small groups, for example, students were asked to read picture books and use their textbook to develop some strategies for engaging the children. After structuring the learning task, the instructors could then clarify and supply explanation to guide and support their completion of the task (Many, Dewberry, Taylor, & Coady, 2009). However, the students largely co-constructed their own connections between the picture book and the strategies they had learned in class. Starting in the second term, four students were assigned to choose picture books and lead small groups in reading circles on a

weekly basis. It followed, then, that students also assumed more authority in scaffolding their peers toward understanding the content:

Leylo, Jun, Christa, Bijou, and Ameena are seated on the floor on foam mats preparing to read the picture book *If You Give a Pig a Pancake*. Bijou and Christa discuss how to make a pancake. Bijou asks Jun if she has ever eaten a pancake and she states: “Christa brought me one last week.” Alisa, who is listening in, asks if she liked it and she said “no” as the other students laughed. Christa explains how she made it, and Jun wrinkles up her face and adds, “it was very hard.” Bijou corrects Christa, saying, “that’s not a pancake, that’s a waffle.” (FN, November 21, 2012).

In this example, the instructor hovered close to the group, but did not intervene in the teaching moment. Rather the pictures in the book explicitly mediated their understandings of the vocabulary. Bijou simplified the task for Jun by ensuring that she understood what a pancake was and corrected Christa when she confused a waffle with a pancake.

Since the instructors had guided students to practice reading a variety of storybooks and create accompanying props, the students were able to apply some of the techniques learned in class when children asked them to read unfamiliar picture books. For example, when a child handed Asmaa a “text-heavy” book to read—*Moose*—she opened it up and began to discuss the pictures with the child (what do you see?) instead of reading the words (FN, February 13, 2013). Likewise, Geena used pictures as cues in her picture book reading:

Geena sits up close to Erik, opens the book and begins to read in a high-pitched voice.

After she reads each page, she draws his attention to the picture: “See, the baby dropped the milk! See, the cat jumped in the basket!” She reads in an expressive manner, altering her voice and using intonation to denote emotions (FN, February 5, 2013).

Both Asmaa and Geena drew the children's attention to the pictures to teach vocabulary and engage the children's interest. The pictures functioned as explicit mediators that made the teaching strategies they learned in class more memorable.

Students also demonstrated their appropriation of the task of reading picture books in their use of props, as seen in this teaching episode:

Ameena has created a set of felt character cutouts to be used with the book *Brown Bear, Brown Bear*. She hands out the cutouts, giving several to each child clustered around her. She begins reading the book, asking, "who has the brown bear?" when she finishes reading the page. She pauses and waits for the child to produce it and match it to the picture in the book. "Yeah!" she says, conveying enthusiasm through her intonation and body language. She continues the pattern of reading the page, asking who has the corresponding animal, saying "yeah!" and pausing while the child places it on the book (FN, February 7, 2013).

In the program, the students had learned to use these cut-outs in a different manner, asking children to place them on a larger felt board in turn. In this example, the cut-outs served as external mediators that reminded Ameena how to involve the children in the reading and emphasize the key vocabulary words. Since she did not have access to a felt board, she invented a matching game, demonstrating her ability to use the tool flexibly.

**Using songs.** The professional uses for songs as practical pedagogical tools were introduced to the students in a similar fashion. Instructors began by introducing the songs and vocabulary and demonstrating how to sing the song with accompanying actions. In the following example, Susan taught the song/game "London Bridge" to the class to by writing the words on chart paper and singing it aloud:

Some students appear to be confused as evidenced by their facial expressions. She stops and asks the students if they know what “fair” means. One student answers “beautiful,” while another says “pretty.” When several students protest that the song was “hard”, she launches into a demonstration to convey the meaning. Susan asks for a volunteer and Nazi jumps in front of her, making a bridge with her arms, following Susan's lead. Students begin to sing the song with her, making their way through the bridge one by one, letting out squeals of delight when a student is trapped between their arms. (FN, September 12, 2012)

While the song lyrics functioned as explicit mediators, Susan further controlled the frustration of students and simplified the task by contextualizing the song and vocabulary. She then demonstrated the actions to enhance their comprehension. When she subsequently invited the participation of the entire group, the actions of raising and lowering one's arms served as implicit mediators, helping them learn and recall the meanings of unfamiliar words. In addition to writing down the song lyrics, the instructors consistently urged students either to use voice recorders to capture the singing for review at home or to search for and view videos of the songs on YouTube. These recordings and videos likewise operated as external mediators.

The instructors employed bridging strategies when they asked if the students recalled similar songs, actions, or stories from their home countries. Although the content of the songs was often very different, the accompanying actions evoked distinct types of connections to “back home”; to childhood play experiences, to specific people, and to places, as seen in this excerpt:

Susan sings and shows the movements for the new song, “Hickory, Dickory, Dock”, running her fingers up her arm to simulate the movement of the mouse running up the clock. We practice four or five times as a large group. Some students say it is a little

difficult for them. Susan then puts us in groups of four or five, asking people to think about songs in their countries that have similar kinds of actions. After sharing in small groups, she asks if anyone would like to share their song. Rawya shares a song (translated) about climbing up a hill and going to the well (which is located under the arm). Sharon sings a song in Mandarin about climbing to the top of a mountain to chop wood. She chops her hand up Jun's arm and on the top of her head, chops down the arm, and then chops under her arm. Sevinç volunteers to demonstrate her song about a baby bird in a nest that takes tentative steps up the arm and then flies away, in the process tickling under the arm. Aameena sings about going up to grandma's house which is, again, under the arm (FN September 17, 2012).

After demonstrating the song, Susan engaged the students' interest by drawing their own knowledges into the instruction and asking them to share similar songs. The action of dancing one's fingers up the arm served as an implicit meditational device, connecting back home with the new context. In another class, Susan brought out various musical instruments to accompany their learning of a new song. The students who chose familiar instruments remembered how they used these when they were children and, as they rattled, drummed, and sang, the rhythms and words of the song mediated their activity. This strategy sustained student interest and contributed to shaping their understandings, thus making the new songs more memorable.

As the students gained confidence in using songs as pedagogical tools, the instructors gradually withdrew supports by structuring the learning through choosing songs, materials, or partners, and then transferring responsibility for aspects of the task to the students. From the beginning of the year, the instructors wove elements of student-directed activity into planning

within the established norms for the activity, such as asking students to substitute words in a song:

We next sing the “Hello” song, but instead of the familiar version Susan asks students to substitute hello in their languages. By way of example, she asks Jasmine how she would say hello in Arabic and she says “*as-salamu aleikum.*” Susan puzzles over this as the word is too long to fit with rhythm of the song. Other Arabic speaking students toss out suggestions and they settle on a shorter greeting. Susan divides us into groups of five and within each group we go around the circle, practicing with each language in turn (FN, January 9, 2013).

Susan first structured the learning situation, engaged their interest by how to say hello in their languages, and then turned over the activity to the students to compose a new version. Therefore, Susan supported students’ learning through this bridging while affirming and including their home languages in the class.

After learning a new song, students were generally placed in small groups and dispatched to invent a new verse:

After singing the song “If You're Happy and You Know it...”, Susan puts us in groups of four to invent a new verse. I am with Rawya, Fatima, and Christa. They decide to do “if you are sleepy and you know it...”. Fatima suggests “go to bed,” as she places her head on her hands and lets out a gentle snore (FN, September 17, 2012).

Susan structured the learning by defining who they were to work with and what song they were to use, then sustained their motivation by inviting them produce a new verse. These breakout sessions also gave students who were more proficient in English or had more knowledge of children's songs some opportunities to scaffold their peers’ learning. As a result of these

experiences in class, the students began to work from their existing understandings to actively produce new, invented verses for songs during their breaks. Several were overheard in the bathroom one day singing “If you’re dirty and you know it, wash your hands” (FN, October 1, 2012). Through this experimentation, they were able to imprint their own ideas upon the structure of the songs learned in class and co-construct their own understandings. Invention prepared students for the unpredictability inherent in the field placement setting and for possible musical play with the children. When students were able to extend beyond their understandings of the pedagogical tools in this manner, it also indicated that they were moving toward mastery.

At the beginning of each afternoon class, the instructor sang the students to the back of the classroom with a song titled “Time to Make a Circle”, a routine which she eventually began to delegate to specific students, commenting: “I have done this so many times that Nazi and Teena know exactly what to do...” (FN, November 30, 2012). In the time period allocated to reviewing songs they have already learned, the instructors also supported students in leading the activity:

Susan asks for volunteers to lead the group in a song of their choice. Sevinç volunteers to go first and leads them in “Zoom, Zoom, Zoom”. Bijou follows next, choosing “Shake Your Sillies Out”. When Susan asks what other songs they have learned, Asmaa tentatively states “Ickity Dickity”. Susan asks if she would like to lead the class and she agrees (FN, October 22, 2012).

Thus, Susan individualized her instruction within each student’s ZPD by encouraging students to assume responsibility for leading the group if they felt ready to do so.

As the students became more confident with leadership and planning, the instructors were able to almost fully transfer responsibility, assigning them to locate and present songs in class.

For instance, they were asked to work with a partner to find a song about healthy eating and present it to the class. While the instructor was available to answer questions, the students largely undertook this assignment on their own:

Students are dispersed around the room for a final rehearsal. Susan acts as a resource as needed, but few students approach her for assistance...Calling them to the back, Susan goes around the circle, each pair presenting in turn. All of the groups are very expressive and most have added props and gestures to animate the songs. (FN, September 27, 2012).

In another assignment, students wrote down songs for children in their home languages. As they presented, the students therefore drew from the repertoires of practice modeled by their instructors; demonstrating and explaining the song, then asking everyone to break into small groups to practice. Since the instructors did not have knowledge of their languages, the students were positioned as the experts in these demonstrations. Handing over responsibility for making decisions and resolving problems to the students supported their move to independence in using these tools (Myhill & Warren, 2005) for their presentations and at a college-wide event for Family Literacy Day.

By the second term field placement, each student had memorized the words to over fifty children's songs. However, in order to demonstrate they had fully appropriated the pedagogical tool, they also needed to be able to use accompanying gestures, actions, and props, as seen in the following vignette:

Christa waggles the puppet and sings *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star* to Evan. As she sings “Up above the world so high”, she reaches the puppet over her head. Evan mirrors this action, reaching his hand upward (FN, February 15, 2013).

Geena draws from this repertoire to engage a child who seems to be feeling upset:

Geena suggests they sing “Wheels on the Bus” and begins to sing the first verse (round and round). Emma remains distant from her but bounces along to the music. Emma approaches Geena, clutching a foam block in each hand. Geena sings, “the babies on the bus say wow, wow, wow (makes crying sound in her language), the mommies on the bus say ‘I love you, I love you, I love you.’” After each verse, Geena asks “what's next?” and Emma feeds her cues—wheels, wipers, doors, coins. Emma then wants a new song. Geena suggests London Bridge and begins to sing, holding Emma and bringing her body down and then up simulating the bridge (FN, February 12, 2013).

In this example, Geena enacted a common strategy used by her instructors; engaging Emma’s interest, inviting her to share the next verse, and involving her in the activity. When Geena segued into “London Bridge”, the physicality of raising and lowering her arms to approximate the bridge were implicit mediators, allowing her to adapt the motions to this particular context where creating a bridge with one child was problematic. Her ability to alter the actions in this manner indicates her mastery of the pedagogical tool.

## **Discussion**

While scaffolding has been found to be most effective when the instructor situates instruction within each individual student's ZPD, whole class scaffolding is particularly challenging in a heterogeneous group presenting multiple zones of proximal development (Hogan & Pressley, 1997). These particular instructors utilized multiple methods of scaffolding students including engaging the learner’s interest, simplifying the task, maintaining student motivation, marking salient or relevant features of the task, controlling the learner’s frustration, modeling, bridging, mediators, and structuring. Modeling was the dominant form of scaffolding used when introducing students to new songs or picture books and the practices associated with

these tools. Gaining access to such information about pedagogical tools, as Leko and Brownell (2011) found, strongly influences the likelihood of a student being able to appropriate the tool and utilize it independently in practice. In addition, Tharp and Gallimore (1988) have posited that “active coding of modeled activities into descriptions or labels or vivid imagery increases learning and retention of complex skills” and the learner can subsequently visualize sequences in other contexts (p. 48). The instructors explained unfamiliar words and situated practices in the North American context. Resonant with Grossman et al's findings, this strategy provided students with the necessary access to some of the “conceptual underpinnings of a tool”.

However, it was the bridging that, in effect, translated these activities for the students, linking students' spontaneous concepts formed in their everyday lives “back home” with the more theoretical and abstract scientific concepts advanced in the program (Vygotsky, 1986). Following Vygotsky, Moll (1990) explained that spontaneous concepts “*mediate* the acquisition of scientific concepts” and, likewise, the use of spontaneous concepts is transformed when interacting with scientific concepts (p. 10). In order to effectively situate learning within each student's ZPD, instructors must recognize the interdependence and interconnectedness of both forms of concepts. This bridging approach also allowed the students to engage with their own prior experiences and beliefs, which Warford (2011) believes to be an important accompaniment to expert mentoring. In relation to their study of scaffolding in teacher education, Sleeter et al (2004) commented that it is important to guide students “toward understanding both the culture of power and their own cultural experiences” (p. 92). Bridging effectively linked the two distinct ways of knowing and teaching, affirming and inspiring student reflection on their prior understandings and allowing them to dialogically construct meanings. As Smagorinsky (1995) claimed: “...when there is little or no congruence between formal instruction and students' prior

culturally fostered tool use, and when teachers make no effort to engage in a reciprocal relationship with students regarding appropriate tool use, then instruction will fail...” (p. 204).

The implicit and explicit mediators introduced into classroom activities seemed to act as a form of *cognitive structuring*; that is, they organized and configured students’ mental operations, beliefs, or understandings by constructing conceptual bridges (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). When students were reminded of songs from “back home” using similar actions or gestures, it made the tools more memorable and resonant for them. The use of props similarly aided students in interpreting and contextualizing problematic vocabulary or content. The instructors used mediators not only to validate the ways the students already used these tools, but to guide them in learning how to use the tools in the normative ways enforced by the community of practice. In turn, this approach helped mediate students’ understandings so they could achieve a level of proficiency or competence in their practice (Wertsch, 1998).

These instructors frequently divided the students into small groups to review and practice the skills they learned in class. Consistent with Grossman et al’s (1999) research, this strategy allowed for more differentiation in scaffolding than whole class instructional activities. Learners who struggled with aspects of the task benefitted from peer support within the group while the instructors could circulate and more easily identify students requiring additional assistance. By structuring the task and turning over aspects to small groups, the instructors were therefore able to more effectively scaffold students within their individual ZPDs. Moreover, when the instructors asked students to extend their learning through experimentation and invention of new verses or pedagogical approaches, they were able to practice using the tool as they might on their placements. When students are able to fully participate in such activities, it creates more opportunities for them to develop and, in time, display their competence in the use of the tool

(Meyer & Turner, 2002). For this reason, Kindle and Schmidt (2013) have argued that instructors need to scaffold in ways that permit students “to assume the role of teacher in ways they are not yet able to do independently”(p. 86). The construction of such “learning-to-teach experiences” allowed students to experiment with this role even before they fully understood all the uses for tools (see Johnson & Dellagnelo, 2014).

As a student gains expertise in the skills and knowledges valued within a particular community of practice, Wenger (1998) conceptualized that their membership is legitimized by others and, accordingly, they develop an identity as a member. Many students commented that they felt “professional” on their placements because they were able to mobilize pedagogical tools and operationalize key aspects of their uses in sanctioned ways. As they compared themselves to students from a local university, who they believed did not bring such extensive repertoires of pedagogical tools to their placements, Jasmine and Ameena both empathically stated: “we have more experience” (FN, February 19, 2013). Findings in other studies affirm that students’ sense of self-efficacy is bolstered as they gain confidence in their ability to use tools (Leko & Brownell, 2011; Zimmerman, Morgan, and Kidder-Brown, 2014). The experience these students gained with pedagogical tools in their coursework allowed them to achieve a sense that they were competent teachers and, correspondingly, enhanced their legitimacy within the community of practice.

The scaffolding strategies used by the instructors in this program thus exemplified possible ways instructors in ECTE programs might support immigrant/refugee students in learning to use pedagogical tools in a manner consistent with the norms in the community of practice. In spite of the instructors’ integration of their students’ cultural and personal ways of using these tools into the courses, it was extremely problematic that the authoritative uses for

these pedagogical tools ultimately prevailed in students' practice. During my observations in field placement sites, only one student sang in her home language with the children—although not in accordance with her cultural traditions—and none introduced games or stories from back home, but rather they demonstrated the normative uses as modeled by the instructors. Modeling and demonstration may have exposed students to dominant practices, but unfortunately it simultaneously reinforced in their minds the notion that there was “one right way” of enacting the tool. This finding confirms that which immigrant teachers reported in Adair, Tobin, and Arzubiaga's (2012) study; that the professional knowledge enforced in coursework and on the job was “incompatible” with their own cultural knowledges so they tended to shed their own beliefs in favour of those enforced by the authoritative discourse. In her discussion of an immigrant student's experiences in an ECTE program, Moles (2014) explained that when the student was prompted to integrate her prior knowledges into her learning in the program she gained confidence in her teaching. Therefore, a sense of competence needs to be enhanced in alternate ways by allowing immigrant/refugee students to infuse their practice with their own ways of using pedagogical tools.

The instructors in this program seemed also to face a quandary, wedged between being culturally responsive to their students' own funds of knowledge and readying students to become professional teachers. While instructors drew out students' own recollections of songs and stories back home both informally and in several assignments, the picture books and songs chosen by instructors were steeped with westernized themes and values. Since these tools were linked with professionalism in the students' minds, the exclusion of familiar themes, words, and scenes inscribed the tools with an authority that the instructors may not have intended. It has been argued that picture books can be powerful pedagogical tools in teacher education programs not

only for modelling possibilities for one's future pedagogy, but for forming connections to students' home languages and cultures and provoking discussions on social or cultural issues (Daly & Blakeney-Williams, 2015). For instance, when Bjartveit and Panayotidis (2014) invited immigrant preschool teachers to engage with a wordless, fictitious picture book about an immigrant's experiences (*The Arrival*), not only did the text generate intercultural dialogues, but the teachers mused about how it could be used as a pedagogical tool with the children to initiate conversations about immigration. It is imperative, then, that instructors carefully select picture books and songs that reflect elements of students' own experiences in addition to using bridging strategies to construct such links. Instructors must also deliberate on ways that picture books and songs could be used as more than vehicles to enhance children's literacy development, extending the uses of these tools to foster discussion of issues and cultural experiences. Finally, instructors should be deeply attuned to the types of tools and uses for these tools that their students bring to their studies and use strategies to integrate these into the course, recognizing that assumptions of a "common" knowledge base may disadvantage those who were socialized in diverse contexts.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2013) stated that the growing ethnic diversity of the populations in many OECD countries confirms the need to evaluate how teacher education programs attend to diversity. It is essential to recruit and retain culturally and linguistically diverse teachers (Souto-Manning & Dice, 2007) as they possess the life experiences, cultural bridging and mediation skills, and cultural knowledges needed for working with children and families from similar backgrounds (Adair, Tobin, & Arzubiaga; 2012; Bernheimer, 2003; Guyton, Saxton, & Wesche, 1996; Quijcho & Rios, 2000; Wilgus, 2013). This study suggests not only the pervasive authority ascribed to dominant practices, but also a need to strengthen partnerships between ECTE programs and field sites to ensure consistency in

teaching and mentoring practices. Hence it is important to locate ways to extend the bridging processes that took place in the coursework into the field placement sites so the students feel empowered to bring their funds of knowledge into their professional practice.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### **Authoring Professional Identities: Play, Learning, and Education**

Immigrant and refugee women may gravitate to the field of early childhood education (ECE) for various reasons: to benefit from the availability of positions both nationally and provincially (Beach, Friendly, Ferns, Prabhu, & Forer, 2008), to enter a field that is widely viewed as very accessible to newcomers (Service Canada, 2011), or to draw on the experience they gained as teachers, mothers, aunts, siblings, and grandmothers in their home countries (Massing, 2014). It is unknown precisely how many immigrant and refugee women are employed in child care in Alberta, where this study took place, though anecdotal observations suggest they form well over half of the urban workforce. Statistics Canada (2010) foretells that the ethnocultural diversity of Canada's population will increase dramatically by 2031, when one in three people is projected to be a visible minority, one in four is expected to be foreign born, and more than one-third of these individuals are anticipated to be children. In view of these projections, it is imperative to recruit and retain educators who represent these groups (Souto-Manning & Dice, 2007) because they possess the life experiences, cultural bridging and mediation skills, and cultural knowledges needed for working with children and families from similar backgrounds (Adair, Tobin, & Arzubiaga; 2012; Bernheimer, 2003; Guyton, Saxton, & Wesche, 1996; Wilgus, 2013). However, immigrant and refugee women who seek to increase their qualifications by enrolling in an early childhood teacher education (ECTE) diploma or certificate program experience unique challenges in their studies, particularly in field placements (Ortlipp & Nuttall, 2011).

Students in ECTE programs are widely believed to come with pre-existing beliefs about teaching, learning, and the adult role which may be derived from their personal histories and

theories (Lopes & Pereira, 2012; Stenberg, Karlsson, Pitkaniemi, & Maaranen, 2014), their experiences as students in the school system (Brown & Feger, 2010; Furlong, 2013) their prior experiences working in the field (Horsley & Bauer, 2010), or their personal experiences as mothers or familial caregivers (Osgood, 2012; Vincent & Braun, 2011). Cultural background is deemed to play an especially powerful role in shaping one's beliefs and practices (Gupta, 2011; Quirocho & Rios, 2000). Britzman (2003) has theorized that students are inhabited by "cultural myths" or stereotypes about what it means to be an educator informed by these personal biographies. Students convey these myths about their professional role into their coursework or field experiences, where they either inhibit or create possibilities for professional identity construction. Immigrant and refugee women may experience an especially profound dissonance between the Euro-North-American content and expectations of the program and their own cultural beliefs, knowledges, experiences, and values (Gupta, 2006). Previous research has suggested that these women feel compelled to adopt program expectations at the expense of their own beliefs (Moles, 2014; Nuttall & Ortlipp, 2012).

In this article, I describe how immigrant and refugee women enrolled in one ECTE certificate program in urban Alberta experienced this disjuncture while negotiating their professional identities. After describing the context, theory, literature, and methodology informing this study, I briefly outline the participants' own experiences with learning, teaching, and play as a counterpoint to the "learning through play" theory studied in their coursework. Then, I utilize a series of excerpts from my field observations in their field placement sites to make visible some of these negotiations. I argue that although these immigrant and refugee students were expected to appropriate normative professional practices, they in fact dialogically

authored their own hybridized professional identities informed by both their personal biographies and the authoritative discourse of early childhood education.

### **The Context of the Authoritative Discourse**

Discourses have been defined in a general sense as “ways of talking, listening, reading, writing, acting, interacting, believing, valuing and using tools and objects in particular settings and at specific times so as to display or recognize a particular social identity” (Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996, p. 10). Bakhtin (1981) more explicitly described an *authoritative discourse* as being infused with historically derived power and authority, binding us and demanding “unconditional allegiance” (p. 343). In the ECE field, Western child development theory has long been upheld as the authoritative knowledge base. It is embodied within texts, policies, regulations, standards, and programs and has evolved into a set of defined, prescriptive ways of being with, teaching, and caring for young children. This quantifiable, scientific, technical knowledge exerts dominance over the practical knowledge that shapes our “daily actions in the world” (McLaren, 1989, p. 170). In the context of child care, practical knowledge emerges out of one’s personal experiences, beliefs, values, and relationships with children. Reconceptualist scholars have long problematized this authoritative discourse for proposing a universal and essentialized childhood whereby all children progress through the same developmental stages irrespective of the familial, social, and cultural contexts in which they live their lives (e.g., Cannella, 1997; Lubeck, 1996; Ludlow & Berkley, 1994; Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999, 2007). In spite of this critique, culture is still largely appended to the existing discourse (Fleer, 2006).

Educators' professional knowledge, then, is predominantly defined as theoretical knowledge of Western child development and "developmentally appropriate practices" (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009). Accordingly, the dominant construction of the professional, Moss (2006) argues, is that of a technician who assumes an educative role by transmitting and applying "a defined set of technologies through regulated processes to produce pre-specified and measurable outcomes" (p. 35). When the educator's role is conceived of in such terms, professional autonomy is subsumed beneath the perceived power of the authoritative discourse (Langford, 2010; Osgood, 2006, 2012). Urban (2008) explains that when professionalism is defined by these external frameworks, "it is almost impossible (for educators) to make judgements themselves in a way that is relevant for their actual working context (i.e., the particular children, families, and communities they are working with)" (p. 142).

ECTE programs similarly promote the view of the professional educator as a technician (Lobman & Ryan, 2007; Woodrow, 2008) bound to the authoritative discourse as operationalized in provincial standards, regulations, and curriculum frameworks. These scientific approaches "necessarily eliminate culturally based understandings about teaching and learning that teacher candidates bring to their teacher preparation" (Montecinos, 2004, cited in Wilgus, 2013, p. 7). Even if ECTE programs are desirous of shifting toward a sociocultural framework, the pervasiveness of the authoritative discourse in field placement sites poses challenges to doing so (Garavuso, 2013). This universal, mythologized view of the educator as a technician therefore perpetuates notions of identity as predetermined and immovable, something that is assumed rather than constructed (Britzman, 2003).

## **The Authoritative Discourse in Alberta**

In the Alberta context, regulated child care centres or family day homes are overseen by the Ministry of Human Services and existing frameworks privilege child development knowledge. For example, the Child Care Licensing Act (Government of Alberta, 2013a) defines programs and types of staff certification and mandates program requirements with a particular emphasis on the health and safety of children and children's developmental needs and capabilities. The Government of Alberta (2013b) delineates three levels of staff certification (child development assistant, worker, or supervisor) incorporating some child development coursework. While there is no official code of ethics, the Alberta Child Care Accreditation Program (ACCAP) standards expand on the legislation to promote and measure program "quality" (Alberta Association for Accreditation of Early Learning Services, 2011). According to Lirette (2012), though, the standards, outcomes, and indicators are rigidly defined, prescribing very specific interactional styles and practices within the dominant construction of professionalism. These "official" definitions of professional practice foreground the authoritative discourse and advance narrow definitions of what the professional educator should do (Fenech, Sumison, & Shepherd, 2010), thus marginalizing educators' own practical knowledges (Colley, 2006; Moyles, 2001).

## **Conceptual Framework: Communities of Practice**

This study is framed by sociocultural-historical theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and informed by Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of *communities of practice*. In any community of practice, as ECE is commonly conceived to be (Egan, 2009; Flear, 2003), members are mutually engaged in joint enterprise as they develop a shared repertoire of practice, including actions, language, and

artifacts (Wenger, 1998). As new members (or “newcomers”) actively participate with others and gain access to the community’s historically developed sources for understanding, they move closer to becoming full, legitimate participants. ECTE instructors and field placement supervisors (“oldtimers”) might apprentice students (newcomers) into the community by helping them develop the skills and knowledges required for future employment in ECE settings. These “sources for understanding” might include the licensing regulations, accreditation standards, policies, developmental theories, and day-to-day practices that constitute the authoritative discourse as understood by that particular community.

Identity, which Wenger (1998) has conceptualized as the counterpart to practice, is defined by several elements, including negotiated experience, community membership, a learning trajectory, a nexus of multimembership, and a relation between the local and the global. First of all, Wenger (1998) explains that “we define who we are by the ways we experience our selves through participation as well as by the ways we and others reify our selves” (p. 149). The experience of engaging in practice with others allows one to produce an identity within the community. In addition, becoming a full member by achieving a certain level of competence or expertise in the authoritative discourse contributes to identity formation (see also Karila, 2008; Thomas, 2012). Wenger (2000) maintains that newcomers are perceived as knowing or having learned if they have not only gained competence in the ways of acting, speaking, and being in the community, but also can apply their own personal experience to redefine these competencies. As Sachs (2003) has written, this personal dimension, including experiences, beliefs, and values, influences how each individual “translates” and enacts the authoritative discourse. Hence identity develops in relation as other members of the community contribute to the formation of the self and the individual defines herself in relation to others.

Identity is also conceived of as a nonlinear learning trajectory, thus identity construction is temporal, fluid, and continuously shifting (Wenger, 1998). It is an ongoing negotiation among the past, present, and future shaped by the oldtimers' and the newcomers' individual and collective sense making in specific sociocultural contexts. A trajectory leading to admission or acceptance in the community satisfies a desire for recognition (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000) and fosters a sense of belonging in the individual (Moloney, 2010). Packer and Goicoechea (2000) explain that becoming a legitimate member in a community of practice may define who we are, but "also confronts us as something alien, so we are divided from ourselves and need to discover ourselves" (p. 234). In other words, the process of negotiating an identity is a struggle wherein the individual may become ontologically split between the person they once were ("back home," for example) and the person they are becoming in the community. Next, identity in practice always represents an interplay between the local and the global (Wenger, 1998). For instance, Ortlipp, Arthur, and Woodrow (2011) argue that since local practice is informed by regulations, standards, and curriculum documents, changes in these frameworks impact professional identity construction, especially in new educators. Finally, individuals always belong to multiple communities, which may deviate in terms of ways of being and acting. For this reason, educators move fluidly among multiple, often competing, discourses in practice (Alsup, 2006; Miller Marsh, 2003). Field placements, Lamote and Engels (2010) clarify, may represent a new culture or community with norms and values that differ from those in the program. Immigrants and refugees also experience a disjuncture between discourses as they move from one context and belief system to another (Wenger, 1998). Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) conceptualizations of *internally persuasive discourse* and *dialogism* further elucidate how these students might negotiate these discontinuities.

## **Dialogism and Internally Persuasive Discourse**

When newcomers participate in the practice of a community, as in the field placement site or workplace, it permits them to learn “how to talk (and be silent) in the manner of full participants” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 105). This aspect of the apprenticeship is particularly important given that professions have a *social language* (Bakhtin, 1986); that is, there are distinct types of jargon, words, and phrases that one must access and utilize to be construed as a professional. This shared social language is structured by the authoritative discourse, functioning as the “language of truth” bound to ideology and a specific worldview (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 367). Since one must have mastered English to learn the social language, immigrant and refugee students who are still in the receptive stage of English language acquisition may have difficulties apprehending the social language. Bakhtin further theorizes that because all languages are historically and collectively developed, they derive meaning and power from the *heteroglossia*, or the context in which they are spoken or written. Consequently whenever we speak, our utterances are deemed to be half our own and half someone else’s, situated in both the past and the present: “One may speak of another’s discourse only with the help of that alien discourse” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 355). Our voice becomes our own only when we imbue words with our own intentions, accents, and meanings (Wertsch, 1998). These concepts apply not only to language as in words and texts, but also more broadly to actions, practices, knowledges, ideas, beliefs, and values.

The authoritative discourse, as inscribed formally in texts and regulations and informally in ways of speaking, acting, being, and knowing within the community of practice, is not merely transmitted to a passive learner. Rather, it must be or become what Bakhtin (1981) called an *internally persuasive discourse*, “tightly interwoven with one’s own word” (p. 345). Matusov

and von Duyke (2010) emphasize that a discourse comes to be internally persuasive to the individual when the meaning of these words, knowledges, approaches, and ideas are negotiated, questioned, and tested by the student in dialogue with others, with the self, and with discourse. This process may present unique challenges to immigrant and refugee learners. If dialogue is the basis for composing internally persuasive discourses, then language can create disadvantage for these students. Furthermore, since discourse is embedded in the heteroglossia, students who are new to Canada do not have full access to the tradition and meanings of these words, approaches and ideas (Landay, 2004). Phrases and words such as “learning through play” and “child-centred practice” present as abstract ideas that have been reified into a context-bound set of practices confronting immigrant and refugee students as “alien” (Fleer, 2003; Wenger, 1998). Finally, these students are far more likely to find dissonance between the “ideologically saturated” authoritative discourse (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 271) and their own personally and culturally formed beliefs, values, and worldviews, as outlined in the section that follows.

### **Culturally and Linguistically Diverse ECTE Students and Educators**

To date, very few studies focus on the experiences of immigrant and refugee early childhood educators or ECTE students, especially in relation to professional identity development, but existing studies do provide some insights into their encounters with the authoritative discourse. In the context of ECTE programs, Moles (2014), who interviewed immigrant ECTE students in New Zealand, stated that the students had contested identities because their perspectives on the role of the teacher were not represented in the dominant discourse. For example, one student with a well-established identity as a leader and holder of knowledge in her cultural community shared that she struggled to make sense of the program content since “the things I knew are not here” (p. 173). When Langford (2007) interviewed

instructors and analyzed textbooks and student assignments, she found that Canadian instructors utilized child development theory to quash diverse students' own cultural and linguistic knowledges. The diverse student, Langford claims, appears to be "viewed as less competent (and thus is more marginalized) because first she must learn discourses that are assumed to be commonsense, and second she must shed cultural and material practices (such as teacher-direction) incompatible with those of the good ECE" (Langford, 2006, p. 118). Not surprisingly, by the end of the program most of the students purged any of their cultural practices and beliefs that competed with the notion of the "good" early childhood educator, retaining only superficial signifiers of their cultural identities in practice. In Australia, Nuttall and Ortlipp (2012) interviewed culturally and linguistically diverse students after their field placements. Positioned by her supervisor within a discourse of "difference as deficit," one student commented that she needed to "become someone she would not be 'in real life'" in order to pass her placement (p. 57). She reconstructed her identity as an educator by erasing her difference and imitating her supervisor. These findings were consistent with those in the much more substantial body of literature on international or internationally trained preservice teachers in the field of teacher education, which emphasize that students need to change their beliefs and practices to successfully fit in the existing system (e.g., Agbenyega, 2012; Cho, 2010; Feuerverger, 1997; Myles, Cheng, & Wang, 2006; Walsh, Brigham, & Wang, 2011). Consequently, the perceived power of the authoritative discourse may lead these immigrant and refugee ECTE students to engage in "performative professionalism" (Taggart, 2011), suppressing their personal and cultural beliefs in favour of enacting the professional practices expected in the community of practice.

With respect to practicing educators, Adair, Tobin, and Arzubiaga (2012) found that “many immigrant teachers described their journey to becoming professional as one of having to give up old beliefs as well as to acquire new ones” because they were made to believe that their cultural knowledges were incompatible with the professional knowledge they had learned in the ECTE program and workplace (p. 11). Jipson (1991) concurred that diverse educators adopted practices which they personally found to be “culturally inappropriate.” Huijbregts, Leseman, and Tavecchio’s (2008) quantitative findings propose that immigrant and refugee educators trained in Holland adhered closely to the authoritative discourse in the workplace, but their responses suggest that they still retained culturally informed child-rearing beliefs and practices at home with their own children. Similarly, the Latina educators in Wilgus’s (2006) study of disciplinary beliefs and strategies did not simply enact the authoritative discourse, but critically evaluated ideas they had learned in the ECTE program, actively deciding which to embrace and which to discard (p. 265). In these latter two cases, then, the educators seemed to pursue a trajectory leading to competence and acceptance within the professional community of practice while simultaneously maintaining some of the beliefs of their cultural communities.

## **Methodology**

With the exception of Wilgus’s study, previous studies have relied solely on self-reported data, but researchers have identified substantial gaps between educators’ self-reported beliefs and actual teaching practices (e.g., Wen, Elicker, & McMullen, 2011). The overall purpose of this study, then, was to gain insights into how immigrant and refugee women experience their studies and field placements in an ECTE program by using an ethnographic methodology over a sustained period of time. Ethnography has been used in studies of culturally diverse teachers in the school system “in the hopes of making visible and meaningful the complexity of what is

usually not seen” (Quiocho & Rios, 2000, p. 494). Three questions framed the research: (1) What understandings do immigrant women in one ECE program construct of the dominant discourse in ECE? (2) What impact do these understandings have on their perceptions of themselves in relation to children as they negotiate their professional identities as ECE teachers? (3) How does their learning in this program influence their interactions with children in their field experiences?

**Research site and participants.** The research site was a large urban community college in Alberta offering a variety of upgrading and ESL courses, as well as postsecondary certificate and diploma programs. The college enrolls a high proportion of immigrant and refugee learners, particularly women, who are often eligible for government funding for language and career training. Twenty immigrant and refugee women—five from China, one from India, four from the Middle East, and ten from Africa—enrolled in a ten-month ECE certificate program (referred to as an ECTE program in this article) participated in the study. In this article, I focus on six African/Middle Eastern students (see Table 1) whom I observed on field placement and who constituted a “culture sharing group” (I have noted instances where their experiences or viewpoints differed). Their experiences cannot be generalized to other students coming from the same countries. These women all came from comparatively affluent families, grew up in urban centres, are mothers, and are Muslim. Geena and Jasmine came to Canada as immigrants while the other women came as refugees.

**Table 1: Study participants**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Home Country</b>	<b>Prior Experience</b>
Ameena	Late 20s	Ethiopia	Mother of three preschool-aged children

Asmaa	Late 20s	Somalia (spent part of childhood in Yemen)	Mother of one school-aged child
Bijou	Mid-20s	Sudan (spent part of childhood in Senegal and Central African Republic)	Mother of two school-aged children Began teacher training back home and worked in child care in Canada
Fatima	Early 50s	Somalia	Mother of four grown children and one school-aged child
Geena	Early 40s	Sudan	Mother of two school-aged children
Jasmine	Late 30s	Syria (spent childhood in Kuwait)	Mother of four school-aged children

**Data collection and analysis.** I was a participant-observer situated within the students' day-to-day experiences in this program for two to three full days a week from September to June during their courses, breaks, special events, and field placements. Qualitative data were collected through observational field notes (at the college and in field placement sites), interviews, focus groups, informal conversations, spatial maps, and artifacts/documents (field placement evaluations, class notes, assignments, assessments, artistic creations, and class work).

Participants were interviewed two to six times throughout the year for 30–45 minutes and took part in up to four 60-minute focus groups. I obtained permission to observe seven of the participants for half a day each week during their term two field placements in four different accredited child care centres. I analyzed the data descriptively by doing an overview reading of the textual and oral data as they were being collected. Once I identified areas of dissonance and congruence with the students' own cultural practices during classes, interviews, and focus groups, I was particularly attentive to these notions as operationalized in the field placement

sites. I used open coding to categorize and identify themes, and, upon completion of the data collection, I read these patterns theoretically based on the literature (Angrosino, 2007).

In the next section, I provide some context to the students' commonly held understandings with respect to the adult role during play and teaching/learning in their home countries in order to juxtapose their experiences with the authoritative discourse on "learning through play" that they learned in the ECTE program. Then, I present the findings in the form of a series of excerpts from my field notes detailing participants' interactions with children that revealed elements from their dialogues with the authoritative discourse as they attempted to make them internally persuasive.

### **The Context of Play, Learning, and Teaching "Back Home"**

The participants brought with them to the ECTE program very specific notions about the separation of play and learning based on their own preschool experiences. From the time they could walk, all participants recalled playing outdoors with siblings and other children in the community. These times were often largely unsupervised by adults, though a parent would check on them occasionally and neighbours might admonish the children to go home if they were still out at night time. As Aameena recalled: "Mostly we played outside with other children, with the neighbours. It's not like here. They just send you outside.... We play outside, we enjoy and then we come back, like, night time. But here, 24/7 the kids stick with you" (interview, Feb 28, 2013). The adult role in play, then, was one of an occasional supervisor who steps in when problems arise.

The interactional patterns between adult and child affirmed this relationship as adults remained standing and more distant from the children. Geena confirmed: "I have to sit down on

the ground or be at the same level? We don't have this" (interview, February 28, 2013). Similarly, Ameena stated: "We never sit with the children face to face. We don't talk that much" (interview, February 28, 2013). Jasmine, then, was "shocked and surprised" when an educator knelt down and talked extensively with a child (interview, February 25, 2013). Interactions were also more nonverbal and less conversational than those back home. For example, Fatima stated that asking questions as parents might do in Canada was rare: "Most parents don't ask a lot, just like 'what are you doing?' when the child is doing something. The open-ended [questions]? No, they never do" (interview, June 25, 2013). Only infants, then, were held and "played with" or sung to. Although conversations between adults and children were uncommon, in their experience, everyone recalled that parents or grandparents sang to them or told them stories orally. These songs and stories were not shared with the goal of fostering literacy skills, though, but rather to transmit cultural values, guide behaviour, or convey encouragement or familial hopes for the child (Massing, 2014).

While the participants experienced a great degree of freedom in their childhood play, the adult role in the context of formal schooling was more prescribed and directive. Only Geena had had the experience of attending preschool (with a private religion tutor on the weekends), while the others attended preparatory *madrassas*, or religious schools, starting at the age of four or five and then advanced to the school system upon completion (usually one year). Early experiences in school were overwhelmingly associated with literacy and numeracy skills or "numbers and ABCs." Beginning in the madrassa, children were taught to read, primarily through memorization, as Fatima explained:

We learn how to read and write the Quran and then you take a Quran test.... You are not looking at your book. They ask you story number one, you have to say it.

Number five, you have to say it. So you go to grade one, you know the Quran, you know Arabic. That's what we learn first (Interview, October 23, 2012).

According to Bijou, a school teacher might write a passage on the board, then "you copy it. You go home. You make sure you memorize" (Interview, May 14, 2013). None of the participants remembered having educational toys or materials in their classrooms apart from paper and writing implements and the occasional book. As Ameena declared, "Just in our minds and write it down, no materials" (Interview, February 28, 2013).

In the madrassa, children also learned values such as respect and honesty and "how to behave," as children were expected to listen and obey. Pedagogically, teachers asked closed-ended questions to test children's skills in memorizing the content and, as students, they were expected to respond. Bijou affirmed that this style helped her to retain information: "Everything is in your head.... Our teacher gave us the questions, we made the answers, but he made your brain go beyond what you know, and why. This way you get smart" (focus group, December 4, 2012). Not surprisingly, then, there was a strict separation in the women's minds between play and learning; play is free, unsupervised time whereas learning is formal, structured, and highly controlled. Geena explained this distinction: "If we are learning ABCs, we have to sit in a desk, not like here playing and learning ABCs, like, we had to sit and I had a pencil and tried to write ABC or 123.... No playing. You can't play while you are learning. If you want to play, you play outside" (Interview, February 28, 2013).

### **The Authoritative Discourse: The Adult Role in Teaching and Learning**

At the end of the first term of the program, the students took a course entitled "Learning Through Play" in which they learned about the characteristics of play, play theory, play and

development, the play environment, planning for play experiences (both experiences and centres), and the adult role in play. They studied the distinctions between child-directed and adult-directed activity as well as open-ended and closed-ended activities. Resonant with the participants' own experiences, the instructors, learning materials, and texts also privileged literacy and numeracy learning; however, these were often disguised as games, activities, or centres. As Sherwood and Reifel (2010) also found, singing songs was classified as "play." A secondary goal of the course was to expose the students to a wide variety of unfamiliar toys, art supplies, books, natural materials, and musical instruments which they might encounter in the field. Throughout the year, they utilized these materials as they explored or planned an array of centres: dramatic play, art, sensory, literacy, or numeracy. By second term, most students were able to plan and set up "learning centres" to encourage open-ended, child-directed play based on the children's interests. Many of the students came to associate the provision of such centres or experiences as consistent with their role as a professional.

In terms of the adult role, the students were taught to be actively involved in play by playing with the children, being on the floor with children, adding materials to extend play, modelling appropriate play and language, answering children's questions, and asking open-ended questions (e.g., "Can you tell me about ...?"; course learning guide). Given that their own childhood play experiences had been child-directed and their school experiences had been adult-directed, the addition of an adult supervisor/educator during play was particularly difficult for the students to envision. So, although they understood the concept of child-directed play as defined in this course—the child chooses the activity, is in charge of the play, has a goal for play, and there is no expected end product—having the adult follow the child's lead or play with the child

was not within the realm of their experiences. Rather, they alternately imagined the adult as a teacher or a supervisor who would stand, observe, and ensure their safety.

In their coursework, then, the students had the opportunity to engage in dialogue with this authoritative discourse and form opinions about its content and use. As Bakhtin (1981) has described, the student may draw a word or idea into her own conceptual system, establish “a series of complex interrelationships, consonances and dissonances with the word,” and then formulate a response (p. 282). Different conceptual horizons and social languages come into dialogue as interlocutors (both people and texts) interact. These participants accessed their own cultural myths related to what an educator should do and juxtaposed them with the content they were learning in the program, moving back and forth between conceptual systems to make meaning. While on field placement, their actions and interactions with the children made visible, in a sense, this process of negotiating and dialoguing with the authoritative discourse so that it would become internally persuasive. In the next section, representative vignettes from their field placements, examples that the participants themselves define as “learning through play,” have been chosen to exemplify some variations of these dialogues.

### **Dialogues with the Authoritative Discourse**

Few participants seemed entirely convinced that play was an efficacious means of learning all-important literacy and numeracy skills given their personal histories whereby learning and play were separated. Jasmine and Geena, in particular, concurred that their parents taught them that “academics”—numbers and ABCs—are most important, then playing. Geena confirmed:

If I send my kids to the kindergarten (back home), you know, the basic things like reading, story time is very important. I don't know why they think playing is important (in Canada). I understand that learning through play is important here. Back home, not exactly. They are playing outside ... adults leave them to play what they want (Focus group discussion, December 13, 2012).

In view of this disconnect, assuming the concomitant adult role in “learning through play” proved challenging for both of the women once on field placement, as can be seen in the following excerpts from my field notes.

At 10:44 in the morning, Jasmine is seated on a child-sized chair in the reading area in the middle of the preschool room. Two boys are building with DUPLO™ blocks in front of her. She sits on the floor between the boys and asks the first boy, James, “what’s this?” He tells her it’s a bridge. “What colour is it?” she asks him. He explains that he has a car that will go on the bridge he has built out of the DUPLO. She turns to the other boy, Blake, and asks “who’s this?” He states that it’s his sister. She turns back to James: “I’m going to build something with you.” Jasmine picks up blocks one at a time—“What colour is this? And this? And this? Very good”—before placing them back down on the floor. James tells her he has more blocks at home. “Oh, at home” she repeats. “You can use this one too if you want to,” she tells him as she hands him a block. She turns to Blake, asks him if he has a car. Not waiting for an answer, she turns back to James and says “what’s this? It’s a window. It’s huge. Oh, look at this” she says as she hands him a block. “Do you know what this letter is? Do you know?” James replies, “No.” Jasmine

asks him, “Do you want to know?” and James again replies “no.” Jasmine says “okay” and sits back up on her chair (FN, February 13, 2013).

In the following short excerpt from a play episode, Geena was drawn into pretend play with two children (nearly three years old) and seated herself on a child-sized chair in the dramatic play area.

Emily is cooking on the stove and Geena asks her, “What’s this? What’s this? ... Are you going to put it on a plate like that? Yeah good. Where’s the fork? Where’s the fork?” Emily hands her a spoon. Geena says, “That’s not the fork.” Guessing that Emily may have a different plan, Geena says, “Okay, you are going to mix it? Are you going to put salt? No salt? Breakfast is now ready? Put this here. Where’s the milk? Where is the milk? We need to put milk in the cereal” (FN, February 12, 2013).

Both Jasmine and Geena incorporated elements of the authoritative discourse into their interactions: sitting at the children’s level, interacting with the children, and asking them questions. However, both women seemed uncomfortable joining the children’s play and instead performed as a “teacher,” a role consistent with their own experiences back home. They bombarded the children with closed-ended “test” questions such as “what’s this?” and “who’s this?” Jasmine quizzed James on his knowledge of colours and attempted to introduce a lesson on letters. Geena sought to teach by directing Emily’s play and correcting her mistakes, which resonated with her own school experiences. Consistent with a North American view, the authoritative discourse mandated asking questions to stimulate conversation, demonstrate interest, and extend play, but Jasmine and Geena invoked a didactic understanding of instructing

through questioning and testing knowledge. These questions operated as hybrid constructions, spoken by a single speaker but belonging simultaneously to two intersecting belief systems (Bakhtin, 1981). While each woman was in dialogue here with the authoritative discourse, their interactions with the children implied monologue or transmission of knowledge rather than dialogue or co-construction of understanding.

While many participants did make attempts to play with the children, more often they fell easily into this teaching role when invited to play. Their instructors had introduced them to many children's songs and books, and had them manufacture story props or games to be used with various texts. The authoritative discourse regulated how they should "do" story time: sitting on the floor (or a short chair) at the children's level, holding up the book so the children could see, asking open-ended questions, and involving children with the props (class handout). Ameena was surprised by this aspect of the program because, back home, parents, not teachers, sang to children: "I know in back home we sing for the children, but in school? I never see like that" (Interview, October 3, 2012). In the professional context, Ameena strongly believed that her role was to teach the children and prepare them for school: "If I just watch over them, feed them, if I don't teach them anything, when they go to school they get a surprise. No. I'm going to teach them numbers, ABCs" (Interview, October 3, 2012). Therefore, when Amy approached the dollhouse next to where Ameena was sitting and invited her to play, Ameena instead diverted her toward the "game" she had brought: a *Five Little Ducks* book with felt board props.

"I have a new game for you," she says to Amy enticingly. A large cluster of children soon join her as she walks to the reading area with Amy, the book, and the props. Eight children gather around her, sitting on the floor as Ameena sits on a chair. She holds the book in her lap and reads the first verse out loud. Evan asks,

“Where is daddy?” and Ameena responds: “Daddy come after, yeah, he called the next one. Quack, quack, quack, quack (she pronounces the sound in her language and it sounds like “quock”). Three little duckie, one go swimming over the hill and far away. Mother duck call quack, quack, quack. How does she quack? Who can tell me? Yay” she says as she claps her hands. Ameena reads the book two more times, each time in a slightly different way as she seems to rely less on the words and more on her memory to interpret the words in her own way. During these readings, three of the children use the felt board, manipulating the ducks as she speaks (FN, February 11, 2013).

While Ameena had memorized the song in class, she chose instead to sing from the book, holding it on her lap so she could rely on the text to guide her interactions with the children. The song represented the words of another, derived from an unfamiliar sociocultural context; however, through her dialogue with the text and with the children, Ameena made the authoritative discourse (the text and her learning in the program) internally persuasive. The content of the song reassured her that she was teaching the children numeracy skills. As she altered the words of the song and made the duck’s cry in her home language, she populated the words of the song with her own accents and meanings in a playful manner, constructing her own way of speaking within this community of practice rather than mechanistically reproducing the words as written in this authoritative text. The act of reading and singing thus became what Bakhtin (1981) referred to as double-voiced discourse: a dialogue of “two voices, two worldviews, and two languages” (p. 325). The words belonged both to the text (author) and to Ameena, and in the dialogue between them, she produced her own professional voice (see also Knoeller, 2004).

In the final vignette, Asmaa was engaged in block play with two 3-year-old boys.

Asmaa is sitting down on the floor. Kevin, sitting to her left, asks for assistance in pushing together DUPLO blocks. She holds the structure for him as he adds blocks. It seems to resemble an airplane. They work silently, attaching blocks to the building plate to fashion what is perhaps a landing strip. He picks up the airplane with his right hand and adjusts it. Asmaa turns her attention to a basket of Tinker Toys™ and begins spearing sticks into the connectors. She seems to be building a vehicle. Kevin sits to her left and appears to be observing what she is doing as he tries out his airplane, but she is concentrating fully on her own work. Kevin also begins to extract parts from the basket, trying to put a stick in the hole. Ethan, playing nearby, indicates her car with his finger and Asmaa gives it to him. “This is a nice car,” he comments. Asmaa does not speak. She chooses a few more blocks to build with, but then the educator proclaims that it is time to clean up (FN, February 12, 2013).

Asmaa was cognizant of the expectation that she sit on the floor and “play with” the children, but she interpreted this role in a different manner. Contrary to dominant practice, which would emphasize role modelling language and asking questions (Heath, 1983), this episode was a rich, nonverbal, embodied interchange as Asmaa spoke only once during the entire ten-minute play episode. However, she was still acutely aware of the children, responding to Ethan’s expression of interest in the car, and her rich nonverbal messages invited the children to be with her. She explained to me that in Somalia people believe that “if you are a good person, they come. The kids all come beside you. But if you are not a good person, they don’t like you. Children know” (interview, February 20, 2013). Therefore, Asmaa saw verbalizing and

questioning as superfluous. She felt that since children were drawn to be with her, they perceived her to be a “good person,” a challenge to the adult role presented in the authoritative discourse. In this manner, she was constructing her professional identity dialogically but nonverbally with these children as she played alongside them. Within the community of practice, then, these immigrant and refugee ECTE students were engaged in a process of sense making as they dialogued with the unfamiliar authoritative discourse and endeavoured to relate it to their own practical knowledges, beliefs, values, and experiences.

## **Discussion**

The process by which aspects of the authoritative discourse were (or were not) made internally persuasive to an individual student was quite complex because much of this negotiation occurred outside of the participants’ conscious awareness and was barely discernible to the casual observer. Focused observations of their interactions with the children allowed for a nuanced look at the ways in which the cultural myths about what it means to be an educator formed in their own experiences pervaded their practices. If we consider the transparent and observable surface elements to be representative of one’s professional practice, then we cannot perceive the invisible layers of deeply held cultural beliefs and values dwelling beneath the surface that inform and propel our actions (Goodfellow, 2003; Nieto, 2010). In terms of identity, the women were attempting to negotiate belongingness in multiple, disparate communities, each with very different expectations about how to teach young children. Their practices suggested that, at that point at least, the women resided within the interstices of an identity conferred by the community of practice and one established in the context of their own personal and cultural biographies.

Ameena's explanation actualizes this tension between personal or cultural ways of being with children and the authoritative discourse of professionalism: "Professional means you do how they teach you [in the ECTE program] even if they (supervisor or instructors) don't see you.... Joanne [an educator], she's more professional in how she talks to the kids, how the kids love her. Everything she does in a real way, the right way, and a real way" (Interview, February 28, 2013). Joanne is perceived as holding the "right" professional knowledge, but she is also "real," acting intuitively and applying what she personally knows about children. Consistent with Wenger's (2000) work, the professional educator must be able to mobilize her personal understandings and refine the expected competencies. Since the practical knowledges of immigrant and refugee students or educators are excluded from the authoritative discourse, it is difficult for them to legitimately apply their own understandings in this manner. Essentially, these women are positioned as needing to change themselves, otherwise their learning trajectory will never lead to full, legitimate participation in the community (Wenger, 1998).

Furthermore, Wenger (1998) explains that identity is a locus of social power: "Power derives from belonging as well as from exercising control over what we belong to" (p. 207). Previous studies (e.g., Langford, 2007; Moles, 2014) have suggested that immigrant and refugee students appear to succumb to this pressure to conform, and Geena confided that she, too, felt a sense of obligation to the authoritative discourse:

I know the system is different here. I can't do anything because this is the system and the rules for day care.... Sometimes you have to follow your heart, but if you have rules, you know, guidelines, you can't do the opposite of that. You can't follow your heart everywhere. I know what to do. I know my obligations (Interview, February 28, 2013).

Power is infused with tension in cases where belonging in the community means losing the ability to negotiate and contribute to the terms of membership. Potential outcomes include feelings of powerlessness, vulnerability, and marginality (Wenger, 1998). Alsup (2006) found that students who had difficulty envisioning themselves fitting into the established identity experienced conflicts which, in some cases, led to leaving the profession.

Geena frequently referred to the internal struggle to make the authoritative discourse internally persuasive as “making the balance” between belief systems. Such conflicts need not always be negative, but can also potentially be productive: “Our ideological development is just such an intense struggle within us for hegemony among various available verbal and ideological points of view, approaches, directions and values ... this (internally persuasive) discourse is able to reveal ever newer *ways to mean*” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 346). The areas of tension operationalized in their interactions with the children expose aspects of practice that are easily made internally persuasive to these immigrant and refugee students and others that are not. As these “newer ways to mean” emerge, the participants may continue drawing ideas into their conceptual systems, relating them to their own prior understandings, and dialogically (re)constructing their own professional identities. Both practice and identity are not immovable, but fluid, continuing to shift and change over time. Alsup (2006) describes such shifts as “a state of continual becoming rather than an endpoint” (p. 7).

Currently, though, the power of regulatory frameworks ensures that many ECTE programs adhere to a monologic, authoritative discourse (White, 2009) with a desired endpoint of the professional as a technician. Within the ECTE program, Miller Marsh (2003) posits, instructors need to be aware that the discourses they themselves use could either constrain or offer possibilities for students’ identity construction. To disrupt this authoritative discourse,

instructors must create spaces for immigrant and refugee students to form meaningful connections between their own beliefs, experiences, and practical knowledges and the course content (Gupta, 2006, 2013; Moles, 2014; Pui-Wah, 2006). Since the findings in this study demonstrate that practice is a hybridized mixture of two belief systems contained within a single action or encounter (Bakhtin, 1981), instructors and supervisors should understand that students will always retain residual traces of their beliefs (though these will change over time). If students have time and space for dialogue with the content and practices they are learning, they can populate their practice with their own intentions and meanings and make it their own. When immigrant and refugee students access their practical knowledges, they may be marginalized within their ECTE program community of practice. Their experiences are not accountable to “the regime of competence” and therefore “are repressed, despised, feared, or simply ignored” (Wenger, 1998, p. 216). Thus ECTE programs must acknowledge the validity of multiple, polyphonic voices “with equal rights and each with its own worlds” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 6). In this way, immigrant and refugee educators or ECTE students can imbue practice within the community with their own personal competencies and author their own legitimized professional voices in dialogue with other members of the community of practice instead of being made to feel they must adopt a universal professional identity to pass their courses. Ultimately, practices that blend personal, cultural, and professional knowledges will provide richer and more meaningful experiences for immigrant and refugee children and their families, who will be supported in their diverse ways of being and becoming.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### Understandings of care in infant/toddler field placements

*They leave the child alone to feed himself. It's hard for him. He has severe needs, but they don't care. They really don't care at all. That was something I did not like (Interview, February 28, 2013).*

Bijou, a student in an early childhood teacher education (ECTE) program who had originally come to Canada as a refugee from Sudan, was distressed to observe in her field placement site that a 13 month old boy with Down's Syndrome was expected to feed himself. Bijou's beliefs and values led her to interpret this situation, in which the boy was being encouraged to develop independence, as evidence of neglect or lack of care. Early childhood teacher education (ECTE) programs and field sites are framed by an authoritative discourse (Bakhtin, 1981) underpinned by Eurocentric values and beliefs such as encouraging children's autonomy and individuality that are in conflict with diverse ways of working with and caring for young children. This discourse is inscribed in the regulatory frameworks, policies, accreditation standards, and curriculum documents though it is interpreted in different ways in individual ECEC programs. Immigrant and refugee student teachers like Bijou are thus challenged to find ways to navigate this discourse in their coursework and field placements.

While it is widely viewed as a desirable goal to achieve continuity between the home and the ECEC program, Bijou's comment suggests that this can be problematic when working with immigrant and refugee infants, toddlers, and their families. Immigrant and refugee families form a growing proportion of the population of many OECD countries. For instance, Statistics Canada (2010) foretells that by 2031, 25 to 28% of the Canadian population will be foreign-born and 29% to 32% will be members of a visible minority group (a third of whom will be children).

There is a corresponding shift in terms of religious diversity with Muslims expected to constitute half of the non-Christian population by 2031 (Statistics Canada, 2010). Recent surges in the numbers of refugees from Middle Eastern countries, such as Syria, to OECD countries may serve to further enhance these projections. Such diversity is reflected both in the early childhood education and care (ECEC) workforce (Service Canada, 2011) and in the children and families being served by ECEC programs. Immigrant/refugee educators and ECTE students may hold the funds of knowledge necessary to provide culturally resonant care to children from similar backgrounds. However, their understandings are often positioned outside the authoritative discourse and are silenced in the field. In this paper, I contend that the elision of their cultural and religious perspectives on care contributed to a profound discontinuity between what the participants in this study—immigrant/refugee Muslim women enrolled in an ECTE program—knew of caring for infants and toddlers and the professional roles they were expected to execute in their field placement sites. I seek both to elucidate the women's care knowledges, and to examine how they responded to the dissonance between value systems as operationalized in mealtime and feeding practices.

### **Review of Literature**

Growing concerns about “quality” in ECEC provision in OECD countries have contributed to both a division and a hierarchy between education and care (Van Laere, Peeters, & Vandebroek, 2012). Extending Bowlby’s (1946) attachment theory which prioritizes maternal care in aiding the child’s healthy development, traditional care discourses posit that working with young children is an innate, feminine trait consistent with the construction of the “good mother” (Cannella, 1997). Positioning such work as “emotional labour” (Hochschild, 1983), or an extension of the mothering role, effectively serves to justify educators’ low professional status

and wages leaving them vulnerable to exploitation (Taggart, 2011). Since it is not measurable or quantifiable, care is generally excluded from regulatory frameworks, codes of conduct, and other documents constitutive of the authoritative discourse (Osgood, 2006). Van Laere et al (2012) explain that the more recent “schoolification” of ECEC has led to policies and practices that privilege approaches, goals, and standards related to school preparation at the expense of those related to care. According to Moss (2006), this view positions the educator as a technician who applies the validated, authoritative discourse to her work to achieve defined, prescriptive outcomes. When educators accede to these standards, then, they do so at the expense of their own tacit, practical knowledges (Jipson, 1991), and lose the ability to exercise personal judgement and autonomy (Blank, 2010; Osgood, 2006). Research affirms, however, that educators experience the paradox described by Moyles (2001)—they feel unprofessional when they take on a caring role yet emphasize the importance of love, care, and emotion in their work (eg. Dalli, 2008; Madrid & Dunn-Kenney, 2010). Working with infants and toddlers, in particular, necessarily involves physical and emotional intimacy (Manning-Morton, 2006; Recchia & Shin, 2010). As Osgood (2010) contends, care and emotionality can potentially be viewed as counter-discourses, shaped by personal histories and experience, “that reside outside the professional context but come to inflect and shape practitioners' self-understandings as more or less professional in their work” (p. 126).

This tension between education and care, with the corresponding professional expectations associated with each, is often made visible in the mealtime practices in ECEC sites. Eating and feeding have traditionally been positioned as “care” activities. However, as Rockel (2009) contends, the shift to an educational focus means that mealtimes are managed through prescriptive, predetermined routines enacted by educators at pre-specified times rather than

caring responses to children's individual cues. In the Swedish context, Lofdahl and Folke-Fichtelius (2015) found that care activities were transformed into “more readily useable, measurable, and process-related” areas of learning for the children such as self-care skills for the purposes of documentation (p. 268). As exhibited in the Alberta child care licensing regulation, mealtimes are constructed in a utilitarian manner without reference to affect, care, or relationality. The document simply mandates that meals be provided to each child “at appropriate times” and “in sufficient quantities” and that “the manner in which children are fed is appropriate to their age and level of development” (Government of Alberta, 2013). Independence is the dominant value permeating practice; promulgated during mealtimes when even very young children are encouraged to feed and serve themselves. Following Rose (1999), Cameron (2007) argues that independence might imply freedom for the children, but it is “simultaneously being governed by a web of socially sanctioned rules and norms” (p. 468); thus there is a tension between the goal of promoting children’s independence through exercising choice and maintaining structure and order throughout the day.

Mealtime practices are commonly executed with the educative goal of socializing the children into the dominant culture. The routinized and systematized nature of mealtimes in many ECEC settings promotes what Grindland terms a “discourse of order” (cited in Johansson & Berthelsen, 2014). During their observations, Johansson & Berthelsen (2014) noted that educators usually enforced this discourse by insisting that children follow the rules, eat “properly”, and demonstrate appropriate table manners. Brennan (2007) commented that the teachers in a New Zealand site infused playfulness, humour, and even tenderness into their socialization strategies, but seemingly with the ultimate objective of ensuring that children ate and complied with the norms. In her analyses of English educators’ discussions, Cameron (2014)

found that they seemed to favour training children into independence by offering them carefully controlled and monitored choices. It should be noted, however, that her findings across four European countries indicated that educators' understandings of independence were contextually situated, interpreted in complex and varied ways. In Canada, Nxumalo, Pacini-Ketchabaw, and Rowan (2011) have problematized mealtime practices for representing the traditions and values of the dominant western culture at the expense of those from diverse cultural backgrounds. As Kultti (2014) described, mealtimes may create opportunities to include immigrant children and guide them in learning the majority language but, in the context she studied, these children's experiences, values, traditions, competencies, and languages were “made invisible through institutional norms” as embodied in the teacher’s words and expectations (p. 28). While many have asserted there is a need for mealtimes to be conceptualized as interactive, relational, and pedagogical events in which the children are active participants (eg. Alcock, 2007; Bae, 2009; Johansson & Berthelsen, 2014), a technical, educative approach often prevails in practice. As will be developed in the sections that follow, an overemphasis on education may create additional tensions for individuals who access discourses of care that are conjoined with their cultural and religious beliefs and values.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study was framed by sociocultural-historical theory and concepts such as Lave and Wenger’s (1991) communities of practice and Bakhtin’s (1981) dialogism. Communities of practice is defined as a “set of relations among persons, activity and the world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 98). While often conceived of as a single community of practice, the field of ECE is a *constellation of practice* comprised of many interconnected and overlapping communities of

practice, including ECTE programs and field placement sites, that may have common histories, styles, discourse, jargon, tools, artifacts, and members. Wenger (1998) explained that participation and reification are a duality constitutive of practice within a community. In the field placement site, the students take part in shared activities alongside their supervisors, and this participation shapes both their experience and the community. Specific tools, terms, discourses, stories have been reified into concrete form, becoming “points of focus around which the negotiation of meaning is organized” (p. 58). The authoritative discourse has been reified into policies, documents, regulations, materials, and tools that align and coordinate practice across different ECE communities, though they may be re-interpreted in distinct ways. For example, the idea of promoting independence during mealtimes through self-feeding was reified in curriculum documents in the ECTE program and policy statements in the field sites which created continuity between the different communities.

The relationship between practice and the community is cohered by three dimensions: mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire of practices. First, the participants are mutually engaged in practice as they negotiate meanings with others. Such negotiations allow for the interweaving of participation and reification. In addition, the enterprise—that is, the teaching and care of young children—is communally negotiated among members. Aspects of the enterprise are derived from the authoritative discourse but also they are also interpreted, and potentially reified, within the local context of practice (such as the child care centre). Ideally, members can imprint their own diverse, but overlapping competencies on the development of this enterprise. The ability to actively negotiate aspects of practice in this manner leads to a sense of mutual accountability to the enterprise. Finally, over time, Wenger (1998) asserts that communities develop a shared repertoire of practices or resources including routines, words,

tools, stories, ways of doing things, actions or concepts that are both dynamic and reflective of their history of engagement.

In relation to learning, “oldtimers” (instructors and field placement supervisors) are instrumental in the process of apprenticing or enculturating “newcomers” (or ECTE students) into the existing community of practice, support newcomers’ participation by conferring both peripherality and legitimacy on them. Peripherality, or exposure to the practice of the community, may be attained when the supervisor supports the student’s mutual engagement in the practice and assists them in defining the enterprise and “reconciling conflicting interpretations of what the enterprise is about” (p. 95). Supervisors promote students’ peripheral participation by aiding them in developing the necessary repertoires and skills and in building accountability to their shared work of teaching and caring for young children. They might coordinate with ECTE programs to ensure continuity in the tools, discourses, and artifacts when students cross the borders between the communities. In addition, the student must be granted sufficient legitimacy as a potential member in order to be able to learn the practice. Prospective members are perceived as knowing or having learned if they have achieved competence in the ways of acting, speaking, and being in the community and can apply their own understandings to redefine these competencies (Wenger, 2000). As the learner participates in the activities of the community, pursues an inbound trajectory leading toward full participation, and becomes competent in its enterprise and repertoires, she or he begins to construct an identity as a legitimate member. Since individuals belong to multiple communities of practice that may have competing goals, this process often involves some degree of reconciliation and negotiation.

Bakhtin’s (1981) concept of dialogism further illumines the process whereby the student newcomer learns to use and apply the authoritative discourse, or repertoires in use within the

community of practice. Authoritative discourse “demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with the authority already fused to it” (p. 342). Bakhtin contended that in order for the learner to appropriate the authoritative discourse, it must first become internally persuasive to them. An internally persuasive discourse is populated with the individual learner’s own meanings; it becomes “tightly interwoven with one’s own word” (p. 345). Matusov and von Duyke (2010) maintain that a discourse comes to be internally persuasive to the individual when the meaning of these words, knowledges, approaches, and ideas are negotiated, questioned, and tested by the student in dialogue with others, with the self, and with discourse. Once the discourse is made persuasive, the learner generates new meanings and can “...take it into new context, attach it to new material, put it in a new situation in order to wrest new answers from it, new insights into its meaning” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 346). However, the gaping chasm between authoritative discourse, inscribed with the tradition of theory and practice in the field and re-interpreted within the various programs, and these students’ own internally persuasive discourses complicates the process of reconciliation. In this paper, I endeavour to document the care beliefs, values, and practices of these immigrant/refugee ECTE students and how these came into conflict with the authoritative discourse enacted within the field placement communities.

### **About the Study**

The purpose of the larger study was to enquire into the day-to-day experiences and knowledge co-construction of immigrant/refugee women throughout the duration of their studies in an early childhood teacher education (ECTE) program. The research was guided by three research questions: What understandings do these women construct of the authoritative discourse in ECEC? What impact do these understandings have on their perceptions of themselves in

relation to children as they negotiate their professional identities as ECEC teachers? How does their learning in this program influence their interactions with children in their field experiences? This paper focuses primarily on the latter two questions.

## **Methods**

**Participants and research site.** The research site was a large community college in a mid-sized Canadian city with a variety of upgrading and ESL courses, as well as post-secondary certificate and diploma programs. Twenty immigrant/refugee women from China (5), India (1), the Middle East (4), and Africa (10) enrolled in a one-year early childhood education certificate program participated in the study. Although many of the African and Middle Eastern participants shared common viewpoints on care, I have chosen to focus on five women, ranging in age from 26 to 53, who are originally from the same region in Africa, identify as Muslim, are from relatively well-off families, are mothers, and came to Canada as refugees: Bijou (Sudan), Geena (Sudan), Ameena (Ethiopia—Oromo), Asmaa (Somalia), and Fatima (Somalia). None of these women had previous experience working in child care or schools in their home countries, though Bijou had worked in a Canadian child care centre, but cited their extensive experience as mothers, siblings, aunts, and neighbours responsible for the care of young children.

**Data collection and analysis.** In this ethnographic study, I was a participant-observer situated within the students' day-to-day experiences in this program for two to three days a week for ten months (September to June); courses, breaks, special events, and field placements. Qualitative data were collected through observational field notes (at the college and in field placement sites), interviews, focus groups, informal conversations, spatial maps, and artifacts/documents (field placement evaluations, class notes, assignments, assessments, artistic creations, and class work). Participants were interviewed two to six times throughout the year for

30-45 minutes and took part in up to four sixty-minute focus groups. I obtained permission to observe seven participants for half a day each week during their field placements in four different accredited child care centres. After the placement, I asked the question “can you tell me about your experience on field placement?” with the follow-up questions emerging from their responses, so the findings represent how the participants themselves defined their experiences. The data were analyzed descriptively by doing an overview reading of the textual data, using open coding to categorize and identify themes, and then reading patterns theoretically based on the literature (Angrosino, 2007). The analysis revealed two main categories of care, care as ensuring health and well-being and care as teaching religious and cultural values, with two or three themes for each, juxtaposing their understandings of care with practices they perceive as evidence of “not caring” in the child care context.

## **Findings**

**Care as ensuring children's health and well-being.** Consistent with studies in nursing (see Leininger, 2006), studies in early childhood education see care as instrumental in ensuring the health and well-being of children. Leininger (2006) states that well-being “implies a quality of life or desired state of existence in most cultures studied” (p. 11). She refers to Fawcett’s (1984) definition of health as “a state of well-being that is culturally defined and constituted” (p. 10), which indicates that any conclusions about the “goodness” of one's health depend on cultural understandings of what it means to be well. Health is deemed restored when the desired or optimal level of well-being is achieved. My participants' responses reflect two main themes around health and well-being.

***Care as “hot meals and warm milk.”*** All the participants confirmed that in their home countries the meals are always hot and fresh and young children are served warm milk; a cultural

custom practiced for health reasons. As Fatima described, shopping was commonly done daily to ensure freshness: “Every day you have to go and buy your groceries. No fridge. You have to buy your meat, your milk, everything” (Interview, October 23, 2012). Asmaa, whose family did have a fridge, still followed this cultural practice: “every day we cooked. We cooked dinner, lunch, breakfast fresh every day. Every day we bought food...” (Interview, February 19, 2013). Upon their return from placement, many of the students in the class expressed surprise that the educators consistently gave the infants and toddlers cold milk to drink and, less frequently, cold meals. Aameena asserted that cold milk “is not good for the tummy” (Interview, February 28, 2013), while Bijou affirmed that back home the doctor told her to warm up her daughter's milk “or her nose will run” (Interview, February 27, 2013). Fatima explained: “something like this is related to our culture or tradition. That's why my classmates say cold milk is not good. I do the warm milk. I think it's important...” (Interview, February 28, 2013). In the child care setting, then, the participants felt that giving cold milk and meals showed a lack of care. As Bijou declared: “They give the baby cold milk, but I don't know. I don't really like it as a parent. I won't allow my child to drink cold milk” (Interview, February 27, 2013). This perceived deficiency of care was particularly troubling to Asmaa who stated: “If you don't give hot food, they can't eat, they can't chew it” (Interview, February 19, 2013). Thus, the participants' culturally formed values of sustaining children's good health by serving warm meals and milk created tensions for them in the child care setting.

***Care as nurturance: “getting enough.”*** All of the participants articulated a preoccupation with ensuring that the children ate sufficient quantities at mealtimes. In their home countries, food is not measured, as they were taught to do in their coursework using the Canada Food Guide (FN September 19, 2012). Parents or older siblings serve and feed young children in

their countries until anywhere from two to four years of age, as well as visually monitoring their consumption. In a focus group discussion with the Somalian participants, I showed a video clip on independence and they responded as follows:

Leylo: For us, it's opposite.

Fatima: Opposite.

Leylo: We always support, support.

Fatima: We feed them. (Focus group, December 12, 2012).

As Fatima later explained, “Back home at this age, like four, three, two we feed them. We don't know if they eat enough if we don't. Yeah, you have to make sure they eat” (Interview, February 28, 2013). Bijou was especially concerned about children's well-being, stating: “They need food to survive” (Interview, February 28, 2013). Geena affirmed that helping children was a means of caring: “It's something like culture. You see that maybe he can't eat well. You want to feed him, you want to make sure he's not hungry, like more care” (Interview, February 28, 2013). The participants were attuned to the differences between children; some were capable of feeding themselves at younger ages than others, while others needed the support. Feeding, then, is amalgamated with care; the caring parent or educator observes, assists, and encourages the child during mealtimes. This practice reflects a commitment to children's well-being, but also to helping those in need as a cultural value.

In the child care centres, care, in the sense of helping children eat to ensure their needs are met, was subjugated to educative goals. Children were encouraged to feed themselves so they would learn to function as individual, autonomous subjects. Their instructor warned them about this practice well in advance (FN, September 17, 2012) and reassured them on multiple occasions “don't worry, if they are hungry they will eat” (FN, September 27, 2012).

Nevertheless, when the participants saw infants and toddlers being left to eat independently in the child care centres, they were appalled and wanted to help. Geena stated: “I go to the infant room like nine, ten months and they eat by themselves and throw all the food around...They didn’t eat anything. I feel it. They didn’t eat ANYTHING!” (Interview, February 28, 2013). When she asked the educator if she could help, she was told she could not and found this very “difficult” (Interview, September 13, 2013). Fatima commented to me that a toddler was “so skinny” as she furtively scooped more food onto his plate (FN, February 6, 2013). Likewise, Asmaa when attempted to help a toddler butter his bun “the educator says to the child ‘you need to try because I know you can do it.’ Asmaa abruptly stops, says ‘yeah’ and sits silently” (FN, February 12, 2013).

The participants focused most of their attention on the children they perceived as struggling. Bijou’s comment at the beginning of the paper illustrates how distressing it was for her to see a child with Down’s Syndrome left to feed himself. Asmaa had a similar experience with one of the girls in an infant room: “She can’t eat. I ask if I could help her and they (the educators) say ‘no.’ I go to the washroom after and cry and cry. I feel very bad. She’s crying, she’s hungry, she needs to eat. The others know how (to feed themselves), but some kids can’t eat and they (the educators) don’t care” (Interview, February 19, 2013). In this instance, the child’s cries activated Asmaa’s own emotions and she sought a private space in which to release them knowing that her feelings must be controlled on placement (see also Colley, 2006). The participants’ own care beliefs, centred around providing hot meals and warm milk and assisting children in eating sufficient quantities, led to concerns that the educators were not attentive enough to the food intake of each individual child. When the participants articulated their concerns for children needing assistance, it epitomized the intersection between care and justice.

The participants sought to address children's needs in part to care for and respond to their cues, but also out of concern for fairness and equitable access to food.

**Care as conveying religious and cultural values.** When care is solely tied to children's physical well-being, it obscures the deeper religious and cultural values associated with the participants' practices. Beliefs about care were envisioned, and sometimes actualized, as pedagogy shaped by these values. In recognizing children's needs, therefore, participants attended to well-being in a cultural and spiritual sense, not merely with respect to physical, health needs. This popular children's song, presented to the class by Geena and Jasmine, demonstrates how health is intrinsically connected with cultural and religious values around respecting food and milk:

*Oh children, oh sweetheart*

*Drink milk for health and for strength.*

*Drink slowly and thank Allah*

*You must say thanks to Allah, never forget*

(FN, November 19, 2012; translated from Arabic by Jasmine).

**Teaching about sharing.** Notions of sharing with others and caring for others are likewise closely linked, as operationalized in feeding practices. All of the participants described meal times at home where each dish was accorded a separate plate and the family ate communally, choosing from the various dishes freely. They carried this practice into the college classroom, though their instructor cautioned them that this "isn't allowed in day care" (FN, September 24, 2012). In a focus group, Ameena, Fatima, and Asmaa lamented the focus on independence in Canada where everyone wants their own plate and cup and everything is "mine, mine, mine" (Focus group, April 12, 2013). Back home, only very young children were served

food separately, with the mother or older sibling preparing a plate, in order to monitor their consumption. Later Aameena explained: “we share from the beginning. When the child starts eating...then we put them in our lap and we feed them from our plate” (Interview, May 14, 2013). Fatima recalled how her mother invited a homeless woman and her two children to share their meals with them over a prolonged period of time. When Fatima and her siblings expressed disgust because they were “dirty”, her mother responded as follows:

“we are same as this person. We came from the same. God made us both. He gives to us, he doesn't give to them to show us how we can help each other...” That's what she did.

Yeah, because she always tells us “God, he has the power to give everybody everything, but why does he give some people something and he doesn't give the other one any? He's going to see how we help that person” (Interview, May 14, 2013).

Due to her mother's teaching, Fatima came to understand that care was interconnected with concerns about sharing and ensuring equity. These particular mealtime practices, conspicuously absent in the child care setting, revealed the participants' own pedagogy of care emphasizing meaningful cultural and religious values.

***Wasting food is haram (sinful).*** Influenced by cultural and Muslim religious beliefs, all of the participants strongly believed that the self-feeding practices in the child care centres caused too much waste. Although each of my participants was raised in a fairly affluent family, they were very much cognizant of the context of their upbringing. Coming from African countries where food is scarce for many, seeing food being wasted was particularly disturbing. Asmaa described this conflict: “At the day care, they (the children) spilled all the food on the floor. It's not good. Yeah, they (the educators) don't care. They clean it up and they have a small pail where all the food the children didn't eat goes and everything goes to the garbage”

(Interview, February 19, 2013). There is also a religious component to the cultural value attached to food. As Bijou explained: “In the Muslim religion we don’t waste the food and we make sure we eat our food because they say it's *haram* (sinful)” (Interview, February 28, 2013). Further to this, Geena stated that food “is something from God and we don’t waste it in our religion” (Interview, February 28, 2013). After observing the children spill their food in the child care centre, Ameena commented: “We don't spill like that. Some very religious people they don’t spill ANYTHING...You can’t leave anything on the plate. You have to clean the plate, you have to eat everything” (Interview, February 28, 2013). The participants recognized the importance of helping the children eat based on their own cultural and religious values around wasting food. As Geena explained, religion represents “a red line” which cannot be crossed: “I have basic things I have to teach my children and here I find the opposite. That is why it is so hard. But every single thing related to religion is number one, red line” (Focus group discussion, December 13, 2013). A course of action formed around these values, then, might entail teaching and modelling culturally congruent practice by feeding or helping the children.

***Silent mealtimes.*** Silence during mealtimes is enforced in their families and cultures both because of safety concerns and for religious reasons. For example, Asmaa described how “mealtime is quiet time in my country because we believe that when you talk when you eat sometimes you choke and you cough when that happens...yeah, you can choke” (Interview, February 19, 2013). While choking is one concern, religion strongly influenced their beliefs about maintaining relative silence. Geena told me: “we don’t talk during the meal time...in our religion during meal time you have to respect the meal and respect the food in front of you” (Interview, February 28, 2013). For Ameena, a little bit of small talk is okay, but “you disrespect the food if you talk too much” (Interview, February 28, 2013). In the college

classroom, the participants respected food by never eating during class time and maintaining relative quiet until they were finished eating lunch. In my field observations, I noted that the participants and immigrant educators were silent during meal times, except when serving the children, in sharp juxtaposition to non-immigrant educators who maintained a constant stream of conversation with the children (FN, February 5, 2013). This cultural and religious practice was one that they were personally able to bring into the placement sites as their placement supervisors did not exhort them to speak during mealtimes.

**Responses to discontinuities in care practices.** While participants perceived the weight of authority of this discourse, which is being taught in the program and operationalized in the field placement sites, it had not yet been made internally persuasive to them. Since caring is excluded from occupational or professional standards, as interpreted in these sites, the participants experienced conflict with respect to whether or not they “ought to” act to preserve their care practices. When confronted by these discontinuities between their own cultural and religious beliefs about care and the practices in the site, they responded in one of two ways.

*Rejecting own understandings of care in favour of dominant practices.* On some occasions, the participants chose to engage in what Taggart (2011) refers to as performative professionalism. That is, they suppressed their own beliefs and performed the role expected of them in the specific community of practice. In an informal conversation with the researcher, Fatima and Ameena described this tension:

Fatima: I didn't try to feed the children. I saw maybe they (the educators) didn't want you to feed them.

Ameena: We didn't try. I didn't want to change. You know the problem...

Fatima: You teach them, and then you leave.

Ameena: When I leave—imagine!

Fatima: You don't want to change their way.

(FN, February 19, 2013).

Geena further elaborated on this issue:

I know the system is different here. If I have a day home, I can do something different, but I have to go with what is here...I can't do anything because this is the system and the rules for day care...if you have rules, you know, guidelines, you can't do the opposite of that. You can't follow your heart everywhere. I know my obligations (Interview, February 28, 2013).

Obligation to her own beliefs and values, then, is eclipsed by her obligation to professional standards within this child care centre. It should be noted, though, that in view of the expectation of self-feeding in the child care centre, Geena vowed to the class and instructor: “if I have an 11 or 12 month old child I *can't* put them in day care” (Field notes, February 19, 2013). Ameena likewise placed her three young children in family child care because she felt they “need attention” to “eat well” (Interview, October 3, 2012).

***Subverting dominant practices: Acts of defiance.*** As I observed in my field visits, other times participants openly or surreptitiously ignored dominant practices and enacted their own care practices in spite of the educator's strictures. Bijou, placed in an infant room, was permitted to help the children eat, except for the child with Down's Syndrome mentioned previously who was over a year old. Even though she was highly visible in the tiny space, I observed her feeding the child. She later declared: “I don't listen when they say that. I just go and feed the boy. I don't care if they tell me not to. I have to feed this boy. I was really worried about that little boy. It's hard to watch a child not eat” (Interview, February 28, 2013). Extending this notion into other

“self-care” activities, Asmaa consistently defied the orders of her field placement supervisor to help children dress to go outdoors:

Asmaa tries to help one of the girls get ready to go outside. The educator admonishes Asmaa, saying “she can do it herself.” In view of the supervisor, Asmaa tosses the snow pants to the girl and exhorts her “do it yourself, do it yourself.” The girl cries. Asmaa surveys the group, then moves around the corner out of view of the educator. She then fully dresses the child (Field notes, February 5, 2013).

When I asked her if she did this often, she replied: “Every day I hide. I go to that place. She (the educator) says, ‘Asmaa, don't help them.’ I say ‘okay’ and I help them. I go and hide (laughs)...I don't like them to feel cold. I think of my own daughter” (Interview, February 19, 2013). Once Asmaa is able to apprehend the children's reality—being improperly dressed and getting cold—as a possibility for her own daughter, she felt compelled to enact her own care practices. These acts were not subconscious realizations of their usual practices, then, but were examples of intentional, albeit sometimes covert, challenges to dominant practices they perceived as uncaring. When confronted with moral issues in practice, both Bijou and Asmaa acted to preserve or maintain their care practices in accordance with their cultural and religious beliefs and values.

## **Discussion**

In this study, expressions of participants’ care practices were almost exclusively expressed during self-care activities, especially mealtime practices, revealed through their actions and disclosures of instances where educators “don't care” in field placement sites. Based on their own beliefs and values, the participants believed that the children should receive healthy sustenance (hot meals and warm milk) in appropriate quantities, with those children being seen

as more vulnerable being given additional care, and that the educator's role was to ensure the children actually ingested the food to ensure their well-being. For the participants, though, spiritual well-being through the promotion of religious and cultural values, such as sharing, and assumed dominance over physical well-being; it is the essence of care. When I asked participants about my interpretations of the data, Geena explained this further: “religion is number one and you get all the morals and values inside the religion...everything else is inside” (Interview, September 13, 2013). As explained by Ansari (2008), Islam “embraces criteria and values, attitudes, customs, and manner in all reaches of human concern and relationship” including food selection and preparation, table manners, and meal etiquette (p. 3). The Quran also pronounces that children have a right to health and proper nutrition (UNICEF, 2005). Consistent with these teachings, Geena maintained that the first pattern—care as ensuring children's health and well-being— is actually situated within the second—care as teaching cultural and religious values—as the Quran prescribes these day-to-day actions and practices. In other words, there is always pedagogical intent when feeding a child; a pedagogy that is shaped by religion and prioritized above enactments of care as hot meals and warm milk and care as nurturance. The participants knew that they could not “teach” religion in child care programs, but it was impossible to banish their values and beliefs entirely as these shaped their responses to, and opinions of, the dominant practices in the field placement sites.

The authoritative discourse in ECEC entrenches the goal of aiding children’s development of independence by promoting self-care in feeding and dressing. In these particular communities of practice, the authoritative discourse around mealtime practices was received as a monologue:

Monologue is finalized and deaf to the other’s response, does not expect it and does not acknowledge in it any *decisive* force. Monologue manages within the other, and therefore

to some degree materializes all reality. Monologue pretends to be the *ultimate word* (Bahktin, 1984, p. 293).

In many instances, the educators in these sites were so adamant that children feed themselves that they foreclosed on caring altogether. The somewhat vague government regulations around mealtimes had been re-interpreted within these communities of practice in specific ways and reified in their policies and practices (Wenger, 1998). The students were then expected to unquestioningly assimilate interpretations of a discourse that, to them, was “alien” (Bahktin, 1981).

Bahktin (1981) contended that understanding of an unfamiliar discourse is to be formed dialogically; it is drawn into the individual’s own conceptual system to establish areas of consonance and dissonance and then is interwoven with their own understandings. While these students entered into such dialogues internally, they were denied the opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogues with their supervisors in order to negotiate their joint enterprise or enrich the discourse with elements their own understandings. They lacked contextual information about the families, the children, and the evolution of these particular practices over time. Without having such discussions and negotiations with their supervisors, Wenger (1998) believed that the student would be disadvantaged in terms of gaining full access to the community and its practice. Consequently, only the students’ own care discourses seemed to be internally persuasive to them. This positioning is problematic because on the one hand they could not care for these particular children without being perceived as unprofessional or incompetent. On the other hand, to not care when a child’s need for assistance was so apparent led the participants to experience distress.

Care is often subsumed beneath educative practices, yet is identified by many educators as integral to their work, but this tensionality is particularly acute for immigrant/refugee women due to the wholesale exclusion of their own understandings of care from the authoritative discourse. These students seemed to be ontologically divided between their own cultural and familial care practices and knowledges, and those that were valued in each child care centre community of practice— they were divided from themselves as Packer and Goicoechea (2000) contend. This division is something the participants felt intensely as they separated from the selves they were “back home” and the selves they needed to be to fit into the new community. Therefore, in the field placement, they had to simultaneously negotiate how to belong in the community while still being true to their cultural and religious selves. Consistent with the findings in this research, Wenger (1998) maintains that individuals participate in multiple communities of practice and some of these may have conflicting forms of accountability, repertoires, and ways of engaging in practice. In order to resolve these areas of discontinuity, the individual must also form an identity that can reconcile these very different ways of caring for young children. When the educator is conceptualized as a technician who carries out predetermined, invariable care routines, the task of resolving such differences is difficult.

Although there is a dearth of research related to the experiences of immigrant/refugee educators or ECTE students, studies generally report that they enact the normative, authoritative discourse and suppress their own beliefs. In their study of immigrant educators, Adair, Tobin and Arzubiaga (2012) found that they were reticent to apply their cultural knowledges to their practice for fear of being perceived as unprofessional. Immigrant Latina educators in Wilgus' study (2006) also eschewed “clinging to tradition” within the community of practice, although they did evaluate the dominant disciplinary strategies and make conscious decisions about which

to utilize. Langford (2007) interviewed ECTE instructors and analysed textbooks and student assignments in a Canadian ECTE program. She found that instructors expected immigrant students to alter or deny their culturally constructed beliefs in favour of the authoritative discourse and, by the end of the program, most seemed to have done so. In terms of field placements, an international student participant in Ortlipp & Nuttall's (2011) exploratory study of Australian programs ultimately had to conform to the Western-based expectations of her supervisor in order to pass her practicum (Nuttall & Ortlipp, 2012; Ortlipp, 2006). Consistent with existing research, the participants in this study sometimes restrained their own beliefs and performed as “professionals,” aligning their practices to those in the community. They reluctantly submitted to the authoritative discourse though it was not internally persuasive to them. Their adherence to the dominant practices allowed them to demonstrate their competence in the community’s enterprise and repertoires as well as to potentially achieve a sense of belonging.

Acts of subversion among immigrant/refugee educators or ECTE students have not been documented. Fenech, Sumsion, and Shepherd’s (2010) research with non-immigrant educators indicated that they rejected dominant technical practices which were contrary to their own beliefs, but their participants possessed significant cultural and social capital. When confronted with situations where the participants in this study identified that care was needed, they seemed to be influenced by context and their own care traditions rather than dominant, technical interpretations of the educator’s role in their decision making processes. However, they did not simply act intuitively, but intentionally invoked their own experiences as mothers or carers in addition to their beliefs and values. Hence some participants refused to submit to the explicit authority of the supervisor when the discontinuity between the authoritative discourse and their

own internally persuasive care practices was too vast for them to reconcile with their own moral understandings and beliefs about what “must be” done, as was the case when the children were unable to feed themselves. Wenger (1998) emphasizes that mutual engagement in practice does not always imply harmony and coexistence among members (or potential members). The individual who rebels against normative practices may, in fact, have a stronger commitment to the community and its improvement than the passive conformist. These students problematized and challenged the practices of the community in order to ensure that all children had equitable access to food. In resisting the authority of their supervisors, though, these students may have been perceived as peripheral or lacking competence in the repertoires of the community, which would present a significant obstacle to their acceptance as full, legitimate members of the community.

The presumed universality of skill, knowledge, and experience in the authoritative discourse discounts the local contexts for care such as cultural and familial values and practices (Nsamenang, 2010). As Wenger (1998) has explained, a community of practice may import and adopt much of their repertoire of discourses, artifacts, and so forth, but there must also aspects that are locally produced, reflecting the members’ mutual engagement and shared commitments to the community. These research findings elucidate, from the perspectives of these participants, the intermingling of care values and justice values around ensuring that all children are “getting enough.” Moreover, they share how care might be enacted with pedagogical intent from their cultural and religious perspectives; information that enhances educators’ work with Muslim children and their families. The findings challenge decontextualized, uniformly applied, technical enactments of Western theory and practice which effectively silence “diverse individual practice” (Urban, 2008, p. 140). Through dialogue, members should be able negotiate

the community's enterprise and repertoires and infuse their practice with their own knowledges with the goal of improving practice (Wenger, 1998). Immigrant/refugee educators must be authoritatively recognized as the holders of knowledge with respect to children from similar backgrounds so they can legitimately integrate these understandings into their practice. When constructions of professionalism not only honour care, but multiple perspectives of care, then there is promise for meaningful and equitable inclusion of diverse families' values, beliefs, and practices in ECEC settings.

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## CHAPTER SIX

### Overview and Implications

This concluding section will first address each of the research questions in relation to the findings. While the paper-based dissertation format was an effective means of organizing the substantial quantities of data collected in this ethnographic study, it has some limitations in terms of the presentation of these data. I have included additional data in this concluding chapter to further illuminate the connections between the questions, findings, and theoretical and conceptual frameworks, as well as to draw in the perspectives of students whose voices were not present in the papers. Then I will advance implications and recommendations for early childhood education policy, teacher education programs, and practice.

### Overview of Findings

**Understandings of the authoritative discourse.** The first research question asks: “What understandings do the immigrant/refugee women enrolled in this ECTE program construct of the authoritative discourse in ECE?” For the majority of the students, this ECTE program represented their introduction to the authoritative discourse of ECE, and throughout the year they navigated new ways of speaking, acting, and being alongside young children. In their coursework, the students ascribed great authority to the various written texts in the program; learning guides, textbooks, handouts, and pamphlets. Consistent with this view, a third of the participants interviewed at the end of the year expressed concern that there were pages in the texts that were not being taught in class, as Sue explained:

In the first term we covered almost all of the pages in the learner guides then in second term we skipped a lot of pages. I thought these were important and we should learn them. If they don't have time, maybe give it for homework (Interview, June 11, 2013).

As discussed in Chapter 3, in spite of the instructors' efforts to be inclusive of the student's experiences, the authority of the written texts coupled with the instructors' modelling of desirable practices gave the students the impression that the only "experience" that was seen to count in the field was that which was gained in the ECTE program—particularly their own specific program. The perceived hegemony of the authoritative discourse was thus received as a *monologue*, as explained by Bahktin (1984):

Monologue is finalized and deaf to the other's response, does not expect it and does not acknowledge in it any *decisive* force. Monologue manages within the other, and therefore to some degree materializes all reality. Monologue pretends to be the *ultimate word* (p. 293).

When Leylo, Jasmine, Geena, and Ameena compared themselves to students from a local university who had not come to placement equipped with pedagogical tools for using with the children, they proclaimed that they had "more experience" than these other students (FN, February 19, 2013). However, they referenced only their more recent professional experience, not their own past experiences as mothers or teachers by this point in the program. Some students even began to make connections between this discourse and their parenting in the Canadian context. Leylo affirmed that she gained experience "not just to work in day care, but also I learned how to deal with my kids" which suggested that she was discounting the knowledges she personally had accrued through mothering (Interview, June 17, 2013).

By the end of the year, the students undeniably came to believe that they had to take on the authoritative discourse or, in Ameena's words, "you do how they teach you (in the ECTE program)" in order to become a professional teacher (Interview, February 28, 2013). As evidenced by the surreptitious nature of their acts of defiance on field placement, they

understood that their own practical, cultural knowledges were construed as unprofessional in the community of practice. That is, they would not become members if they were not able to appropriate the shared repertoire of discourses, tools, concepts, and practices constitutive of the community of practice and become accountable to its joint enterprise (Wenger, 1998). While this finding is consistent with views expressed by participants in other studies, this research is unique in documenting the processes by which these immigrant/refugee students arrived at this realization.

In a Vygotskian (1978) view, learners actively construct knowledge through their engagement in activities alongside others within the sociocultural context. Accordingly, I have come to apprehend that the question that might better be asked is “*How did these students form understandings of the authoritative discourse?*” as this question encapsulates the students' knowledge construction; their negotiations with the authoritative discourse in order to make it internally persuasive (Bahktin, 1981). Throughout the year, the students identified numerous discontinuities between what they were learning in the program and their own ways of teaching and caring for children particularly with respect to the role of the adult, hospitality, learning through play, child-centred practice, the ways of using pedagogical tools such as songs and stories, teaching and communication strategies, and the focus on fostering independence. Students may have appeared to receive the authoritative discourse as the established and accepted standard for practice, but, as accentuated in the papers, they still utilized their own knowledges and experiences to interpret and negotiate with the authoritative discourse to make aspects internally persuasive. Bakhtin (1984) contended that “To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth” (p. 293). For this reason, it

is difficult to disentangle the understandings the participants formed of the authoritative discourse from the processes employed to construct these understandings.

The observational nature of the data collection procedures made visible some of the students' dialogues with the authoritative discourse. New terminology introduced in the program such as “gross motor skills”, “learning through play”, or “open-ended activities” are embedded in the professional stratification of language—or *social language* (Bakhtin, 1981)—that is unique to these particular ECE communities of practice. The privileging of such jargon led to it becoming intertwined with the students' understandings of what it means to speak (and, by extension, act) authoritatively as a professional; to talk from within their practice instead of from outside it (Lave & Wenger, 1991). These students were confronted with two principal challenges in learning the social language of practice as outlined in Chapter 4. First, as English language learners they grappled with translating the terms as Linda clarified: “Teachers don’t say ‘fine motor skills’ and ‘gross motor skills’ (in China)—different words” (Interview, October 24, 2012). In addition, these words signify terms that were developed and entrenched within the North American sociocultural-historical context, therefore the students needed to uncover the social *heteroglossia* to access the meanings (Bakhtin, 1981).

One of the concepts that nearly every participant struggled with was the idea of open-ended versus closed-ended activities. Closely related to a learning-through-play pedagogy, open-ended activities were defined in one of their learning guides as child-directed, exploratory, allowing choices, having materials that could be used in many ways, and having no expectation of a final product or goal. In contrast, many of the students recollected very traditional school experiences “back home” where the teacher had used directive, didactic teaching approaches. Within the community of practice, Wenger (1998) posited that negotiating meaning involves two

constituent elements: reification and participation. “Open-ended activities” is an abstract term reified in the practice of the community that shapes the actions and experiences of its members; it represents ways of planning, enacting curriculum, interacting with the children, teaching, and so forth that were dissonant with the students’ own experiences of schooling. Alongside their instructor, Alisa, the students were engaged in figuring out what constituted an open-ended activity; their participation was active, social, and shaped their experience (Wenger, 1998). This process is exemplified in the discussion between the instructor and students:

Leylo shares, “As children, we usually did open-ended because we were outside.” Alisa cautions, “Just because it is outdoors, doesn’t mean it is open.” She uses hide and seek as an example of an outdoor activity that has rules and an end goal. Leylo says, “Yes, but we did more open-ended activities.” Alisa asks for an example. Leylo amplifies her explanation: “Like sometimes we made our own toys with corncobs or we played in the sand and we built houses.” Alisa states, “Those would be examples of open-ended activities because you are using your imagination to create things. In the early years we are supposed to encourage children and give opportunities to engage in open-ended activities. What happens when they go to school?” Jasmine says, “It is more closed.” Leylo explains, “They get instructions.” Alisa agrees, “It is very task oriented in elementary.” Bijou asks, “How about when they are playing at recess time? Most of the kids go into the playground and play around. Would that be open? It seems open, but then the teacher is there to supervise them.” (FN, October 17, 2012)

As the group conversed about open-ended activities, Alisa interjected questions and prompts that served as implicit mediators, bridging between Canada and “back home.” In a later class, Alisa then introduced more explicit mediators; open-ended learning centres that the students were free

to explore. Bijou later confided that this idea was very “confusing” to her, but she also continued asking questions in class over the next few weeks until she was satisfied that she understood the instructor's meanings. It is through the dynamic interplay and layering of participation and reification and the strategic use of mediational devices that the students were able to negotiate the meaning of this concept.

Sometimes these negotiations were internal as students wrestled with the new content. After struggling all year to plan and prepare open-ended activities in practice, Lotus reflected on why she found the notion to be so challenging:

I think our instructors like open-ended activities more. I think children here cultivate their creativity from open-ended activities...You don't need to expect something finished, something done. Back home, we didn't think about it. We just followed the teacher's steps and copied them. We (the students from China) were educated in the box so it's very hard for us to change (Interview, June 11, 2013).

Bahktin's (1981) work extends our understanding of Lotus' processes of making sense of the content. Words, he argued, are assimilated into one's own conceptual system; the individual finds areas of consonance and dissonance, drawing in new elements to attain meanings. In such a manner, these students would engage in dialogues between their own understandings and those advanced in the authoritative discourse; both within the self and with others. Bahktin (1986) explicated that if speaker and listener are oriented to each other to understand each others' conceptual systems then their voices and languages enter into a multivocal, dialogic relationship. Consistent with Lotus' discussion of following the teacher's steps, many students asserted that they could learn the new information, internalize it, and apply it to practice in an almost formulaic, methodological fashion. In reality, they generated new understandings through

double-voiced discourse, a “concentrated dialogue of two voices, two worldviews, two languages” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 325). Chapter 3 clarifies the instructor role in facilitating such dialogues and aiding students in bridging between cultural and professional practices. Chapter 4 then considers how these dialogues were extended into the placement sites in their interactions with the children. Previous studies have established that immigrant/refugee ECTE students submit to the authoritative discourse, but this research contributes to our understanding of how, in fact, they form new understandings in dialogue with this unfamiliar content. While the students seemed to be able to reconcile the gap between their cultural beliefs and the professional expectations in the context of their coursework, they experienced the disjuncture more acutely while on field placement.

**Impact of Discontinuities.** The second research question asks “what impact do these understandings have on their perceptions of themselves in relation to children as they negotiate their professional identities as teachers?” Wenger (1998) defined identity as a layering of events of participative, lived experiences and reification woven together as one constructs meanings. That is, the student's learning and sense making in the community is interlaced with the project of “negotiating the self” (p. 151). As discussed previously, the students in this program encountered a dissonance between that which they were learning in the program and their existing knowledges and experiences. Bahktin (1981) further explicated that this gap between authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse is also integral to the individual's process of their becoming; it is within this tensionality that the student comes to produce a new identity. Students' memberships in multiple, often divergent communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), in essence challenges them to reflect upon their ideological commitments to each community and to formulate decisions about their own positioning within each. Identity

construction thus entails some efforts at reconciliation. Some of these students' decisions vis-à-vis these commitments were made visible in their actions in field placement sites.

Following Wenger (1998), realizing an identity as a member in the community of practice—or as a legitimized, professional teacher—is closely linked to the development of competence. Such competence is attained through mutual engagement in a joint enterprise alongside both old-timers and newcomers to the community in order to develop a shared repertoire of discourse, concepts, tools, artifacts, and actions. Being on the periphery of a community of practice does not imply marginality, but rather assumes that the newcomer has access to these repertoires and enterprises. Chapter 3, for instance, demonstrates how the instructors in this program constructed bridges from students' existing understandings to help them successfully master the use of practical pedagogical tools in ways sanctioned by the community of practice. The dominant construction of a teacher as a technician, however, presumes a common knowledge and experience base and, correspondingly, an immutable professional identity that is assumed when the student demonstrates mastery in utilizing such prescribed theories and practices. However, Chapter 4 made apparent that identity formation is an ongoing process of (re)construction and authorship, not transmission and adoption; students gained competence in using tools, discourses, and so forth, but also imprinted their existing understandings on dominant practices sometimes without conscious awareness. The instructor “old-timers”, likewise, learned from their students. They elicited the students' stories and experiences and then integrated some of these new understandings into their planning and development of learning guides, thus they too became more competent in their work.

The students in this program not only acknowledged the authority of the practices they were learning about in the program, but believed themselves fully capable of learning and

operationalizing these in the field. They felt that the “experience” they had amassed during their studies allowed them to exhibit competence in the activities of the community of practice and move toward full, legitimized membership. Most of the students seemed to conceive of their role as being one of a technician but, as will be discussed in the next section, there was actually a gaping chasm between perception and reality. The participants entered the program with multiple, established identities as mothers, familial caregivers, or teachers—among others—along with corresponding notions about the adult role in teaching and caring for young children that leaked into their practice. Since identities are situated within particular sociocultural contexts, Wenger (1998) has affirmed that it is challenging to maintain one’s identity across the boundaries between very different communities of practice (such as back home and here in Canada), especially when one is striving for legitimacy through membership in the new community. In their coursework and placements, the students were expected to assume very different roles in relation to the children than they were accustomed to, but through their negotiations—as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5—sometimes they were able to bridge between and reconcile very diverse “landscapes of practice” (Wenger, 1998, p. 161). Such alignment is necessary to foster a sense of belonging and inclusion in the community. Bakhtin's concept of "outsideness"—of concurrently entering another culture while remaining outside of it—may explain how one can accomplish this without threats to one's existing identity (Emerson, 1997 cited in Marchenkova, 2005).

The participants' struggles disrupt any notion, then, that a professional identity is something that can be easily appropriated through technical enactments of specified practices. Many students appeared to reside on the borderlands (Alsup, 2006) drawing on multiple discourses as they formed their professional identities; their identities shifting depending on

contextual factors such as their own experiential knowledges, the field placement supervisor, the ages of the children, and the dominant discursive practices in the site. Moreover, fragments of the identities they had formed in the context of their prior experiences permeated their practice as they dialogued with new understandings, illustrating the fluidity and temporality inherent in identity formation. The examples presented in this dissertation imply that participants experienced the splitting of the self limned by Packer and Goicoechea, (2000); ontologically divided between who they once were and who they were becoming. As the first known ethnographic study of immigrant/refugee ECTE students, the findings in this study thus impart significant insights into how these women might author their professional identities as teachers in ECE communities of practice. If I had also been able to observe these women with their own children over the course of the program, it would have augmented these analyses of their interactions with children, thus further research in this area would benefit from such an approach.

**Interactions with the Children.** Finally, the third research question is as follows: “How does their learning in this program influence their interactions with children in their field experiences?” This question attends to the myriad ways in which the participants translated their learning from one community of practice (the ECTE program or other communities of practice to which they belong) to another (the field placement sites). The overall goal of the field placement experiences was to promote *peripherality*, or “an approximation of full participation that gives exposure to actual practice” (Wenger, 1998, p. 100). Many of the reified tools, theories, concepts, and pedagogical styles operated as what Wenger (1998) terms *boundary objects*. That is, through their use in coursework and field sites, these materials, ideas, and practices coordinated enterprises in the various communities and provided continuity for the students as they moved from one community to another. The boundary objects were standardized in the

sense that the students were able to see them used in similar ways in the different contexts; they were introduced to play materials in their coursework, for example, and then observed these same materials being used in field placement sites. Many of these objects could be used flexibly, accommodating various activities and uses depending on the activities and needs of each community of practice. As mentioned in Chapter 4, ideally peripheral participation should not only engage the newcomer, but should allow them to negotiate the enterprise and the shared repertoire of discourses, tools, actions, and concepts in use. Many of the participants had extensive experience with young children, but did not receive the impression that they were permitted to imbue the practice in these communities with their own understandings or interpretations of the authoritative discourse. For instance, they attempted to use the material boundary objects in a manner consistent with the specific ECE community of practice rather than in accordance with their own understandings. Faced with discontinuities between the ways of teaching and caring for young children advanced by the authoritative discourse and their own beliefs, values, experiences, and practices, the students exhibited responses that were highly dependent on contextual factors. Three patterns emerged from analyses of their actions: conformity to the authoritative discourse, rejection of this discourse, and authoring new hybridized practices.

*Conforming to the authoritative discourse.* Consistent with findings in previous studies, the participants did sometimes suppress their own beliefs and practices to perform as professionals in accordance with the authoritative discourse. Even though the instructors affirmed their own funds of knowledge in the program, as detailed in the third chapter, in most cases the students seemed to perceive their own practices as being for the ECTE classroom only; a bridge toward learning the professional practices they were obligated to perform on their

placements. As Geena explained, “Sometimes you have to follow your heart, but if you have rules, you know, guidelines, you can't do the opposite of that” (Interview, February 28, 2013). While some students found it challenging to conform, other students commented that they felt it would be relatively simple to change their practices. For instance, chastised by a placement supervisor for helping a three year old boy tie his shoes, Lotus, a former teacher in her home country of China, explained:

From her perspective independence is important for children, but we as caregivers often do something for them unconsciously. So maybe we have to notice that point when we work in day cares... We can be trained not to do that (help the child). After several tries we know (Lotus, Focus group, December 3, 2012).

Lotus believed that such admonishments gave her fuller access to the practices of the community, thereby allowing her to absorb, and be absorbed in “the culture of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 95).

Many students similarly contended that they were capable of changing their ways of being with the children and, by extension, themselves in order to adhere to the dominant teachings in their program and practices in the field placement sites. At this particular time and place in the trajectories of their professional development, students like Geena and Lotus perceived that conformity would allow them to demonstrate their competence, moving them from the periphery to the centre of practice within the community. As Wenger (1998) contends, a regime of mutual accountability arises within the joint enterprise of members that defines:

...what matters and what does not, what is important and why it is important, what to do and not to do, what to pay attention to and what to ignore, what to talk about and what to leave unsaid, what to justify and what to take for granted, what to display and what to

withhold, when actions and artifacts are good enough and when they need improvement or refinement (Wenger, 1998, p. 81).

Aspects of the regime such as regulatory frameworks are reified in practice, but the members also negotiate and shape what they do. For newcomers, in particular, aligning one's practices to be accountable to the regime reflects one mode of belonging in a community, even though Wenger (1998) states that sometimes this is achieved through coercion or obligation. I would concur that this was the case for a number of the participants. Geena, among other students, indicated that she felt obligated to act in specific ways, while the examples in chapter five illustrate how the students were sometimes implicitly or explicitly barred by placement supervisors from caring for young children in ways that deviated from the dominant practices of the community.

These students' comments, though, allude to some of the complexities inherent in negotiating belonging in an existing early childhood community of practice underpinned by very different values, beliefs, and worldviews. When speaking of her own practices, Lotus mentioned that she enacted these "unconsciously", as though to do so was a lapse from reason. Geena referred to restraining herself from "following her heart." These remarks imply that they felt a need to exercise control and reign in their own innate, intuitive, and tacit ways of being with children in obligation to the "rules". If rational thought is privileged then such emotional expressions of the "heart" are relegated to the realm of the irrational or unprofessional (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999). Their statements are therefore reflective of the debates in the larger field about the division of education and care in ECE. While both students maintained that it was possible to effectively "be trained" to suppress their own knowledges and understandings in favour of the normative practices, the fourth paper shows that compliance came at great

personal cost to participants when it meant acting against their own beliefs about care. After graduation, some participants found it too difficult to sustain a façade of “professional behaviour” in the workplace in view of these conflicts and either did not pursue a career in child care, or opened a family day home where they would have more control. For example, Ameena obtained a position in a child care centre and also enrolled her three preschool-aged children there. After less than two months, she resigned and pulled her children out of the centre. While she felt herself able to adhere to dominant practice, she increasingly became disturbed at the thought of her own children being cared for in a manner that was so dissonant with her own beliefs.

*Rejecting the authoritative discourse and enacting one's own practices.* The ethnographic methodology used in this study allowed me to observe how participants were not solely bound to “doing what they were taught to do”, nor was it a straightforward process. Rather, this research elucidated two additional patterns that have not previously been identified in studies of immigrant/refugee ECTE students; discarding dominant practices in favour of their own practices and integrating their learning in the program with their existing practices. First, the participants sometimes rejected the authoritative discourse to enact their own personal and cultural ways of caring for and teaching young children. As limned in Chapter 5, such acts of subversion were generally manifested in relation to their own notions of care, formed in the context of their cultural and religious beliefs and values as well as their own prior child care experiences. When they completed their field placements in infant or toddler rooms, they sometimes drew upon their “mothering discourses” or practical knowledges, carrying out the practices they believed to be ethically and morally correct when caring for the children. However, for the Muslim women, religion teachings were foundational to these practices.

Resonant with other scholarship, the findings indicated that love, emotion, and care were critical in their work with young children, but this study is distinctive in elucidating the centrality of both religion and culture in informing one's understandings of care. These understandings were mobilized with aims of justice—ensuring equality for all children—as well as with pedagogical intent. Wenger (1998) describes how communities of practice are never homogenous; they bring together a collection of individuals from diverse backgrounds that may advance conflicting notions about how to engage in practice. Rebellion can reveal an even deeper commitment to the community of practice. In these instances, the participants believed that the existing practices were “uncaring” and, while it might have been easier to acquiesce, instead they sought to improve practice in the community. While immigrant/refugee women are often disempowered in Alberta ECE settings, occupying marginalized positions as Child Development Assistants, this study illustrated instances and ways in which these women were able to exercise agency in their everyday interactions with children that ultimately altered their practice.

*Authoring hybrids of practice.* More commonly, the participants authored new voices representing an integration of the dominant practices taught in their ECTE program with their own personal and cultural practices. Observations of the participants with the children made visible their conversations and negotiations with the authoritative discourse. Wilgus (2006) found in her research on disciplinary strategies used by immigrant teachers that they drew from both personal and professional repertoires, consciously making choices about which to use and which to discard. In this research, however, the participants were largely unaware of many of the practices from “back home” that filtered into their interactions with the children, as they generally believed that they were “following the rules” (unless they actively made the choice to defy them). As described in Chapter 4, interactions with the children often seamlessly blended

practices deriving from both contexts; representing dialogical constructions (Bakhtin, 1981). The identification of these two additional patterns is a very significant contribution to the existing literature; suggesting that, resonant with social constructivist perspectives on learning, immigrant/refugee ECTE students are not simply passive recipients of the authoritative discourse, but rather consciously and unconsciously navigate the contours of practice in relation to their own beliefs, values, experiences, and knowledges.

One of the main limitations of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks used in this study became evident in relation to this final question. Assessments of the participants' rejections of, or adherence to, the strictures of the authoritative discourse governing practice in the field placement could be linked to the concepts of communities of practice and dialogism. However, there was a range of diversity inherent in the values, beliefs, and experiences of the members and prospective members of the community of practice. It was difficult to deconstruct the power relationships both within the classroom and in field sites to fully understand whose interests were privileged and whose were subordinated within each community. The ways in which instructors and supervisors exerted power over the students and, concomitantly, how individual students asserted their agency could not be fully analyzed. Poststructuralist or critical theory may have allowed for a more nuanced analysis of the field placement data in consideration of the issues of power underlying these interactions.

### **Implications and Recommendations for Policy**

**Regulatory frameworks.** This research brought to the foreground how ECE policies were operationalized in practice in field placement sites. The existing regulatory frameworks and, especially, the accreditation standards must be more inclusive of diverse perspectives and practices. Teachers are exhorted to “respect” home practices without being given any indication

of how this is to be accomplished. In the absence of any information or examples about how one might be more inclusive of diverse families' home practices, experiences, knowledges, and languages, the authoritative discourse becomes the default in practice. As illustrated in Chapter 5, the lack of flexibility and attention to the local contexts of practice in the authoritative discourse can lead teachers to interpret the standards with such rigidity that all common sense about what is in the best interests of the individual child is lost. It was disturbing both for the students and for me to observe teachers in the accredited field placement sites blindly enacting practices that exhibited a complete lack of care for the health and wellbeing of some of the children, yet we felt powerless to institute changes in the requisite standards. While the family day home placement sites also adhered to these standards, the students did not report such concerns, suggesting that teachers employed in a larger community of practice are monitored and controlled to a greater extent by external validation team members, licensing officers, colleagues, and directors. This study confirms the importance of having regulatory frameworks that are more adaptive to the local contexts of practice. Additionally, it may be necessary to aid ECE stakeholders in understanding how one might attend to diversity in practice. The accreditation standards, for instance, would be greatly enhanced by a series of stories from within the field, detailing a range of approaches that have been used to bring home practices into the ECE setting, as well as approaches used in working with diverse children and families. These vignettes should be generated by culturally and linguistically diverse teachers working in a variety of programs in urban and rural contexts in recognition of their funds of knowledge. After my pilot study, I wrote a report to justify the participants' blending of cultural and dominant professional practices for the benefit of the accreditation validation team and they subsequently approved the centre's accreditation. Licensing officers and accreditation validation team members need professional

development or guidance in interpreting the practices used in sites populated by culturally and linguistically diverse teachers and children.

**Pathways to certification.** In the Alberta context, there is a dearth of statistical data or other official documentation on immigrant/refugee women in the ECE workforce. This study provided insights into these women's reasons for choosing a career in ECE, as well as the obstacles they experienced (or will experience) in advancing their levels of certification. A third of the participants enrolled in this particular program were teachers in their home countries who opted for early childhood in part because elementary and secondary teaching certification was an unattainable goal. Sue, who was a teacher for 23 years back home in China, explained: “I want to teach students, but because my language is not good enough I can’t teach school students” (Interview, October 5, 2012). Bijou likewise commented: “I can’t be a (school) teacher, but at least I can be something” (Interview, October 22, 2012). Yet, although ECE is more accessible than school teaching, the current language requirements<sup>15</sup> for certification at the Child Development Worker or Supervisor level invalidates the credentials of many educated and experienced teachers from non-western countries. Even those women who are certified to teach in their home countries languish at the Assistant level, earning just above minimum wage and reporting to supervisors who often have fewer years of post-secondary studies and experience than they do. Certainly this was the case for some of the participants in this study. Women who migrated to Canada as refugees are especially disadvantaged, unable to obtain their university transcripts and other documentation needed to advance their standing. Moreover, the language requirements ensure that many of these women will never be able to gain access to post-

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<sup>15</sup> Applicants are required to have achieved a score of 7 or higher on the Canadian Language Benchmark Assessment or have completed a college level English or French course to move to the Worker or Supervisor levels. However, some students who had completed the requisite college coursework in their home countries were denied higher levels of certification. It seemed as though English courses taken in some countries held more value than those taken in others.

secondary studies to achieve a higher level of certification and, correspondingly, pay rate. While it is undeniably important that teachers be able to model appropriate language to young learners, the privileging of English and French as the only languages worth knowing when teaching young children elides the linguistic capital possessed by immigrant, refugee, and Aboriginal teachers. This study illuminated some of the deficiencies in the current system of certification in Alberta.

There needs to be more diverse pathways for achieving certification and for entering ECTE programs. In Alberta, there is an overarching and justifiable concern with enhancing the qualifications of the ECE workforce (Muttart Foundation & Langford, 2014). The findings in this study indicate that immigrant/refugee students are best supported in achieving their goals in a program designed especially for them with instructors who have extensive experience working with diverse learners. While it is beneficial for all students in ECTE programs to learn alongside classmates bringing a diversity of experiences and knowledges, immigrant/refugee students should have the choice and opportunity to commence their studies in a program intended to bridge them into conventional post-secondary programs. Such programs should not operate under a deficit model, but rather must be underpinned by the notion that these students bring funds of knowledge to their work that might better be accessed in a smaller class with a structure and course content tailored to their experiences. For instance, the students enrolled in the program under study did not need as high a level of English to enrol in this program as they would have needed in a typical post-secondary program (a Canadian Language Benchmarks score of 4 or 5 as opposed to 8 or 9) therefore it provided options to women who might not have been eligible for admission to other programs. As newcomers to Canada, many of the participants were also able to access full government funding for “job training” which reduced many of the barriers to entering the program and was instrumental to their successful completion.

Unfortunately, the current structure of the certification requirements means that despite their ten months of full time study most of the participants in my study could only be certified at the Assistant level. More than half of the participants hoped to continue their studies beyond this program to raise their certification levels, but were disillusioned to find that the only option for them was a privately run job training college having a very poor reputation in the field. As it stands, there are many systemic barriers to immigrant/refugee women's full participation and advancement in the field of ECE. At the very least, there should be an intermediary certification level between the Assistant and Worker levels that acknowledges the hundreds of hours some women spent learning early childhood theory and practice, either in Canada or in their home countries. Optimally, the authoritative discourse and, by extension, the regulatory frameworks and ECTE programs must be re-visioned to be inclusive of multiple ways of teaching and caring for young children; this study provides a foundation for reconceptualizing the field by bringing forth some of the funds of knowledge immigrant/refugee women bring to their work as well as key areas of tension between cultural and professional practices.

### **Implications and Recommendations for ECTE Programs and Teacher Educators**

The OECD (2013) recently confirmed the importance of studying teacher education programs in order to ascertain ways of effectively working within increasingly diverse societies:

The effectiveness of teacher training (both initial and in-service) in which special attention is devoted to social and ethnic diversity has hardly been evaluated. This is a growing issue of importance because of the greater ethnic diversity of the population many countries are facing.

Currently, immigrant/refugee teachers and teacher education students are not viewed as the sources of knowledge with respect to how to work with children from similar backgrounds, and

there is a relative lack of research into the experiences of those who enroll in ECTE programs. One of the primary contributions of this study was to generate extensive qualitative data that could inform teacher education programs serving culturally and linguistically diverse learners. The findings in this study suggest a number of ways in which individual instructors and programs can elicit these knowledges and, in turn, enhance the experiences of their immigrant/refugee students. Moreover, the findings fill the gap in the research with respect to the processes by which immigrant/refugee students might learn content and skills.

**Provide access to unfamiliar tools.** The instructors or “oldtimers” are instrumental in ensuring that student “newcomers” gain access to the “sources of understanding” in the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). While the structure of many ECTE programs assumes that students come with a common knowledge base derived from their childhood experiences, the instructors in this program recognized that their students came with varied experiences and knowledges attained in Canada or back home. Hence, the instructors provided access to many pedagogical tools—both practical and conceptual—they would encounter in the field placement or workplace. The classroom contained many toys, manipulatives, puzzles, art supplies, storybooks, and CDs with children’s music.<sup>16</sup> In addition to the more structured instructional activities, the instructors provided informal opportunities for the students to explore, play, and otherwise familiarize themselves with these materials. The students found it “different” and “difficult” because they had to “act like children”, but ultimately, though, the play was very enjoyable, satisfying, and useful for them. As Bijou commented:

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<sup>16</sup> It should be noted that the instructors also attempted to procure some materials—mainly musical instruments—that the students would find in their home countries.

It was strange to pretend to play as a child, but it was good because I could see how a child develops when we give them those materials. Some of the materials were new and I had to learn how to use those materials (Interview, June 17, 2013).

Such experiences were foreign to many students such as Jun who explained: “You know in China we just study from the book. We never try anything. It’s really helpful” (Interview, June 11, 2013). Lotus similarly enthused: “You learn more when you act like a child and show curiosity” (Interview, June 11, 2013). This learning allowed them to approach their field experiences with more confidence. Moreover, Sharon, among many other students, described how such play allowed her to “remember when I was a child”; specifically childhood games which she had long forgotten (Interview, September 26, 2012). This recollection was a common one—not only did students remember their childhoods, but they were permitted to re-enact favourite childhood activities. In this manner, not only the songs and storybook reading activities, but also some of the materials formed a bridge between “back home” and life in Canada. Awareness of such commonalities can potentially enrich their practice with children from similar backgrounds. The findings thus indicate that instructors need to understand what information and experiences their immigrant/refugee students need to learn if they are to be successful in the program, and then intentionally bring these into dialogue with the students’ own knowledges. ECTE programs must then be designed to provide all students with access to the “culture of power” (Delpit, 1995) while honouring and including students' own diverse knowledges. These diverse funds of knowledge should be disseminated beyond the ECTE classroom, and teacher educators and programs might hold workshops, orientation, or professional development sessions for local agencies as well as the directors and staff at field placement sites.

**Include the diverse knowledges and experiences of every student.** Over half of the students in this particular college were born outside of Canada. Yet, college-wide events, ostensibly designed to foster cross-cultural understanding, privileged normative Christian holidays and customs. For instance, although one event for students was advertised as a “holiday” party, the graphics were Christmas-themed and Santa and presents were the main attractions. The lobby, offices, and classrooms were adorned with Christmas decorations, and many instructors organized Christmas parties in their classes. The students’ own traditions were only acknowledged in perfunctory ways, adhering to a “fun, food, and fashion” approach to diversity. As Hoffman (1996) explains, such an approach reduces culture to a familiar set of categories, thereby promoting “superficial learning about difference that does little to create a space for understanding self and other” (p. 552). These students received the implicit message from the institution that they needed to adapt and change in order to fit into the dominant society. Hence, all institutions should interrogate their own practices, considering whose interests are best being served.

Within the micro-context of study in the ECTE program, however, the instructors worked alongside their students to bring forth their knowledges, beliefs, values, and experiences as related to teaching and caring for young children using a variety of techniques detailed, in part, in Chapter 3. In this example, Susan sought to elicit their comments on the action song “Five Little Monkeys”:

Susan shares that she did this song with a group of Chinese immigrant children and their parents and two of the children turned their backs on her. The parents then told her it was rude to stick out one’s tongue in their culture. Susan asks the students if this is the case in

any of their cultures. Lotus and Sue explain that they don't usually stick out their tongues in China (FN, January 30, 2013).

The instructors usually demonstrated an interest in, and openness to, the students' views and practices even if these were contrary to the dominant expectations, thus the learning environment engendered a sense of security in the students. However, the instructors simultaneously made students aware of the "rules" that did not allow for flexible interpretation. Numerous lessons were structured to encourage students to share their opinions, stories, and experiences in conversation with a partner. Working from these understandings, the instructors then introduced the authoritative content and, finally encouraged the students to reflect on or dialogue with the content in relation to their own experiences with their partner or in a small group. Since a student's prior beliefs and values are greatly influential in shaping their future practice, it is essential to validate these in the program (Gupta, 2006). Without such information about their students, the instructors in this program would have found it difficult to adapt the course content or pedagogical strategies to accommodate their individual learning styles and needs.

Furthermore, the findings affirm that if the instructors' approaches are monological in nature, focusing on transmission of the authoritative discourse, then students are unable to engage in dialogues with the content to make it internally persuasive. In a more conventional ECTE program, the voices of immigrant/refugee students are typically silenced or unacknowledged as these learners come to understand that what they bring is "different" than the norm are thus anxious about sharing (see, for example, Moles, 2014). Instructors in such programs must exercise intentionality in planning and teaching to ensure that the voices of all of their students are heard. Finally, the written texts used in this program were imbued with an overriding authority in the students' own minds, even though the instructors used many other resources in

the classroom. This study demonstrated that the content of the textbook has the capacity to unravel many of the gains being made in class to bring students' own knowledges to the forefront. As Langford's (2007) analyses of ECE textbooks suggest, "differences in deeper beliefs and practices of the good early childhood educators are viewed as sources of bias rather than strength..." (p. 341). Instructors need to interrogate the content of textbooks, considering how diversity is represented (or marginalized) and the various ways in which this content might be interpreted by their students. In this program, for instance, the instructors developed guides—to be used alongside standard texts—that included some reflective exercises designed to connect students' own cultural knowledges, experiences, and practices with the content.

**Ensure continuity in instructors and course groupings.** If instructors are to include their students' experiences in meaningful ways, it is necessary for them to have an opportunity to get to know the students. The students enrolled in this particular program formed close attachments to each of their instructors and were extremely distressed when one of their instructors moved to a different program at the end of the first semester. It took several months for them to adapt to the replacement instructor, and students complained that she "spoke too quickly" and "used big words." Bijou explained that these issues were overcome once the new instructor formed relationships with them: "When she started she had a different style so we got kind of confused, but then we got it so that was good. She needed time. She needed to get to know everybody" (Interview, June 17, 2013). Immigrant/refugee students, in particular, benefit from stability and continuity in their educational experiences by having fewer instructors for their courses or one instructor who remains with them throughout the program provided, of course, that the instructor has the ability to work effectively with diverse learners. Moreover,

being with the same classmates in every course was advantageous to the students, giving them a sense of security and closeness and helping them build connections.

**Tailor instructional approaches to individual learners.** Exposito and Bernheimer (2012) have confirmed that more scholarly attention needs to be given to the modes of delivery used in programs for diverse ECTE students, and the current study provided valuable insights into promising pedagogical approaches. This research elucidated the need for a diversity of approaches when teaching immigrant/refugee students. The experience of the instructors in this program themselves was instrumental to the students' learning. All of the instructors had cross-cultural or international teaching experience coupled with coursework on the theory and practice of teaching English as an Additional Language (EAL). Thus, they brought extensive expertise with respect to how to support the learning of their immigrant/refugee students, and my analyses revealed they used many of the "best practices" in EAL instruction (see Alberta Teachers of English as a Second Language, 2009). Having observed these instructors' interactions with the students over the course of the year, I maintain that all teacher educators would benefit from similar types of training or professional development on how to work with English language learners. I also concur with Lim, Maxwell, Able-Boone, & Zimmer (2009) who recommended that program recruit and retain non-white faculty members to increase the likelihood of meaningful approaches to diversity.

In spite of this program having a fairly standard curriculum and course readings consistent with the authoritative discourse, the instructors seemed attuned to individual students' strengths and needs, as seen in their ways of scaffolding. In the final interviews, the students overwhelmingly asserted that their instructors explained difficult concepts in a comprehensible, detailed, step-by-step manner; effectively using mediational devices to enhance learning. They

seemed to intuit the vocabulary that students might struggle with based on their past experiences working with English language learners. They used actions or explanations to convey meanings, clarified challenging concepts, and provided access to meanings that might be difficult for cultural outsiders to decode. The manner in which the instructors augmented these explanations with examples from their experiences as teachers and as mothers allowed the students to form connections between the narratives and difficult course content. As Lotus declared: “We can remember the stories” (Interview, June 11, 2013). The students appreciated the repetition inherent in the structure of the program as key concepts were infused throughout several courses. In addition to the academic supports available in the college, students in this program had access to a one-on-one English tutor who worked with them individually within the class to explain difficult grammatical concepts. Students in other programs would benefit from similar supports.

As discussed in Chapter 3, instructors also need to be flexible and creative about introducing varied ways to scaffold the students’ learning within their individual zones of proximal development. These particular instructors were so skilled at scaffolding that they did so without conscious awareness and were surprised when I mentioned how prevalent it was as an instructional approach. The use of scaffolding connected theory to practice, modelling to students an instructional strategy they could eventually use with the children. Moreover, when a student asked an instructor for assistance, she would sometimes refer her to a classmate, explicitly acknowledging the expertise of that student. Students eventually began using one another as resources first and then asking the instructor. The one student who was a native English speaker was especially in demand when students had questions related to grammar or spelling. The instructors were gradually able to withdraw their support, then, as students either gained the necessary skills or began to rely more on these expert peers. Such peer support was

enhanced by the prevalence of partner or small group work in the program as it allowed each student to identify who might be able to assist them.

**Aid students in building connections and resources.** During their schooling back home, many of the students shared that they were accustomed to whole group, teacher-directed instruction coupled with assigned work to be completed individually. An informal analysis of each day's instructional time (about 270 minutes) was conducted to understand the amount of time students spent in different learning configurations on a typical day in this program. The analyses revealed that students spent an average of: 97 minutes or 36% of the day in whole group activities or instruction (with instructor "talk" comprising less than a third of that time), 70 minutes or 26% of the day working in pairs, 62 minutes or 23% of the day in small group work, 25 minutes or 9% of the day was spent in individual activity (usually silent reading), and 16 minutes or 6% of the day was used for transitional activities (waiting for students, moving into groups, cleaning up, preparing materials). Therefore, the majority of the day was spent in direct interaction with other students. In sum, classes were characterized by student dialogue rather than instructor monologue. In the final interviews all but two of the students expressed that they preferred working in small groups to working alone or with a partner. As Leylo explained, this structure allowed for sharing: "If you need help because you don't know something, maybe another person knows and what that person doesn't know, maybe I know. We share that information" (Interview, June 17, 2013). Similarly, Geena stressed: "When we are together we share different stories and ideas and every day you learn new things from others." (Interview, June 19, 2013). Students in this program were not discouraged from discussing course content in their home languages, and it was common to hear someone translating for a classmate even while

the instructor taught. However, the instructors encouraged them to form cross-cultural groups in which English was a common language or arranged them in such groups.

The varied instructional groupings had benefits that extended beyond the classroom. Students formed cross-cultural bonds and friendships, sharing information and resources related to navigating aspects of their lives in Canada. Lotus commented that working with women from many countries had prepared her for “cooperating with others” and “working as a team” in multicultural child care centres (Interview, June 11, 2013). Anisef, Sweet, and Adamuti-Trache's (2009) study certainly supports the efficacy of aiding immigrants in building this *bridging social capital*—social capital acquired through connections with persons from different backgrounds to access resources which would otherwise be unavailable to them. These social networks allow immigrants to build connections and gain greater access to information and resources in the host country than if they only associate with people from their own cultural communities.

**Attend to diversity in normative understandings about how to be a student.** Finally, this research pointed to the need to attend to some of the cultural norms and values around how to be a college student. This heterogeneous group of students came with very diverse school and post-secondary experiences, thus they needed assistance in adapting to some of the dominant practices. The North American orientation to time was evident in this program in relation to assignments as well as in the actual classes where instructors were pressed to cover large quantities of material on a very tight schedule. It was challenging for instructors to be “on-time” when they needed closely attuned to the students’ body language, interrupting the flow of conversation to check that they understood a word or concept or to permit students to share stories and form connections to personal experience. Many of the time-induced pressures were beyond the instructors’ control, imposed by college deadlines and the timetabling software

(PeopleSoft); they were caught between finishing “on-time” and being responsive to their students. Immigrant/refugee students, in particular, need additional time to make sense of the unfamiliar content. This dilemma points to the need for a flexible, emergent curriculum rather than rigid program and course structures and timelines, thus assigning agency to instructors in deciding which content and skills are essential and which are not.

In contrast to the orientation of the program, many of the students experienced difficulty conceptualizing how to organize their time and materials.<sup>17</sup> The instructors tended to space out due dates in a logical manner so the students could map out their time, but many students did not plan in a linear, sequential fashion. The instant a new due date was written on the board, then, many students would immediately begin working on that assignment even if it was not due for a few weeks. They simultaneously laboured on or fretted about, all of the assignments posted by their instructors regardless of when they were due. Although the instructors offered reassurance to students that they had time and aided them in organizing their tasks, fewer than one third of the students told me that they did not worry when they had a lot of assessments due. These particular students all had previous experience in post-secondary studies and seemed accustomed to organizing their time to meet deadlines. As Sue explained: “I’m organized, so I don’t mind” (Interview, June 11, 2013). All of the other students described feeling “frustrated,” “confused,” “worried,” “anxious,” or “stressed out” when they had a lot of assignments to finish. Bijou described her feelings as follows: “I can’t sleep and just think about it all the time. I can’t handle a million things at the same time. I panic” (Interview, June 17, 2013). One student advised teacher educators: “Don’t write lots of assignments up on the board—it’s stressful to see so much” (Interview, June 11, 2013). The organization of materials was equally problematic, as some students were unfamiliar with the supplies such as binders and needed to be taught how to

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<sup>17</sup> Notably, none of the students who originally came from China reported such difficulties.

navigate them. The instructors had them purchase binders in specific colours and then walked them through the process of adding dividers and organizing their papers, frequently referencing where to put a handout throughout the year. Lotus explained: “I really learned how to organize things here like binders. We don’t use them often there (in China)...It’s very helpful.”

(Interview, June 11, 2013). Therefore, immigrant/refugee students may need additional supports not only in academic skills such as reading and writing, but in time management and organization.

Finally, it was challenging for students to cope with the mismatch between class work—much of which was completed in small groups or partners—and those assessments that needed to be completed individually. During tests, “improper collaboration” or cheating was rampant amongst the majority of the students across all cultural groups as I noted in my reflective journal:

Once again, watching the students write their quizzes, I am struck by the disjuncture between their understandings of knowledge as something which is shared and the official college policy which stipulates that knowledge is individually held. There seems to be an implicit, unspoken understanding that one must help her table partner if she seems to be in distress, confused, or stuck. Observing them is a fascinating experience, seeing how one senses the other’s need, revealing her paper to her, pushing her quiz closer, or looking up answers and sharing them in a whispered conference. Home languages are quietly spoken as though they believe the instructor cannot accuse them of cheating if she cannot understand them....In the coursework, the instructor really supports them in working collaboratively to uncover the possibilities. They work through concepts together and help each other, but then they are expected to write their tests alone. I wonder how this affects them (FN, September 28, 2012).

Wenger (1998) asserts this is a systemic issue based on the assumption that learning is to be a decontextualized and individualized process: “To assess learning we use tests with which students struggle in one-on-one combat, where knowledge must be demonstrated out of context, and where collaborating is considered cheating” (p. 3). The disjuncture between the collaborative work in class and the individual tests was difficult for many of these students to reconcile, suggesting that ECTE programs may need to explore a range of assessment options that match the day-to-day activities in class. The majority of participants stated that they preferred it when the final course assessment was a group project rather than an exam. Moreover, this study points to the need for instructors to be aware that the students themselves may not perceive assisting a classmate as cheating, but as an extension of their collaboration.

**Achieve continuity between the institution and the field placement sites.** The field placement is a crucial part of the ECTE student experience as it bestows (or denies) the student fuller access to the sources of knowledge and practices within the community. The findings in this study showed there was a substantive gap between the theory presented in the coursework and practice as operationalized in their field placements. While the instructors were responsive to their students’ knowledges and experiences, students got the impression in field placements that these were unwelcome or marginal. There is a need to find ways to include their knowledges in placement sites and in the workplace. To achieve this goal, the knowledge base for the field needs to be contextually situated and not externally developed and imposed.

While students reported instances when they felt that their own knowledges were excluded in practice or had some small conflicts with their supervisors, none felt they experienced racism or discrimination in their field sites. Since half the participants were Muslim and wore *hijabs*, I found it to be especially encouraging that they did not perceive that they were

being discriminated against.<sup>18</sup> I believe that there are several reasons why this was the case. First, the instructor who oversaw the placements was very intentional in her selection of sites. She attempted to place students in sites with a higher proportion of culturally diverse staff where they might conceivably be able find work after graduation. If a student had a negative experience in a site, the instructor noted the concern for future consideration. In extreme circumstances, she dropped the site from their placement list, but generally she was able to continue placing students there if she was cognizant of how to circumvent similar issues. In general, then, such instances suggest that substantial reform is necessary in the field as a whole as there are systemic barriers to immigrant/refugee students' full participation in individual communities of practice.

Second, since the supervisor wields great influence over the outcome of the student's placement experience, the instructor's mindfulness in arranging placements was crucial. Previous studies have cited the need for professional development activities for supervisors aimed at enhancing their cultural competence (Ortlipp, 2006; Myles et al, 2006), and appropriately interpreting the expectations outlined in the placement handbooks in relation to their culturally diverse students (Nuttall & Ortlipp, 2012; Ortlipp & Nuttall, 2011). Not surprisingly, those students who had immigrant/refugee supervisors reported having especially positive experiences. In the first term placement, the students went to family day homes, many of which were run by immigrant/refugee teachers whose practices were more congruent with their own. For instance, when I watched Geena with her supervisor, an immigrant from Asia, I noted consistency in the ways they helped the children with self-care tasks. On one occasion, I observed the lunch procedures whereby two non-immigrant teachers sat at one table—passing food around for the children to serve themselves and then eating while maintaining a constant stream of chatter with

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<sup>18</sup> Hyman, Meinhard, and Shields (2011) write that Muslims experience more obstacles to integration in Canadian society as well as higher rates of unemployment.

the children—while Geena and the immigrant teacher sat at the other table serving the children and eating in complete silence (FN, February 5, 2013). Geena later explained:

I realize that the Canadian teacher is different from my supervisor in some things like that—independence. She said “go and dress” like you have to do everything by yourself. Even if they wanted help, she didn't do like my supervisor. My supervisor gave them more help or more support. I realized that (Interview, February 28, 2013).

It is not surprising that students placed with immigrant/refugee supervisors made comments such as “She understands me”. Given the shifting and fluid nature of students’ identity construction and how they bring existing beliefs, experiences, knowledges and values into their studies, it is important that they have supervisors who understand what they bring to their practice and perhaps can offer suggestions for reconciling conflicts between belief systems. Some students were even supervised by past graduates of the program which instilled them with more confidence. Upon completion of her second placement, Jasmine showed her classmates photos of some of the activities her field placement supervisor—who had graduated from the program three years prior—did with the children. Commenting on how “great” the activities were, she stated: “This speaks to the program. The students coming from Susan (their instructor), they're successful” (FN, February 19, 2013). Unfortunately, as Lim and 'Ole-Boune (2005) confirm, culturally diverse teachers tend to occupy support roles in classrooms and the dearth of role models and mentors serves as a barrier to the recruitment and retention of culturally diverse students in teacher education programs. Given the demography of the ECE workforce, we must actively seek out and recruit diverse field placement supervisors.

Finally, the instructors, and not the supervisors, made the final decision as to whether or not the student would pass the placement. Related studies report that power issues frequently

arise in placements (Myles et al, 2006; Nuttall & Ortlipp, 2012). The structuring in this program situated power with the instructor who was better acquainted with the student and knew more about the knowledges and experiences she brought to her teaching and, accordingly, was better positioned to understand aspects of the student's practice. Instructors might also "translate" the meanings of their student's practices to supervisors. I believe that this is an especially important consideration in structuring field placements provided the instructors themselves are culturally competent. Therefore, my findings suggest that ECTE programs should attend to these considerations, finding ways to ensure that placement sites and supervisors are equipped to work effectively with immigrant/refugee students and, ideally, arranging for students to have one of their placements with a supervisor from a similar background.

### **Implications and Recommendations for Practice**

The ability to draw upon the strengths of diverse cultural perspectives is both an asset and a challenge to multicultural societies. The need to support the learning of growing numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse children in schools and child care settings has been well-documented in policy and research (eg. NAEYC, 2009; UNICEF, 2008). In spite of this, ECE policy and programs in Canada "are not currently well-developed, well-financed, widely enough available, or coherent enough to meet their potential for ensuring that Canada is a socially inclusive society or that official commitments to a very diverse population are met" (Friendly & Prabhu, 2010, p. 13). There are many concerns that the teaching workforce has not been adequately prepared to work with diverse populations (Lim & 'Ole-Boune, 2005). Teachers play a crucial role in fostering positive attitudes and cultural identities, but negative teacher beliefs and practices are still a persistent barrier to building commitment to respect for diversity (MacNaughton, 2006). As outlined in the introduction and Chapter 1, immigrant/refugee teachers

often experience systemic barriers to full participation as their cultural and linguistic knowledges are deficitized in the field. Observing the participants on their field placements affirmed to me that they bring valuable expertise to their practice that is beneficial to the children in their care.

The early years are a formative time during which children develop understandings of diversity (Banks, 2008). Children as young as two or three years old perceive differences, and may display positive or negative attitudes toward these differences (Connelly, 2007; Jones Díaz & Robinson, 2006). According to Friendly and Prabhu (2010), ECE programs have the capacity to create environments where young children can build positive ideas about diversity, inclusion, equity, and acceptance of difference before they form negative impressions of “us” and “them”. Culturally and linguistically diverse teachers or student teachers may be instrumental in aiding non-immigrant children in constructing understandings of diversity and difference. In this research, those students who had been in Canada longer, like Fatima, intuited not only how important it would be for children to learn about other cultures, but also how they might be able to facilitate such learning: “I like to tell them a lot of stories from Somalia because many of the children here they just know this country. It's good to know another way, another people at a young age” (Interview, October 23, 2012). Unfortunately, the hegemony of the authoritative discourse in practice essentially disallowed the participants from drawing upon these understandings to teach the children about their cultures and languages.

It can be particularly advantageous to immigrant/refugee children to have teachers from similar backgrounds to theirs. Young children are forming their own cultural identities and there are indications that they defer to the mainstream culture unless ECE programs and teachers purposefully integrate multiple cultural perspectives (MacNaughton, 2006). Teachers who are members of minority groups are therefore widely considered to be desirable role models for

culturally diverse children (Doherty et al., 2003; Kennedy, 2008). However, Guyton, Saxton, & Wesche (1996) emphasize that diverse teachers' contributions are more complex than simply being role models. They may also be more sensitive to the life experiences and circumstances of students and families from similar backgrounds, and may be able to draw from their own immigration and adaptation experiences to assist them (Cho, 2011; Guyton et al, 1996; Quirocho & Rios, 2000). Adair (2009) found that immigrant teachers had much larger arsenals of approaches for working with immigrant children. In the field placement sites, I noticed that the participants were particularly skilled at discerning young children's non-verbal communication. The third paper illustrates how these participants infused their own cultural ways of teaching and communicating into their play with the children. Although mainstream ECE settings and schools claim a separation from religious beliefs and practices, in reality, Christian traditions pervade most sites. As the final paper illustrates, deeply rooted beliefs and values underlie many choices that individual teachers make in practice. The ability to draw from their resources, experiences, and understandings in this manner could allow children from the same cultural or religious backgrounds to feel more at home. The students in this particular program were all bilingual or multilingual—speaking as many as five languages—yet when they applied for positions after graduation, their linguistic funds of knowledge were not perceived as assets. The students who could speak English confidently tended to have an easier time securing positions. Only one student, Fatima, was hired specifically for her capacity to speak five languages, but she applied at a centre that only served newcomers to Canada.

One of the major contributions that immigrant/refugee teachers may make to classroom practice concerns their work with culturally diverse families. Often ECE programs are immigrant families' first point of contact with formal institutional structures in their new country (Adair,

2009). Regulatory frameworks accentuate the importance of respecting and including home practices. Immigrant/refugee teachers may be better prepared culturally and linguistically to construct such bridges, and might also have ideas about how to meet the standards while still being inclusive. They can also serve as translators—explaining the meanings behind home or centre practices to parents or colleagues—or mediators able to resolve differences arising from conflicting notions about education or care. As the final paper of this dissertation exemplified, the students had distinct understandings of care formed in the context of the cultural and religious values and beliefs that would allow them to be sensitive and responsive to children and families from the same regions in ways that non-immigrant teachers could not. Parents can explain to a teacher what they do, but it is more difficult to articulate these deeply rooted values and beliefs in ways that a non-immigrant teacher could understand. Immigrant/refugee teachers might also act as a voice for parents who may feel reticent or disempowered in regard to questioning the ways in which teachers work with their children.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **Methodology**

In this appendix I describe the methodological framing for the study in more detail. According to LeCompte & Preissle (1993), “ethnography is both a product--the book which tells a story about a group of people---and a process---the method of inquiry which leads to the production of the book” (p. 1). Ethnography is thus employed to elucidate people's stories— aspects of their experiences, their perspectives of these experiences and how they view themselves and each another (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Since I was endeavouring to understand the experiences of immigrant and refugees enrolled in an ECTE program, ethnography was a suitable methodology. This research is also a study of culture and ethnography entails a commitment to cultural interpretation (Wolcott, 1995). I studied the culture of the ECE community (or communities) of practice and how it was experienced by women from diverse cultural backgrounds. LeCompte & Schensul (2010) assert that in an ethnographic study, all elements exist within contexts of “cultural, historical, political, and social ties that connect individuals, organizations or institutions” (p. 22). In the case of this study, the participants generated the context by virtue of the locations where they engage in learning (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). I sought to understand the phenomena under study within these different milieus—field placement sites, and formal and informal learning spaces—exploring the various interrelationships (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 3). Martinovic and Dlamini (2009) point out that in a TE program an ethnographic approach is advantageous as it allows the researcher to “member-check” in the moment, asking for participants' perspectives on learning incidents as they are happening.

Ethnography also captures the intricacies of the community and traces the changes and transformations which occur over time (see Wenger, 1998). Furthermore, ethnography can be used to “explore the factors associated with a problem in order to identify, understand, and address them...” (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010, p. 36). In my case, the problem has emerged out of my own work as a teacher educator. I believe that the current paradigm does not support the knowledges culturally and linguistically diverse students bring to their learning and hope we can find ways to honour their perspectives. When I was an instructor, students' comments and stories implied there was a dissonance between their cultural knowledges and those understandings which were valued in the program. As an instructor, I was well-positioned to observe many aspects of my students' learning processes, but the precise nature of these tensions and how they were experienced by my students were not clear primarily because of my positioning as an authority. Although other researchers have touched upon this topic using various methods (Bernheimer, 2003; Gupta, 2006; Langford, 2007; Orlick & Nuttall, 2012), the problem is still underresearched and undefined (Angrosino, 2007). I felt that ethnographic methods might elicit a more in-depth understanding of the complexities which cannot easily be discerned or voiced by the participants themselves. As Britzman's (2003) research with secondary teacher education students has demonstrated, an ethnographic approach can be particularly effective when studying professional identity development.

### **The Pilot Study**

The design of my doctoral research was informed by my pilot study (data from this study was included in the first paper) which I will briefly describe here. The site for this research was an intercultural child care centre, in its second year of operation, attached to an agency serving immigrant and refugee children and families. I was asked by the agency director to deliver

professional development sessions on communication and guidance strategies to the immigrant teachers to help prepare them for accreditation. Since we were concerned that these sessions might simply impose dominant Euro-North American practices on these women, we decided on a more reciprocal approach focused on eliciting some of the women's cultural and personal perspectives on communication and guidance. I hoped to gain an understanding of the possible discontinuities or conflicts between their own understandings and the dominant practices. In order to document our work, I proposed to collect data during these sessions, completed an ethics review, and served both as principal investigator and session facilitator. I also aspired to test out and refine my first two research questions, develop possible interview questions, and enhance my skills in data collection methods, particularly facilitating focus groups, conducting interviews, observation, and taking field notes.

This study, framed by participatory action research methodology, employed multivocal, visual-cued ethnographic methods which derive from the work of educational anthropologists (eg. Spindler, 2008) and have been adapted for use for several large-scale international studies in early childhood (e.g. Tobin, Wu & Davidson, 1989; Tobin, Hseuh, & Karasawa, 2009). I facilitated three 90 minute focus group sessions with ten East African, Southeast Asian, and South Asian women employed at the centre. They met as a whole group for one session and then were divided into two smaller groups for subsequent sessions. During these sessions, I showed the women a series of video clips from ECE communication and guidance teaching videos such as the *Reframing Discipline* series and *Facing the Challenge*. Some of the techniques depicted in the clips included: a teacher and child making direct eye contact during an interaction, a teacher playing on the floor with a child and talking throughout, a teacher offering choices to a child, a teacher mediating a dispute between two children (problem solving), a teacher using “I

messages”, and a teacher acknowledging feelings while soothing a crying child. I used these video clips as stimuli for reflection and discussion around their own culturally-based means of communicating with young children in relation to dominant practice. Then, the women shared which of the dominant practices they felt comfortable using, in view of their own culturally-constructed understandings, and which they did not. Six months later we met several times to co-create a set of guidance and communication practices which resonated both with dominant practices and their own cultural practices (which were shared by many of the children with whom they work).

I gathered data in the form of observational and anecdotal field notes and audio-recordings of the discussion. After transcribing the focus group sessions, I met individually with each of the women for 30-60 minutes to check that the transcripts accurately reflected their comments. At the request of the participants, I spent eight hours observing them interacting with the children, acting as a resource in resolving guidance issues. I did not collect data during these observations because I had not included observation in my ethics application. This pilot study aided me in testing my research questions as well as in developing a plan for the main study.

### **Gaining Access**

The research site for the main study was chosen because it is a college that serves many immigrant/refugee students and offers a ten-month early childhood education certificate program that almost exclusively attracts immigrant/refugee women. As an instructor in the field, I had contacts and friendships which I was able to employ to gain access to the site. In December 2011, when I began to design this study, I approached the lead instructor, Susan, and asked if she would be amenable to having me in her class for the following year. When I told her more about the goals of the study, she readily consented and henceforth acted as my gatekeeper. She offered

to broach the subject with the other primary instructor in the program whom I had met, but did not know well. Likewise, she introduced me to the head of the ethics review board and greatly aided the process of securing institutional approval in July 2012. In terms of gaining access and collecting data, the main instructors' support and ongoing commitment to the aims of the study was crucial. We met or e-mailed numerous times over the spring and summer once they had reviewed my candidacy proposal. Due to the nature and intensity of the study, they were both somewhat apprehensive about how the research proposal might be operationalized in the classroom especially since they themselves did not yet know the students. The proposed research design was altered in consultation with the instructors and then they created formal parameters for my presence within the class; the terms of which continued to be negotiated during bi-weekly meetings during the first few months. Some of the areas of concern from the perspectives of the instructors included boundaries around my participation in the class, the start date, offering assistance to students, and my presence in the class during lunch time. Collaboratively, we attempted to plan for all possibilities and these strictures unquestionably aided me in dwelling in the classroom as a researcher rather than as an instructor.

In my initial ethics review at the research site, my request to observe the students on their field placements was denied. However, I revised my expectations, deleted references to videotaping and photographing and approached Susan again in December 2012 when the study was underway. With her permission, I re-submitted the ethics application and my visits were approved for the term two placements. Gaining access to the field placement sites was relatively uncomplicated. Susan called the child care centres where she had placed my primary participants and told the directors a little about the study. She asked if it would be okay for me to contact them directly, and all of the directors agreed. I then e-mailed each director to ask if they would

be amenable to having me come in and observe the participants and again all consented. I sent each director an information letter. I already knew two of the four directors in a professional capacity. In the meantime, I obtained police and intervention record checks so I could provide copies of these to each of the child care centre directors on my first day. Each director gave me a tour of the centre on the first day and introduced me to the staff in each room. The educators generally welcomed my presence, but did not initiate any conversations with me except occasionally to tell me what would be happening next. One educator mistook me for an instructor and began asking me about my participant's assignments. Several educators in an infant room seemed quite enthusiastic to have someone new to converse with, albeit in fragmented time intervals as I wrote furiously.

### **Site and Participants**

**Site.** While I have already described the context of this study, I defined the boundaries of the field broadly, encompassing any areas of learning both within and outside of the college. In the conduct of the study, I collected data within the college; the classroom, the computer lab, the library, the cafeteria, meeting rooms, empty offices, and common areas such as hallways. I also observed all of the primary participants while on field placements in child care centres scattered throughout the city. All of the child care centres were accredited, urban, and served families of preschool-aged children. One centre had seven rooms (100 spaces), one had five (75 spaces), one had four (60 spaces), and one had three (50 spaces). The field also included off-campus sites where I visited with participants outside of class time such as restaurants, convenience stores, grocery stores, and the site of the graduation ceremony. Finally, I frequently conversed with participants by phone during their field placements and after graduation, and occasionally by e-

mail during their job searches; thus the field incorporated these distal encounters when authorized by the participants.

Initially, I had proposed two levels of participation and consent. For the first level, in my first week in the class, I proposed to ask all students in the class for consent for one interview and to collect observational data. In early October, I then planned to approach five or six students to ask if they would consent to more in-depth data collection. The primary criteria for inclusion were that they were enrolled in this program, a first generation immigrant or refugee, and female. I also identified secondary considerations such as a willingness to share their perspectives, oral language skills, and country of origin as I hoped to research with women from similar geographical regions and cultural traditions. However, the process of recruitment unfolded in quite a different manner than I expected.

On my first day, Alisa introduced me to the class as a researcher and student from the University of Alberta, and then I introduced myself, sharing about my family, my teaching experience, and my studies. I asked if they would also introduce themselves and they shared a surprising amount of information with me, as though modelling their introductions after my own. I had organized the tables into groups and had placed art materials in the middle of each, including air-dry clay, markers, pencil crayons and paper. Following Ellis' (2006) method of using pre-interview activities, I wrote three prompts on the board and invited them to choose one to guide their exploration of the materials. These prompts were: 1. Use markers or clay to show something you liked to do as a child, 2. Use markers or clay to show a person you liked to spend time with when you were a child, 3. Use markers or clay to show a special time you shared with a child. The students were fully engaged in this activity for about 40 minutes and I had the chance to chat with each of them more informally. The resulting artwork was then photographed.

I later used the photos in the initial interviews, albeit more as an icebreaker or starting point than as an intentional framework for the questions. Then I projected the initial consent form onto the screen and reviewed it line-by-line with the participants. Even written in the simplest language, it was overwhelming and I encouraged them to take it home and look it over and then I would answer any questions they had. I also offered translation if desired. Over the course of the week, I tried to speak to each of the students individually about the study and then at the end of the week I spoke to the entire class. All but two of the twenty-two students signed these initial consent forms. In accordance with my original plan, I interviewed each of the twenty participants in October 2012. Two of these students would subsequently drop out of the program.

By this point, I felt deeply uncomfortable with approaching only five or six participants for the next stage and wondered how that might be experienced by those students who were not asked. In the interests of equity, I decided to invite the entire class to participate in the second stage since all of them met my participation criteria (except the one Canadian-born student who was invited to participate but declined). Given the time commitment required, I was surprised when sixteen members of the class consented. While this uptake essentially tripled my workload as a researcher, I felt it was well worth the investment of time and effort to give everyone an equitable opportunity to be heard. While this dissertation focuses more on five of the women, which I will refer to as my “primary participants”, I analyzed the data from all of these participants and their perspectives will form the basis of other scholarly publications. These primary participants were selected because they came from the same geographical area; came from the same religious backgrounds; came from similar socio-cultural backgrounds; were mothers, and were forthcoming in our interviews. Moreover, I connected with each of the

women in some way and we had a comfortable relationship. All four of the instructors teaching in the program also gave consent.

**Participants.** In this class of twenty-two, twenty immigrant or refugee students consented to take part in the study, but two students—Winta and Abrihet, both from Eritrea—left the program after my first set of interviews. Five students were immigrants from China; Lotus, Sue, Sharon, Jun, and Linda. Four of the students in this class originally came from the Middle East; Nazi, Khalila, Jasmine, and Sevinç. Four students came to Canada as refugees from Somalia; Leylo, Rawya, Fatima, and Asmaa. There were two students who came from North Sudan; Geena and Bijou. Finally, three students in the class were the only people from their home countries; Teena from India, Christa from the Congo, and Ameena from Ethiopia. The following table gives a brief overview of the participants’ biographical information (the star is used to indicate that I observed the participant on field placement):

**Table 2: Participant Information**

<b>Participant Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Home Country and Languages Spoken</b>	<b>Religion</b>	<b>Biographical Information</b>
Lotus	20s	China Mandarin and English	Not identified	Married, no children University-educated, teacher in home country with preschool experience Came to Canada so her husband could pursue a Master's
Sue	40s	China Mandarin and English	Not identified	Married, one daughter in university University-educated, junior high math teacher in home country Came to Canada for her daughter's and husband's postsecondary studies
Sharon	40s	China Mandarin and English	Not identified	Married, one son in university University-educated, engineer in home country Came to Canada so her son would have more post-secondary options

Linda	20s	China Mandarin and English	Not identified	Single, no children High school education in home country Came to Canada to learn English
Jun	20s	China Cantonese and English	Not identified	Single, no children High school education in home country Came to Canada to pursue post-secondary studies
Nazi	30s	Iran Persian, English	Muslim	Single, no children University-educated, art teacher in home country
Khalila	30s	Iraq Arabic and English	Muslim	Married, two young sons University-educated, teacher in home country
Sevinç	20s	Turkey Turkish and English	Muslim	Married, no children University-educated, kindergarten teacher in home country
Jasmine	30s	Syria (spent part of childhood in Kuwait) Arabic, French, and English	Muslim	Married, four sons (kindergarten to grade eleven) University-educated
Geena*	40s	North Sudan Arabic and English	Muslim	Married, one daughter and two sons (elementary/junior high) University-educated, lawyer in home country Came to Canada as immigrant for her children's schooling
Bijou*	20s	Sudan Arabic, French, Sango, English	Muslim	Divorced, one daughter and one son in elementary school University-educated, began teacher training Came to Canada as refugee
Fatima*	50s	Somalia Somali, Arabic, Italian, French, and English	Muslim	Married, five grown sons High school education Came to Canada as refugee
Leylo	20s	Somalia Somali and English	Muslim	Married (husband works in US), two preschool-aged children (one son, one daughter) High school education Came to Canada as refugee
Rawya	40s	Somalia Somali and English	Muslim	Marital status unknown, two grown children (one son, one daughter) High school education Came to Canada as refugee

Asmaa*	20s	Somalia (moved to Yemen at age five) Somali, Arabic, and English	Muslim	Marital status unknown, one kindergarten-aged daughter High school education Came to Canada as refugee
Ameena*	20s	Ethiopia Oromo, Amharic, English	Muslim	Married, three preschool-aged daughters High school education Came to Canada as refugee
Teena	30s	India Hindi and English	Hindu	Married, one kindergarten-aged son University educated (BA), professional singer in home country Came to Canada as an immigrant
Christa	30s	Congo English and French	Christian	Married, five children (preschool to high school aged) High school education Came to Canada as a refugee
Winta	20s	Eritrea Amharic and English	Christian	Married, no children Education unknown
Abrihet	20s	Eritrea Amharic and English	Christian	Married, no children Education unknown

In this dissertation, I focused primarily on five participants—Geena, Bijou, Fatima, Asmaa, and Ameena—who, while very different as individuals, share cultural and religious values and traditions, come from the same geographical area of Northeast Africa, are from comparatively well-off families, and are mothers. Moreover, challenging stereotypes about the submissive Muslim woman, all of these participants were very strong and outspoken.

While the students' voices were foregrounded in this study, the instructors were an integral part of this classroom community, and shaped much of what happened there during class time. Susan held a Master's degree in Early Childhood Education, and had long worked in the field as a teacher or director. Nadine and Alisa both had Master's degrees in Adult Education, and had extensive experience working with children and adults in cross-cultural and international settings. Hannah, who taught only one hour a week, also had a Master's degree in Adult

Education. All of the instructors were certified as English as an Additional Language teachers.

### **Data Collection**

**Participant observation and researcher positionality.** LeCompte and Preissle have defined participant observation as a "method relying on watching, listening, asking questions and collecting things" (p. 196). My participation in the class commenced in the second week of classes once the instructors had a week to get to know the students. As part of our negotiations, we decided that I would attend the class full time for the second week of classes, three days a week for weeks three and four, and three half days a week thereafter. The students attended class from 9:00 to 3:00 daily therefore my "half day" would generally go from 8:20 to 1:00 or 12:00 to 3:10. Within two months, the instructors were so accustomed to my presence that they issued invitations for me to spend as much time as I needed to in the class and my half day would become a full day. By situating myself for a more concentrated period of time at the beginning, I was able to get a sense for the context, build relationships with the students, and begin participant recruitment. Initially the instructors requested that I leave the classroom for half of each lunch break so the students would not feel obligated to host or entertain me. I usually went to the cafeteria area or out for a walk in these first months. Over time, though, the students would invite me to join them, and we re-visited this practice. I had a more or less set schedule in the first term, with occasional changes, but took a more targeted approach in terms two and three, attending classes I, or the instructor, felt would yield richer data.

Participation is best conceptualized as occurring along a continuum, and I would describe my role as that of a "participant-as-observer" whereby I was immersed in the community but was known to be conducting research (Angrosino, 2007). In this particular community of practice, I shifted between membership roles; sometimes I was a peripheral member who did not participate

in the activities of the group (especially in the field placement sites), while the majority of the time I was an active member who participated without necessarily being fully committed to the members' values and goals (Adler & Adler, 1987 cited in Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). As a participant observer, I became part of the life of the classroom and the students. For the first five months, the instructors assigned seating so that the students would all get to know each other instead of gravitating into home language groups. I was usually placed at one of the tables in the back row alongside some of the students, switching every week or so to the other side of the classroom. In the second and third semesters, I was occasionally driven to the middle row as students began to choose their own places and some preferred sitting in the back row. By locating myself with the students and joining in their learning, I hoped to become part of the everyday routines and activities in the classroom rather than being an isolated observer hiding in a corner of the room. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011) contend that this mode of involvement, "participating-in-order to write", "allows an intense immersion in daily rhythms and ordinary concerns that increases openness to others' ways of life" (p. 22). The structure of the class usually permitted me to achieve this participation as I wrote, thus I achieved still the rich detail of one who simply observes, without sacrificing opportunities for in-the-moment interactions.

My positionality as a participant observer in this classroom was complicated, fluid, and shifted throughout the study. I brought myself into this study and who I am was inextricably linked to what happened during the study. The "self" I brought to my relations with the participants is a white, middle class, female member of dominant society—with all the associated historical-colonial implications—a cross-cultural dweller and an ECE "expert". In spite of being what Emerson et al (2011) described as "a partial stranger to their worlds", I hoped the students would perceive me as "one of them" inasmuch as was possible, but I constantly

negotiated this role (p. 43). As a cross-cultural dweller, I have lived and taught in Guatemala, Colombia, Japan, Egypt, Mexico, and on two First Nations reserves here in Canada.

Undoubtedly, these experiences proved essential to my research, particularly in terms of “reading” nonverbal communication, observing cultural protocols, and building connections within specific cultural communities. Certainly as the study unfolded the fact that I had lived and worked in Egypt proved invaluable in building trust with my Muslim participants. On one occasion, for example, Jasmine began to explain the meaning of a word in Arabic when Geena interjected and informed her: “she used to live in Egypt” (FN, November 19, 2012). Jansson and Nikolaidou (2013) similarly found that shared experiences and backgrounds aided them in establishing relationships with participants. Nevertheless, I felt concerned that I would form assumptions about the participants based on my prior knowledge of some of their cultures so I was intentional about suspending or suppressing my presuppositions inasmuch as was possible.

As someone who had taught ECE for eight years and was a known insider in that community, I was caught between being perceived as an expert or concealing my identity. I decided I would not share any of my past ties to the institution with participants in my self-introduction, though I told them I had taught in ECTE programs for a number of years. I also told them about my current position as a full time doctoral student in ECE. I felt that they might be reticent to critique the course content if they knew I had been so invested in it. Of course, I always answered all of their questions honestly. Since I had once taught in the college, many of the instructors and administrators greeted me in the hallways. At a couple points in the year, a student asked me about this familiarity and I would tell them I used to teach at the college several years in the past. Two students noticed my name in the course guide credits and thus I acknowledged my past connections with the program to them. In addition, two of my former

students were employed at one of the field placement sites where I collected data. They openly discussed these connections with my participants at that site. While I assumed that all of this information would be passed around the group and pieced together, apparently nothing was said. When Susan inadvertently disclosed my former instructor status at the final party in June, all but a few students were surprised. It seemed that my current status as a student superseded any past affiliations I had with institution as an instructor. Despite my student dress and status, my visibility as a member of the dominant culture, as one who looked (but did not dress) like the other instructors, could have set me apart from the actual students. There were only two instances, though, where a participant treated me as an instructor. When the participants were banned from using the staff kitchen to fill their tea kettle, for example, Jasmine urged me to sneak into the kitchen and fill the kettle; commenting “you look like an instructor”. On another occasion, Bijou specifically called me over from across the room and asked me for help on an exercise in the regular classroom. I apologized and demurred, explaining that only the instructor knew precisely what was needed (FN, November 21, 2012).

Ethnographers must identify “possible ways of negotiating a feasible membership role”, but their modes of involvement inevitably have an impact on the participants and practices under study (Jansson & Nikolaidou, 2013, p. 154). I felt concerned that the students might associate me with the instructors, yet I wanted to give back to the class in some tangible way. Since I did not want to be perceived as an ECE “expert”, I thought I might tutor the students in English. The instructors had already secured a volunteer English tutor, and so instead I helped in the computer classes for an hour and a half a week. In that context, Alisa introduced me as a “computer whiz” and I definitely took on an instructor role, circulating around the class to assist students. This role automatically conferred an insider status on me, but not the kind of insider I hoped to be. I

sometimes wrestled with constructing an identity as a “student-researcher” as I moved between contexts. Fortunately, the students seemed to tacitly understand how my role shifted between the two classrooms, though I was asked several times for help using an iPad in the regular classroom. I, too, came to see my identity as contingent and fluid, shifting between the various contexts constitutive of the field (Ledger, 2010).

For the most part, the participants and instructors interacted with me exactly as they would with any other student. While Susan already knew me well and was comfortable having me participate in all of the classroom activities from the outset, Alisa initially asked that I not interact with students during class time and just stay quietly in the back row. Conscious of the tremendous risks she was taking in allowing a former instructor observe her teach, I was very careful to honour her request. As the first month progressed, she began inviting me to take part in specific activities alongside the students until I was able to almost fully take on this student role. In some of the pair and group work activities, I remained a more detached observer, observing groups in turn, unless a student needed a partner. In other activities, such as singing, art, or storytelling, I was assigned to a group and worked along with my group mates. Of course I knew most of the songs they were learning, yet the students did not perceive me to be an expert as this excerpt indicates: “Two students express concern that I did not have the words to the song and offer to share. Both are surprised when I say I know the song” (FN, September 28, 2012). I dressed and acted like a student and located myself in student spaces. I attended classes, presentations, special events, guest speakers, and library sessions. I went for breaks with other students or for lunch, going to the local grocery store or cafeteria. When my cell phone accidentally went off in class, much to my mortification, the students chuckled and I felt that I had officially been accepted as “one of them”. When the students had negative experiences on

field placement, my positioning as a researcher allowed me to be indignant and critical of practices in ways that I could not when I was an instructor.

I came to understand how they viewed one another as resources in navigating life in Canada and in this program and I became yet another resource. When they turned around and asked me how to spell a word, it was because I was close and convenient, not necessarily because I was a native speaker. Although students asked me to borrow money, to look for information on my iPad, or to offer some advice on a problem, they would do the same with their classmates so I knew I was not the final authority or only resource they had available. My fieldnotes sometimes proved useful when students were unsure about the instructor's specifications for an assignment as I could dredge up her exact words. I also used my iPad to find information for them and assisting them with job searches. In a few cases, I worked well beyond the study to scour job sites, revise resumes and cover letters, and help participants apply for positions. Many of the participants similarly positioned themselves as resources who could aid me in gaining access to their cultural values and beliefs. In much the same way as they would help a struggling classmate, they would frequently take it upon themselves to teach me about their norms and translate the content of their lunchtime discussions to me (see also Emerson et al, 2011).

I had a number of situations where I personally faced conflicts over my identity as an instructor versus my positioning as a researcher. For instance, when the students had an exam or quiz, nearly every student would aid a classmate who was struggling by pushing her paper a little closer to share her answers. The instructors had spoken to them about the difference between individual work and collaborative work, thus the participants knew that copying exam answers was not allowed. As I sat quietly in the back observing and tapping away, students were aware of

my presence. Occasional glances in my direction suggested they were testing me to see how I would respond, to see if I was one of them or not. These boundaries were blurred even further at the end of the year when a student surreptitiously asked me to help her with the answers for a computer test. While I declined to become complicit in the cheating, I also did not betray her to the instructors. As an instructor, my course of action would have been clear, but as a researcher there was moral ambiguity. As I wrote in my notes: “I feel a pang, a sense of ethical responsibility to fill in the instructors on what is happening, but I suppress my feelings. After all, the students believe in me and are willing to open up their lives to my view. I cannot break this trust if I am to be one of them” (Reflective Journal, September 28, 2012). Similarly, some of the students enjoyed using the instructor's computer (the only computer in the class) to play music videos from their home countries. If the instructor forgot to log off, sometimes a student would contravene the implicit rules around student computer use and play music at lunchtime. I definitely felt that my ongoing silence in both cases helped me secure and maintain their trust.

Likewise, in May, the Somali students decided that we should go out for lunch both so they could introduce me to their local cuisine and so we could celebrate the end of the year. Unfortunately, Nadine had scheduled a quiz immediately after lunch and we would surely be late coming back. Although I really wanted to go, I did not want to influence them one way or the other as it was their marks at stake. After much discussion, they decided we would go anyway. As one student said, “We are almost done and I can take any consequence”. Eleven of us piled into two cars and went for lunch. The whole way there, another participant kept saying she had never, ever skipped class in her life because “you have to respect your teachers”. Thus, I became part of this transgression, situated with the students and acting in direct defiance of the instructor (who, I should note, was incredibly understanding). By this point, I had become an integral part

of the class, so much so that one participant argued vociferously that I should also graduate with them because, as she said: “you were with us. You learned too. You should get a diploma” (FN, June 23, 2013).

My familiarity with the research site was both an advantage and a disadvantage in the research. As Emerson et al (2011) write, first impressions of the research site are critical, but I could not recall these distant thoughts, only notable changes. Furthermore, I had to be careful not to make assumptions about how activities or lessons would unfold based on my own experience. In addition, one of the explicit goals of ethnography is to make the familiar strange, but I entered a site that was so familiar I might have presumed to already understand it. In fact, I had developed some of the courses and written the accompanying materials. I am reminded by Heath & Street (2008) that, “silence and a nonintrusive stance come with difficulty to ethnographers who choose to study sites similar to those in which they have previously played a role” (p. 58). I worried that my capacity to unpeel the layers obscuring life in this community would be inhibited by my familiarity; that I would form assumptions based on my own experiences and overlook (or be closed to) essential details. Early in the data collection period, I wrote:

I cannot separate myself from my own personal history teaching in this program. I was there at the front of the room for two years. I wrote curriculum. My own words are thrown out there in the classroom, spoken by a different voice, one that may not have understood my meanings and intent. I even find myself thinking how a current student resembles one I taught in the past, drawing parallels between their mannerisms, accents, and dress, sometimes even their experiences. If these impressions seep into my consciousness, they may contaminate my initial impressions of the women, causing me to make unfounded assumptions about them. At times I experience flashbacks and make comparisons, but I

also need to locate these in a different writing space to avoid dwelling on them when I am in the field. It is all so familiar, yet must become strange (Reflection, September 23, 2012). Ethnographers, according to Erickson (1984), should possess the ability to question and examine “the obvious, that is so taken-for-granted by cultural insiders that it becomes invisible to them” (p. 62). In order to do so, I needed to look at the site through a different lens and interrogate the known as if it were unknown. I was somewhat aided in doing so because several years had passed since I last worked in the college. In the intervening time, significant changes had occurred in the administration, structure, and physical plant which functioned to introduce an element of “strangeness” into the site.

To be reflexive, the researcher consciously reflects upon such issues as presuppositions, interpretations, and authority; interdependence between researcher and participant; and narrative style (Robben, 2007). I was cognizant of how the self I carried into the field shaped both the data and my own interpretations of it. Interrogating my own decisions about what I chose to focus on in my observations or include in my notes, what I neglected to observe or chose to leave out and how I made these kinds of decisions are an integral part of writing fieldnotes (Erickson, 1984). According to Keesing and Strathern (1998), there is a gap between “the data described in field notes and the lived experiences, sounds, smells, and scenes that cannot be captured in writing but are sedimented in the unconscious” (cited in Sluka & Robben, 2007, p. 8). I recognize that my impressions, as recorded in fieldnotes, could be distorted by the choices I make and my own somewhat fallible memory. Heeding Agar’s (1980) advice to employ a broad repertoire of research approaches, then, I collected data in various forms, as described in the pages that follow.

*Fieldnotes.* Clifford (1990) has identified three processes employed when writing fieldnotes: inscription, transcription, and description. Inscription involves writing jot notes in the field to prod one's memory later. Transcription is the process of writing down the exact words spoken by the participant in order to “distribute authority differently” and craft a more inclusive, multivocal text (p. 58). Additionally, the focus of transcription can be on nonverbal communication (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010), thus honouring these participants’ culturally-infused ways of conveying meaning to others. Finally, description is the transformation of inscribed and transcribed notes into extended fieldnotes allowing someone to envision exactly what the researcher saw and heard. In order to accomplish this, the researcher recalls and reconstructs the day working from the jot notes either chronologically or by significant event (Emerson, 2011). The resulting description of events, behaviours, conversations, and activities “help create a portrayal of the soul and heart of a group, community, organization, or culture” (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). The ways in which these processes are operationalized in the field is largely dependent on the researcher's positioning as a participant observer as s/he is the main instrument of data collection.

Since I was situated in a post-secondary classroom sitting at a table alongside the students, I was generally fully immersed in their experiences while writing fieldnotes on these experiences. In the first week of the data collection, I refrained from using the iPad so the participants could get to know me and then spent frantic evenings trying to flesh out my inscribed jot notes. When I introduced the iPad in the second week, I assumed it might be a distraction, but, in fact, the iPad's presence seemed to implicitly authorize the use of technology in this classroom. The students themselves began to bring in tablets until I was one of eight people in the class tapping away on my keyboard. For the most part, the iPad assisted me in

achieving detailed, realistic, descriptive fieldnotes on-site, though I always reviewed these at the end of the day and added details. I was able to watch, listen, and type simultaneously which was hugely beneficial. I also wrote separate analytic memos which were generally comprised of interpretations, discussion of my emotions, questions, and, sometimes, evaluative judgements. When I composed these memos while I was in the field, I placed them in parentheses within the text. It was only in less conventional activities, such as singing or movement, and during computer class that I had to rely on my memory and jot down notes afterwards in order to participate fully. Transcription in the classroom was sometimes problematic if the conversation flowed quickly. I generally tried to capture the exact words of each of my primary participants and paraphrased the speech of other members of the class. I did not tape record any of the classes for two reasons; first, the recorder could have captured conversations not intended for my consumption and, second, I feel it is challenging in the classroom context for participants to be able to turn off the recorder as needed or desired. I also made a conscious decision not to take notes during breaks or at lunch, as I wrote in my reflective journal:

I'm not taking field notes at lunch or breaks. I don't want them to feel like I'm spying on them, recording their every word. It seems duplicitous to that to them after they have signed consent, agreeing to let me write down what they say and do. The boundaries between public and private are tenuous, fragile (RJ, September 28, 2012).

I did write brief notes about our break time discussions after class ended, but only with a view to identifying potential interview or focus group questions. Overall, I thought I was fairly unobtrusive in my note taking, however at least some of the students were definitely aware of my writing. When Susan was teaching the observation course, she explained to the class that it was important to write “what you actually see or hear” when observing children. At that moment, Jun

turned around and whispered to me “that is what you do!” (FN, October 15, 2012). When I observed in the field placement sites, I began by inscribing jot notes on site and then spent six or seven hours amplifying these notes at home because I assumed the iPad would be a source of fascination and distraction for the children. By the fourth day, I decided to try the iPad and was surprised to find that it was of interest to only one child; a toddler who was absolutely convinced that I must have games on it despite my assurances to the contrary.

In my fieldnotes, I composed a running record of the class activities as they happened including direct speech and nonverbal communication (being positioned in the back row, I could not always see facial expressions). Guided by LeCompte and Preissle's (1993) framework for observation, I recorded who was in the scene (I assigned initials to each participant), what was happening, where they were located, and when they met. Emerson et al (2011) add that the researcher must also ask how something occurred to understand “the social and interactional processes through which the members construct, maintain, and layer their social worlds” (p. 27). Individual and group activity was of interest whether it was related to the course or not. Therefore I made note of actions and behaviours such as sleeping, whispering to another student, answering a cell phone, leaving the room, raising a hand to summon the instructor, and evidence of concentration or distraction. By attending to the reactions and emotions produced by the participants, I could gain a sense for what was meaningful or significant to them (Emerson et al, 2011). Given the primacy of context in ethnographic research, I paid close attention to the physical context in the class and in the college as a whole and noted changes from day to day in terms of placement of objects and furniture. I sometimes photographed these changes in order to write about them later. I also observed changes in the appearance and behaviour of individual students; dress, hair cut or style, cultural markers such as henna (signifying some kind of

celebration in the family), use of cell phones, inattentiveness, working with a different group than usual, and so forth. Noting the unexpected can assist the researcher in identifying what is significant in the flow of everyday activity (Emerson et al, 2011). I recorded agendas, homework assignments, and notes the instructors, and sometimes the students, wrote on the white board or flipcharts. I also inserted scanned copies of any handouts from the instructors in the appropriate location in the fieldnotes.

Spatial mapping (Heath & Street, 2008) informed my understanding of the context and the patterns within this particular classroom. I wrote the times each student and instructor arrived in the class. I drew maps of the classroom noting the time and where each student and instructor was positioned for each different activity, documenting instances where participants changed position, such as leaving the room or moving to another part of the room. In addition, to support understanding of what Cousin (2009) deems the “interactive order”, I noted who worked, sat, or interacted with whom, giving me a sense for their preferred groupings as well as where the power was situated in the class. I aimed for “thick description” of the entire group, and their actions and behaviours, to elucidate emerging patterns (Geertz, 1973), narrowing my focus as the year proceeded to hone in on specific elements in the context as well as on my primary participants (Spradley, 1980).

***Document and artifact collection.*** Artifacts, documents and technologies used within the community of practice carry the history and culture of that community (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and so it is important to ascertain what they represent and the meanings participants ascribe to them. Using my iPad, I photographed documents and artifacts that appeared to be valued in this college and program. Throughout the college, I photographed notices of events and informational flyers on bulletin boards, and collected student newspapers. I also monitored both student and

staff areas of the official website to collect more information on the research site. In the classroom, I photographed student handbooks, course outlines, class handouts, and pages from textbooks. I also made copies of the student learner guides that had been prepared by the instructors. Once I had established a close relationship with students, I asked my primary participants for permission to photograph all of their materials including class notes and exercises, doodles, field placement evaluations, assignments, and assessments. All of them granted permission and I did this in the second semester (going back to the beginning of the year) and then again in the third. Although I anticipated that some of these materials would be written in the participant's home language, this was not the case apart from the occasional word. In my role as a helper in the computer lab, I was privy to some of their e-mail correspondence with instructors and potential employers, but did not collect data in their virtual learning spaces.

*Focus group discussions.* Once each semester, I held a 45-60 minute focus group discussions for any of the students who wanted to attend. All of the sixteen participants who agreed to the full study participated in all focus groups. One of the women who did not grant consent for the study expressed a strong desire to take part in the focus groups and share her cultural perspectives. Although I had to exclude her data, her insights sometimes sparked conversations among the other members of the group. Both the focus groups and the interviews were held on-site in various private locations in the college such as unoccupied classrooms, a group work space in the library, vacant offices, or pre-booked meeting rooms. The instructors and several administrative assistants assisted me in procuring access to spaces. While I had hoped for some continuity and familiarity, it was a constant struggle since the college was full and I frequently had to scrounge for a new space on short notice. For each of the focus groups, I asked students individually who they would feel comfortable having in their group, encouraging

but not mandating groups based on home country. The Chinese and Somali students always formed two of the groups, and the Somali women also adopted Ameena who did not share a geographical or linguistic background with anyone else. The other students tended to want to be with their closest friends in the program and not necessarily with people from their home countries. These groups shifted somewhat throughout the year. While the first set of focus groups took place over the lunch break, the instructors allowed me to pull students out of class in subsequent meetings.

These focus groups definitely supported students in making sense of their learning in the program and offering critique. Although I developed open-ended questions based on my fieldnotes, sometimes the conversation was less structured and linear, “running from place to place” (Barthes, 1978 cited in Carson, 1986, p. 80). Rodriguez, Schwartz, Lahman, and Geist (2011) describe “culturally responsive focus groups” as being relational, informal, and socially conscious. The researcher is aware and respectful of participants’ social identities and operates within an asset-based model, providing opportunities for co-constructing knowledge. We often met in student meeting rooms or classrooms, but I brought snacks and tried to adhere to an informal structure. I articulated the purpose of these meetings as being to talk about their learning, specifically what is the same and what is different from their own cultures or families. Therefore, the participants themselves were often quite intentional, making conscious decisions about what was important for me to know. This format “allowed for storytelling and sharing of collective wisdom in ways that were culturally salient for participants” (Rodriguez et al, 2011, p. 407). Inspired by the work of Tobin and colleagues in visual-cued ethnography, I used video elicitation as stimuli in the second and third term focus groups to extract their perspectives on dominant ECE practices (Tobin, Arzubiaga, & Adair, 2012). While the method involves filming

a representative video (such as a typical day in a preschool) to show participants, I instead chose a series of short clips from the videos the instructors had shown in class on topics related to child development (developmental milestones in the different domains and developmental theorists such as Piaget and Erikson) and communication and guidance. Visual methods can effectively be used as prompts; assisting a participant in expressing her ideas, encouraging reflection, or exploring tacit knowledge or lived experience residing in one's subconscious (Pain, 2012). These video clips also reminded students of the course content and allowed them to re-engage with topics they had learned in class. I deliberately chose clips illustrating practices or concepts which, based on my fieldnotes, seemed to be confusing to them or incongruent with their cultural practices (or both). In this manner, I could also guide aspects of the discussion. Together the participants co-constructed new understandings of the content as they related it to their own experiences and understandings. The clips were also a means of inviting discussion of what they were learning in the program in such a way that participants did not feel as though they were being critical of their instructors or program if they did not agree with a particular concept. These group discussions were audiotaped and then I transcribed them, writing analytical notes as I did so.

*Conversations/interviews.* According to Seidman (2013), interviews have tremendous utility when the researcher seeks to understand experience; in this case, experiences in an ECE program. In this study, the interviews were the most important source of data. The majority of the interviews took place in the research site in whichever room I could procure, though I did meet one participant at a shopping centre close to her home and another at her field placement site. By necessity, a few of the later interviews were conducted in the hallway outside the classroom while classes were in session and we would stop talking if someone happened to walk

by. I met students before class, at lunch, or after class depending on their preferences, and the instructors were very accommodating in allowing me to take students out of class whenever possible. I interviewed twenty students in the initial interviews for 30 to 40 minutes, and sixteen students at the end of the year for 15 to 40 minutes. All of the interviews were conducted in English which imposed some limitations in terms of the ideas the students were able to express. The data from the final interviews was anonymized and, with the participants' permission, the themes were shared with the instructors after the program concluded to assist them in refining their practice and the curricula. Each of my primary participants was interviewed at least four times. I recorded the interviews, but I refrained from taking notes to concentrate fully on what they were saying. At the beginning of each interview, I demonstrated how the recorder worked and invited the participant to turn it off if they wanted to do so.

Stage and Mattson (2003) reconceptualized ethnographic interviews as *contextualized conversations*. When the interview is infused with conversational characteristics, it invites a reciprocal relationship between researcher and participant and blurs the boundaries between them. Each of the interlocutors approaches the conversation with openness to the other, “to allow oneself to be conducted by the object to which the partners in the conversation are directed” (Gadamer, 1975, p. 330). In order to imbue the interviews with a conversational quality, the interviews were usually semi-structured. When I interviewed students after their field placements, the format was even more informal as I only planned to ask a “grand tour” question “can you tell me about your experience on your field placement?” (Spradley, 1979). The chief exception to this structure was when I interviewed a particular participant who requested the questions in advance of our meeting. Our interviews were much more structured as she had prepared her answers for seamless delivery. I occasionally shared my own experiences where it

seemed appropriate or when I was asked, but did so sparingly, seeking to create a balance between conversation and foreclosing on the participant's own perspectives. My interviews did not approach the degree of informality described by Agar (1980) as the interviews were all scheduled, one-on-one, and isolated. I felt that by establishing some degree of formality, the boundaries between data collection and friendly conversation might better be established in the participants' minds.

The authors propose several techniques for contextualizing interviews which I used to guide my interviews. First, researchers need to become comfortable with natural pauses in the conversation, viewing these as times for reflection not as a signal to jump in with a question or comment (see Mischler, 1986). This pause was particularly difficult for me at times because there was much I wanted to know, but participants seemed to need and appreciate having the time and space to compose their answers, especially as English as an Additional Language learners. I felt that by creating spaces for ruminating on answers, it diminished the possibility of having very sensitive information spill out unintentionally. In this manner, the participants were able to reconstruct salient experiences and reflect on the meanings they ascribed to them (Seidman, 2013). From my perspective, these pauses allowed me to concentrate on their words, observe nonverbal cues, and listen for what Steiner calls "inner voice", in contrast to the voice constructed for the public (in Seidman, 2013).

Next, Stage and Mattson (2003) contend that questions should be contextualized. As a participant observer, I was situated within the contexts of learning, thus I was able to be sensitive to some of settings and circumstances that may have influenced the participants' experiences. I also shared these experiences with them albeit from my own subjective point of view (Seidman, 2013). I used both the fieldnotes and the focus group transcripts to contextualize and identify

possible areas for in-depth exploration or clarification. In class, the instructors encouraged students to share their cultural perspectives and stories when relevant and appropriate, however, these discussions were often limited by time. I noted the context of the discussions as well as the names of students who seemed open to sharing. In addition, I spent a lot of time inside and outside of class time conversing with students which assisted me in developing possible questions for interviews. These semi-structured interview questions were used as a guide, as the participant's answers also shaped the direction of the conversation. Fatima, for instance, always responded in long narratives which did not seem to relate the question, but I held myself back from re-directing the conversation. Much later in the year, she shared how her mother always told stories to teach her and her siblings. I began to gain clarity around the lessons she was imparting to me in narrative form and the meanings she ascribed to these stories. By attending to context in the interviews, then, I learned about the knowledges and experiences the participants brought to the study and the impact they might have had (Stage & Mattson, 2003).

The third characteristic of the contextualized conversation is that the researcher draws participants into the research process using various means. In the first interviews, I began by asking participants if they felt comfortable telling me about what they had made in my introductory activity. While this activity was not designed as a pre-interview activity (Ellis, 2006), it did allow participants to reflect on the significance of these creations and decide what they felt comfortable sharing about them. I had two options related to their own childhoods and one option related to their experiences as mothers or carers, so participants could choose whether or not they want to talk about their own childhoods or home country experiences. All of them did elect to depict a special person in their childhood or something they liked to do as a child

implying I was authorized to ask about these experiences back home. I often commenced the interviews by referring to a topic or lesson taught in the classroom.

### **Data Analysis**

Data management is a necessary precursor to analysis as it assists the researcher in identifying gaps (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010). In this study, I organized the data in folders on the computer on an ongoing basis labelled by the month it was collected, but I also printed copies which were organized chronologically with each data source separated (fieldnotes, interview transcripts, focus group transcripts, course materials, student documents, and photos).

Ethnographic data analysis always occurs alongside data collection. As Agar (1980) stated, “the process is dialectic, not linear” (p. 9). In my case, I began to make sense of data by composing analytic memos at the end of days when there were significant, surprising, or puzzling events or as I organized the files. Since I transcribed the interviews and focus groups quite soon after conducting them, I was also able to jot down interpretive comments and questions. However, in spite of this early engagement with the data, I took an inductive, or “bottom-up”, approach to the analysis rather than imposing pre-specified codes on the data (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010). This process involved becoming familiar with the data, chunking the data into categories, developing a coding framework, coding the data, and searching for patterns or themes.

According to Emerson et al (2011) analytic categories and themes often impose an external, researcher-derived structure on the data whereas they should represent the local, indigenous knowledges of the participants and meanings they themselves ascribe to events. Therefore, I began my analyses with the interview and focus group data which were almost exclusively in the participants’ own voices (though influenced by the questions I chose to ask). I read each individual transcript multiple times to “immerse myself in the details”, paying close

attention to the words used by participants to describe their own experiences (Agar, 1980, p. 103). From these readings, I developed broad coding categories (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) such as education, care and childrearing, culture, religion, play, professional practice, and childhood experience. In the next stage, I sorted all of the interview and focus group data electronically by copying and pasting text into the various categories. Once completed, I read the data in each of the categories line-by-line several times, jotting down ideas, notes, and possible codes on the transcripts as I read. Sometimes I moved text from one category to another or duplicated it in a second category. Based on this process of open-coding, I developed an extensive list of possible codes and subcodes. Following Bogdan and Biklen (1992) and Gibbs (2007), I coded such things as acts, behaviours, events, situations, activities, practices or strategies, states or conditions of being, conditions or constraints, participant meanings or perspectives, participation, relationships, interactions, and settings or context. Inasmuch as possible, I adhered to the participants' own words and “actual situated uses of such terms” to generate the codes (Emerson et al, 2011, p. 152). Often I needed to refer back to my fieldnotes or ask a participant to ascertain these contextualized meanings. As I developed the codebook, I wrote explanatory notes as needed to describe all the possible meanings and parameters or criteria for the code or subcode (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010). Gibbs (2007) explained that the researcher can ensure consistency and reliability across applications of the codes to texts when each code is clearly defined. Then, I engaged in *focused coding*, hand-coding the data as I reviewed it again line-by-line. As I coded, I entered the codes into my Word file to facilitate searches, revised some of my codes and subcodes, and added others to the codebook. These same codes were then affixed to student generated documents —such as notes, assignments, assessments, and class work— in a similar manner. At this stage, I delved into the scholarly research again, expanding my reading

beyond my initial literature review within the identified categories. Finally, I began what LeCompte and Schensul (2010) have labelled “pattern-level analysis” which involves examining the codes to understand how they are related, assembling the various parts to discern how they fit within the whole. Such patterns were identified in various ways, such as: frequency, omission, similarity, co-occurrence, corroboration or triangulation, or sequences of actions, ideas, people, or responses (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010). Finally, I begin a more theoretical analysis (Angrosino, 2007) by relating the patterns to the literature and trying to explain and understand their existence.

The fieldnotes I inscribed in the classroom, field placement settings, and other sites for learning were analyzed separately from the interview and focus group data. Since the fieldnotes constituted many binders and pages of data, it would have been extremely time-consuming to categorize the data. In addition, many of the codes and categories extracted from the other data sources did not apply to the classroom context where the focus was more on activities, events, behaviours, practices, and interactions in the context of western ECE. Therefore, I commenced with multiple readings of the texts, then followed a very similar process of open and focused coding. In the final readings of the coded data, I read across the data sources to identify patterns or themes and triangulate the data.

### **Ethics and the Research Relationship**

Before I embarked on this study, it was approved by the University of Alberta Ethics Review Board as well as the ethics review board in my research site. I adhered to the research plan as filed with these review boards as well as ethical guidelines in the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research with Humans. As Seidman (2013) recommended, I wrote the consent forms in simple English and explained them thoroughly on multiple occasions

so that the participants could give informed consent. The participants were given the opportunity to opt out of the study up until June 30, 2013 and none chose to do so. I have tried to ensure anonymity by asking participants to choose pseudonyms, and I did not use their real names in my fieldnotes or transcriptions. In the focus group discussions, I also asked participants to keep their discussions confidential outside of their small group. In this dissertation, I also sometimes ensure anonymity by referring to someone as a participant or student, rather than singling them out by pseudonym. The instructors knew who was participating in the study and who was not, and I informed participants of this in the consent forms. All participants, but especially the primary participants, were informed that their instructors would be able to easily identify them based on their home countries if these were shared publicly. They all affirmed that they were comfortable with having their instructors learn this information about them and gave me permission to share their home countries. There was some information that was shared along with an admonition not to tell the instructors, and I have not included these opinions or stories. The rich description characteristic of an ethnographic study opens up the possibility that the site, program, and participants could be identified therefore I have been cautious in my writings.

However, the complexities of the research relationship cannot simply be reduced to a series of forms and promises. Ethnographic research ruptures the boundaries between private and public; exposing the participant's thoughts, stories, writing, and artifacts to public scrutiny. Over the course of a year, we became enmeshed in each other's experiences, sharing both mundane and intimate minutiae of our lives as they unfolded through the year. I have met their families and visited some of their homes. When the boundaries between researcher and participant are blurred in these ways, it increases risk for both parties. The participant may place a lot of trust in the researcher's discretion and, as Battacharya (2007) also found, there is a burden on the

researcher to honour this relationship in negotiating representation. For this reason, Heath and Street (2008) described fieldwork as “an act of betrayal” (p. 29). While there has been much reciprocity in our sharing, my personal life is not being opened to public view. Moreover, my own revelations may have deepened our relationships to a greater extent, encouraging participants to disclose more than they might have otherwise.

As a Western concept, informed consent can be problematic in cross-cultural research (Fluehr-Lobban, 2003). No amount of simplification can fully translate the language of the written consent document into a comprehensible, recognizable form for English language learners thus I proceeded with caution and much oral explanation. Davies (2008) advised that asking consent should not be a one-time event in an ethnographic study, but an ongoing process involving re-negotiation and consultation. Throughout the fieldwork, I consulted with participants regarding their willingness to continue participating and assured them that they were not in any way obligated to adhere to the list of data collection activities outlined on the consent form. A few participants indicated that they did not want to participate in a particular focus group discussion or did not want to be interviewed, thus altering the extent and nature of their participation. In one case, the other focus group members wanted to intercede and pressure the participant to attend and I had to assure them that it was entirely her choice and the study would not suffer due to her absence.

From the outset, I was never entirely sure that the participants understood that I was almost always collecting data when I was with them. Few participants explicitly differentiated between the information which is for the study and that which is “just for you”. Although invited to do so as desired, no participant ever shut off the recorder during our discussions. In view of their relatively easy acquiescence to the data collection, I have felt compelled to navigate the

data carefully, remembering that what has been said in the context of a friendship with a “classmate” may be too personal to share publicly. As I analyzed the data and wrote up findings, I frequently spoke to the participants to clarify their words and meanings as well as my own interpretations. I reviewed their answers with them and invited them to add, change and delete information to ensure that they had the final authority over how they were represented. In addition, each of the participants asked me to review the data sources, check her grammar, and make corrections accordingly. In the process of doing so, I have taken some statements back to the participant to make sure her original meaning was not lost in my alterations. Aluwihare-Samaranayake (2012) contends that using multiple dialogical modes—oral, written, and visual— aids in the development of critical consciousness for ethical research particularly when researching with culturally diverse participants. In the conduct of this study, I have attempted to adhere such a dialogical approach. Since the participants are English language learners, I am aware that the final written products of this study will largely be inaccessible to them; adding yet another layer to the conundrum of how to negotiate consent and representation. Ultimately, possessing a close attachment to the participants has made it easier for me to make decisions around representation, as I am fiercely protective of them and more aware of where they themselves might situate these boundaries between private and public, both personally and culturally.

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# APPENDIX B

## Institutional Ethics Approval



### RESEARCH ETHICS OFFICE

300 Campus Tower  
Edmonton, AB, Canada T6G 1K8  
Tel: 780.492.0459  
Fax: 780.492.9429  
www.reo.ualberta.ca

#### Notification of Approval

Date: June 16, 2012  
Study ID: Pro00031794  
Principal Investigator: [Dana Massing](#)  
Study Supervisor: [Anna Kirova](#)  
Study Title: **An Ethnographic Study of Immigrant Women's Knowledge Construction in an Early Childhood Teacher Education Program**  
Approval Expiry Date: June 15, 2013

	Approval Date	Approved Document
Approved:	6/16/2012	<a href="#">Information Letter and Consent.Instructors.docx</a>
Consent Form:	6/16/2012	<a href="#">Information Letter and Consent for Field Placement Supervisors.Revised.docx</a>
	6/16/2012	<a href="#">Information Letter and Consent for all Students.Revised.docx</a>
	6/16/2012	<a href="#">Information Letter and Consent Form for Primary Participants.Revised.docx</a>
	6/16/2012	<a href="#">Information Letter and Consent for Families.Revised.docx</a>

Sponsor/Funding Agency: SSHRC - Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

SSHRC

Thank you for submitting the above study to the Research Ethics Board 1. Your application has been reviewed and approved on behalf of the committee.

A renewal report must be submitted next year prior to the expiry of this approval if your study still requires ethics approval. If you do not renew on or before the renewal expiry date, you will have to re-submit an ethics application.

Approval by the Research Ethics Board does not encompass authorization to access the staff, students, facilities or resources of local institutions for the purposes of the research.

Sincerely,

Dr. William Dunn  
Chair, Research Ethics Board 1

**██████████ College**

**Applied Research Advisory Committee**

**Research Ethics Board**

Review checklist for expedited and full committee review

The following checklist is used for expedited review, full committee review and, if necessary, reviews by the appeal committee. For decisions related to ethics approval, the REB will strive to reach consensus.

Review Results	
<b>Project Name</b>	An ethnographic study of immigrant women's knowledge construction in an early childhood teacher education program
<b>Submission Author</b>	Christine Massing
<b>Date Reviewed</b>	June 26, 28, 29, and July 9, 2012; August 20 and 23, 2012
<b>Expedited Review X</b>	<b>Full Review</b>
<b>Approved as submitted</b>	
<b>Approved with changes</b>	
<b>Denied</b>	
<b>Name:</b>	██████████
<b>Signature:</b>	

**Changes**

Approved. All the best with your project!
---

**Notification of Approval**

Date: June 20, 2011

Study ID: Pro00023308

Principal Investigator: [Dana Massing](#)Study Supervisor: [Anna Kirova](#)

Study Title: Exploring cultural perspectives and knowledges of immigrant early childhood educators: A multivocal, visual-cued ethnographic study

Approval Expiry Date: June 18, 2012

Approved Consent Form: Approval Date  
6/20/2011Approved Document  
[Informed Consent](#)

Thank you for submitting the above study to the Research Ethics Board 1. Your application has been reviewed and approved on behalf of the committee.

A renewal report must be submitted next year prior to the expiry of this approval if your study still requires ethics approval. If you do not renew on or before the renewal expiry date, you will have to re-submit an ethics application.

Approval by the Research Ethics Board does not encompass authorization to access the staff, students, facilities or resources of local institutions for the purposes of the research.

Sincerely,

Dr. William Dunn  
Chair, Research Ethics Board 1

*Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system).*

## APPENDIX C

### Sample Information Letters and Consent Forms

#### An Ethnographic Study of Immigrant Women's Knowledge Construction in an Early Childhood Education Program

##### Information Letter and Consent Form (Students)

**Research Investigator:**

Christine Massing  
551 Education South  
Department of Elementary Education  
University of Alberta  
Edmonton, AB

**Supervisor:**

Dr. Anna Kirova  
551 Education South  
Department of Elementary Education  
University of Alberta  
Edmonton, AB

**Background Information**

My name is Christine Massing and I am a PhD student in the Department of Elementary Education at the University of Alberta. I would like to invite you to participate in a research study. Your instructors have agreed to let me spend the next ten months observing in some of your classes. You are being asked to be part of this study so I can learn more about the experiences of immigrant women who are studying early childhood education. The results of this study will be used for my dissertation and for academic presentations and publications.

**Purpose of Research**

Early childhood education programs teach about how to work with and talk to children in a North American style. However, Canada is a very multicultural country. Families have many different ways of being with their children. They have different goals and hopes for their children. I hope to learn about the cultural knowledge and skills you bring to your work with young children. I want to find ways of including your knowledge in early childhood programs. I want to learn what it is like for you to be in the program and hear your ideas about what you are learning. I also want to understand your experiences to see if there are ways of improving early childhood education programs.

**About the Research**

During the year, I will observe in some of your classes and write notes about what happens. I will be in the class every day, thirty hours a week for the first and last three weeks of the year.

For the rest of the year, I will spend about six to nine hours a week in your classes with you. I might also participate in class events and field trips.

I would like to ask for your consent to be part of this study. If you agree, I would like to gather information from you in two ways:

1. I would like to interview you one time for 30 to 40 minutes. This interview could take place during one of your breaks or before or after class. I will tape record this interview and then transcribe (type) it.
2. I also ask for your permission to write about what I see and hear in the class. I would write notes on your conversations with other students, with instructors, or with me.

If I use any of this information for the study, I will check my notes or the transcripts with you to see if you would like to add, delete or change anything in your comments.

### **Benefits and Risks**

I hope that you will benefit from participating in this study. You may benefit from having me to support you and listen to your experiences. You will also have the opportunity to share your experiences with others. Researchers and other early childhood programs may learn from these experiences. Your ideas and knowledge may help early childhood education programs serving immigrant students develop their course materials and textbooks and improve their teaching strategies. You can have input into these programs in regard to meeting the needs of immigrant students. I will also volunteer as a computer tutor in this class. You are welcome to have this extra help even if you do not participate in the study.

I do not anticipate any risks to participating in this study. You will be invited to share some of your personal experiences. Some of these might be upsetting to you. You are free to refuse to discuss any topics that might be uncomfortable for you. I can help arrange for counseling services through the college if you wish.

### **Voluntary Participation**

You are not obligated to participate in this study. Your decision to refuse will not affect your standing in the program or your relationship with your instructors in any way. Even if you agree to be in the study, you can change your mind. You can withdraw from the study any time before June 30, 2013. If you withdraw from the study, I will delete your words and actions from all my notes, transcripts and other data sources.

### **Confidentiality and Anonymity**

These data would be used for my doctoral dissertation and for academic publications and presentations. The use of data will meet the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants. I will keep your information confidential. I will not include your name, or any other information which might identify you, in my writing or presentations. I will not include your real name or identifying information in the transcripts and notes. I will not

publish the name or location of the college or of the program or field placement sites. I will try to keep your participation in the study anonymous and will not talk about your participation with others. Staff and instructors at the college and in field placement sites may know about this research study. I will not tell them if you are participating in the study or not. Your instructors may know if you are participating in the study. I will not share information about your experiences with them.

My supervisor will see or read any information I collect in this study (transcripts, notes, photos, videos). She will sign a *Confidentiality Agreement*. If someone is asked to translate our conversations or to transcribe (type) the conversations on the tapes, they will also sign a *Confidentiality Agreement*. All persons involved with this research will comply with the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants. During the study, original data (field notes, audio tapes, photographs, videotapes, transcriptions and analysis) will be stored on a password protected, encrypted computer. After the study is completed, I will keep all data in a locked and secure cabinet for a minimum of five years following completion of the research.

If you would like to receive a copy of the findings from this research or transcripts of your interviews, please ask me and I will make a copy for you. I have included my contact information below.

### **Further Information**

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, or if for any reason at any time prior to June 30, 2013 you choose to withdraw from this research please contact:

Christine Massing

[REDACTED]

OR

Dr. Anna Kirova University of Alberta, Christine Massing's dissertation supervisor

[REDACTED]

### **Consent**

If you choose to participate in this research study, I ask you to sign two copies of this consent form, one copy for you to keep for your own use.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ consent to participate in this research for the purposes of gathering data to be used by Christine Massing in her doctoral dissertation as well as articles or presentations of a scholarly nature. I understand that I am consenting to:

1. One 30-40 minute interview with Christine

- Christine writing notes on what she sees and hears in the class.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

This study has received ethical approval from the [REDACTED] College Ethics Review Committee.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence of ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Offices at (780) 492-2615.

**An Ethnographic Study of Immigrant Women's Knowledge Construction in an Early  
Childhood Education Program**

**Information Letter and Consent Form (Primary Participants)**

**Research Investigator:**

Christine Massing  
551 Education South  
Department of Elementary Education  
University of Alberta  
Edmonton, AB

**Supervisor:**

Dr. Anna Kirova  
551 Education South  
Department of Elementary Education  
University of Alberta  
Edmonton, AB



**Background Information**

My name is Christine Massing and I am a PhD student in the Department of Elementary Education at the University of Alberta. I would like to invite you to participate in a research study. Your instructors have agreed to let me spend the next ten months observing in some of your classes. You are being asked to be part of this study so I can learn more about the experiences of immigrant women who are studying early childhood education. The results of this study will be used for my dissertation and for academic presentations and publications.

**Purpose of Research**

Early childhood education programs teach about how to work with and talk to children in a North American style. However, Canada is a very multicultural country. Families have many different ways of being with their children. They have different goals and hopes for their children. I hope to learn about the cultural knowledge and skills you bring to your work with young children. I want to find ways of including your knowledge in early childhood programs. I want to learn what it is like for you to be in the program and hear your ideas about what you are learning. I also want to understand your experiences to see if there are ways of improving early childhood education programs.

**About the Research**

I would like to ask you to help me further with this research. You have agreed to one 30-40 minute interview and for me to write notes about what you say and do in the class. With your consent, I would like to learn about your experiences in more detail and depth. I would like to gather data from you in these ways:

1. Asking you about your experiences in six to eight interviews. Each interview will be about 30-45 minutes in length. We would meet in a private place at the college or in your choice of location. I will audiotape and transcribe (type) these discussions and check

them with you to see if you would like to add, delete or change anything in your comments.

2. Participating in up to five small focus group discussions with four or five other women in the class. These focus groups will be about 60-90 minutes in length. If all of you agree, I would also like to video tape these discussions. The videotapes will be used for data analysis only so only my supervisor and I will view them. If you or any of the others are uncomfortable with being videotaped, I will only audiotape the discussions. I will transcribe (type) these discussions and check them with you to see if you would like to add, delete or change anything in your comments.
3. By looking at your class materials. These might include class notes, learner guides, assignments, assessments, field placement comment forms, and artistic creations (posters, displays, drawings, paintings, sculptures). I would photocopy or photograph these at the college and return them to you immediately. If you decide that you do not want some of these samples used, you can say no.
4. By visiting you in your field placements and observing you with the children. If you agree, I would photograph or videotape you with children. If you are not comfortable with photos and video, I would only take notes. The photos and videos would only be viewed by me and my supervisor.

### **Benefits and Risks**

I hope that you will benefit from participating in this study. You may benefit from having me to support you and listen to your experiences. You will also have the opportunity to share your experiences with others. Researchers and other early childhood programs may learn from these experiences. Your ideas and knowledge may help early childhood education programs serving immigrant students develop their course materials and textbooks and improve their teaching strategies. You can have input into these programs in regard to meeting the needs of immigrant students. I will also volunteer as an English language tutor in this class (at lunch, or before or after class according to a schedule). You are welcome to have this extra help even if you do not participate in the study.

I do not anticipate any risks to participating in this study. You will be invited to share some of your personal experiences. Some of these might be upsetting to you. You are free to refuse to discuss any topics that might be uncomfortable for you. I can help arrange for counselling services through the college if you wish.

### **Voluntary Participation**

You are not obligated to participate in this study. Your decision to refuse will not affect your standing in the program or your relationship with your instructors in any way. Even if you agree to be in the study, you can change your mind. You can withdraw from the study any time before June 30, 2013. If you withdraw from the study, I will delete your words and actions from all my notes, transcripts and other data sources.

## **Confidentiality and Anonymity**

These data would be used for my doctoral dissertation and for academic publications and presentations. The use of data will meet the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants. I will keep your information confidential. I will not include your name, or any other information that might identify you, in my writing or presentations. I will not include your real name or identifying information in the transcripts and notes. I will not publish the name or location of the college or of the program or field placement sites. I will try to keep your participation in the study anonymous and will not talk about your participation with others. Staff and instructors at the college and in field placement sites may know about this research study. I will not tell them if you are participating in the study or not. Your instructors may know if you are participating in the study. I will not share information about your experiences with them.

My supervisor will see or read any information I collect in this study (transcripts, notes, photos, videos). She will sign a *Confidentiality Agreement*. If someone is asked to translate our conversations or to transcribe (type) the conversations on the tapes, they will also sign a *Confidentiality Agreement*. All persons involved with this research will comply with the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants. During the study, original data (field notes, audio tapes, photographs, videotapes, transcriptions and analysis) will be stored on a password protected, encrypted computer. After the study is completed, I will keep all data in a locked and secure cabinet for a minimum of five years following completion of the research.

If you would like to receive a copy of the findings from this research or transcripts of your interviews, please ask me and I will make a copy for you. I have included my contact information below.

## **Further Information**

You can change your level of participation in this study at any time before June 30, 2013. If you have any questions or concerns about this research, or if for any reason at any time before June 30, 2013 you choose to withdraw from this research, please contact:

Christine Massing  
[REDACTED]

OR

Dr. Anna Kirova University of Alberta, Christine Massing's dissertation supervisor  
[REDACTED]

## Consent

If you choose to participate in this research study, I ask you to sign two copies of this consent form, one copy for you to keep for your own use. You may consent to participate in the *study only* or to both the *study and being videotaped/photographed*.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, consent to participate in this research for the purposes of gathering data to be used by Christine Massing in her doctoral dissertation as well as articles or presentations of a scholarly nature. I understand that I am consenting to:

1. Six to eight 30-45 minute interviews.
2. Participating in up to five small focus group discussions with four or five other women in the class. These focus groups will be about 60-90 minutes in length.
3. Allowing Christine to look at, photocopy and/or photograph class materials such as: class notes, learner guides, assignments, assessments, field placement comment forms, and artistic creations (posters, displays, drawings, paintings, sculptures) for data analysis only.
4. Christine visiting me on my field placements and observing me with the children.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I, \_\_\_\_\_, consent to being videotaped and or photographed by Christine during focus group discussions and while working with the children on my field placement visits. These videos and photos will only be viewed by Christine and her doctoral supervisor.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

This study has received ethical approval from the [REDACTED] College Ethics Review Committee.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence of ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Offices at (780) 492-2615.

# **An Ethnographic Study of Immigrant Women's Knowledge Construction in an Early Childhood Education Program**

## **Information Letter and Consent Form (Instructors)**

### **Research Investigator:**

Christine Massing  
551 Education South  
Department of Elementary Education  
University of Alberta  
Edmonton, AB

### **Supervisor:**

Dr. Anna Kirova  
551 Education South  
Department of Elementary Education  
University of Alberta  
Edmonton, AB

### **Background Information**

My name is Christine Massing and I am a PhD student in the Department of Elementary Education at the University of Alberta. I would like to ask for your cooperation in a research study. I am hoping to learn more about the experiences of immigrant women who are studying early childhood education. The results of this study will be used for my dissertation and for academic presentations and publications.

### **Purpose of Research**

Many immigrant women enter early childhood education (ECE) programs due to the availability of positions in the field. However, ECE theory and practice is based on Euro-North American developmental theory; theory which does not apply in many cultural contexts. Cultural perspectives are only included in many mainstream ECE programs in superficial ways if at all. As a result, immigrant women may enter programs in which the knowledge they are mandated to learn is in conflict with their own culturally constructed values and beliefs about how to be, and interact with, young children. Yet these understandings are necessary if early childhood educators and programs are to work effectively with the growing numbers of immigrant children in Canada. There is a need for research on how to bring difference into ECE theory and practice so immigrant early childhood educators are not viewed as unprofessional if they bring their cultural knowledges into their work with children. I hope to enquire into the day-to-day experiences of five or six immigrant women throughout the duration of their studies in this early childhood program. This study will be the first to document how immigrant women experience their coursework and field placements. My goal is to better understand the knowledge and skills that immigrant women bring to both ECE theory and practice. Although this program is not typical of other ECE programs, your focus on cultural perspectives in courses will help draw out these understandings.

### **About the Research**

During the year, I will observe in some of your classes and write notes about what happens. I will be in the class every day, thirty hours a week for the first and last three weeks of the year. For the rest of the year, I will spend about six to nine hours a week in your classes with you. I might also participate in class events and field trips. I ask for your guidance in making this schedule so that my presence does not inconvenience you.

My primary focus in this research will be on the students in the class. However, I would like to ask for your consent to collect data from you for this study. If you agree, I would like to gather information from you in two ways:

1. I would like to interview you about the program one or two times for 30 to 40 minutes. I will tape record these interviews and then transcribe them.
2. I also ask for your permission to write about what I see and hear in the class. I would write notes on your public conversations with students, with other instructors, or with me.

The information I collect from will be used as a context to the study. For example, in order to write notes on how a student responds to instructions you give in class, I would write down what you have said. If I use any of this information for the study, I will check my notes or the transcripts with you to see if you would like to add, delete or change anything in your comments.

### **Benefits and Risks**

The main benefits for participating in this study will be experienced by the student participants. I hope that you will benefit from the findings in terms of developing your curricula and course materials. I would also like to volunteer as a computer tutor in this class. I do not anticipate any risks to your participation in this study.

### **Voluntary Participation**

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. You are also not obliged to answer specific questions even if participating in this study. Even if you agree to be in the study, you can change your mind. You can withdraw from the study any time before June 30, 2013. If you withdraw from the study, I will delete your words and actions from all my notes, transcripts and other data sources. I have provided my contact information for this purpose.

### **Confidentiality and Anonymity**

These data would be used for my doctoral dissertation and for academic publications and presentations. The use of data will meet the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants. I will keep your information confidential. I will not include your real name, or any other information that might identify you, in my writing, transcripts, notes, or presentations. I will not publish the name or location of the college or of the program or field placement sites. I will try to keep your participation in the study anonymous and will not talk about your participation with others. Staff, students, and instructors at the college and in field

placement sites may know about this research study. I will not share the information you have given to me or information about the activities in the class with them.

My supervisor will see or read any information I collect in this study (transcripts, notes, photos, videos). She will sign a *Confidentiality Agreement*. If someone is asked to transcribe the conversations on the tapes, they will also sign a *Confidentiality Agreement*. All persons involved with this research will comply with the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants.

During the study, original data (field notes, audio tapes, photographs, videotapes, transcriptions and analysis) will be stored on a password protected, encrypted computer. After the study is completed, I will keep all data in a locked and secure cabinet for a minimum of five years following completion of the research.

If you would like to receive a copy of the findings from this research or transcripts of your interviews, please ask me and I will make a copy for you. I have included my contact information below.

### **Further Information**

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, or if for any reason at any time prior to June 30, 2013 you choose to withdraw from this research please contact:

Christine Massing

[REDACTED]

OR

Dr. Anna Kirova University of Alberta, Christine Massing's dissertation supervisor

[REDACTED]

### **Consent**

If you choose to participate in this research study, I ask you to sign two copies of this consent form, one copy for you to keep for your own use.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ consent to participate in this research for the purposes of gathering data to be used by Christine Massing in her doctoral dissertation as well as articles or presentations of a scholarly nature. I understand that I am consenting to:

1. Two 30-40 minute interviews with Christine
2. Christine writing notes on what she sees and hears in the class.

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Signature of the Participant

---

Date

This study has received ethical approval from the [REDACTED] College Ethics Review Committee.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence of ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Offices at (780) 492-2615.

**Exploring cultural perspectives and knowledges of immigrant early childhood educators:  
A multivocal, visual-cued ethnographic study**

**Research Consent Form**

I invite you, in partnership with the [REDACTED], to participate in a research study examining the culturally based knowledges immigrant early childhood educators bring to their work with young children. This research will begin to identify immigrant early childhood educators' culturally specific ways of communicating and being with young children and how these perspectives are different from those taught in early childhood education courses.

All of the staff in your centre will be receiving some professional development training on communicating with young children. I would like your permission to observe and audio-record these sessions. Your involvement in this research consists of participation in two or three 60-90 minute focus group discussions with your coworkers. The focus group will consist of between five and six participants. Your supervisors and any staff who choose not to participate in the study will be placed in separate groups. I will not tell any of the staff who has agreed to participate in the study and who has not. You will be asked to watch a video about communicating with children and discuss it. A facilitator from the [REDACTED] will guide the discussion and I will gather field notes during the focus group discussions and will audio-tape the conversations. It is hoped that your involvement in the project will allow me to explore ways of honouring diverse cultural perspectives in early childhood education and will benefit immigrant early childhood educators and early childhood education students.

Your decision to participate in this research study is voluntary. Please read and think about the information attached and explained to you verbally. If there is any part of the information you do not understand, please ask me to explain it. If you would like to consult with someone not associated with this study before consent, feel free to. If you decide not to participate, or if you later decide to discontinue your participation, your decision will not affect your present or future relations with the facilitator or any member of the [REDACTED], any of your supervisors at work, or myself. If you decide to participate, you will always be free to discontinue participation any time up to one month after the final session, and all data collected during your partial participation will be destroyed without being used in the study.

Data obtained from your participation is for two purposes, 1) by the [REDACTED] for the purposes of learning more about culturally appropriate practices in early childhood education, and 2) by the researcher, Christine Massing, for use in my doctoral dissertation and for other scholarly publications and presentations.

If you decide to participate, please put your signature where indicated below. You may consent to either one or both of the research purposes. Your signature indicates that you have read, considered, and understood the information provided above, and that you have decided to participate. If you have any questions now, please ask me. If you have additional questions later please use the following contact information.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, or if for any reason at any time up to one month after the final focus group session you choose to withdraw from this research, please contact:

Christine Massing [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

or

(Insert contact information for the facilitator here)

or

Dr. Anna Kirova University of Alberta, research consultant to the project and Christine Massing's dissertation supervisor, [REDACTED]

If you choose to consent to participation in this research study, I ask you to sign two copies of this consent form, one copy for you to keep for your own use.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ consent to participate in this research for the purposes of gathering data to be used by the [REDACTED]. The data provided to the [REDACTED] will be in the form of transcripts with all identifying information removed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I, \_\_\_\_\_ consent to participate in this research for the purposes of gathering data to be used by D. Christine Massing in her doctoral dissertation as well as articles or presentations of a scholarly nature.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension, Augustana and Campus Saint Jean Research Ethics Board (EEASJ REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEASJ REB c/o (780) 492-2614.

## APPENDIX D

### Sample Interview Questions

#### Initial Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me about what you have made? (link to first day activity)
2. How did you come to decide to study in this program?
3. What is it like for you being a student?
4. What surprised you when you started studying in this program?
5. What are some of the goals you have in working with children?
6. What would your goals (or cultural goals) be if you were working with or raising children in your home country?
7. Can you recall a lesson/class you've really enjoyed? What did you like about it?
8. Has anything happened in your classes so far that has puzzled you or that you wonder about? Can you tell me a little about it?
9. What do you hope to learn in your studies?
10. What has been satisfying about your classes so far?
11. What has been disappointing about your classes so far?

#### Final Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me your thoughts about your experiences in this program?
2. What surprised you this year?
3. Which courses or ideas were most helpful to you? Why?
4. What courses or ideas were least helpful to you? Why?
5. Describe what an instructor can do to help you learn best.

6. What advice would you give an instructor who has never taught immigrant students before?
7. Can you tell me about the kinds of activities that help you learn?
8. Do you prefer working alone, with a partner, or in a small group? Why?
9. Your instructors have you do activities where you play with the materials like children. What was this like for you?
10. How do you feel when you have a lot of assignments due? How do you get everything done?
11. What are your plans now that you are finishing?
12. Do you have any other comments? Anything else you would like to share?
13. Are you comfortable with me sharing some of these ideas with your instructors? I would not share your name or exact words.

## APPENDIX E

### Coding Framework

**Category: Culture**

Codes	Subcodes
<p><b>CC</b> Cultural change: When a participant refers to how things were back then versus how they are now, when they mention how things are “different” for their own children, when they mention doing things differently from own mothers, and when they give descriptions of changes when moving to new context</p>	
<p><b>CB</b> Cultural beliefs: beliefs identified by the participants (personal, familial) as related to their culture</p>	
<p><b>CP</b> Cultural practices: those practices which are informed by cultural values and beliefs and are fairly uniformly enacted in all of the participants’ families</p>	<p><b>CP1</b> Sharing: where resources or knowledges are shared with others or adults model/teach how to share</p> <p><b>CP2</b> Helping, supporting, or caring for others: where an older person is serving the child food, helping the child dress, feeding the child, etc.</p> <p><b>CP3</b> Ensuring wellbeing: where the adult expresses concern for the physical wellbeing of a child (nutrition, getting enough to eat, dressing appropriately, safety)</p> <p><b>CP4</b> Supporting independence: where the adult facilitates or encourages the child’s independence (self-care, etc.), meanings attached to independence by the participant</p> <p><b>CP5</b> Preserving resources: where the participant expresses or exhibits a concern with preserving resources such as food, water, etc. or waste</p> <p><b>CP6</b> Feeding: feeding practices informed by culture (serving warm milk, etc) (may overlap with CP2 and CP3)</p> <p><b>CP7</b> Supervision: discussion about who supervises the children, cares for the children</p> <p><b>CP8</b> Body positioning: where adults and children should be in relation to each other</p> <p><b>CP9</b> Dependency: counterpoint to independence, where they discuss children needing them to help, innocence, inability</p>

<p><b>CV</b> Cultural values: values which are identified by participants as fairly uniform, universal within their culture; values which are seen to govern practice, action, behaviours, words</p>	<p><b>CV1</b> Respect: references to respect for others and the knowledge they hold, often for elders, husbands, guests to one's home  <b>CV2</b> Obedience  <b>CV3</b> Honesty  <b>CV4</b> Sharing, caring, or community help  <b>CV5</b> Value attached to children</p>
<p><b>CGR</b> Culturally-influenced gender roles: roles which are assumed by either boys or girls in their cultures, tasks completed only by a specific gender, restrictions placed on a gender</p>	
<p><b>CT</b> Cultural tension: where the participant express that there is a conflict between value systems (eg. back home and in Canada)</p>	
<p><b>CCON</b> Cultural continuity: where participants discuss continuity between home and school (such as values, practices, language), doing what their parents used to do, doing here what they did back home</p>	
<p><b>CONV</b> Continuity of values: where participants mention examples of values which are the same between back home and Canada (not lying, for example)</p>	
<p><b>UNV</b> Universal values or practices (as perceived by participants)</p>	

**Category: Religion**

<b>Codes</b>	<b>Subcodes</b>
<p><b>RB</b> Religious beliefs: specific instances where participants identify that in their religion they believe certain things.</p>	

<b>RV</b> Religious values: values which the participants explicitly associate with their religion, values emphasized in the Quran, values which are taught to children in the Madrassa or Quran school (all these overlap)	<b>RV1</b> Respect <b>RV2</b> Obedience <b>RV3</b> Honesty <b>RV4</b> Modesty
<b>RP</b> Religious practices: practices which the participants identify as being based on or influenced by their religious beliefs, instances where participants mention being motivated by religion to act in a particular manner	<b>RP1</b> Sharing <b>RP2</b> Helping, supporting, or caring for others <b>RP3</b> Ensuring wellbeing <b>RP4</b> Preserving resources
<b>HAR</b> Sin: where the participant mentions that something is <i>haram</i> or sinful	
<b>RT</b> Religious tension	
<b>RGN</b> religion and gender roles	
<b>RB</b> Religious beliefs: what they profess to believe and link to religion	

**Category: Care and Childrearing**

<b>Codes</b>	<b>Subcodes</b>
<b>CP</b> Cultural practices: those practices which are informed by cultural values and beliefs, and are fairly uniformly enacted in all participant's families	
<b>CGR</b> Culturally-influenced gender roles: roles which are assumed by either boys or girls in their cultures, tasks completed only by a specific gender, restrictions placed on a gender	

<b>CAA</b> Care activities	<b>CA1</b> feeding or food preparation <b>CA2</b> dressing or undressing <b>CA3</b> diapering or toileting <b>CA4</b> supervising
<b>CAT:</b> Care and time: references to routinized care, eating at specific time, etc.	
<b>CCA:</b> Changes in care practice: over time, due to change in context or circumstances, etc.	
<b>CAE:</b> Evaluation of care: references to giving more care, lack of care, not caring, worrying about care, differences in care	
<b>CAU:</b> universality of care: practices and beliefs which are perceived to be universal	
<b>CAV:</b> Variations in care or childrearing practice depending on age, child, context, family resources or income	
<b>CD</b> Child development: references to how children develop, milestones, how one observes or learns about child development	
<b>CDCO</b> child development and context: references to individuality, uniqueness, variations based on gender, context, socioeconomic status, etc.	
<b>CDAR:</b> Child development and the adult role: how the adults facilitate development	
<b>PRC</b> Parent responsibilities in care activities: references to what parents have responsibilities for in care, gender divisions and so forth	

<b>CRR</b> Child rearing resources: the sources for information or assistance about child development, care, child rearing	<b>CRR1</b> elders such as mothers or aunts <b>CRR2</b> medical professionals <b>CRR3</b> medicine man (“cultural medicine”) <b>CRR4</b> other parents <b>CRR5</b> observation or comparison <b>CRR6</b> experience
<b>CBNO:</b> child birth norms or experiences	
<b>CRP:</b> child rearing practices	

**Category: Education (School and Home, Formal and Informal)**

<b>Codes</b>	<b>Subcodes</b>
<b>CU</b> Curriculum: information on school curriculum or content being taught to children in various contexts.	<b>CUBH</b> Curriculum back home (school) <b>CUC</b> Curriculum in Canada (school or child care) <b>CUTE</b> Curriculum in the ECTE program <b>CULN</b> Literacy or numeracy
<b>DI</b> Discipline: information related to disciplinary strategies in the school, community, or home or student responses to these strategies.	<b>DSBH</b> Discipline in school or madrassa back home <b>DSC</b> Discipline/guidance in school or child care centre in Canada <b>DHC</b> Discipline in the home or community (administered by neighbours, relatives, older siblings, etc.) <b>DIS:</b> Discipline strategies
<b>ST</b> Skills taught: references to the skills parents teach children in the home	
<b>PES:</b> personal experiences in school	
<b>TR</b> Teacher role: the teacher’s role in the classroom in relation to the children, families	<b>TRBH</b> Teacher role back home <b>TRC</b> Teacher role in Canada
<b>PR</b> Parent role: the role of parents and other significant family members in supporting the child’s education in school or teaching the child skills in the home.	<b>PRSBH</b> Parent role in schooling or home teaching back home <b>PRSC</b> Parent role in schooling in Canada

<b>GC</b> Goals for children in the context of education (teaching and learning)	<b>GCBH</b> Goals for children back home <b>GCC</b> Goals for children in Canada
<b>TLE</b> Teaching and learning environment: any references to the environment or context	
<b>BN</b> Behavioural norms and expectations for children in the classroom, home, community	<b>BNBH</b> behavioural norms back home <b>BNC</b> Behavioural norms in Canada
<b>COVED:</b> Contextual variations in education such as between private and public schools, urban and rural schools	
<b>IA</b> Instructional or learning approaches used by teachers or parents	<b>CDIA</b> Child-directed learning <b>ADIA</b> Adult-directed teaching <b>OL</b> Observational learning
<b>PS</b> Pedagogical strategies used in the teacher education classroom	<b>PSDT</b> Direct teaching <b>PSEX</b> Exploration, instructor or students provide materials and others explore these <b>PSGP</b> Guided participation <b>PSSD</b> Student(s) is in charge of teaching as in leading a song <b>PSQU</b> Asking and answering questions <b>PSSC</b> Scaffolding
<b>TLC</b> Teaching and learning configurations in the teacher education classroom	<b>TLCSG</b> Small group <b>TLCWG</b> Whole group <b>TLCP</b> Partners <b>TLCI</b> Individual work <b>TLCT</b> Transitional activities
<b>MEM:</b> memorization	
<b>TLM</b> Teaching and learning materials used in classroom or child care settings	<b>TLMBH</b> Teaching and learning materials back home <b>TLMC</b> Teaching and learning materials in Canada used in school/child care <b>TLMTE</b> Teaching and learning materials used in the ECTE classroom

<b>LD</b> Learning and development: instances where participants link learning and development in the educational or home context	
<b>AS</b> Assessment: any reference to methods of assessment or assessments being completed	<b>ASBH</b> Assessment back home <b>ASC</b> Assessment in child care centres or schools in Canada <b>ASEX</b> Exam or unit test <b>ASQ</b> Quiz <b>ASP</b> Presentation or oral exam <b>ASA</b> Assignment <b>ASPR</b> Project <b>ASLG</b> Learner guide <b>ASRC</b> reading comprehension
<b>PY</b> Play: any comments related to play in the ECTE program, childhood experience, Canada	<b>PYC</b> Play context: any reference to where play takes place, indoor or outdoor <b>CDPY</b> Child directed/led play <b>PYP</b> Play partners <b>PYR</b> Play with rules <b>PYL</b> Play and learning: any reference to learning (or not learning) through play, development and play <b>PYS</b> Play and safety: references to concerns about safety <b>PYAR</b> Play and the adult role <b>PYM</b> Play materials <b>PYU</b> Play which is considered universal <b>PYN</b> the nature or kinds of play <b>VPY</b> Value of play

**Category: Communication and Interactions**

<b>Codes</b>	<b>Subcodes</b>
<b>CS</b> Communication strategies: the ways in which adults and children communicate with each other in school, home, or community settings, body positioning during interactions, ECTE teaching or discussions about interactional styles	<b>CS1</b> proximity: where the adult is proximal to the child as in sitting on the floor together or on the chair beside them (and at the same level) <b>CS2</b> non-verbal: where the adult is using non-verbal communication strategies such as making eye contact with the child or vice versa, clicking the tongue, gesture, etc. <b>CS3</b> verbal <b>CS4</b> direct (as in telling) <b>CS5</b> indirect (as in suggesting) <b>CS6</b> Face-to-face

	<b>CS7</b> explaining
<b>NI</b> Nature of interaction: the apparent purpose behind the observed interaction between teacher and child or parent and child	<p><b>NI1</b> caretaking: where the teacher engages in care activities such as feeding, dressing, diapering, toileting</p> <p><b>NI2</b> teaching: where there is an informal attempt to teach the child during an interaction</p> <p><b>NI3</b> directing: where the teacher is directing the child's action</p> <p><b>NI4</b> play: where the teacher is playing with or alongside the child</p> <p><b>NI5</b> guidance: where the teaching is verbally or nonverbally guiding the children's behavior</p> <p><b>NI6</b> encouragement or praise: where the teacher is offering encouragement or praise to the child</p> <p><b>NI7</b> literacy and numeracy: where the teacher is engaged in a literacy or numeracy activity with the child (songs and storytelling)</p> <p><b>NI8</b> helping: where the teacher is assisting the child with a learning or self care task</p> <p><b>NI9</b> questioning: where the teacher asks or answers a question (open or closed-ended)</p>

**Category: Professionalism or Professional Practice**

<b>Codes</b>	<b>Subcodes</b>
<b>PRO</b> Professionalism: used when a participant discusses professional practice, professionalism, or what a professional does. They may not use the word professional, but rather "good". (also unprofessional or "bad")	<p><b>PROT</b> Professional traits or attributes the individual professional is seen to possess</p> <p><b>PROB</b> Professional behaviours: things a professional says or does in practice at a more theoretical level</p> <p><b>PRR</b>: Professional rules: where the participant identifies specific rules which must be followed in the field</p> <p><b>MOT</b>: mothering and professionalism: where mothering is mentioned with respect to the professional context</p>
<b>BRD</b> Bridging personal/cultural and professional practice, creating balance, home and school	
<b>PROO</b> Professional obligation: expressing feelings of obligation, can't follow one's heart, must do as told even if they disagree	

<b>PROA</b> Accepting professional norms: where they embrace professional practice.	
<b>PROAD</b> adhering to dominant practice even if they disagree with it	
<b>CVAD</b> adhering to cultural, personal, religious practice in the professional setting	
<b>IMC</b> Image of the child	
<b>IT</b> Image of the teacher: the idealized or romanticized image of the teacher	<b>ITBH</b> Image of the teacher back home <b>ITC</b> Image of the teacher in Canada