Learning "In Relations:"

Engaging with Decolonization in Early Learning and Child Care

by

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Abstract

Quality early learning and child care can support children in both short and long-term developmental and educational outcomes. In many ways, notions of quality and related educator dispositions in early learning and child care for Indigenous children and families mirror any program. Yet for many Indigenous families with young children in Canada, daily lived experiences continue to be impacted by colonialism, and it remains unclear how urban early learning and child care programs can be most responsive to families' priorities and strengths. It is thus imperative for decision makers to understand how decolonial relational-based early learning and child care contexts attract, engage, and support Indigenous children and families.

The purpose of this dissertation is to contribute to the limited understanding of potential indicators of quality in early learning and child care and educator dispositions of those working with Indigenous children and families in an urban setting. Weaving together three studies, this multi-paper dissertation identifies current literature regarding indicators of quality in early learning and child care and determines how quality for Indigenous children and families might be shaped by child care contexts, including educator dispositions, pre-service learning environments, and engagement in decolonization work.

The first paper shares the results of a scoping review exploring existing literature in the areas of quality and educator dispositions in relation to Indigenous families' experiences with early learning and child care in an urban Canadian context. The second paper, a secondary analysis of qualitative data from a case study, considers Bourdieu's theoretical apparatus of social reproduction to emphasize the role that socially constructed barriers may cause for the persistence of systemic inequalities, and how educators' dispositions and centre programming can act as potential challenges to such inequalities. The third paper, an autoethnography,

navigates reflexive work that explores how post-secondary instructors engage in meaningful decolonization and Indigenization of early learning and child care preservice education.

Keywords: *Decolonization, child care, Indigenous families, educator dispositions, quality*

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Chelsea Erin Freeborn and includes three studies, two of which originated from a previous research project that included the author as a co-primary investigator: 1) a scoping review and 2) a secondary analysis of qualitative data from a case study. The previous research project discussed in this thesis included a modified scoping review, focus groups, and a case study. This project received research ethics approval from MacEwan University's Research Ethics Board (REB) for the focus groups and case study (Project name: Quality Indicators and Dispositions in the Early Learning and Child Care Sector: Learning from Indigenous Families, File No: 101861, November 24, 2020). The secondary analysis of qualitative data from the case study included in this manuscript received ethics approval from the University of Alberta Ethics Board, Project Name "In Relations: Learning from Indigenous Families in the Urban Early Learning and Child Care Context," No. Pro00115576, December 7, 2021. The scoping review included in this dissertation and the third study, an autoethnography, did not require ethics approval.

The scoping review in this paper-based thesis has been submitted for publication and includes additional authors that were involved in the initial study design (Freeborn et al., 2021c). I was primarily responsible for data collection, data analysis, and writing of the manuscript. C. Soetaert contributed during the previous research project to data collection and data analysis. A. Mardhani-Bayne was the co-primary investigator in the previous research project and contributed to data analysis in the initial project and manuscript edits of the scoping review included in this thesis.

Acknowledgements

My name appears as the sole author of this thesis, and yet I view the culmination of the work and related labour required by no means as an individual effort. I present this completed dissertation as an extension of gratitude for the many people who have contributed to my ability to arrive at this moment of completion.

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I extend a heartfelt thank you to those involved in the dissertation-associated research completed in partnership between MacEwan University and the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care. This includes the co-primary investigator from MacEwan University, Dr. Alvina Mardhani-Bayne, and the research assistant, Cheyanne Soetaert. This work would not have been possible without the support of the Council and the numerous participants that engaged in the focused conversations and case study; for these partnerships, I am so grateful.

Getting through to the completion of my dissertation required more than academic support, and I cannot begin to express my gratitude. This first and foremost includes Jorma, my

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Chapter 1: Introduction

I begin this dissertation by acknowledging that I researched and wrote on multiple traditional lands, referred to as Treaty 6 Territory and the unceded territory of the Coast Salish Peoples. Treaty 6 encompasses the traditional lands of numerous Western Canadian Indigenous communities, including but not limited to nêhiyaw-askiy (Cree), Sųłiné (Dene), Cade Wicashdabi (Nakota Sioux), ᓇᐦᑲᐍ (Saulteaux), and Niisitapi (Blackfoot). Coast Salish includes the territories of the xʷməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səl̓ílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. I am a guest on these lands. A guest, according to Koleszar-Green (2018), seeks to understand through a reflexive process the responsibilities as a settler to learn about the land, the history, and the stories of the First Peoples to "unsettle the privilege of ignorance" (p. 174). I hold an obligation to learn, unlearn, and honour the lands and communities in which I reside.

This dissertation aims to contribute to the limited understanding of quality indicators and contexts for educator dispositions in early learning and child care for Indigenous children and families. Through three studies, this multi-paper dissertation seeks to (1) map the body of available literature regarding indicators of quality in early learning and child care for Indigenous children and families; and (2) determine how current urban early learning and child care contexts, including educator dispositions, pre-service learning environments, and engagement in decolonization, shape quality for Indigenous children and families in Canada.

The first two papers draw on research conducted in partnership between MacEwan University and the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care (ECELC) that began in the spring of 2020. I contributed to this research as a co-primary investigator. More information regarding this primary research can be found below as well as in Chapter 4. The first paper, a

scoping review, explores existing literature in the areas of quality and educator dispositions concerning Indigenous families' experiences with early learning and child care.

The second paper, a secondary analysis of qualitative data from a case study that followed the scoping review in the primary research, employs Bourdieu's theoretical apparatus of social reproduction (1984) to respond to systemic inequalities for Indigenous children and families and consider how educators' dispositions and centre programming can act as potential challenges to such disparities. The third paper, an autoethnography, shares reflexive narratives of an instructor (and PhD student) navigating decolonizing work in a post-secondary environment. This study addresses the question: How can post-secondary instructors engage in meaningful decolonization of early learning and child care preservice education?

The autoethnographic study also seeks to engage in Indigenous decolonizing research methodologies (Aveling, 2013; Grande, 2015; Kovach, 2021), a critically reflexive approach by the researcher that can support efforts for redressing systems of oppression through critical and Indigenous epistemological, theoretical, and methodological lenses. Research approaches using this methodology critically question dominant and widely accepted knowledge embedded within structural injustices, systemic inequality, and intersectionalities of oppression (Absalon & Willett, 2005; Applebaum, 2010; Graveline, 2000; Kendall et al., 2011; Rigney, 1997; Schostak & Schostak, 2008). Essential within this method is attention to "the power of whiteness and how it can invade [Indigenous] territories – to reinscribe or prescribe what is and means to be [Indigenous]" (Laycock, 2009, p. 46).

Research Context

Much of this research stems from a larger initiative by the Edmonton Council on Early Learning and Care (ECELC) to conduct research and analysis of community needs for early learning and care with respect to the elimination of poverty. As a graduate student, I was initially

involved in supporting the ECELC to explore the needs of Indigenous children and families in Edmonton. In 2019, Talking Circles, based on an Indigenous tradition of sharing circles, were conducted with participants from the early learning and child care community who could speak to prior and current experiences of Indigenous children and families with early learning and care in Edmonton. Participants included (1) Indigenous families with young children in Edmonton, (2) those working in Indigenous early learning and child care and/or work with Indigenous children and their families in child care settings, and (3) those involved with early learning and child care at a provincial/federal/municipal government-level setting. This inquiry resulted in several recommendations for the early learning and child care sector in Edmonton and can be found in a final report (Kemble, 2019). These recommendations included the Indigenization of early learning and child care spaces, provision of little to no cost child care for Indigenous families, the recruitment of Indigenous early learning and child care professionals, mandatory preservice and in-service education regarding working with Indigenous children and families, and the development of ongoing professional development opportunities that support professional quality standards.

To further examine experiences of Indigenous families accessing early learning and child care, in the spring of 2020, the ECELC and MacEwan University began a joint research project. This research sought to further explore the experiences of Indigenous families accessing child care in Edmonton through a scoping review (Freeborn et al., 2021a), focus conversations (Freeborn et al., 2021b), and a qualitative case study (Mardhani-Bayne et al., 2021a). Two questions guided this research: (1) For Indigenous families, what are indicators of quality in early learning and child care? (2) What are essential dispositions that child care educators may demonstrate to meet the needs of Indigenous children and families? A full description of the

background context of this research project and studies are detailed in Research Methodology and Design in Chapter 4. This dissertation includes the scoping review from this research and a secondary analysis of qualitative data from the case study.

Terminology

Before introducing and addressing this dissertation's intricacies, several terms require explication.

Indigenous. According to the Government of Canada (Statistics Canada, 2018), “Indigenous peoples” is a term for the original peoples of North America and their descendants. “Aboriginal peoples” is also a widely used term found in academic publications and other media sources. The Canadian Constitution recognizes three groups of Indigenous peoples: First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. These three distinct peoples represent many diverse communities, each holding unique histories, languages, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs (Government of Canada, n.d.). More than 70 distinct Indigenous languages were reported in the 2016 Census, more than 30 of which had at least 500 speakers (Statistics Canada, 2018). Large urban settings such as Edmonton feature many diverse cultural groups, including cultures within Métis, Inuit, and First Nations communities and from across North America. Recognizing and respecting the diversity, distinctness, and connections of Indigenous peoples is a fundamental step that non-Indigenous peoples can take toward reconciliation.

Early Learning and Child Care. Because various terms exist to describe *early learning and child care*, it is helpful to clarify any diversity in linguistics. Related references to early learning and care include early childhood education, early childhood development, and early childhood services. Early learning and child care encompass a broad assortment of educational programs and services. These include, but are not limited to, daycares, preschools, Head Start

programs, and prekindergarten programs such as those offered through formal school systems (Sinha, 2014). In Alberta, there are numerous categories of licensed child care services defined under the Child Care Licensing Act. These include "day care programs for preschool-aged children (under seven years), part day preschool programs, group family child care, and innovative child care programs designed to meet the unique child care needs of the community in which they are provided, as approved by the director" (Friendly et al., 2018, p. 93). The other recognized early child care program in Alberta is the Family Day Home program, where approved day home educators are required to follow identified standards for operation. More than 50% of Alberta's centre-based child care programs and almost half of approved family day home agencies are for-profit centres (Friendly et al., 2018).

Dispositions. The term dispositions refers to the "tendencies [of educators] to respond to situations in particular ways" (Ministry of Education, 2017 as cited in Davitt & Ryder, 2019, p. 20). The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) (2002) defines dispositions as "the values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence behaviours … as well as the educator's own professional growth" (p. 53). According to the NCATE (2002), educator values, beliefs and attitudes influence dispositions within a sociocultural context.

Organization of Dissertation

This dissertation will first explore the background to the research issue through a review of the literature. This review will cover an overview of Indigenous families in Canada, their experiences in early learning and child care, related policies and practices impacting the experiences of Indigenous children and families, and quality in early learning and child care. Next, I will share epistemological and theoretical orientations that offer foundational understandings of theories shaping this dissertation. The section following will briefly describe

the methodology for each of the studies (scoping review, secondary analysis of qualitative data, and autoethnography). The bulk of methodological descriptions can be found embedded in the three studies. Following the three studies, a final chapter of this dissertation will include considerations, reflections, and conclusions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The goal of this chapter is to frame research through the articulation of the issues related to early learning and child care and Indigenous children and families in Canada. The objective of this chapter is to posit the circumstances contributing to contemporary contexts by drawing on available research in describing and analyzing the contours of experiences for Indigenous children and families, key policies, and notions of quality in urban early learning and child care environments in Canada.

This research shares Britto and colleagues' (2011) assertion that "early years are emerging as a public policy focus around the world" (p. 3). Early learning and child care is a critical policy and practice issue, and in particular for Indigenous families in Canada (Taylor, 2017). Despite Indigenous peoples facing a prolonged history of colonization, the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples as outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2008, are both recognized and expected to be upheld by all levels of government. In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released findings and calls to action that included dozens of recommendations on topics related to child wellbeing, protecting language and culture, and strengthening information on missing women and children (TRC, 2015). Specific to early learning and child care, a recommendation called upon the provincial, federal, and Indigenous governments to create relevant early childhood education programs for Indigenous families (Taylor, 2017).

From the time of the signing of Canada's historical treaties, Indigenous peoples have endured assimilative and discriminatory policies with profound effects (Armitage, 1995; Fast & Collin-Vézina, 2010). Many Indigenous peoples experience unemployment, poverty, high rates of teen pregnancy, and poor health conditions (Reading & Wien, 2009). According to Statistics Canada (2016), 40% of Indigenous children in Canada live in poverty, with the overall national poverty rate for children at 19%. Indigenous peoples can experience high rates of negative health outcomes, resulting from high rates of child poverty and chronic underfunding of needed services as well as the harmful legacy of residential schools. In addition, Indigenous peoples in Edmonton are overrepresented in homelessness, accessing Food Bank services, and can experience significant barriers to employment (7 Cities on Housing and Homelessness, 2016).

Indigenous Families in Canada

Indigenous peoples are the fastest growing cultural group in Canada, with quality early learning and child care an important consideration for Indigenous children and their families (Statistics Canada, 2018). According to the 2016 Census, more than 1.67 million people in Canada identify themselves as Indigenous. The Indigenous population in Canada increased by 42.5% between 2006 and 2016; as the youngest population in Canada, approximately 44% were under the age of 25 in 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2016).

Indigenous peoples make up 6% of the total population, and Indigenous children account for 10% of the child population in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2016). The steady movement of Indigenous families into urban settings has placed pressure on Indigenous-focused early learning and child care programs as well as highlighted the need for non-Indigenous mainstream programming to meet the needs of Indigenous families (Scott, 2013). Social supports and services, including those aimed at early learning and child care, are critical for urban Indigenous

families living in vulnerable situations such as poverty and marginalization (Ball, 2012; Hare & Anderson, 2010). Early learning and child care programming, in the context of working with marginalized families, can bolster positive health and social outcomes and can contribute to community wellness (Britto et al., 2011). Nevertheless, according to Pasolli (2019), early learning and child care in Canada is in a continuous state of crisis. "Numerous studies and assessments paint a nationwide picture of a severe shortage of spaces, unaffordable fees, poor working conditions for early childhood educators, service gaps that have led to the expansion of for-profit services, and programmes of questionable quality" (p. 3).

Ball (2014a) observed that Indigenous children living in Indigenous communities are less likely to attend early learning and child care programs compared to non-Indigenous children. In First Nations communities, approximately 30% of children ages 0 to 4 years attend regular child care (First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2018). Of those, more than two-thirds attend formal child care settings (such as early learning and child care centres) compared to approximately one-third in informal care arrangements (such as cared for by an extended family member). According to Findlay and Kohen (2010), this is significantly higher for First Nations children living off-reserve (52%).

Experiences in Early Learning and Child Care

Indigenous designed and managed early learning and child care programs can play a specific role in providing Indigenous children and families quality programming (Halseth & Greenwood, 2019). Government investment in quality Indigenous early learning and child care can play a critical role in optimizing Indigenous children's health and development, addressing historic and omnipresent colonization policies and practices, and mitigating intergenerational

impacts of social and structural inequities on Indigenous children and families (Halseth & Greenwood, 2019).

Ball (2012) emphasizes that the experiences of Indigenous families accessing early learning and child care vary greatly, especially when considering the differences that may exist between community settings and urban contexts. Indigenous children and their families live in a variety of settings including but not limited to on-reserve, off-reserve, rural and urban communities. Indigenous populations thus represent many families potentially accessing early learning and care services (Ball, 2004). Significant policy and practice-related gaps exist, particularly in urban settings, in the provision of quality and culturally appropriate early learning and child care for Indigenous families in Canada.

In a study by Hare and Anderson (2010) examining the experiences of Indigenous families accessing a formal early intervention program in an urban Canadian setting, the authors found that Indigenous families experience access differently than non-Indigenous families. According to the authors, "the historical and social realities of Indigenous parents play a significant role in the process of coming to early childhood programs, and also how parents navigate the transition [into early childhood education]" (p. 26). Thus, questions persist regarding how and what early learning and child care programming Indigenous families access in the urban context, and the reasons for families' choices to access and remain in early learning and child care environments.

For Preston (2014), social connections within a community strengthen when policies and practices focus on the needs of young children. A supportive and stimulating environment can also meet a wide range of objectives, including child care, learning for young children, and broader supports for both children and their families (Friendly & Prentice, 2009). Ball (2014b)

asserts that the promotion of early learning and child care in a community can help to mobilize Indigenous family wellness and prompt a variety of community services. Thus, early learning and child care focuses on child development in the early years and can encourage the holistic wellness of families and communities. Children can be a catalytic factor in the strengthening of communities; compelling evidence suggests that quality early learning and care has a positive and longitudinal academic and social impact (Landry, 2008; Niles et al., 2007).

In the context of Indigenous young children and their families, Greenwood (2016) shares that "early childhood can be seen as a crucial site for reconciliation and cultural healing" (p. 1). Early learning and child care anchored in Indigenous community cultures can play a foundational role in supporting children's cultural identities and broader collective well-being for Indigenous families and communities (Greenwood & de Leeuw, 2012; Government of Canada, 1996; Smylie, 2009). Indigenous-focused early learning and child care programs have the potential to uphold long standing calls by Indigenous families and communities to assert government-obligated rights for quality care (Gerlach et al., 2021). Affordable and accessible quality early learning and child care can provide Indigenous families and children with additional support while parents choose to advance their education, obtain new employment, or maintain their current employment (Boulanger, 2018).

Policies and Practices

In Canada, child welfare policies constitute "a broader colonial system" that has become "so fully naturalized as to be mostly invisible, especially to settler-colonists" (de Leeuw, 2014, p. 60). The continuity of colonial hegemony through current child welfare systems (de Leeuw, 2014; McKenzie et al., 2016), endures through both patriarchal and racialized discourses portraying children to be "at risk" and Indigenous mothers as "unfit" (Cull, 2006; de Leeuw,

2014). Provincial and federal decision makers continue to disregard their role in advancing Indigenous early learning and child care programs that support optimal health and wellbeing (Gerlach & Browne, 2016; Hughes, 2013; Tait et al., 2013). Despite some outwardly facing progressive character, Canada's social policies hold "potentially deleterious outcomes especially for mothers, lower income and racialized women" (Bezanson, 2018, p. 170).

In 2018, the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Métis National Council and the Government of Canada released the Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework (Government of Canada, 2018). The framework paves the way for Indigenous governance of early learning and child care and acts as a guide for those working in the field to ensure Indigenous children receive the opportunity to experience quality. The Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework

> sees children and families supported by a comprehensive and coordinated system of ELCC policies, programs and services that are led by Indigenous peoples, rooted in Indigenous knowledges, cultures and languages, and supported by strong partnerships of holistic, accessible and flexible programming that is inclusive of the needs and aspirations of Indigenous children and families [and grounded in culture] (Government of Canada, 2018, p. 5).

The Framework offers nine general principles as well as a "vision for happy and safe Indigenous children and families, strong cultural identity, and a comprehensive and coordinated system that is anchored in self-determination, centred on children and grounded in culture" (para. 2). One of the nine principles, quality programs and services, distinguishes early learning and child care as "grounded in Indigenous cultures and delivered through a holistic approach that supports the wellness of children and families in safe, nurturing and well-resourced programs

and environments" (Greenwood et al., 2020, p. 22). This principle also emphasizes "culturally competent" educators working in healthy and supportive environments. The Framework was developed to act as a guide for those working in the early learning and care field to ensure that programs and services "built on a foundation of shared principles, rooted in Indigenous knowledge, cultures and languages, and supported by strong partnerships" (Government of Canada, 2018, para. 2).

Flight, Alberta's Early Learning and Care Framework, transparently recognizes that it does not address the specific needs of Indigenous communities and acknowledges that it "cannot speak authentically about early learning and child care in these communities, nor can we take the lead on bringing these voices to the Alberta curriculum framework" (Makovichuk et al., 2014, p. ix). Nevertheless, Flight does recognize the multifaceted and complex role that a "practice of relationships" (relationality) has when working with children and families. Recognizing that families are the experts in their children and thus know them in ways that educators cannot, educators view families and their relationships with them as pivotal in the care of children. According to Flight, educators must reflect on individual family practices, reflective of communities, that support children's identity to deepen their understanding and relationship with children and families (Makovichuk et al., 2014).

Despite their existence, the enactment of these frameworks remains aspirational for many early learning and child care settings. A vision of decolonizing praxis, where contextual histories, contemporary realities and epistemologies of relationality are fully honoured and considered through policies, programming and reflexive practices, does not currently fully exist in the urban early learning and child care context in Canada. This, according to Ritchie (2015), "would require a [deeper] intentional disentanglement on the part of [early learning and child

care educators and leaders], in order to reset educational aspirations outside of the pervasive colonialist legacy" (p. 148).

Investing resources in quality early learning and child care for young children and their families is a meaningful way to help ensure their future well-being. Examining notions of quality and educator dispositions for Indigenous families can offer insight into the range of benefits that early learning and child care offers Indigenous children and families, including those families experiencing periods of vulnerability.

Quality in Early Learning and Child Care

In settler-colonial based societies such as Canada, the notion of quality for Indigenous children and families in early learning and child care centres can vary, depending on how ideological, policy, and structural factors interact to influence Indigenous family choices and experiences. Settler-colonialism, briefly stated, refers to "a form of colonization in which outsiders come to land inhabited by Indigenous peoples and claim it as their own new home" (Tuck et al., 2014, p. 6). The dominant discourse for early learning and child care in Canada suggests that high-quality programs and services are key components in closing equity gaps for Indigenous children and families in Canada (Garon-Carrier, 2019; Greenwood et al., 2020; Landry, 2008; Niles et al., 2007; Yoshikawa et al., 2013); however, a dearth of explication exists regarding how high-quality is defined in this context. Although the impact of structural elements such as policies and funding can impact children's and families' experiences, there is no definitive, one-size-fits-all approach to defining what precisely constitutes quality "since systems are rooted in the articulation of ideas, concepts, values, and principles that differ across time and geographic location" (Greenwood et al, 2020, p. 26).

In recent years, scholarly engagements sought to challenge colonialisms within the context of Canadian early learning and child care, asking such questions as how hegemonic actions from colonial pasts continue to exist in contemporary social and political landscapes (de Finney et al., 2011; Nxumalo et al., 2011; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2007; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2006). The challenges to colonialism remain important in today's landscape, as "the effects bleed into the present in many ways, particularly in assimilation policies and ongoing material and cultural appropriations of Canada's Indigenous peoples" (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012, p. 305).

Nxumalo (2019) places an urgent need for early learning and child care policies, programs, and practices to critically respond to the settler-colonial legacies for decolonization to occur through the disruption of dominant discourses and colonizing views. Several scholars propose to unsettle assumptions that position early learning and child care benefitting from ongoing settler colonial relations (Ashton, 2015; Bear Nicholas, 2008; Nxumalo, 2015; Tuck & McKenzie, 2015). Bear Nicholas (2008), for example, reveals how Western human-centric notions of pedagogies, like developmentally appropriate curriculum, work against decolonizing early learning and child care.

Quality in early learning and child care is not a separate concept for children and families accessing and experiencing care. Overall, for many families, quality early learning and child care environments safeguard children's well-being, happiness, positive experiences, and development. Quality is what they expect from early learning and child care. Moreover, children, families and communities are diverse with varying needs, likings and contexts, and these diversities can reflect varying concepts of quality. Early learning and child care deemed to be of high quality in one context may not necessarily present as high quality in all contexts and for all families. Quality of any form should be determined through impact for children and their

families and based on families' definition of quality. Research and questions regarding evaluation should also be contextually determined, as these too can be subject to assumptions (Kral et al., 2021). Given that urban early learning and child care environments offer a range of outcomes for Indigenous families, including those experiencing periods of vulnerability, it is imperative to consider theoretical and ideological factors when considering quality.

The purpose of Chapter 2 was to frame the forthcoming studies through the articulation of issues posited through various factors associated with early learning and child care for Indigenous children and families in Canada. The next chapter will offer a theoretical road map based in critical inquiry to frame the nature and limitations of understanding in this dissertation. By doing so, Chapter 3 aims to explicate the ways in which my positionality underpins choices made throughout the research process. As reflexivity can trace and examine settler-based stances that may act to transubstantiate methodological approaches, it is imperative to explore assumptions and concepts that inform the knowledge and knowing guiding research choices.

Chapter 3: Epistemological and Theoretical Orientations

Early childhood research grounded in critical theoretical perspectives can generate knowledge that unmasks multiplicities in historical and socio-cultural experiences (Cannella & Viruru, 2004; Dahlberg et al., 2006; Nxumalo, 2019). A theoretical framework for critical inquiry, grounded in human ecology and relational epistemologies, informs the secondary analysis of qualitative research data and autoethnography as methodological approaches in this dissertation. These approaches hold potential to create space for diverse voices, to position the research, and to deepen discourses related to early learning and child care for Indigenous children and families.

It is necessary to ground research choices through the critical investigation of human ecology and relational epistemologies as these theories of knowledge make visible linkages between my personal epistemological beliefs and what methodological guiding motives exist within this dissertation. Creating opportunities to situate methodological choices as inseparable from epistemological stances regarding knowing and knowledge can create the basis for the promotion of critical reflection and opportunities for transformation. As Gerlach (2018) states, "thinking relationally can provide the epistemological scaffolding necessary for enacting critically oriented and decolonizing research that benefits Indigenous peoples and advances social change" (p. 1).

Multiple epistemological and theoretical influences impacted my research choices. Through a funnelling process, the forthcoming theoretical "journey" will act as a contextual guide for the methodological choices and paradigmatic decisions that have led me to this important and personal work. As a student of human ecology, I have been inspired by both the overt and covert ways that relationship maps our scholarly choices. Thus, it is imperative to offer this process of understanding, starting with human ecology, continuing with relational worldviews impacting this area of study, and the spheres of influence that affect our work in the field of families and early learning and child care. I will then offer theoretical considerations of neoliberalism and its hegemonic ascendancy and seek to unsettle dominant discourses through reflexivity and decolonization, including the work of Pierre Bourdieu.

Human Ecology

One means by which to understand the many connected systems and influences on children and families' everyday lives is through human ecology. A human ecological perspective supports the understanding of meaning that young children and their families give to experiences

and offers context to the settings within which children and families engage in their everyday lives. Human ecology as a discipline of study seeks to understand the mutual influence between humans and their environmental surroundings and draws inspiration from the field of ecology. Eugene Odum (1997), an American ecologist, views ecology as a holistic approach that studies "both parts and wholes" (p. 34). Ecology, according to Odum, draws inspiration from the notion that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Like ecology, which interprets life as a whole, human ecology explores human life as an aggregate phenomenon. Straus (1990) similarly defines human ecology as

> the discipline [that] seeks to understand and manage wisely the complex problems of the planet of which humans are a part. It integrates the old disciplines of highly specialized scientific investigation with the new discipline of seeing things, and acting upon them, as generalists (p. 22).

As human ecology is not a specialty contained within one discipline (Catton, 1994), and thus is not bound by any specific epistemological stance, Dyball (2010) suggests human ecology is "adisciplinary, in that it is inclusive of the disciplines but is not bound by any" (p. 13).

Although the roots of human ecology can be traced back to ecology, human ecology did not historically gain a foothold within this scientific discipline. Rather, human ecology primarily developed within social sciences. Of late, with fundamental environmental issues arising and facing human civilization, a bold attempt within human ecology to transcend the boundaries of biological and social sciences seeks a unity of knowledge much like what Odum (1997) referred to as a "third culture." According to Kassam (2009), this attempt has more recently taken "an urgent tone as [both cultural as well as ecological] diversity face the grave prospect of extinction. Because of these concerns, literature on the relationship between diverse [peoples] and their

varied ecological contexts is appearing with even greater frequency" (p. 32). This conceptualization of human ecology offers an understanding of the complex interconnectivity between the biological and the cultural. The concern between nature and humans' behaviour within ecological contexts is foundational in human ecology (Westney et al., 1988).

Dyball (2010) argues that human ecology is

> fundamentally concerned with questions about ecological sustainability and social justice… It seeks to imagine what it might be to live and do well in a humane, sustainable and worthwhile world and to invite and encourage broader community commitment to work towards realizing those futures (p. 274).

Human ecology has the potential to additionally contribute to theorizing of ways in which social, political and economic conditions impact humans' ability to engage with their world. Moreover, Bubolz and Sontag (1993) emphasize that "the uniqueness of human ecology lies in its focus on viewing humans and their near environments as integrated wholes, mutually influencing each other" (p. 118). The concept of mutual reciprocity suggests that although a significant power imbalance may currently exist between individuals and their environments, there may also be the potential to influence the power relations toward a more balanced existence.

Transforming the entrenched ways human beings historically and currently exploit nature is no easy feat. It requires the assumptive transition to one where humans and ecological systems hold a dynamically balanced, more nearly equal relationship. Olalla (2009) suggests that a better balance can be achieved

> by integrating the Eastern emphasis on contemplation and merging with the West's focus on analytical understanding and effective action. Such an

> integration would overcome the historical but unnecessary antagonism between these two diverging paths, taking hold of the best of each tradition (p. 6).

As human ecology explores relationships between humans and their environments, family-based ecological understandings consider how families interact with all ecosystems. For human ecological theory, adaptation and the function of relationships are key processes of both humans and their environment. Bubolz and Sontag share that "adaptation is behaviour of living systems that changes the state or structure of the system, the environment or both. Humans do not simply adapt to the environment but also modify the environment to reach desired outcomes" (1993, p. 433). Thus, central to human ecology are the assumptions of interrelationships between humans and the environments in which they live (Visvader, 1996; Young, 1991; Bubolz & Sontag, 1993). A shared ontological view between ecological and many Indigenous points of view suggests the interrelationship between all things and the mutual impacts on one another.

One of the fundamental differences between Indigenous philosophies and many western perspectives is the epistemological viewpoint. The principle of holism, which considers that "reality may be best understood by the interrelationships among its constituent parts" (Klein & Jurich, 1993, p. 51) proposes the study of relationships between humans and environments to understand the assets of this relationship. The underlying epistemological assumption made with the principle of holism suggests an objective distance throughout any research process. As LaBoucane-Benson (2009) attests, the principle of interconnectedness found in many Indigenous epistemologies, however, maintains that humans are in relationship with what they are studying; this relationship results in a deeper personal and subjective understanding of the self. Knowledge of the self is a contextually dependent individual interpretation; behaviours change because of the interrelationship with the environment (LaBoucane-Benson, 2009).

Relational Worldviews

Cross (1995) offers an ecological perspective based on a relational worldview: "the balance and harmony in relationships among multiple variables, including metaphysical forces," where "every event is in relation to all other events regardless of time, space or physical existence" (p. 147). Saxena and colleagues (2018) emphasize that human-environmental interactions are driven not just by labour or productive relations but also through the process of meaning-making. They state that

> meaning-making [can be] tied to cultural memory-keeping, especially in activities that relate to biodiversity. Memory-keeping practices may be particularly important in landscapes that have been touched by the traumas of colonial domination and capitalist extraction. The values people place on their relationships with nature, then, may reflect larger social and economic power relationships (p. 56).

It is imperative to acknowledge the root of knowledge from which relationships and contexts emerge; while human ecology may fit well within a relational framework, this requires additional critical reflection regarding what is and/or has been prioritized in the process. For Saxena and colleagues (2018) state, “All forms of knowledge...are developed with reference to particular contexts, but efforts to make such knowledges universally legible tend to re-create power hierarchies that privilege the knowledge of dominant groups while delegitimizing or minimizing those of less powerful people” (p. 58). When differing “values” exist between groups of people, any pre-existing power relationships will influence which set of values is prioritized (Saxena et al., 2018). Thus, relational worldviews must also consider how differences amongst groups have shaped policies and practices over time.

For Kassam (2009), “human ecology is simultaneously a function and a narrative of human beings’ developing a socio-cultural system on the foundation of nature” (p. 66). Thus, human ecology includes the relationships between human activities and their cultures and the environment. For many Indigenous communities, nature is embedded within the social systems as an interrelated guide. Thus, relational thinking extends beyond humans to include all organic beings. Ingold (2000) considers that “if every organism is not so much a discrete entity as a node in a field of relationships, then we have to think in a new way not only about the interdependence of organisms and their environments but also about their evolution” (p. 4). In such contexts, no separation exists within relationships of connectivity, and as such people are in active engagement within their ecological world; boundaries between ecological or biological sciences and the social sciences become permeable, suggesting an interdisciplinary approach.

Capra (1982) emphasizes that as individuals within societies and as part of a planetary ecosystem, we are reaching the turning point: “The paradigm shifts occurring within societies makes the current crisis not just a crisis of individuals, governments, or social institutions; but a transition of planetary dimensions” (p.25). Many unifying themes that unite Indigenous epistemologies challenge us to establish “new truths” in knowing and seek ways of living that retract from current reductionist and divisive paradigms. Colonization, according to Arabena (2010) was “based on a knowledge system that perpetuates the suppression of a global society founded on the respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice and a culture of peace” (p. 262). The impact of colonization can still be felt through the legitimization of the monopolization of resources whilst suggesting the only alternative to this hegemonic worldview would result in chaos. Arabena (2010) also suggests that engaging in knowledges Indigenously creates an opportunity “to understand that ideas are nested interconnected systems that form

conceptual structures that become our personal and collective paradigms" (p. 265). As human ecology as a discipline seeks to understand interrelationships as part of a complex, interacting system, many alignments exist between human ecology and Indigenous ecological perspectives.

Spheres of Influence

The consideration of potential transformative practice as envisioned by Eleanore Vaines (1996; 2004), advocates for ways of knowing in human ecology that consider Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies. According to May-Derbyshire (2019),

> narrative ways of knowing (local stories) and lifeworld ways of knowing (everyday life in a particular place or 'placed') were two ideas [Vaines] foregrounded in what became an impressive legacy of mapping, investigating, and understanding our deep ecologies and complex webs of life (p. 39).

Vaines mapped spheres of influence: inner (individual), private (family/kin), public (community) and the interrelated spheres of environment, including the spiritually based "unknowable" (1996). Vaines also challenged what she referred to as the power sphere - colonial institutions that carry inherited epistemological stances that limit engagement in other spheres. She proposed critical examination of the influence that the power sphere has in our collective and common ways of knowing and being, and considered how we could, through the creation of "new stories," nurture transformations in everyday life for reconciliation (May-Derbyshire, 2019).

These interrelated spheres of environment and the influence of power on everyday life align closely with the consideration of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory for understanding experiences with early learning and child care (Tudge et al., 2017). Bronfenbrenner (1989) explicates that the world of the child (and each family member) consists of five interrelated systems of interaction. Each system depends on the contextual nature of the person's life and

influences growth. The contextual environment, both immediate as well as remote, heavily influences proximal processes - the "extended game of ping pong, gradually becoming more complex, as the child becomes increasingly able to do things and a caring adult adapting and extending what the child can do" (Tudge et al., 2017, p. 1085). Bronfenbrenner's interplay between domains of influence can offer many important insights and conceptual clarity between the person and their social context. Nevertheless, sole use of Bronfenbrenner's model may act to silence the importance of hegemonic structures and the impact they have on families' lives. Although the theorist acknowledges the importance of differentiated social contexts, he offered limited theorization of how power permeates social life and can act to produce and reproduce social stratification. As Houston (2017) states, "structural barriers to child development cannot be fully understood without comprehending coercion… ecological theory is limited to an expository, rather than explanatory account of the person-in-society" (p. 6).

To further examine the forces of power in driving social processes within a human ecological paradigm, Bubolz and Sontag assume that "(k)nowledge can be used to transform oppressive structures in order to bring about greater justice and freedom" (1993, p. 428). As human ecology focuses on the contexts shaping individuals' experiences, a graphic representation can consider the ways in which families may interact with various spheres of influence. The idea of nested spheres, initially conceptualized by Bronfenbrenner (1979) and further considered by Vaines (1996), places emphasis on why it is critical to acknowledge the interrelation and impact of different spheres. Vaines (1996, as cited by Smith, 2019) claims

> every system is related to every other system in some way and to some degree and the whole of these parts is greater than the sum of their parts. The Spheres of Influence integrated as a whole interactive interdependent system provides a

> way...to examine and critique fundamental changes. If only one metaphor dominates, long-term consequences are manifested in pathologies and impoverished human understandings and experiences (p. 15).

Vaines also believes that reflexive practice offers a vision that coalesces ways of knowing and being and determines a possible “interconnected whole” (Smith, 2019).

Family ecology, a facet of human ecology, engages with tenets of human ecology within a family-specific context. According to Bubolz and Sontag, the family “is considered to be an energy transformation system that is interdependent with its natural physical-biological, human-built, and social-cultural milieu” (1993, p. 419). The authors assume that "human ecosystems are a particular kind of living system composed of humans in interaction with their environment," (1993, p. 425). Interrelationships are not predetermined; rather, families are able to respond to, change, and modify their environment. Thus, environments do not necessarily determine human behaviour; however, according to Trzcinski (1995), “adaptation and strategies for survival occur within environments that pose limitations and constraints as well as possibilities and opportunities for families” (p. 10).

The ecological framework for understanding families, as proposed by Bubolz and Sontag (1993), suggested that structure and functions of families are neither fixed nor given; rather, they are responsive to the ecological systems that families respond to. For Trzcinski (1995), Bubolz and Sontag’s theory suggest that family policy development “take[s] place only within the context of the values that determine which choices are made” (p. 11). Trzcinski also states that

> Family policy within the ecological framework entails the study of how human-derived rules shape these structures and institutions based on interrelated dimensions such as race, class, and gender. These policies thus create conditions

> that affect how easy or how difficult it is for families and for each member of these families to live and to survive. In addition, the ecological approach examines how policies within families shape and interact with other structures and institutions in society in creating and maintaining the social ecosystem in which families exist (1995, p. 12).

The interdependence of humans and nature is what grounds basic moral values of human ecology (Trzcinski, 1995). Survival is at the core of their ecological framework: for humans, species, and the nonliving environment that supports life (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993). A dearth of economic, political or social equity within an ecosystem not only threatens the ability of individuals and families to survive but also the health of the overall planetary ecosystem. This ecological approach thus requires the questioning of conditions that make survival problematic for some members of the ecosystem.

Family policy, within the context of early learning and child care and grounded in an ecological approach, considers survival as a core value; thus, social structures must consider the healthy development and functioning of families as foundational (Trzcinski, 1995). For Trzcinski, “when all of life is viewed as interrelated and human beings are recognized as having power to shape their environment through human-derived rules, it is imperative to design social structures and institutions that recognize this interdependence” (1995, p. 30). Bronfenbrenner (1988) mirrored this recognition of interrelationships as “this ecosystem comprises the social fabric that sustains our capacity to live and work together effectively, and to raise our children and youth to become competent and compassionate members of our society" (p. 143).

Policy has a clear and decisive role to play in ensuring the ability for families to actively engage with early learning and child care settings. Bronfenbrenner (2002) emphasized the role

that political institutions may play in supporting child-rearing processes. Considering the importance of the early years in the healthy development of children, and the important role that early learning and child care plays in the functioning of families, “it is of great interest to policy makers to ensure that optimal care and learning environments are provided to young children” (Breitkreuz et al., 2013, p. 3). Breitkreuz and colleagues (2013) share that the impact early learning and child care policies have on the wellbeing of young children and their families is contingent on decision makers’ ability to understand policy impact on children and families’ everyday lives.

Neoliberalism Arrangements

Any contextualization of contemporary relations and realities for Indigenous peoples can challenge a multitude of myths, such as a commonly held belief that Canada is a meritocracy with improving Indigenous-settler relations. As Baldwin and colleagues (2011) note, “despite liberal assurances to the contrary, Canada is a polity whose juridical-political structure, history, spatial arrangements, and social relations are thoroughly racialized and marked by racist ideologies” (p. 8). This dearth of understanding, most recently highlighted with the discovery of thousands of unmarked graves in many historical residential school sites throughout Canada, emphasizes the need for an “unsettling” of powerful ideologies that have and continue to influence collective consciousness, including discourses widely held in early learning and child care impacting the experiences of Indigenous children and their families.

The discourses and practices of neoliberalism, including government policies related to early learning and child care, have been at work since the 1980s. Yet neoliberalism remains shrouded in mystery, in explanation, form and function. Harvey (2005) defines neoliberalism as “a theory of political economic processes that proposes that human well-being can best be

advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (p. 2). Carroll and Shaw (2001) share that historic deviations in governmental roles were pivotal in the shift to neoliberalism in Canada. They argue that the governmental role in changes in the market "widen[ed] the scope of markets in social life" through "deregulation, privatization, regressive tax reforms, erosion and dismantling of social services, campaigns of state deficit- and debt-reduction, the opening of doors to foreign investment, and attacks on trade-union rights" (p.196). Harvey (2005) insists that characteristic changes in policy, institutions, and the dominant discourse are at the core of neoliberalism resulting in a steady increase of social inequality.

Chomsky (2016) warns that "as long as the general population is passive, apathetic, and diverted to consumerism or hatred of the vulnerable, then the powerful can do as they please, and those who survive will be left to contemplate the outcome" (p. 56). Indeed, neoliberalism has become so entrenched in our collective consciousness that for many, it is simply the way society functions (Davies & Bansel, 2007; McCarthy & Prudham, 2004). Davies and Bansel in 2007 cautioned that "the latest iteration of neoliberal discourse [was] a travesty of early childhood ideals" (p. 257). A growing focus on market-based neoliberal approaches to early learning and child care sidelines a more egalitarian system that has been a feature in welfare state countries (Otterstad & Braathe, 2016).

This shift away from egalitarianism characterizes neoliberalism with an abandonment of social justice (Chomsky 2016). Brown (2015) mirrors the concern that neoliberalism prioritizes school preparation (and ultimately employment) over children's strengths and interests, pushing school curricula into early learning and child care whilst positioning early learning and child care as an investment in the labour market of the future (Simpson et al., 2015). Sims et al. (2018) state

that "the impact of neoliberalism on programmes for very young children is increasingly evident in this positioning of children as investments and the construction of curricula centred around the skills judged necessary for productive future employment" (p. 1).

Neoliberalism also supports a two-tier organization of social reproduction. Tronto makes the claim that, "for those that can pay, childcare is a commodity that can be bought from the market. For those who cannot pay, private solutions are to be relied upon by enlisting family (and perhaps friends and charities)" (2017, p. 30). Social inequities can compound when early learning and child care does not act as a community-based service for the common good with access conditional on families' ability to pay. This lens by which to view early learning and child care is in theoretical opposition to many Indigenous child-rearing approaches (Muir & Bohr, 2019). Such arguments are powerful and pervasive and can be used to validate calls for further investment in early learning and child care.

A two-tiered approach to early learning and child care posits the underlying cause of disparity of services as the fault of families who "fail" to take advantage of available opportunities for their young children. Through this lens, funded early intervention programming in early learning and child care often focuses on "failing" families and their children (often defined as "at risk"), and as a result, systemic issues creating and maintaining oppression and inequalities remain shrouded (Sims, 2017). As Moss (2014) states,

> neoliberalism claims through the magic of early intervention to ensure equality of opportunity to every child, offering a 'Head Start' to the poor and needy, implying any subsequent inequalities are down to individual, familial or cultural failings or to personal preferences, not class or other forms of privilege and not systemic injustice (p. 68).

Through this standpoint, families are viewed as being solely responsible for the outcomes of their children engaged in early intervention programming.

Pacini-Ketchabaw and colleagues (2014) conceptualize neoliberalism through exposing existing tensions as well as the “multiple and at times incongruent connections between the shifting social, economic, political, and material forces that come together in the emergence of geopolitically and temporally situated formations of early childhood governance and surveillance” (p. 41). In other words, neoliberalism in the early learning and care context may appear to many to contribute to a coherent society. It is imperative to challenge the muddled political and economic ideologies existing within neoliberalism to unearth the factors that intensify inequalities and lived everyday experiences for many young children and their families.

In a neoliberal existence, coloniality continues to figure strongly through “persistent “neo-colonial” relations” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 9). As Stoler (2011) states, “in new force fields [colonialisms] are reactivated unevenly and strategically and are part of the fabric that shapes the liveliness of racialized ascriptions and the lividness of the affective states tied to them” (p. 156). Silences surrounding racialized and colonial inequities shift any socioeconomics-based discussions out of the public political discourse “and reassign identity-based biases to the private and personal spheres” (Davis, 2007, p. 349).

Through a focus on personal autonomy, neoliberalism discourse has the power to undermine any collectivist values that may facilitate social cohesion. An analysis of neoliberal morality sheds further light on how policy decisions that may perpetuate structural and racialized inequalities faced by some Indigenous families such as poverty become rationalized and viewed as an inevitable feature of society. According to King (2012), “as such, gross disparities in income and circumstance are not something to be addressed by the state, but rather something to

be managed and offset at the individual level" (p. 31). From this perspective, any failure to tackle structural poverty is not deemed unjust, as individuals are held responsible for managing their circumstances. Such notions are compounded by a fabricated discourse existing in Canada that paints Indigenous families as "undeserving recipients" of government handouts (King, 2012).

Challenging the tendrils of colonialism through reflexivity and counternarratives can "interrogate and subvert the logic of multiple rationalities—legal, neoliberal, and scientific among others—and their role in reinforcing racism under the guise of integration, assimilation, [and] colorblindness" (Baszile, 2015, p. 249). Engaging in questioning helps to expose areas where things have been done in a particular way, asking why, and wondering about new ways of looking. What are we (as settler researchers) doing? Why are we doing this? What do we seek to achieve? Are there other ways we can try? Whose voices can't we hear through the assumptions we make and the blind spots we hold?

Reflexivity

Unsettling dominant discourses of racism and colonization impacting Indigenous families with young children within neoliberalism requires the active dismantling of ideas and structures that reinforce inequality through counternarratives. Unsettling through reflexivity can help "contextualize and uproot the ways that settler-colonial epistemologies are so ubiquitous that they go unnoticed or avoided" (Calderon, 2016, p. 6). Calderon states that "moving toward a decolonial reflexivity first requires this work of unsettling" (2016, p. 17). An unsettling through reflexivity refuses "to feed the settler colonial gaze that seeks to assuage settler anxiety by affirming the racial logics of settler colonialism in place" (2016, p. 17).

The practice of reflexivity creates opportunities for assessments of our own as well as others' arguments. Considering the experiences of Indigenous families through a critical lens and

dominant discourses opens new ways in which to consider realities, perceptions and improve the validity of our understandings. As Allen (2000) states, "how knowledge gets constructed is not self-evident. We must openly engage the underlying commitments that inform our work. If we ignore the contested ground on which we work, we accumulate facts but fail to...understand families" (p. 13). Allen further suggests that reflecting and making transparent how our personal worldviews are relevant to a particular area of study in which we are engaged is one way to critically analyze any knowledge we may produce from such an inquiry. According to Pacini-Ketchabaw and colleagues (2015), "[reflexivity] is about making discourses visible and disrupting dominant ones. We need to acknowledge how powerful discourses are, to be able to look at what is so deeply ensconced that we can't step back" (p. 29).

The work of Paulo Freire (2000) and "critical consciousness" supports the process of uncovering place-based knowledge and acknowledging its significant role whilst "unseating Western science from its high perch [to] engage in comparing knowledge systems on a level playing field" (Johnson, 2012, p. 834). Central to this process is to acknowledge and affirm the existence and value of other ways of knowing and being besides those dominating Western science discourses. As Freire (in Johnson, 2012) suggests, "to engage with a community requires us to engage with the place, with the place specific ways of knowing that place and that community" (p. 835). Questioning the taken-for-granted may not in itself imply transformative practices, but it does suggest the possibility of reconsidering and challenging previously assumed dominant approaches for knowing, believing, and acting (Schostak & Schostak, 2008).

Freire's (2000) work is, however, limited by its Eurocentric worldview and focus on individual achievement. This was evident in Freire's call for individuals to "be the authors of their own salvation" (Getty, 2010, p. 10). Instead of offering emancipation through their own

ways of knowing and being, Indigenous peoples in this narrow view may be challenged to let go of their ways of knowing and being and continue to work under knowledge systems dominant in Western thought (Daes, 2000). This mirrors the crux of the issue faced by non-Indigenous researchers when supporting Indigenous peoples through their own lens of knowing. How do settler researchers engaging in allyship with and support of Indigenous peoples when their own epistemology is so firmly ensconced in all aspects of research?

Battiste (1998) states that “as outsiders, Eurocentric scholars may be useful in helping Indigenous peoples articulate their concerns, but to speak for them is to deny self-determination so essential to human progress” (p. 25). If research is a metaphor for colonization, we must address the issue of various ways of knowing as being in a state of potential contrast. Engaging in reflexive research as a settler requires the identification of approaches to research where choices are made because they have always been made in a particular way; the exploration of decolonizing ways to achieve what we hope to achieve; and, to the engagement in epistemological and methodological approaches that align with decolonization.

Towards Decolonization

Recognizing that ways of knowing are associated with diverse means of understanding how people relate to each other and the world supports the explicit inclusion of cultures. One approach to this – a drawing up of both Indigenous and Western thought – is “largely ‘inclusivist’ in the sense of a concern with negotiating an intercultural or dialogical relationship between Indigenous and Western knowledge” (Morrow, 2009, p. 68). However, the theoretical basis for this approach may result in “exclusivist” polarization of Indigenous and Western knowledge as strictly homogenous categories, not recognizing the breadth of thought present in Indigenous knowledge paradigms.

The rhetoric assuming Western thought and modernity as a universal process and "point of arrival," as Mignolo (2007) argues, also must consider the reproduction of "coloniality." To uncover these assumptions, "we must consider how to decolonize the 'mind' (Thiongo) and the 'imaginary' (Gruzinski) that is, knowledge and being" (p. 450). De-coloniality, then, suggests an epistemology focused on what Mignolo (2007) offers as

> hegemonic ideas of what knowledge and understanding are and, consequently, what economy and politics, ethics and philosophy, technology and the organization of society are and should be, it is necessary to fracture the hegemony of knowledge and understanding that have been ruled, since the fifteenth century and through the modern/colonial world by what I conceive here as the theo-logical and the ego-logical politics of knowledge and understanding (p. 459).

Hanson (1997) contends that when the early learning professionals with whom Indigenous families engage represent the dominant society, compounded by a potential historical mistrust, conflict may occur. Kalyanpur (1998) advocates a "posture of reciprocity ...whereby professionals engage in explicit discussions with families regarding differential cultural values and practices, bringing to the interactions an openness of mind, the ability to be reflective in their practice, and to listen to the other perspective" (p. 330). Unless the application of critical social theory identifies reflexive approaches through a lens of Indigenous epistemologies, the process could miss what might be most relevant to Indigenous peoples. Early learning and child care with a focus on Indigenous children and families may thus hold specific attributes anchored in epistemologies that are fundamentally different from those relating to the broader Canadian context (Gerlach, 2008).

Decolonization discourses support the construction of a strategy that, for Battiste (2004), rethinks “the conceptual, institutional, cultural, legal and other boundaries that are taken for granted and assumed universal but act as barriers to many” (p. 1). Post-colonial theory offers a theoretical “home” to consider ideas outside of the realm of Eurocentric and Western thought and ensures the inclusion of Indigenous peoples’ voices (Tamburro, 2013). Hegemony, a concept utilized by many postcolonial theorists, sheds light on the continual colonization of Indigenous peoples through control over educational processes and social structures. The process of becoming conscious of both overt as well as covert forms of hegemony, conscientization, brings to light systemic issues that can lead to marginalization (Freire, 1994). This form of challenging colonial oppression includes the need for “greater respect for and encouragement of Indigenous-centered epistemology, an understanding of historic background and current issues, support for self-determination, and self-government” (Tamburro, 2013, p. 11).

Bourdieu (1986) also deepens our understanding of hegemony and its modes of operation. Bourdieu considered power as diffused in both institutions and everyday practices. Without being conscious of hegemonic structures, people are constrained and not conscious of available alternatives. The notion of cultural capital situates dispositions (habitus) and capabilities that “establish a person of a particular background and social stratum in a set of social relations through which relationships [they] produce and reproduces [their] own socially constructed position” (Bernhard, 2013, p. 111). In accordance, the term “Indigenous” is not inherently an ethnic-based descriptor but rather an ascription and construction by dominant groups, with assumed “deficits” that follow. Bourdieu also highlights that, through colonization, “the exercise of the power of choice, which theoretically belongs to those societies that confront one another, has not been granted to the dominated society” (Bourdieu, 1961, p. 120).

Although Bourdieu considers deterministic elements of Marx (1963) to explain social inequality, he is more concerned with how "social hierarchies reproduce themselves without the conscious or intentional actions of individuals" (Musoba & Baez, 2009, p. 154). Bourdieu challenges how economics and schooling are positioned to explain the perpetuation of social stratification (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). For Bourdieu, class inequality includes more nuances and extends beyond economics to include social capital and cultural capital. Unlike Marx, Bourdieu believes that oppression functions in a more covert and natural way to privilege those in the dominant group (Musoba & Baez, 2009).

Pacini-Ketchebaw and Nxumalo (2014) report on "anti-colonial possibilities," that is, disrupting colonial "ways of seeing" for decolonization. One outcome from the historical dearth of intellectual space for Indigenous epistemologies is the continual "cognitive imperialism" over non-western thought. Indigenous theories can challenge colonial relations of power, language of colonization, as well as provoke historical and current theoretical hegemony (Pacini-Ketchebaw & Nxumalo, 2014). One of the key concepts underpinning many Indigenous epistemologies is the concept of relationality. Indigenous epistemology of relationality and its potential to disrupt "hierarchical dichotomies of difference" offers "potential for attending to the complexities of encounters with colonialism and racialization in ways that create affirmative and creative possibilities rather than already known solutions" (Pacini-Ketchebaw & Nxumalo, 2014, p. 135).

Many diverse Indigenous epistemologies foreground being "in relations," emphasizing notions of reciprocity, accountability, and interdependence (Cajete, 2017; Todd, 2017). Indigenous knowledges of relationality consider collective connections with ancestors, spiritual beings, the earth (Martin, 2008; Tuck et al., 2014). With such concepts, human life centres on "immersion in different expressions and experiences of reciprocal relatedness expressed in

multiple, specific, pedagogical, sacred, and ecological ways" (Tuck et al., 2014, as cited in Nxumalo, 2021, p. 128). Such Indigenous onto-epistemologies can create movement towards what Recollet (2015) refers to as a “radical turn towards relationality, difference, and interdependence” (p. 132).

Decolonization is a process that involves the divesting of colonial power politically, culturally, and psychologically (Smith, 2012) by undoing “the privileging of dominant Euro-centred cultural values and beliefs in education, scholarship, knowledge production, the legitimization of intellectual capital, and the networks and systems of power” (Styres, 2017, p. 19). In this quest, an increasing number of settler researchers consider multi-epistemological methodological approaches with elements of Indigenous paradigms (Held, 2019). Nevertheless, decolonizing research cannot solely focus on methodologies, as Zavala (2013) concludes. It must permeate all of academia, for “decolonizing research strategies are less about the struggle for method and more about the spaces that make decolonizing research possible” (p. 55).

This chapter sought to frame the dissertation in a set of theoretical and epistemological underpinnings regarding how the researcher determines knowledge and knowing. It is imperative to challenge omnipresent worldviews to interrupt the perpetuating cycle of colonial hegemony existing in academic and early learning and child care spaces. With a clearer understanding of epistemological assumptions in Chapter 3, Chapter 4 examines the research processes of the three studies included in this dissertation. It is important to situate methodologies within critical social theory to identify ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology and Design

When planning research studies, methodological considerations are at the heart of responding to research questions as thoroughly and accurately as possible. Often concerns

regarding methodology focus on how to conduct research without considering broader elements embedded in research. Harding (1987) opens the door for considerations of methodology in conjunction with epistemology and method. According to Harding, epistemology focuses on knowledge: who knows what and how knowledge develops. Methods refer to the specific techniques for gathering and analyzing data. How researchers engage with both techniques constitutes methodology. According to Sprague (2016),

> each methodology is founded on either explicit or, more often, unexamined assumptions about what knowledge is and how knowing is best accomplished. That is, a methodology works out the implications of a specific epistemology for how to implement a method… it's where philosophy and action meet (p. 5).

Specifically, methodology grounded in critical reflection offers researchers the opportunity to consider previously unexamined questions and assumptions to further contextualize potential research outcomes.

In this chapter, I will first discuss critical theory and share key components of this research approach. Then, I will impart my understandings of Indigenous epistemologies, to provide the background for the methodological choices made for this study. I then introduce and situate scoping reviews, secondary data analysis, and autoethnography within critical theory, sharing central tenets and assumptions. Finally, I will argue for these methodological choices as appropriate to study the varying means by which to engage in decolonizing work for the benefit of considering quality indicators and educator dispositions for Indigenous families accessing early learning and child care in an urban setting.

Critical Theory in Research Methodology

Conventional positivist research practices for producing knowledge in social science do not generate insights regarding injustices and systemic bias (Sprague, 2016). Addressing implicit assumptions helps to consider the complex ways that beliefs shape and situate systemic forms of political and socio-economic structures and power relations (Gerlach et al., 2014). Critical social science/critical theory epistemology often embraces a fundamental movement toward social transformation by addressing domination, power and oppression (Rigney, 1997). Farias and colleagues (2016) suggest that social transformation through critical social science is “a major rationale for rejecting a common positivist/postpositivist tendency to naturalize certain perspectives and assumptions as ‘true’” (p. 237). Thus, methodological approaches grounded in critical and liberatory social science epistemologies can create opportunities for conscientization and unveiling of political intentions. Such a perspective confronts historical and current colonization of Indigenous communities through identifications of oppression and power.

Guba (1990) argues that critical theory can align with positivism in its critical realist ontology; within critical theory lies a value-oriented “what should be.” The understanding of truth differentiates critical theory from positivism. Critical theorists understand “truth” as contextualized within multiple potential realities. Although critical theorists espouse objective reality, they do not believe purely objective knowledge exists. Many critical theorists believe that reality exists only in relation to omnipresent contexts of economic, political, social, and cultural factors. Knowledge is therefore socially constructed as “every group is located socially and historically;” thus, “there is no such thing as an objective or neutral or disinterested perspective” (Nielsen, 1990, p. 9).

Within a critical social science perspective, social orders founded on systems of power provide individuals and groups with “hegemony on the basis of social, political, economic or ideological power” (Getty, 2010, p. 10). These inequities can alter marginalized and oppressed individuals’ understandings of their own life situations. Knowledge is both historically and socially constructed and filtered through the lens of dominant ideologies. Based on historical and current perceptions, meaning-making by individuals or groups affected by these inequities may not consciously reflect the hegemonic power systems that explicate domination and, subsequently, marginalization (Campbell & Bunting, 1991). Hegemony as culturally and socially constructed becomes re-legitimized through the interplay between agency and structure (Navarro, 2006). Examining the programs and policies of and experiences in early learning and child care can shed light into what families experience in these settings as related to the norms and tendencies that guide behaviour and thinking. Such habitus, according to Bourdieu, is “the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinant ways, which then guide them” (Navarro, 2006).

Indigenous Epistemologies

Considering critical social science within an Indigenous worldviews and systems of knowledge can further address colonization and oppression through an emancipatory understanding. This epistemological perspective, informed by postcolonial Indigenous knowledge systems, emerged “from the inability of Eurocentric theory to deal with the complexities of colonialism and its assumptions” (Battiste, 2000, p. 19). Indigenous epistemological perspectives mirror critical social sciences and imply a transformative approach in recognizing Indigenous peoples’ varied experiences in intersecting forms of colonization,

structural racism, gendered inequities, and other forms of oppression and marginalization (Battiste, 2008).

Indigenous ways of knowing and being historically arose from interaction with biological and social environments (Getty, 2010). Kovach (2021) presents characteristics of Indigenous epistemology as emerging from the interconnectedness between the human world, the spirit and the inanimate entities. In opposition, positivist science focuses on a materialist worldview, severed from the empathic connection and ancestral ties with the earth and other beings (O'Hara, 2006). Moreover, Ermine (1995) outlines Indigenous epistemology as a process that also has "the capacity to tap the creative life forces of the inner space by the use of all the faculties that constitute our being – it is to exercise inwardness" (p. 104). This kind of reflexivity in the staging and shaping of research becomes pivotal to how I engage with and interrogate both the subject matter and the self (Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

According to Gruenewald (2008), the geography of our everyday lives helps to locate our ecological relationships. Unfortunately, this view has become a taken-for-granted concept in our current understanding of cultural experiences (Johnson, 2012). According to Johnson (2012), "placelessness is a primary component of our modern Western condition [and is a] by-product of the Enlightenment narrative which serves to divide culture from nature, leading to a loss of connection to our places" (p. 830). This epistemological legacy of colonialism has resulted in a reductionist narrative that disengages people from nature. Furthermore, this placelessness disconnects "Western" positivist scientists from Indigenous ways of knowing and learning, historical and current challenges, and ultimately, from engaging in critical consciousness (Johnson, 2012). By distancing from histories and science of place, Western science seeks to minimize other knowledge systems that remain more attached to place.

Honouring Indigenous knowledge systems and methodologies in research is a way of understanding political, social and educational goals to develop experiences and address concepts of self-determination. When this does not occur, deficit-based notions of difference as fixed truths rather than fluid constructions can reinforce biased epistemologies (Cooper et al., 2010). In an early learning and child care setting, biased epistemologies may then "inform biased educational practices and policies and lead to non-productive relationships between educators and families (Cooper et al., 2010, p. 768). Any attempt at reforming or reimagining early learning and child care structures for Indigenous families without examining the role of dominant epistemologies may be ineffective. Moreover, when engaged in a practice of relationships with Indigenous peoples, research must also pay attention to how knowledge paradigms influence both policies and practice and the research approach.

Decolonizing Research Methodologies

Rigney (1997) applies *Indigenist* research to distinguish non-Indigenous researchers within an Indigenous context (Kendall et al., 2011, p. 1723). Although a promising positionality, Indigenist research remains grounded in Indigenous epistemology, and as a non-Indigenous scholar my ways of being and knowing originate from a position of white privilege (Aveling, 2013). Any research approach must critically question dominant and widely accepted knowledge embedded within structural injustices, systemic inequality, and intersectionalities of oppression. Within this knowledge paradigm, it is essential to be mindful of "the power of whiteness and how it can invade the last of the [Indigenous] territories – to reinscribe or prescribe what is and means to be [Indigenous]" (Laycock, 2009, p. 46).

To address such complexities, some scholars seek to challenge dominant methods in qualitative research, subvert representational aspects of methodologies, and emphasize

complexities found in research (Koro-Ljungberg & Mazzei, 2012; Law, 2004). Koro-Ljungberg and Mazzei (2012) question what happens for researchers “when scholars and policymakers demand, perform, and build on (over)simplified knowledge claims” (p. 728). According to Law (2004), researchers should consider practices that reflect methods as full of multiplicities, fractionalities, and interferences. Researchers’ task, according to Law, is “to begin to imagine what research methods might be if they were adapted to a world that included and knew itself as tide, flux, and general unpredictability” (2004, p.7). Research, rather than necessarily representative, is deeply politically situated and embedded with power relations (Haraway, 2008). Such research practices “teach that knowers are manipulators who have no reciprocal responsibilities to the things they manipulate” (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 88).

Smith (2012) reminds us that the word “research” brings with it a long history of pain and distrust among many Indigenous peoples; “[how] research is implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism remains a powerful remembered history from many of the world’s colonized peoples” (p. 1). Researchers cannot remove themselves from a system that, while perhaps well intended to “improve” lives, still cannot escape from the legacies of colonialism. How can researchers engage in studies ethically committed to moving away from Western notions of policies, programs, and practices in early childhood education? How can they do so while acknowledging the inherited and inevitable complicity of researchers whose knowledge production has excluded, marginalized, and assimilated Indigenous communities in Canada?

Researcher Positionality

As a researcher, I am a non-Indigenous settler. I must acknowledge the Western lens that any inquiry I engage with takes on and my role as an ally within this inquiry. Although my methodological approach, based on my subjective perspective, may fall within the ideals of

critical theory, I must still acknowledge my sphere of understanding as being rooted in mainstream underpinnings. Historically, non-Indigenous researchers carried out most of the research regarding Indigenous communities in Canada. In this context, research rarely had direct benefits for communities, which sometimes harmed those included in the study. My involvement with this subject matter is part of both a personal and professional journey of growth and decolonization. This includes creating a personal meaning of allyship and recognizing the privilege associated with my non-Indigenous identity. My cultural perspectives limit my ability to understand Indigenous perspectives; I seek to adopt intentional vulnerability to create the necessary space for building positive relationships with Indigenous peoples based on curiosity, consciousness, active reflexive thinking, and listening.

I also recognize that historical and ongoing injustices have strained the relationship between Indigenous communities and researchers. I am responsible for acknowledging privilege with every aspect of the inquiries, my involvement in various early learning and child care projects that engage with Indigenous families, and my role as an instructor in an early learning and child care post-secondary program. My settler understandings come from within an education system founded upon Western notions of research.

Background Context to Studies: Research on Quality Indicators and Dispositions in the Early Learning and Child Care Sector

Data informing this dissertation derives from a research project that was conducted from 2020-2021. The research project *Quality Indicators and Dispositions in the Early Learning and Child Care Sector,* sponsored by the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care (ECELC) and in collaboration with MacEwan University, aimed to address gaps in understanding by examining the following questions: For Indigenous families, what are indicators of quality in

early learning and child care? What are the dispositions child care educators demonstrate to meet the needs of Indigenous children and families? A research project exploring the experiences of newcomer families occurred concurrently (Mardhani-Bayne et al., 2021b).

This research project utilized a multi-phased research approach. In the first phase of the project, researchers conducted a scoping review to identify existing evidence of quality indicators and desirable educator dispositions (Freeborn et al., 2021a). Although two separate research questions guided the scoping review (regarding quality and educator dispositions), it was determined that both should be integrated into one umbrella process as both questions profoundly influenced the other.

Using a modified version of Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) methods, two co-primary investigators from MacEwan University (Chelsea Freeborn and Alvina Mardhani-Bayne) and a student research assistant first defined a series of search terms and then used those terms to identify relevant literature across several databases. The results of the searches identified both local and international research on Indigenous families, with each source reviewed by multiple researchers to confirm alignment with research questions. For more information on the scoping review methods used in the initial research project, please see the scoping review report (Freeborn et al., 2021a).

Results from the scoping review were then used in determining the methodological structure and guiding questions for focus groups with Indigenous families as well as educators who work with Indigenous families. Purposive, convenience sampling was used in collaboration with ECELC members; researchers relied on these networks and the support of ECELC members to reach potential participants. Members of these networks received emailed information about the study as an invitation to participate in the form of a letter outlining the purpose of the study,

their role, and potential time commitment. Once potential participants expressed an interest in participating, they were given a copy of the consent form to review. The convenience sampling method was appropriate for the group, as existing rapport and trust were important to ensure that potential participants felt comfortable sharing their insights with the researchers.

A total of five virtual focus groups were planned, including two with Indigenous parents. The intention was to hold focus groups, but given the availability of participants, focused conversations replaced the focus group format. COVID-19 required participants to join virtual sessions, thus reducing the anticipated number of recruited participants. The first educator focused conversation, on March 10, 2021, included 3 in-service early childhood educators. The second educator focused conversation on March 17, 2021, included 2 in-service early childhood educators. The third educator focused conversation occurred on March 18, 2021 and included 3 in-service early childhood educators (total educator participants n=8). The focused conversations for Indigenous parents were held virtually on March 15 and 19. Due to barriers related to COVID-19, including the requirement of participants to join virtual evening sessions, challenges regarding participation persisted in these focused conversations that resulted in a small number of family participants (n=2). The questions that guided all focused conversations were based on thematic outcomes from the scoping review but remained largely centred on experiences of and with Indigenous families.

All focused conversations opened with a land acknowledgment, and then a round of introductions to the research team members in attendance. The consent process, including an explanation of study purpose, highlighted participation in the focused conversations as an indication of consent. At the conclusion of each focused conversation, researchers shared the next phase of the project, and let participants know of the ways to contact researchers if they had

anything more to share at a later date. The focused conversation protocols and procedures were reviewed and approved by the research ethics board (REB) at MacEwan University.

The third phase of the research project involved a case study of two early learning and child care centres, identified by educators and families in the focus groups as being of “high quality.” The sites for the case study included a centre with experience working with Indigenous children and families and an Indigenous-focused centre. The first case study site opened approximately fifty years ago with a mission to support families experiencing periods of vulnerability. This early learning and child care centre supports many Indigenous children and families and has evolved to offer an integrated service model to ensure that staff meet the varying needs of the children and families they work with. The second case study site recently opened in Edmonton under the umbrella of a centre in operation for approximately forty years and offers culturally based early learning and child care grounded in Indigenous cultures. This Indigenous-focused centre explores languages and traditional teachings as well as supports the overall wellness of both children and families. I interviewed each centre’s leadership team online and then collected documents via email such as policies and guidelines, samples of communication, and outreach materials.

Overview of Studies

For this multi-paper dissertation, three distinct studies and methodologies explore the following research questions: What does current literature share regarding indicators of quality and educator dispositions in early learning and child care for Indigenous children and families? How do educator dispositions and learning environments shape quality for Indigenous children and families? How can post-secondary instructors engage in meaningful decolonization of early learning and child care preservice education?

Below is a brief description of each of the studies, including the methodology used, data collection methods and analysis. Study one uses scoping review methodology to determine indicators of quality and educator dispositions in early learning and child care for Indigenous families. Study two applies social reproduction theory to re-examine qualitative data related to educator dispositions. Study three engages in critical autoethnography to explore decolonization in a post-secondary context.

Study One: Scoping Review: Quality and Educator Dispositions for Indigenous Families in the Urban Early Learning and Child Care Context

The purpose of this scoping review was to explore the academic literature to identify existing understandings of indicators of quality and desirable educator dispositions in centres engaged with Indigenous families in the urban context. Scoping reviews (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Colquhouna et al., 2014) are useful to map a synthesis of the literature, determine key concepts, possible gaps in information, and the types and sources of evidence that may inform future research, practice and policymaking.

According to Thomas and colleagues (2020), "the heterogeneity of data and epistemologies present in the literature to be synthesized [in a scoping review] means that the research findings presented therein are not easily amenable to objectivist-rooted epistemologies" (p. 991). Rather, scoping reviews align closely with a worldview that Crotty (1998) labels as "subjectivism," and that Lincoln and Guba (1985) mark as "transactional/subjectivist;" they set out to map existing knowledge on a given topic. Scoping reviews are exploratory in nature, and although they involve collecting and charting data, researchers do not strive to report on a single answer as objective truth (Arskey & O'Malley, 2005). Rather, scoping reviews "bring together the myriad of information on the topic that is available, allowing researchers to offer a subjective

interpretation of what is known about that topic" (Thomas et al., 2020, p. 992). In other words, my epistemological orientation shapes multiple methodological choices within the scoping review process.

The scoping review follows Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) methodological framework as a guide. This methodology follows five stages: (1) identifying the research question, (2) identifying relevant studies, (3) study selection, (4) charting the data, and (5) summarizing and reporting the results. This approach to a scoping review acts as a viable and useful methodology for a broad and comprehensive scan of literature. This study is described in detail in Chapter 5.

Study Two: Using Social Reproduction Theory to Conceptualize Practices in Early Learning and Child Care: A Bourdieusian Analysis

Study two explores the research question: How is quality for Indigenous children and families shaped by current child care contexts, including programming and educator dispositions? This paper is a secondary analysis of qualitative data through the lens of critical theory. The approach considers Bourdieu's theoretical apparatus of social reproduction (1984): cultural capital (recognition of Indigenous families' funds of knowledge), social capital (engagement of informal/formal relationships), habitus (culture of promoting families' aspirations), and field (environment where aforementioned forms of capital occur) (Muzoba & Baez, 2009). Analyses using social reproduction theory help to shape discourses regarding quality and educator dispositions for Indigenous families seeking child care in the urban context. Reproduction theories focus on examining how structures such as early learning and child care environments impact future outcomes for children.

Inductive analysis grounds this study. Through the coding process, themes emerge by studying the case study material repeatedly (transcripts as well as additional documents) to

consider possible meanings. The data analysis is guided by Bourdieu's social reproduction theory as it plays the role of identifying domains and topics to be investigated. Although the findings are influenced by these domains, the findings arise directly from the secondary analysis of case study data, not from a priori model. Bourdieu's social reproduction theory provides relevance for conducting the analysis, and not a set of expectations regarding the findings (Thomas, 2006).

Study Three: Disillusion with Post-Secondary Decolonization: Autoethnography of a Settler in Academic Spaces

Study three builds on the findings in study one and two to engage in a critical autoethnography on the tensions felt by a non-Indigenous instructor navigating decolonizing work within an early learning and care program at a post-secondary institution. An exploration of Indigeneity and decolonization through changes to policy, programs and practice challenges thought and practice in academia. The study answers the question: How can post-secondary instructors engage in meaningful decolonization of early learning and care preservice education?

Autoethnographers, in an attempt to analyze through personal narrative, research themselves in relation to their surroundings. Autoethnography reflects, analyzes, and interprets narratives within a broader economic, political and socio-cultural context (Chang, 2008). The positioning of the personal at the periphery creates space for autoethnographic engagement that situates varying standpoints and differences. By acknowledging how difference influences the way we see and experience the world, autoethnography "has the capacity to resist mythical normative perspectives that don't account for the diversity of race, age, class, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, ability status, education, religion and region, which also represents a distinction in experiences" (Boylorn & Orbe, 2013, p. 5).

Critical autoethnographic research in higher education can act as a transformative methodological approach. This process reveals the potential for “authentic professional learning... [that encourages] a spirit of critical inquiry where professionals can gain insight into their own learning and the assumptions they hold about their practice” (Webster-Wright, 2009, p. 272). Thus, critical autoethnography in higher education can facilitate critical insights into personal assumptions and deepen understanding regarding lived academic experiences via creative means and through the lens of broader social, political, and economic realities (Pillay et al., 2016).

According to Foster and colleagues (2006), four key features exist in an autoethnographic approach. First, the researcher shares their own experiences and shared humanity with the audience. Second, no claims to objectivity can be made as the researcher is the primary tool in the research. Third, subjectivity is valued. Finally, critical autoethnography is not storytelling, but rather includes an approach that includes systematic analysis of personal experience to understand experiences.

In addition, there is no one way to demonstrate data collection for an autoethnography (Williams, 2021). According to Williams (2021), “the insistence of doing and writing research according to traditional western methods, advocates a white, masculine, heterosexual, middle/upper class, Christian, and able-bodied perspective” (p. 8). Considering methods that address potential power structures in the field may also advance decolonizing processes. Data collection for this research will include reflective writing including recall and document gathering. Myself as the research site does not mean that I am compelled to document experiences as is prescriptive in western-focused research. In contrast, an autoethnography implies I involve myself in the process of making meaning in the research journey. As such, critical reflective writing serves to achieve the aims of this research that focuses on experiences

and related understandings. I co-construct knowledge and understanding in the backdrop of varying experiences and my personal journey with decolonization, both retrospectively as well as currently.

Thematic analysis follows the process of data collection through reflection and narration of lived experiences, where I explore the data for themes that present themselves with high frequency. To unpack the complex taken-for-granted aspects of self, positioning theory will be used as an analytical framework that offers guidelines for the process of reflexivity (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999).

Ethical Considerations

Scholarship and research with Indigenous content and context, even through a decolonizing lens, raises a fundamental question: Should non-Indigenous researchers work within this field of study? Absalon and Willet (2005) state that, at a minimum, any methodological approach through a non-Indigenous researcher lens should include "a critical analysis of colonization and an understanding of Western scientific research as a mechanism of colonization" (p. 120). Absalon and Willett (2005) also argue that "identifying at the outset, the location from which the voice of the researcher emanates is an [Indigenous] way of ensuring that those who study, write, and participate in knowledge creation are accountable for their own positionality" and that "location is about relationships to land, language, spiritual, political, economic, environmental, and social elements in one's life" (p. 99). Sharing researcher identities such as white, female and feminist may be a worthwhile start, and this inquiry also includes a critical analysis of historic and current discourses of colonization as it relates to the area. What remains concerning, nevertheless, is whether this approach of self-disclosure and analysis simply

constitutes “a form of pleasurable relief” (Applebaum, 2010, p. 19), implying an absolving from any complicity in perpetuating a colonized system of power imbalances.

Rather than presenting presumptive narratives under the guise of knowledge regarding Indigenous epistemologies or Indigenous experiences under historical and current colonization policies and practices, non-Indigenous researchers can use “what I know” and “how I know” to work as an ally with Indigenous researchers. Schostak and Schostak (2008) ask “why so much research contributes so little to democratic questioning of the powerful” (p.1). Challenging top-down structure of current epistemological understandings may lead to a more holistic “critical ecology” and there may be a role within this praxis for non-Indigenous allyship. Coming from a position of relative power and privilege, non-Indigenous research can also seek to contribute to the process of decolonizing and shaping a more socially just society through embracing feminist principles of voice. Graveline (2000) shares that “only those who are Indigenous can speak about being Indigenous” (p. 361). Through questioning whose voices might be silenced or buried, and questioning whose voices inquiries represent, critically reflexive research may support efforts for redressing systems of oppression through critical and Indigenous epistemological, theoretical, and methodological lenses.

Additional ethical considerations for this research included working with participants experiencing or having experienced periods of vulnerability. There are numerous documents available to support the specific considerations in the involvement of Indigenous peoples in research, including the Tri Council Panel on Research Ethics (2018). The considerations include but are not limited to the jurisdiction of Indigenous peoples over their culture, heritage, and knowledge; appropriate venue choices when conducting interviews and/or focus groups; consideration of Indigenous participants’ control over all research data; the understanding of

Indigenous social structures and systems; and consider any steps that may ameliorate potential inherent conflicts between research ethics board policies and Indigenous ethical requirements.

Finally, I employ the simple but at times unsettling test of imagining an audience sitting in the front row at a conference panel, reading the dissertation papers like a news story. With such an attempt comes the mindfulness that my methodological choices privilege me to project, even briefly, others' minds. Respecting others, rather than "othering" them, (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012) symbolizes a broader social vision of decolonization and is essential to the writing of this dissertation.

Rigor, Reflexivity and Delimitations

Questions regarding rigor and integrity consider research design, application, and reflexivity (Darke et al., 1998). Of particular relevance to this study are critical questions regarding the trustworthiness of the secondary data analysis process and reflexivity in the critical autoethnography. With respect to the quality of secondary datasets, consistency across time can be problematic in the research process. Quality, according to Sumner and Tribe (2004), "is open to question if it fails a basic test of consistency and using data from different sources is highly problematic" (p. 19). Given that the researcher also acted as primary investigator for the original data, issues related to consistency do not apply to this secondary data analysis.

Trustworthiness considers a credible research approach for both context and circumstances. One challenge for case study analysis is that the variety of data collected and strategies for case study analysis are generally not well defined (Yin, 1994). It is thus imperative that the researcher develop a data analysis strategy. The secondary analysis approach, using Bourdieu's theoretical framework, involves coding: the assignment of themes and concepts, sorted into related categories, and finally the verification and integration of categories into

Bourdieu’s theory. Morse and colleagues (2002) suggest that verification strategies can support trustworthiness in research; by checking, confirming, and making certain that each stage and choice involved in the research contributes to the ongoing validity and reliability of the research, thus ensuring rigor.

The issue of biases introduced by the researcher during data analysis also needs consideration. Biases during data analysis may include the researcher's own beliefs, values and prior assumptions which may result in the researcher unduly influencing the analysis of the case study evidence. Biases arising from researcher effects may be unavoidable: the researcher by nature of their role in data analysis shapes concepts and interpretations (Walsham, 1995). A researcher can thus acknowledge the implication of that bias existing through the constructs they use to view the world, and the subjectivity of their analysis in that their predispositions, beliefs, values and interests, according to Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991), “always intervene to shape their investigations” (p. 15).

In research focused on diverse communities, reflexivity offers the opportunity for introspection through culturally grounded questions regarding the research process (Milner, 2007). Tracing “places” of uncertainty supports critical explorations of the research (Lather, 1991). As Noffke (1994) explores, positioning research within prevailing epistemologies can lead to “new ways of maintaining privilege systems as they are” (p. 16). Throughout the research process, researchers can reify their privileged standpoints despite best intentions to produce personal and broader change in thinking and practices (Noffke, 1994). The autoethnography is grounded in reflexivity, interpretation and evaluation, bringing into focus racialized processes omnipresent when working with Indigenous families.

For Mazzei (2007), reflexivity includes listening for any silences in research that take place beyond data analyses. Mazzei (2007) defines silences as what speaks beneath the “surface”

in research. Silence as a concept is extremely relevant to research focused on diversity; reflexive work must examine “the assumptions and structures that limit, preventing us from hearing outside our comfortable territory” (Mazzei, 2007, p. 633). In the autoethnography research, the topics under investigation (such as the exploration of Indigenous coursework led by a non-Indigenous instructor) invites questions regarding how silences are constructed and as a result may remain buried because of the “comfortable territory” (Mazzei, 2007, p. 633) shaped by a non-Indigenous scholar. This process embraces what Mazzei (2007) refers to as “a problematic of silence” (p. 635). By actively seeking possible silences, research may reveal what may be shared in the academic process.

A paper-based dissertation cannot rely solely on the compiling of a series of articles and binding them with an introduction and conclusions. When implementing this model, a dissertation must build logical and robust connections between papers that will make up the final document. Thus, planning for this thesis must include reflection regarding how each piece of research will contribute to the overall thesis. As such, emphasis on methodological articulation among the papers must contribute to the conclusions of the thesis as a whole. As Kubota et al. (2021) state, “The final paper-based thesis document must be a cohesive, coherent, integrated, and robust piece of work, where each paper contributes to the overall thesis” (p. 4).

This research stems from an initial project that included focus groups and case studies. This research will not analyze the data collected from the focus groups with Indigenous families and educators who work with families. However, the qualitative datasets from the case study were shaped by the initial research process that also included focused conversation participant feedback. Thus, it is important to note the relational nature of these separate studies, and the influence of the focus conversations on the analyzed data for this research. Furthermore, given the limited voice of Indigenous families in the original focus group and case study processes,

future research should be conducted to explore additional experiences of Indigenous families with early learning and child care in the urban Canadian context.

Chapter 5: Quality and Educator Dispositions for Indigenous Families in the Urban Early Learning and Child Care Context: A Scoping Review

A version of the following manuscript has been submitted for publication as a research article and is currently under review (Freeborn et al., 2021). The manuscript was submitted under the author's name with Alvina Mardhani-Bayne and Cheyanne Soetaert submitted as co-authors for the publication. The style of the manuscript is in accordance with journal requirements, although some APA requirements have been changed to maintain consistency with this thesis manuscript.

Introduction

The lives of families are diverse in both form and structure, and many young children today spend a significant portion of their early years in some form of non-parental care (Beaujot, et al., 2013). UNICEF marked this transition to child care as a critical policy issue, declaring that this reliance on child care presents either an advance or a setback for the well-being of children and families, for today and for the future, that will depend on the wisdom of our collective response (2008). According to Statistics Canada, almost half of Canadian families with children under four use child care. Despite what seems like widespread use, many families struggle to secure consistent child care for their young children that is of high quality, accessible, and affordable (Statistics Canada, 2016). Existing early childhood health inequalities in the social, political and cultural realms result in some families holding the means by which to reconcile work and child care commitments sufficiently, and for others experiencing a significant challenge (Moore et al., 2015).

The experiences of children during their early years are emerging as a global public policy focus (Britto et al., 2011). Kemble (2022) shares that early learning and child care policies in the Canadian context, viewed through the lens of “the larger colonial enterprise of coercion and assimilation continue to have a devastating impact on Indigenous Peoples” (p. 9). While Indigenous peoples have faced a long history of colonialism, the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples, as outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2008, are recognized and expected to be upheld by all levels of government. In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) released findings and calls to action that included dozens of recommendations on topics related to child welfare, preserving language and culture, and strengthening information on missing women and children (TRC, 2015). Since the signing of Canada’s historical treaties, Indigenous peoples have experienced a host of

assimilative and discriminatory policies with profound effects (Armitage, 1995; Fast & Collin-Vézina, 2010). Reading and Wien (2009) emphasize the challenges faced by many Indigenous peoples in Canada, including unemployment, poverty, high rates of teen pregnancy, high rates of suicide and poor health conditions. The legacy of the residential school system, colonial policy frameworks, and the dearth of funding for needed services continue to impact Indigenous peoples through high rates of child poverty, housing and food insecurities, adverse health outcomes, and issues related to employment (7 Cities on Housing and Homelessness, 2016; Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2016).

The steady increase of Indigenous families moving into urban settings has placed pressure on Indigenous-focused early learning and child care programs and highlighted the need for non-Indigenous mainstream programming to meet the needs of Indigenous families (Scott, 2013). Social support and services, including those aimed at early learning and child care, are critical for urban Indigenous families living in vulnerable situations such as poverty and marginalization (Ball, 2012; Hare & Anderson, 2010). Early learning and child care programs can promote long-term health and social outcomes and contribute to family and community well-being (Britto et al., 2011). Furthermore, the TRC specifically recommends that federal, provincial, and Indigenous governments develop relevant early childhood education programs for Indigenous families (Taylor, 2017). Taken together, these elements indicate that early learning and child care access for Indigenous peoples is a critical consideration at this time. What experiences do Indigenous families face when accessing early learning and child care programming in the urban context? According to Kemble (2022), the experiences of Indigenous children in mainstream early childhood education programs remain “largely uninterrogated as a site of oppression and assimilation” (p. 3).

Affordable and accessible quality early learning and child care can provide Indigenous families and children with additional support while parents work or advance their education (Boulanger, 2018). According to Hare and Anderson, the experiences of Indigenous families accessing formal early intervention programs in Canadian urban settings differ from non-Indigenous families as “the historical and social realities of Indigenous parents play a significant role in the process of coming to early childhood programs, and also in how parents navigate the transition” (2010, p. 26). Ball (2012) also emphasizes that the experiences of Indigenous families accessing early learning and child care vary greatly, especially when considering the differences that may exist between Indigenous communities and urban contexts. Indigenous children and their families live in various settings, including rural, remote, on-reserve, off-reserve, and urban communities (Ball, 2004). Thus, significant policy and practice-related gaps can exist, particularly in urban settings, in providing quality early learning and child care for Indigenous families in Canada.

Children can be a catalytic factor in strengthening communities; compelling evidence shares that quality early learning and care can have a positive and longitudinal academic and social impact (Landry, 2008; Niles et al., 2007). Preston (2014) states that focusing on the needs of young children strengthens social ties within a community, enhancing community bonds. A supportive stimulating environment can also meet a wide range of objectives, including care, learning, and social support for children and their primary caregivers (Friendly & Prentice, 2009). Ball (2005) claims that promoting early learning and child care can mobilize Indigenous family wellness and instigate a variety of community services. Thus, early learning and child care involving a focus on development in the early years encourages the holistic health of entire communities.

In order to respond to the context and needs described above, a post-secondary institution in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada (MacEwan University) collaborated with a local non-profit, the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care (ECELC) to conduct a multi-step research project. The overarching goal of the research project was to more clearly understand the experiences of Indigenous families and their children in early learning and child care in Edmonton. To begin the project, researchers conducted a scoping review, reported here. Given that formalized early learning and child care environments can offer a range of beneficial outcomes for children and their families, this scoping review examines notions of quality for Indigenous families accessing early learning and care and the dispositions educators can demonstrate to meet the needs of Indigenous children and families.

Consideration of Voice

As non-Indigenous researchers, it is imperative to address the lens through which this study occurred. Absalon and Willet (2005) state that, at a minimum, any methodological approach through a non-Indigenous researcher lens should include "a critical analysis of colonization and an understanding of Western scientific research as a mechanism of colonization" (p. 120). They also argue that "identifying at the outset, the location from which the voice of the researcher emanates is an [Indigenous] way of ensuring that those who study, write, and participate in knowledge creation are accountable for their own positionality" and that "location is about relationships to land, language, spiritual, political, economic, environmental, and social elements in one's life" (p. 99).

Rather than presenting presumptive narratives under the guise of knowledge regarding Indigenous experiences under historical and current colonization policies and practices and coming from a position of relative power and privilege, non-Indigenous research can also seek to

contribute to the process of decolonizing and shaping a more socially just society. Through questioning whose voices are silent or buried and whose are represented, critically reflexive research may support efforts for redressing systems of oppression through critical theoretical and methodological lenses.

With that in mind, it is important to stress that this scoping review does not represent all Indigenous family experiences and is thus not indicative of all determinants of quality for Indigenous families. Moreover, information gathered is firmly situated in Eurocentric research, dominant languages, and non-Indigenous epistemologies. Nevertheless, researchers intend to use this literature as a helpful starting point for considering what may be necessary to Indigenous families living in an urban context in Canada.

Method

A scoping review can generate knowledge and map the existing and available literature related to Indigenous families' access to, and experiences with, early learning and care in the urban context. Mapping a synthesis of the literature helps determine key concepts, possible gaps in information, and the types and sources of evidence that may inform further research, practice and policy making. This scoping review is reported in adherence to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analysis extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) (Tricco et al., 2018) and followed the methodological steps of the Arksey and O'Malley framework (2005). This methodology follows five key stages: (1) identifying the research question, (2) identifying relevant studies, (3) study selection, (4) charting the data, and (5) summarizing and reporting the results (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). The scoping review protocol predefines the objectives and methods as well as the proposed plans. Because existing literature was used, ethics approval was not required for this review.

Scoping Review Research Questions

The research questions served as a starting point for delineating the study's parameters, with concepts related to the research questions defined to ensure clarity. To confirm that the process captured a substantial range of literature relating to the aforementioned topic, the scoping review focused on two research questions: For Indigenous families, what are indicators of quality in early learning and child care? (RQA) and What are the essential dispositions child care educators demonstrate that meet the needs of Indigenous children and families? (RQB). The quality of many child and family experiences and opportunities in early learning and child care depends on the dispositions of educators, and thus, researchers sought to investigate both the indicators of quality as well as the essential dispositions of early learning and child care educators.

For this scoping review, researchers used the term *Indigenous* to signify "persons of First Nations, Inuit or Métis descent, regardless of where they reside and whether their names appear on an official register. Self-identification is a fundamental criterion for defining Indigenous peoples" (Government of Canada, n.d.). Additionally, *child care, child care centre, centre*, and *program* interchangeably refer to the out-of-home spaces where children under the age of six are cared for by adults other than their family members. The term *educator* denotes employed individuals who plan and care for children in child care centres. Different terms may be used in the works cited, but this study will use the defined terms for consistency.

The term *dispositions* refer to the tendencies of early learning and child care educators to respond to circumstances or situations in specific ways (Davitt & Ryder, 2019). The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) (2002) defines dispositions as "the values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence behaviours … as well as the educator's own professional growth" (p. 53). According to the NCATE (2002), individual

educator values, beliefs, and attitudes influence dispositions within a sociocultural context. The term *quality* was not defined in advance of the scoping review but instead was defined through it, and this emergent definition is described below.

Identification of Relevant Studies

The two research questions directed the study protocol, including identifying search terms, data capture, and selecting databases to search. To cover a broad range of disciplines for peer-reviewed literature, and with assistance from a research librarian, initial searches in databases through the University of Alberta and MacEwan Libraries included: Sociological Abstracts, SocIndex, ERIC (Ovid), Social Services Abstracts, CINAHL, PsychINO, iPortal, Bibliography of Native North Americans, Academic Search Complete (EBSCO), ScienceDirect, JSTOR, and Web of Science. Initial searches also extended to Google and Google Scholar. Due to the nature of scoping reviews in the comprehensiveness and breadth of initial searches, researchers only placed limits of language (English) and year published (between 2000 and 2020, the year the study began) during the initial database search. Criteria for inclusion/exclusion for scoping reviews involve post-hoc specifics based on the research question and familiarity with the subject matter through the reading of studies, and discussions between researchers.

In order to be selected for inclusion, articles must have been published between the years 2000 and 2020. Additional inclusion criteria related to the topic of the article rather than the format; therefore, both theoretical articles (e.g., literature reviews, recommendations based on cited research, informal descriptions) and empirical articles (e.g., original qualitative or quantitative research studies) were included. An article was included if it addressed the topic of quality as related to the experiences of Indigenous children and families accessing early learning and care, or as related to the dispositions educators demonstrate that meet the needs of

Indigenous children and families. Researchers were open to any existing definition of quality in the filtering process, allowing articles focused on policy and practice to be included as well as studies related to child and family outcomes.

Arksey and O'Malley (2005) suggest that scoping review searches include a broad definition of keywords to glean a wide coverage of available literature. Initial search terms included "child care," "Indigenous," and "quality" for RQA; the extended search applied the terms listed in Table 1. For RQB, initial search terms were limited to "child care," "Indigenous," and "educators," but expanded to the terms listed in Table 1.

Techniques for searching included using search tools such as subject headings and Boolean operators to narrow, widen, and combine literature searches. A subsequent investigation included grey literature and a hand search of the reference lists of initial, extended and grey literature. To ensure a comprehensive search in identifying primary evidence and being cognizant of the practicalities of time, inclusion and exclusion criteria were further applied on extended keyword searches. The researchers divided and shared the work for the initial, extended, and reference list searches. All citations were imported into the web-based bibliographic manager Zotero. Researchers shared search results and used Zotero to identify duplicate articles.

*Table 1***: *Topic Searches (TS)***

Key Search Terms

Search Terms: RQA
TS= ("early learning" OR "child care" OR "childcare" OR "daycare" OR "preschool" OR "early childhood")
TS= ("Indigenous" OR "First Nations" OR Aboriginal")
TS: ("quality")

Search Terms: RQB
TS= ("early learning" OR "child care" OR "childcare" OR "daycare" OR "preschool" OR "early childhood")
TS= ("educators" OR "workers" OR "teachers")
TS: ("dispositions" OR "competences" OR "qualities")
TS: ("Indigenous" OR "First Nations" OR "Aboriginal")

Study Selection

Researchers utilized a screening process to assess the relevance of studies identified in the searches. For the first level of screening, only the title and abstract were reviewed in order to determine articles that met the minimum inclusion criteria. The first author then reviewed the modified article groupings for inclusion/exclusion. To ensure rigour in search selection, a full text article review happened next. The first author developed a form on a spreadsheet to confirm, exclude, and/or indicate any uncertainty of these articles, and all researchers contributed to supplying this information.

Exclusion criteria were further developed during the article filtering process to exclude articles without a clear focus on quality indicators and/or dispositions of educators in relation to the experiences of Indigenous children and families in an urban context. An article was excluded from review if it met any of the following exclusion criteria: (1) it focused solely on community-based (on-reserve) programs without consideration of how outcomes would apply to an urban environment, (2) the article focused solely on specific intervention strategies, (3) the article focused specifically on aspects of child development such as speech and language, (4) it was geo-situated in a context not applicable to the urban Canadian context, (5) the article focused on assessment practices, (6) the article was not retrievable online and/or translated into English, (7) the article provided an overview of early learning and care, (8) the article focused on generalized

early learning environments without a focus on the Indigenous family experience, (9) the article focused solely on topics of quality and care that did not specifically relate to the experiences of Indigenous children and families, such as outdoor play.

Researchers used a two-stage screening process to assess the relevance of studies identified in the searches. Using the key search descriptors, researchers initially identified a total of 1,243 articles for RQA, and a total of 1,005 articles for RQB. For the first level of screening, only the title and abstract were reviewed in order to determine articles that meet the minimum inclusion criteria. A review of the abstracts revealed articles that were either irrelevant or duplicated, which narrowed down the total number for RQA to 1,227 and 970 for RQB. To ensure rigour in search selection, researchers used Zotero to independently confirm, exclude, or indicate any uncertainty of these articles. Researchers met regularly during this screening process to resolve any conflicts and discuss any uncertainties related to the study selection. Studies excluded at this phase did not meet the inclusion criteria as previously outlined. Guided by the inclusion and exclusion criteria (see Table 2), following the screening of additional articles from reference lists and grey literature, the total number of full text studies assessed and identified for eligibility equaled 638 for RQA and 362 for RQB.

Table 2: ***Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria***

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Time period	2000-2020	Studies published outside of dates
Language	English	Non-English studies
Study focus	Quality in child care Educator dispositions	Targeted interventions Non-urban programming (in community)
Population and sample	Indigenous families with young children accessing child care	Non-Indigenous families Indigenous families living in community
Location	Canada, United States, Australia, New Zealand	Countries not reflecting conditions considered similar to Canada

Charting the Data

The three authors of this study completed data extraction using an online spreadsheet developed by the first author. Extraction fields included the publication location, authors, year of publication, country of origin, title, study purpose, study methodology, any theoretical framework used in the study, the population examined, the key findings of the study, conclusions, and any recommendations for future research or policy implications. The extraction fields also included a section for any additional comments on articles, including determining whether the article was eligible. Researchers then analyzed data for the generation of themes and results. The researchers populated a separate spreadsheet to capture the final collection of articles and created a chart to sort publications based on their thematic content.

Summary of Results

What follows is a numeric and descriptive summary of the different indicators of quality identified through the scoping review, followed by a similar summary of educator dispositions offered in the explored literature that support Indigenous children and families. Detailed characteristics of studies included in this scoping review can be found in the appendices

following this paper. A total of 47 sources, including peer-reviewed and grey literature, met inclusion criteria for RQA, and 46 sources met inclusion criteria for RQB. Please refer to the appendix for PRISMA flow diagrams of detailed inclusion processes, and for the detailed study characteristics for RQA and RQB.

Below, the key findings from the scoping review are described. A thematic analysis of the articles was conducted and is presented below. For RQA, thematic results from quality indicators include the definition of quality, aspects of curriculum and programming, connections to cultures, family engagement, perspectives from stakeholders other than family, and barriers to quality. For RQB, thematic results from educator dispositions include engaging in a practice of relationships, cultural humility, critical pedagogy, honouring Indigenous family knowledge, having cultural matches between educators and children/families, and the importance of preservice education.

Indicators of Quality (RQA)

Defining Quality

Several articles sought to define elements of quality in the Indigenous family context (BC Aboriginal Child Care Society, 2005; Endfield, 2007; Pence & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2008). Endfield (2007) reveals various possible indicators of quality from both non-Indigenous and Indigenous lenses, including educator knowledge, the inclusion of culture and language, as well as communal values. The article suggests that "[child care] staff, parents, and community should determine their definition of quality as it applies in their community based on established best practices as well as their own cultural experiences" (p. 157). The author emphasizes that it is in the best interest of all child care centres to communicate and engage with families and communities to determine what fits best in terms of quality. Regardless, cultural contexts should

and must be involved in the child care sector to ensure children and families receive the best experiences possible.

Curriculum/Programming

According to some studies (Martin, 2017; Sims et al., 2012), a range of programming-related factors may impact early learning and child care experiences for Indigenous children and families. These include (but are not limited to) programmatic aspects such as cultural inclusivity, a curriculum tailored to fit the needs of children and families in the program, and the potential role of community members in shaping and driving curricular decisions.

Although some Indigenous families seek out programming in an Indigenous-focused child care setting, in a longitudinal study of Indigenous children and their families from Australia, Martin (2017) determined that not all parents had an opinion on mainstream versus Indigenous services. However, the majority of parents expressed specific expectations for early learning and child care, including focus on child developmental goals (independence and physical skills such as tying laces), personal and social skills (confidence and happiness, socialization), academic knowledge (counting, spelling, reading, etc.), and some Indigenous values (learning language and culture) (Martin, 2017). Sims and colleagues (2012) emphasize that “for mainstream child care services to be a viable option for Indigenous families, they would need to learn from Indigenous examples of what works well, and to incorporate these core ideas into their [program]” (p. 103).

In findings from an extensive research project seeking to understand the child care choices of Indigenous families (Bowes et al., 2011), results reflect the values that families place on child care programming. These include: the connection between child care programming and the valued learning taking place at home and in community, including with Elders; educators

using Indigenous ways of knowing to influence their approach with children; and, focus on the transition to schooling as part of child care programming. This study also found that families experienced a distance between themselves, and the program related to a lack of communication and understanding of the curricular approaches.

As with the previous research project, several additional studies recognized the expertise of child-rearing knowledge within the home and community (Anderson et al., 2017; Bowes et al., 2012; Greenwood & Shawana, 2003; Nagel & Wells, 2009). According to Nagel and Wells (2009), honouring family and culture within the learning environment is further supported by curricular considerations such as the inclusion of children's cultural literature that reflects children's community backgrounds, valuing and encouraging family contributions, and, when possible, using the child's home language in the child care program.

Beaton and McDonnell (2013) also emphasize the significance of child care programming in addressing discontinuities in the transition between child care and the formal education system for children and families. They suggest a holistic approach starting with establishing partnerships with community programs and service providers to meet Indigenous families' unique transition needs.

Finally, Kemble's (2019) report on Talking Circles that took place in Edmonton with parents and caregivers of Indigenous children highlights several recommendations related to programming and curriculum in child care. These include but are not limited to: offering holistic programs for families to choose at very low or no cost; ensuring Indigenization of programs that involves training for staff on Indigenous peoples' histories, child rearing perspectives, and contributions; and the development of professional quality standards.

A range of programming-related factors can impact early learning and child care experiences for Indigenous children and their families. It is imperative to emphasize the role of family and community members in shaping and driving curricular decisions, and programming that is tailored to fit the needs of children and families attending early learning and child care.

Cultural Connections

Many articles highlight the pivotal role that culture plays in child care settings for Indigenous children and families (Ball, 2012; Gerlach, 2015; Greenwood, 2001; Preston et al., 2011; Tremblay et al., 2013). In Greenwood's (2001) overview of academic and non-academic literature examining child care through an Indigenous lens, safe, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate environments that value cultures are something that was noted time and time again (p. 31). Furthermore, child care must occur in the context of families and the community (Greenwood, 2001). Specific indicators include: "culturally sensitive, non-profit, comprehensive, accessible, of high quality, affordable and administered by appropriate Indigenous caregivers whenever possible" (p. 28). Overall, according to Greenwood (2001), child care offered to Indigenous children and families, needs to reflect cultural values and be directed by Indigenous peoples' involvement (pp. 29-30). Many of the studies listed above note that this effort provides a unique opportunity to integrate quality indicators that may also reduce disadvantages for Indigenous children and families.

Desjardins (2018) mirrored this focus as well, highlighting key themes, including attention toward families, background knowledge on [Indigenous] history, culturally appropriate programming, empathy, respect and intercultural understanding. The author's findings conclude that "incorporating [Indigenous] pedagogy enhances early learning programs" (Preston et al.,

2011, as cited in Desjardins, 2018, p. 37). Indigenous cultures, knowledge, values, and contexts must be taken into consideration when implementing child care programming.

Anderson and colleagues (2017) focus on the role that Indigenous funds of knowledge play in a child care setting and describe how valuing family voice is pivotal in uncovering and confronting the common practices that view and dismiss Indigenous families' funds of knowledge as "not valid and thus not worthy of being integrated into curriculum and pedagogy (p. 27). The authors define funds of knowledge as the "knowledge and information that [families] use to survive, to get ahead, or to thrive" (p. 21). Recognizing funds of knowledge can thus be "a powerful way to showcase [families'] existing resources, competence and knowledge" (Anderson et al., 2017, p. 21). According to this study, a lack of integration of families' funds of knowledge, drawn from a deficit model, can also be met with an expectation that for children to have academic success, families must learn the dominant culture. For the authors, "even when diversity is recognized in [child care], culture is often reduced to compensatory, fragmented programs that focus on the "Fs" (food, folklore, festivals and fashion)" (p. 27).

Aligning with a funds of knowledge approach, a number of studies emphasize the active engagement of Indigenous families in the curricular decisions surrounding their children's education (Ball, 2001; Greenwood et al., 2007; Greenwood & Shawana, 2003; Mashford-Pringle 2012). Greenwood et al. (2007), in their review of literature regarding the political, social and historical structures that have influenced child care for Indigenous populations, determine that families must receive opportunities to influence the curriculum to ensure the integration of community and family-based values into child care programs (p. 15). As stated by the authors, both historically and in the present day, westernized child care perspectives primarily focus on the importance of the nuclear family and the individual. Indigenous perspectives of quality in

child care are generally much broader: they are often concerned with extended family and communal participation. Moreover, the article concludes that "culture and language should permeate all aspects of [Indigenous]-specific programs and services" (p. 15).

Ball (2012) also discusses the role of culture and suggests that the purpose of education from an Indigenous perspective is to foster children's identity, initiative, and autonomy (par. 9). Early learning and child care leadership must consider the role of culture when implementing programming. As noted in the article by Boulanger (2018), language development is especially culturally significant as it strengthens bonds and fosters connections with the Creator. Nurturing a child's spirit is valued in many Indigenous cultures as a strong spirit will equip the child to face life's challenges. Furthermore, Ball (2012) also emphasizes storytelling and knowledge development occurring "at the right time" (par. 13). Finally, implications for learning involve addressing challenges faced by non-Indigenous educators when supporting young children in care. Ball (2012) states that "non-Indigenous teachers may underestimate Indigenous children's emerging bilingualism and bidialectalism, literacy of the land, and ability to take their place and perform rituals, songs, and dances alongside older children. They also may be unaware that many Indigenous children do not display emotions in the presence of Elders or when it is not the right time or place" (par. 15). Thus, educators must be mindful and attentive to the specific and community-based cultural needs of children to recognize strengths and encourage such values.

According to Hill and Sansom (2010), the rhetoric surrounding the representation of culture in child care settings may already be in place, but westernized and colonized views of learning and development still underpin the majority of programming and pedagogy in child care settings. Harald (2017) notes that it is not possible to simply "plunk" Indigenous culture into child care curriculum. Instead, reflection of culture must also relate to cultural resilience in

children and families. According to Harald (2017), "cultural resilience is initially developed in the home and community environment. It is supported in the [child care] environment if [educators] and [programs] are culturally inclusive and supportive of Indigenous families and communities. [Programs] that seek to engage with Indigenous families and embed culture within the curriculum are more likely to support the development of cultural resilience" (p. 5).

Family Engagement

According to Ball (2012), child care environments include a broad range of inputs ranging from food quality to government policies that can influence Indigenous families' access to and experience in programs. Family-focused approaches and the involvement of families in various aspects of the child care environment can encourage continued access and reflect family voice and children's identities in programs. Ball (2012) further states that parent involvement must be a funded aspect of child care initiatives and that educators and decision-makers must work together to support parents' awareness of the role that child care can play.

How family engagement is defined and actualized can be problematic, as highlighted in Fleer's (2004) article. Fleer (2004) suggests that a fundamental shift in understanding needs to occur, where the child as part of an extended family and community do not always match the beliefs of the child care centre. Moreover, educator-parent relationships can be undermined by power imbalances. Although the involvement of families in programming and curricular decisions may on the surface seem to negate this imbalance, any power can be quickly lost if westernized approaches to programming continue to remain the norm. This "mono-cultural" environment can unknowingly silence other cultures, and "what is often silenced is the known socio-historical and cultural world of Indigenous families, the familiar signs and symbols, and established social and cultural practices and beliefs" (Fleer, 2004, p. 65). Similarly, Gerlach and

colleagues' 2017 study found that the initiative to create more power-balanced relations between child care and families is of great value. Providing voice to parents, families, and communities is one way to combat imbalances. The findings described in this article fill a gap in the identification of family engagement strategies that are, according to the authors, "tacitly aligned with the principles of cultural safety" (par. 7).

The effectiveness of early learning and care programs depend highly on relationship building between families, children, and community (Leske et al., 2015). In the Leske et al. (2015) study on perspectives regarding effective child care programs and services for Indigenous families, educators stressed the importance of relationship-building with families. Further, an awareness and ability to respond to dynamic family circumstances was a significant component to relationship building. Findings reveal that understanding of family agency strongly influences early childhood professionals' perspectives of effective child care provision and their reputation and ongoing relationship with families and community. The findings offer considerations on the 'what' of effective service provision and have implications for policy and practice (p. 116).

External Perspectives

Several articles shared external perspectives regarding indicators of quality child care for Indigenous families, without direct engagement of family voice in the research process (Beaton & McDonell, 2013; Grace & Trudgett, 2012; Guilfoyle et al., 2010; Lee-Hammond, 2013; Martin & Rodriguez, 2007; Preston et al., 2011; Ritchie, 2008; Targowska et al., 2010). Although some considerations are shared below, it is important to note, as Martin (2017) showcases, the importance of data that emphasize Indigenous children and their families' voices as the central aspect of research.

Grace and Trudgett (2012) explored the perspectives of child care educators in supporting Indigenous families. Educators stressed the importance of building relationships with families as well as Indigenous communities in ways that recognizes strengths. According to the authors, essential is a strengths-based approach that seeks to understand the challenges facing each family, while at the same time seeking ways to build on strengths through an atmosphere of acceptance and non-judgement. Equally essential to effective communication is educators who build understanding amongst non-Indigenous educators of Indigenous peoples' socio-historical and cultural contexts. This perspective and understanding may further support relationship building with families.

Guilfoyle et al. (2010) highlighted quality indicators for Indigenous children, families and communities as determined by key stakeholders in the child care sector such as child care providers and government representatives. The research findings conclude that specific values are of considerable importance to Indigenous peoples concerning early learning and child care. These quality indicators include a focus on the child, collaboration with families, identity development, and space for Elders as educators. The article states that a significant theme emerging from the research is the ability of the child care environment to foster a safe atmosphere for children to be independent and grow. The authors state that "it is crucial that [child care] centres are built on what Indigenous families identify as approaches that work for them." (p. 75).

Barriers to Quality

Several authors describe the barriers that Indigenous families face both in accessing quality child care and in society at large. Grace and Trudgett (2012) discuss how educators identify three primary barriers to participation by Indigenous families they work with: a lack of

transportation, a feeling of shame experienced by families, and community division. A prominent theme from interviews with early childhood educators focused on supporting families in any issues arising from transporting their children to and from early learning and child care settings. Educators also expressed concerns that children may not attend programs because of the possible shame felt by families in the provision of children's needs, such as food for snacks and lunches. Finally, educators interviewed in the study expressed that families may feel reluctant to engage in programming and services if they sense that other children attending care come from a different Indigenous community or group. Educators emphasized the importance of relationship building with families and local Indigenous communities with a focus on acknowledging strengths (Grace & Trudgett, 2012).

According to Halseth and Greenwood (n.d.), child care must address needed protective factors and increase the general health and development of children attending programs in order to push back against the systemic barriers that Indigenous peoples face in all aspects of life. The authors suggest that collaboration and funding are needed to move forward to create holistic programs for children (p. 37). Intervention that starts in the early years can significantly decrease the risks and barriers faced by Indigenous peoples.

Mulligan (2007) shared that matters related to Indigenous families' experiences and possible health issues, violence, abuse, and the criminal justice system dominate much of the research, creating a dearth of understanding regarding the complexities and insights that may further support Indigenous families, and in particular mothers. Mulligan's (2007) study focusing on the challenges that Indigenous single mothers overcome determined that a lack of culturally appropriate settings in child care was a significant concern for participants. Barriers also included a general lack of child care spaces available, affordability, accessibility, limited family

support, and transportation. Furthermore, when mothers or children become ill, a critical gap in available child care emerges.

It is also important to note that Bowes et al. (2011) identify significant distrust in families for child care environments. According to the article, "families often felt judged and misunderstood by [educators]. As [educators] talked down to them, families felt intimidated and disempowered. They either persevered because they wanted their children to 'survive' in the education system, or avoided [accessing programs], especially when a parent was at home and could teach their children themselves" (Bowes et al., 2011, p. ix). In Greenwood and Shawana's (2003) study focused on giving voice and choice back to Indigenous families in child care, Indigenous family participants further recommended that more authority over child care programs by Indigenous peoples is critical. The overall goal for early education moving forward should be to preserve and retain "values, beliefs and traditions of the community" (p. 73).

Educator Dispositions

Practice of Relationships

Numerous articles addressing educator dispositions focused on the importance of relationship-building when engaging with Indigenous families, rather than just on specific curricular approaches (Ball & Lewis, 2015; Docket et al. 2006; Fasoli & Ford, 2001; Gerlach & Gignac, 2019; Gerlach et al., 2019; Lambert, et al., 2014; Leske et al., 2015). Aligning with this relational orientation, findings from numerous studies also highlight the deep connection between educators' practice of relationships and the understandings of the historical and social complexities of families' everyday lives (Gerlach & Gignac, 2019; Gerlach et al., 2017; Grace & Trudgett, 2012). This focus on relationships can also create opportunities for educators to

challenge existing power structures and underlying assumptions that may influence educator decisions (Gerlach et al., 2019).

Practically speaking, a focus on relationships includes prioritizing time for building relationships between educators, children, and families (Gerlach & Gignac, 2019). According to Gerlach and Gignac (2019) in their qualitative study highlighting family engagement, additional considerations include meeting families where they already gather, being flexible to family circumstances, involving Elders in the practice of relationships and programming, supporting the whole family, and "deferring child development assessments until trusting relationships are well established" (p. 62). One study conducted in Australia (Leske et al., 2015) found relationships formed between families, children, and educators, and the relational reputation the program carried in the broader community, impacted the sustained attendance of Indigenous families in child care programs.

Another significant theme explored by Trudgett and Grace (2011) is the notion of trust between educators and families. The authors identified trust as a significant factor for family engagement in child care settings: Every family wished to be able to trust the educator working with their child(ren). Another overarching finding was that grouping Indigenous families together and assuming common elements in family cultural backgrounds and practices is not meaningful. In other words, a barrier for one family may not be a barrier for another and could potentially be a facilitator for another. Therefore, a personalized relationship built on trust is essential for family engagement. In child care, we cannot group families based on what we perceive as similarities, but instead must understand the needs, desires, and expectations of each family.

Bang et al. (2018) emphasize that before trust and a practice of relationships can happen between educators and families; educators must “explicitly and intentionally address deficit assumptions about Indigenous families” (p. 16). While continuing to challenge assumptions and stereotypes, educators must begin the process of reaching out to families and Indigenous communities to build trust. Building trust “could take the form of inviting family and community members into the classroom as teachers, collaborators, and decision-makers” (Bang et al., 2018, p. 18).

Day-to-day interactions between educators and children may also impact how relationships between families and communities manifest. A case study by Harrison et al. (2017) that recorded interactions between educators and young children captured many examples of children co-creating a culture of belonging with educators. The experiences exemplified specific, specialist practices grounded in “the strengths of Indigenous cultural traditions [of] family life and raising children” (p. 203).

Cultural Humility

Many articles emphasized the importance of offering educators the opportunity to engage in cultural humility work, and in particular, knowledge development regarding the historical and current contexts for Indigenous families (Canadian Child Care Federation, 2008; Desjardins, 2018; Madden et al., 2013; Santoro et al., 2011; Sinclair, 2019; Stark & Fickle, 2015). According to Scott et al. (2017), “current childcare conversations must be infused with a framework grounded in the context of institutional racism and trauma, must include a discussion around funding streams and childcare barriers, and must ensure cultural competency by deliberately applying an equity framework” (p. 81).

A study by Hare and Anderson (2010) explored the perspectives of 25 Indigenous families in transitioning their children to a child care program in a large urban centre. Making Indigenous knowledge a part of child care experiences for Indigenous children and families can be challenging in urban settings, as families have limited access to resources such as land, extended family, traditional practices, and languages. Nevertheless, educators are responsible to ensure that early learning and child care settings reflect Indigenous ways of knowing. According to the authors, educators working in child care settings should ensure that they learn about the history of residential schooling and forced child removal policies that disrupted Indigenous families in Canada for generations. In particular, educators may be required to address any parental fear regarding institutional forms of care that seem at odds with community values.

Another study highlighting five Indigenous Head Start educators also emphasized the need for decolonizing opportunities for educators in the field (Peterson et al., 2018). The authors emphasize the presence of "dominating spaces of Euro-centric ways;" thus, "decolonizing education must take place in [child care programs] across the country" (p. 45). Engaging educators in a practice of relationships with Indigenous families through a decolonization and cultural humility lens bodes well for transformative opportunities, especially in urban contexts.

Critical Pedagogy

Some articles deeply explored specific aspects of pedagogy through a critical lens, closely related to decolonization practices (Herbert, 2013; Middlemiss, 2018; Miller, 2014; Ritchie, 2014; Ritchie et al., 2011). Some authors, such as Atkinson (2009), focus on challenging mainstream discourses on race and racism, while others, including Ritchie (2014), explore notions of "nomadic subjectivity," enabling educators to "move across conventional categories and move against 'settled' concepts and theories," offering incitement to shift beyond their

previous boundaries and comfort zones (p. 123). Diaz-Diaz (2020) mirrors this sentiment by suggesting that, generally, educators may have yet to adopt in their pedagogy new conceptions related to diversity and social responsibility as multicultural pedagogies continue to prevent educators from learning about the impact of colonialism in Canada.

Ritchie et al. (2011) examined pedagogy focusing on criticality, Indigeneity, and an ethic of care, expressing a need for educators to consider how they might foster experiences that may help develop conscientization. The authors proposed the "implementation of an ethic for caring for oneself, others and the environment. Fostering dispositions of empathy and caring through a pedagogy of listening: recognition that we are all members of the collective; includes listening to ourselves as well as listening to welcome and being open to differences" (p. 346).

A paper reporting on the findings of a critical qualitative inquiry within an Indigenous child care program (Gerlach et al., 2018) illustrates the possibility that educators, when supported in how to do so, can "develop highly contextualised, historicised, and nuanced understandings of families' lives, through a relational process of inquiry…. These findings draw attention to the importance of understanding and addressing mutually reinforcing and intersecting structurally rooted social determinants on family wellbeing. They also emphasize the importance of legitimizing the time required for [educators] to learn from caregivers about their everyday lived realities and provide further evidence for the centrality of relationship-building to the success of Indigenous [child care]" (p. 118). Evidently, adopting a critical pedagogy approach may be supportive for Indigenous families, but requires thought and time to avoid generalizations or tokenism.

Honouring Indigenous Families' Funds of Knowledge

Many articles addressed the critical need for educators to engage with Indigenous funds of knowledge within a practice of relationships (Ball & Pence, 2001; Desbiens et al., 2016; Kitson & Bowes, 2010; MacDonald et al., 2010; Maher & Bellen, 2015; McLaughlin & Whatman, 2015; Miller, 2013). Places of learning for young children should thus, according to Hare (2011), avoid viewing Indigenous knowledge as just an “anthropological curiosity.” The author goes on to declare that “the challenge for educators who work with Indigenous children [is] to create space for Indigenous knowledge so as to support Indigenous children and families" (p. 408). This challenge requires engaging in a practice of relationships with Indigenous families and communities that may also require outreach efforts.

Acknowledging funds of knowledge includes engaging with both families as well as children. Maher and Bellen (2015) emphasize the importance of supporting children to engage in funds of knowledge in the early years and state that “initiatives that embody quality teaching with qualified educators who affirm children's cultural knowledge play an integral role in supporting transitions to formal schooling” (p. 16).

In many Indigenous communities, cultural transmission from Elders and family members to children occurs with young children, as exemplified by MacDonald et al.’s (2010) article. Following in-depth interviews and observations of community events tied to a Stó:lō Head Start Family Program, the authors determined that “children were not separated from events, and learned through active participation in cultural systems of practice” (p. 91). McLaughlin and Whatman (2015) further emphasize that “learning to see Indigenous funds of knowledge within the cultural interface–as a knowledge system in tension and agency with Western knowledges

and one with equal value–is an important professional development requirement for all [educators], both beginning and experienced" (p. 16).

Cultural Match

Some articles suggested that cultural match - the culture of the educator matching that of the child - is a factor worth exploring in child care settings (Ritchie, 2003; Sims et al., 2012; Webb & Williams, 2019). In Webb and Williams' (2019) study exploring children's interactions with educators of the same or different culture, the authors noted the impact on children's communication when culturally matched with an educator. The authors emphasize the relevance of considering cultural context for supporting Indigenous children's language skills. These insights provide a starting point for further research exploring cultural match between educator and child in early learning and child care as a possible factor affecting [Indigenous] children's communication and development (p. 59).

Sims et al. (2012) share that many Indigenous families would prefer an Indigenous educator working with their children "in order for families to feel culturally secure in using services; for services to be culturally inclusive; that services are tailored to fit the specific needs of the community; and that family- and community-centred practice forms the basis of that service. For mainstream child care services to be a viable option for Indigenous families, they would need to learn from Indigenous examples of what works well, and to incorporate these core ideas into their services" (p. 103). Overall, a cultural match between educators, families, and children is an important consideration in child care and would benefit from additional research and exploration.

Preservice Education

Some articles highlight the unique role of preservice education in developing educator dispositions to support Indigenous families (Mills & Ballantyne, 2008; Peltier, 2017; Whatman et al., 2020). Of significance is the act of embedding Indigenous knowledge across multiple preservice educational experiences, and in particular for Indigenous preservice educators. According to Whatman et al. (2020), this includes post-secondary faculty actioning “their personal and professional commitment to embedding Indigenous knowledge,” resulting in “powerful learning and emancipatory experiences for preservice [educators]” (p. 178).

In an article exploring preservice educators’ beliefs regarding diversity in Australia, Mills and Ballantyne (2008) determined that “all students who demonstrated commitment to social justice also demonstrated both openness and self-awareness/self-reflectiveness, and all students who demonstrated openness also demonstrated self-awareness/self-reflectiveness” (p. 453). Thus, the analysis from the study suggests that “these dispositions may develop in a sequential fashion from self-awareness/self-reflectiveness; moving towards openness; and finally a commitment to social justice” (p. 453). Mills and Ballantyne (2008) state, however, that “if teacher education courses on diversity continue to operate in fragmented ways, rather than encouraging students to move from dispositions of self-awareness/self-reflectiveness through to a disposition of commitment to social justice” (p. 454), students may not be able to demonstrate this disposition later in the child care field.

Preservice educational institutions are sites for knowledge convergence, and decisions made regarding curriculum, pedagogy, and evaluation occur on an individual (instructor) level as well as a program (faculty), university, and government decision-making levels. Decisions regarding what is taught, what is not taught, and how knowledge convergence occurs for

preservice educators reflects the extent to which Indigenous knowledges inform professionalization and future pedagogic practices. There exists significant potential for Indigenous worldviews to engage the professional development and pedagogical identity of future early learning and child care educators through the development of educator dispositions that support Indigenous children and families.

Discussion

This scoping review provides an overview of quality indicators and educator dispositions for Indigenous families accessing early learning and child care in Canadian urban settings. Many Indigenous families seek early learning and child care that supports family and community culture and, while doing so, also seek autonomy and self-determination. Indigenous families, educators and community members must be at the centre of determining quality to ensure that experiences, perspectives, and cultural contexts are aptly reflected. In addition, the educator disposition of fostering trust in educator-family relationships is pivotal for some Indigenous families. Additionally, access issues such as cost and transportation impact many Indigenous families' ability to engage in quality child care experiences.

Educators can seek to build unique relationships with children and families based on the desire to meet them where they are at. *Flight*, Alberta's Early Learning and Care Framework (Makovichuk et al., 2014), explores the multifaceted and complex role of a practice of relationships with children and families. When educators can recognize that families are experts in their children and thus know them in ways that educators may not, educators may then view families and their relationships with them as pivotal in children's early learning and care. Educators can also reflect on unique and individualized family practices that support children's growing identity that can deepen their understandings of and relationships with children and

families. A practice of relationships can recognize the complexities of experiences for children and families within a strength-based approach.

Most of the studies in this review highlight diverse viewpoints and the need for ongoing engagement with Indigenous families to centre their voices in policies, programs, and practices. Gerlach and colleagues (2017) state that “any initiative to create more power balanced relations between the early learning sector and families is of great value. Providing voice to the parents, family and community is one way they combat these imbalances” (p. 1770). The varying strategies to realize quality suggest that both culturally focused programs and mainstream programs can achieve positive outcomes despite wildly divergent approaches. What remain critical in every context are educator dispositions such as cultural humility, seeking a practice of relationships with children and families, and reflective practices that consider Indigenous perspectives in their approaches. And what is needed to cultivate these dispositions is explicit support in the form of resources, time, and professional development - support that requires both centre leadership and all levels of government to collaborate, identify how they may help, and act.

Over the past many years, rigorous evidence has consistently sought to demonstrate the characteristics and measures of quality in early learning and child care (Friendly et al., 2006). Many authors seek to define elements of quality in the Indigenous family context (BC Aboriginal Child Care Society, 2005; Endfield, 2007; Pence & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2008). In particular, Endfield (2007) suggests that “[child care] staff, parents, and community should determine their definition of quality as it applies in their community based on established best practices as well as their own cultural experiences” (p. 157). Although some structural elements such as policies and funding can impact quality across all early learning and child care programs and services, no

standard, one-size-fits-all approach exists for defining what constitutes quality (Greenwood et al., 2020). Instead, what is needed are programs and services that are built around the strengths of families and children, supported by policies and funding.

Taken together, these results reveal that research on early learning and child care can also benefit from a strengths-based, relational approach. Many of the ideas expressed in research concerning child care providers can and should also be applied to those conducting this research. For example, research that centres and values family and community voice, knowledge, and participation can further contribute to a sense of belonging and can reveal the importance of family structures and perspectives beyond the westernized views that are currently the norm. What's more, many of those who conduct research in this area are post-secondary instructors who support pre- and in-service educators in terms of professional learning, which means that those conducting this research are in a unique position to influence the perspectives of educators in planning and providing child care. Each researcher who shares these dispositions with their students and with the public can influence hundreds of educators, who in turn support thousands of children and families over their careers. In this way, research that centres Indigenous voices is essential for creating programming that supports Indigenous families.

Limitations

Inherent in scoping review methodological approaches is the possibility that relevant literature may have been inadvertently excluded from the study. This limitation may be due to a number of factors, including database selection, possible exclusion of relevant grey literature that was not found through searches, and the exclusion of relevant studies not published in English. Due to its broader focus, it may be unrealistic to state that all relevant literature was retrieved through the scoping review methodological approach (Gentles et al., 2010). The balance between

breadth and depth is indeed a factor given the large volume of articles identified in the initial searches.

Another limitation to this study may be the lack of critical analyses of included studies in the scoping review as related to quality. Indeed, one primary limitation of all scoping reviews is the identification of gaps in literature as related to quality of research, as this consideration has not received significant attention during the scoping review methodological processes (Feehan et al., 2011). This results in a limitation to offer fully comprehensive recommendations for policy and/or practice due to the lack of assessment related to quality of included studies. McColl and colleagues note that the purpose of a scoping review is the focus on comprehensive coverage, and not necessarily on a particular ‘standard of evidence’ (2009). Nevertheless, as the intent for scoping reviews is to offer a mapped overview of existing literature in a particular field, the intention of any review must as well be to identify any limitations so as to ensure opportunity to determine the value of both findings and possible recommendations (Arksey & O’Malley, 2005).

Future Directions and Conclusion

Quality child care programs can be a powerful ‘equalizer’ in nurturing children’s development (Ball, 2012; DeRiviere, 2016). For Indigenous children and families, quality in early learning and child care may encompass a broad range of programming, a strength-based and multifaceted approach to including the lives of children and families, and engagement with both individuals and groups. Overall, no “one size fits all” approach exists when considering aspects of quality for Indigenous children and families accessing child care. The varying strategies to realizing quality suggest that both mainstream programs as well as those catering to Indigenous children and families can achieve positive outcomes despite divergent approaches.

In regard to dispositions, educators must continually seek opportunities for learning, reflection, and curiosity. Following their pre-professional education, educators must engage in opportunities to further their professionalism and reflect on their practice. A foundational educator disposition includes the active learning alongside children and families to inform curricular decisions (Makovichuk et al., 2014). Such desires to learn can only be realized with the full support of and strategic decisions from a strong leadership team in the early learning and child care centre. Recognizing that families are the experts in their children and hold rich funds of knowledge regarding child rearing, educators must consider families and their relationships with them as vital in the care of children in early learning and care settings.

A supportive, stimulating environment can also meet a wide range of objectives, including care, learning, and social support for children and families (Friendly & Prentice, 2009). Quality early learning and child care can encourage the holistic wellness of entire communities, and the scoping review described here indicates what this quality care can look like. Government investment in quality early learning and child care for Indigenous children and families can play a critical role in optimizing Indigenous children's health and development and mitigating intergenerational impacts of social and structural inequities on Indigenous children and families (Halseth & Greenwood, 2019).

Endfield (2007) emphasizes that it is in the best interest of all early learning and child care programs to communicate and engage with families and communities to determine quality by recognizing diversity within those with which they work. Hare (2011) suggests that "rather than seeing Indigenous knowledge and its various forms as an anthropological curiosity or even entertainment, places of learning should come to see Indigenous knowledge as a legitimate source of knowledge" (p. 408). As such, and given the varied findings described above, a more

specific exploration of the beliefs and values of Indigenous families in urban centres would support the opportunity for families to share their knowledge and understanding of indicators of quality and educator dispositions. In order to respond to this need, the researchers built on this scoping review with a series of focus groups and case studies centred on the ideas and experiences of Indigenous families, reported elsewhere.

Children can be a catalytic factor in strengthening communities, and there is compelling evidence that quality early learning and child care, including educator dispositions that recognize child and family strengths, can have a positive and longitudinal academic and social impact (Landry, 2008; Niles et al., 2007). Quality in early learning and child care for Indigenous children and families may encompass a broad range of programming, the inclusion of cultures, and relationality. By focusing on the needs of Indigenous young children and their families and addressing barriers to achieving quality in early learning and child care, social ties and community development can strengthen.

Table 3: RQA Detailed Study Characteristics

Authors	Year	Country	Study Design	Purpose	Theme
Anderson et al.	2017	Canada	Secondary analysis	How ELCC can be facilitated through engagement with Elders	Curriculum
Ball	2001	Canada	Theoretical	Review of Generative Curriculum model for ELCC programming	Curriculum
Ball	2010	Canada	Qualitative (Case studies)	Culturally congruent services in early learning and child care	Reflection of cultures
Ball	2012a	Canada	Theoretical (Chapter)	Need to ensure access to ELCC and engage parents	Family engagement
Ball	2012b	Canada	Secondary analysis	Ways in which children learn through family and community	Reflection of cultures
Ball	2014	Canada	Qualitative (Interviews)	Gain insights into family views and goals for children's development	Reflection of cultures
Beaton & McDonnell	2013	Canada	Theoretical	Significance of early experiences for Indigenous children	External perspectives/ Curriculum
Boulanger	2018	Canada	News Article	Connection between Indigenous language revitalization and ELCC	External perspectives/ Reflection of cultures
Bowes et al.	2011	Australia	Qualitative (Interviews)	Identify policy direction and guidelines that support families	Curriculum
BC Aboriginal Child Care Society	2005	Canada	Report	Elements of quality rest on laws of the Creator and sacred responsibility of family/community	Defining quality
Cheah & Chirkov	2008	Canada	Qualitative (Interviews)	Parenting beliefs regarding culture and child socialization	Reflection of cultures
Colbert	2000	Kenya, Canada, N.Z. & U.S.	Secondary analysis	Roel of contextual factors in provision of quality services for children and families	Curriculum
DeRiviere	2016	Canada	Qualitative (Interviews)	Determining connection between attendance and programming	Curriculum/ Family engage.
Desjardins	2018	Canada	Literature review	Ways to implement Indigenous pedagogy in ELCC	Reflection of cultures
Endfield	2007	U.S.	Quantitative (Survey)	What quality may mean for Indigenous families	Reflection of cultures/ Defining quality

Fenech	2011	Australia	Secondary data analysis	How quality has been conceptualized through discourse	Defining quality
Fleer	2014	Australia	Qualitative (Filming)	Filming of family interactions with preschool children	Family engagement
Greenwood	2001	Canada	Data analysis	Analysis of development of Indigenous early childhood services	Reflection of cultures
Greenwood	2003	Canada	Report	Ensuring adequate and quality programming that supports cultures	Curriculum
Halseth & Greenwood	n.d.	Canada	Literature review	Overview of knowledge and gaps for ELCC programs	Barriers to quality
Hutchins & Frances	2009	Australia	Qualitative (Focus groups)	Engagement with stakeholders in child care sector to examine quality	External perspectives
Hare	2011	Canada	Qualitative (Focus groups)	Contributions of family funds of knowledge to literacy learning	Reflection of cultures
Gerlach	2015	Canada	Qualitative (Interviews)	Determine how urban home visits responds to needs of families	Workforce
Gerlach et al.	2017	Canada	Qualitative (Interviews)	Analyze how workers support families involvement in programs	Workforce
Grace & Trudgett	2012	Australia	Qualitative (Interviews)	Indigenous ELCC educators identifying family barriers	External perspectives
Greenwood & Perry	2002	Canada	Qualitative (Focus groups)	Recommendations for services reflecting home environment	Curriculum
Greenwood & Shawana	2003	Canada	Qualitative (Interviews)	Giving voice/choice back to families in ELCC curriculum	Curriculum
Greenwood et al.	2997	Canada	Theoretical	Indigenous ELCC site of potential transformative change	External perspective/ Curriculum
Government of Canada	2019	Canada	Proposed Act Overview	Affirm the right of self-government for Indigenous peoples	External perspective/ Reflection of cultures
Guilfoyle et al.	2010	Australia	Qualitative (Interviews)	Determining culturally strong child care programs (stakeholders)	External perspectives
Harald	2017	Australia	Thesis	Belonging & identity as the overarching factor in cultural resilience	Reflection of cultures
Hill & Sansom	2010	New Zealand	Theoretical	Responsibility for all peoples to acknowledge Indigeneity in ELCC	External perspectives/ Reflection of cultures

Kemble	2019	Canada	Qualitative (Talking circles)	Guidance for the design of ELCC that responds to the needs of Indigenous children and families	Curriculum
Lee-Hammond	2013	Australia	Qualitative (Interviews)	Challenges in providing integrated services for Indigenous families	External perspectives/ Barriers
Leske et al.	2015	Australia	Qualitative (Interviews)	Identification of features of ELCC that engage family attendance	Family engagement
Mashford-Pringle	2012	Canada	Qualitative (Case study)	Role of Aboriginal Head Start in families' health and well being	Curriculum
Mashon	2010	Canada	Literature review; Interviews	Successes and challenges to reflect Indigenous culture and values	External perspectives/ Reflection of cultures
Martin	2017	Australia	Qualitative (Interviews) & Quantitative	Choices made by families regarding early childhood education	Curriculum
Martin & Rodriguez	2007	Australia	Theoretical	Programs that emphasize need for holistic approach	External perspectives/ Curriculum
Mulligan	2007	Canada	Qualitative (Talking circles)	Indigenous long parent families and their struggles to ensure well being	Barriers to quality
Nagel & Wells	2009	New Zealand	Theoretical	Overview of Te Whãriki and diversity of cultures in ELCC	External perspectives/ Curriculum
Pence & Pacini-Ketchabaw	2008	Canada	Theoretical	Investigating quality in ELCC within national and international discourses	Defining quality
Preston et al.	2011	Canada	Literature review	State of quality Indigenous ELCC in Canada	External perspectives/ Reflection of cultures
Ritchie	2008	New Zealand	Theoretical	Responding to challenges of bicultural curriculum in ELCC	External perspectives/ Reflection of cultures
Sims et al.	2012	Australia	Qualitative (Focus groups)	Determining role of culturally relevant child care in mainstream ELCC	Curriculum/ Reflection of cultures
Targowska et al.	2010	Australia	Qualitative (Focus groups)	Factors that contribute or create barriers for quality ELCC	External perspectives/

					Barriers to quality
Tremblay et al.	2013	Canada	Qualitative (Focus groups)	Identify elements of healthy development of Indigenous children	Reflection of cultures

***Table 4:* RQB Detailed Study Characteristics**

Authors	Year	Country	Study Design	Purpose	Theme
Atkinson	2009	Australia	Qualitative (Interviews)	Indigenous and non-Indigenous children's exposure to colonial concepts	Critical pedagogy
Ball & Lewis	2005	Canada	Data analysis	Using Indigenous families' goals to guide practice and policy	Practice of relationships
Ball & Pence	2001	Canada	Theoretical	Generative Curriculum Model for ELCC in Indigenous communities	Funds of knowledge
Bang et al.	2018	U.S.	Theoretical	Argue for amplification of Indigenous family leadership and engagement	Practice of relationships
Canadian Child Care Federation	2008	Canada	Theoretical (Resource sheet)	Encouraging Indigenous cultural identity at home and in ELCC	Decolonization
Desbiens et al.	2016	Canada	Quantitative (Survey)	Dimensions of Indigeneity and role of child care in construction of citizenship	Funds of knowledge
Desjardins	2018	Canada	Theoretical	Ways to implement Indigenous pedagogy in ELCC programs (website)	Decolonization
Diaz Diaz	2020	Canada	Qualitative (Witnessing)	Examines children's relationships with place in child care centre	Critical pedagogy
Dockett et al.	2005	Australia	Qualitative (Interviews)	Indigenous families' issues and concerns related to school start	Practice of relationships
Fasoli & Ford	2001	Australia	Qualitative (Narrative inquiry)	Emphasis of importance of relationships between educators and children	Practice of relationships
Gerlach & Gignac	2019	Canada	Qualitative (Interviews)	Exploring family engagement and well-being in head start programs	Practice of relationships
Gerlach et al.	2018	Canada	Qualitative (Interviews)	Relational perspective of family wellbeing in ELCC	Critical pedagogy
Gerlach et al.	2019	Canada	Qualitative (Interviews)	How structures are currently shaping relationships in urban ELCC programs	Practice of relationships
Hare	2011	Canada	Qualitative (Focus groups)	Examine contributions of Indigenous knowledge to literacy learning	Funds of knowledge
Hare & Anderson	2010	Canada	Qualitative (Focus groups)	Factors affecting the transition to formal ELCC settings	Decolonization
Harrison et al.	2017	Australia	Qualitative (Interviews)	Relationships to family, culture and community as seen in educator interactions	Practice of relationships

Herbert	2013	Australia	Theoretical	Role of social justice in preparing Indigenous children in learning	Critical pedagogy
Kitson & Bowes	2010	Australia	Literature review	Incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing by Indigenous ELCC educators	Decolonization/ Cultural match
Lampert et al.	2014	Australia	Qualitative (Interviews)	Demonstrate participation in reflexivity in pedagogic work and relationships	Practice of relationships
Leske et al.	2015	Australia	Qualitative (Interviews)	Perspectives of ELCC professionals working with Indigenous families	Practice of relationships
MacDonald et al.	2010	Canada	Qualitative (Ethnography)	Language and cultural transmission within Aboriginal Head Start	Funds of knowledge
Madden et al.	2013	Canada	Qualitative (Talking circles)	Community voices and experiences of Indigenous education and community engagement	Decolonization
Maher & Bellen	2015	Australia	Data analysis	Disjuncture between literacy experiences as children enter formal schooling	Funds of knowledge
McLaughlin et al.	2015	Australia	Qualitative (Interviews)	Embedding of Indigenous knowledges into preservice education	Preservice education
Middlemiss	2018	Canada	Qualitative (Case study)	Decolonizing pedagogy and practices - Indigenous kindergarten teacher	Critical pedagogy
Miller	2013	Australia	Qualitative (Action research)	Impact of whiteness on non-Indigenous educators' work	Decolonization/ Critical pedagogy
Miller	2014	Australia	Qualitative (Action research)	Understand how racializing practices Are mobilized in professional practice	Critical pedagogy
Miller	2015	Australia	Qualitative (Action research)	Embedding Indigenous perspectives in ELCC curricula	Indigenous funds of knowledge
Miller et al.	2011	Australia	Qualitative (Interviews)	Perspectives of key stakeholders in cultural support program in an ELCC	Decolonization
Mills & Ballantyne	2008	Australia	Qualitative (Auto-ethnography)	Pre-service teachers' beliefs about and attitudes toward diversity	Preservice education
Peterson et al.	2018	Canada	Qualitative (Interviews)	Indigenous pedagogy and ways to inform non-Indigenous educators' learning	Decolonization
Peltier	2017	Canada	Qualitative (Case narratives)	Examination of mismatches between Indigenous children's home and school	Preservice education/ Funds of knowledge

Ritchie	2003	New Zealand	Qualitative (Interviews)	Views of educators on role of ELCC settings in delivering cultural programs	Cultural match
Ritchie	2012	New Zealand	Qualitative (Storytelling)	Enactment of counter-colonial renarrativism within ELCC settings	Practice of relationships
Ritchie	2013	New Zealand	Qualitative (Ethnography)	Enactment of relationality within ELCC and education practice	Practice of relationships
Ritchie	2014	New Zealand	Qualitative (Interviews)	Facilitation of educators with Indigenous families in mainstream ELCC	Critical pedagogy
Ritchie et al.	2011	New Zealand	Theoretical	Pedagogical considerations in the development of a curriculum in ELCC	Critical pedagogy
Ryah & Kantor	2017	Canada	Theoretical	Working with Indigenous communities through a practice of relationships	Practice of relationships
Santoro et al.	2011	Australia	Qualitative (Interviews)	Highlighting teacher knowledge re: Indigenous epistemologies	Decolonization
Scott et al.	2017	U.S.	Theoretical	Applying an equity lens in the ELCC context (cultural competence)	Decolonization
Sims et al.	2012	Australia	Qualitative (Focus groups)	High quality ELCC must include culturally relevant pedagogy	Cultural match
Stark & Fickel	2015	New Zealand	Qualitative/ Theoretical	Indigenous contexts of teacher education – cultural pedagogy	Decolonization
Teather	2008	Australia/ Canada	Literature review	Indigenous ELCC training developed to work with Indigenous families	Critical pedagogy
Trudgett & Grace	2011	Australia	Qualitative (Interviews)	Barriers and facilitators of engagement for Indigenous families	Practice of relationships
Webb & Williams	2019	Australia	Qualitative (Observation)	Children's communication with educators differed in cultural match	Cultural match
Whatman et al.	2020	Australia	Qualitative (Case study)	Examine factors that support practicum journeys of educators	Preservice education

Figure 1: **RQA PRISMA Flowchart**

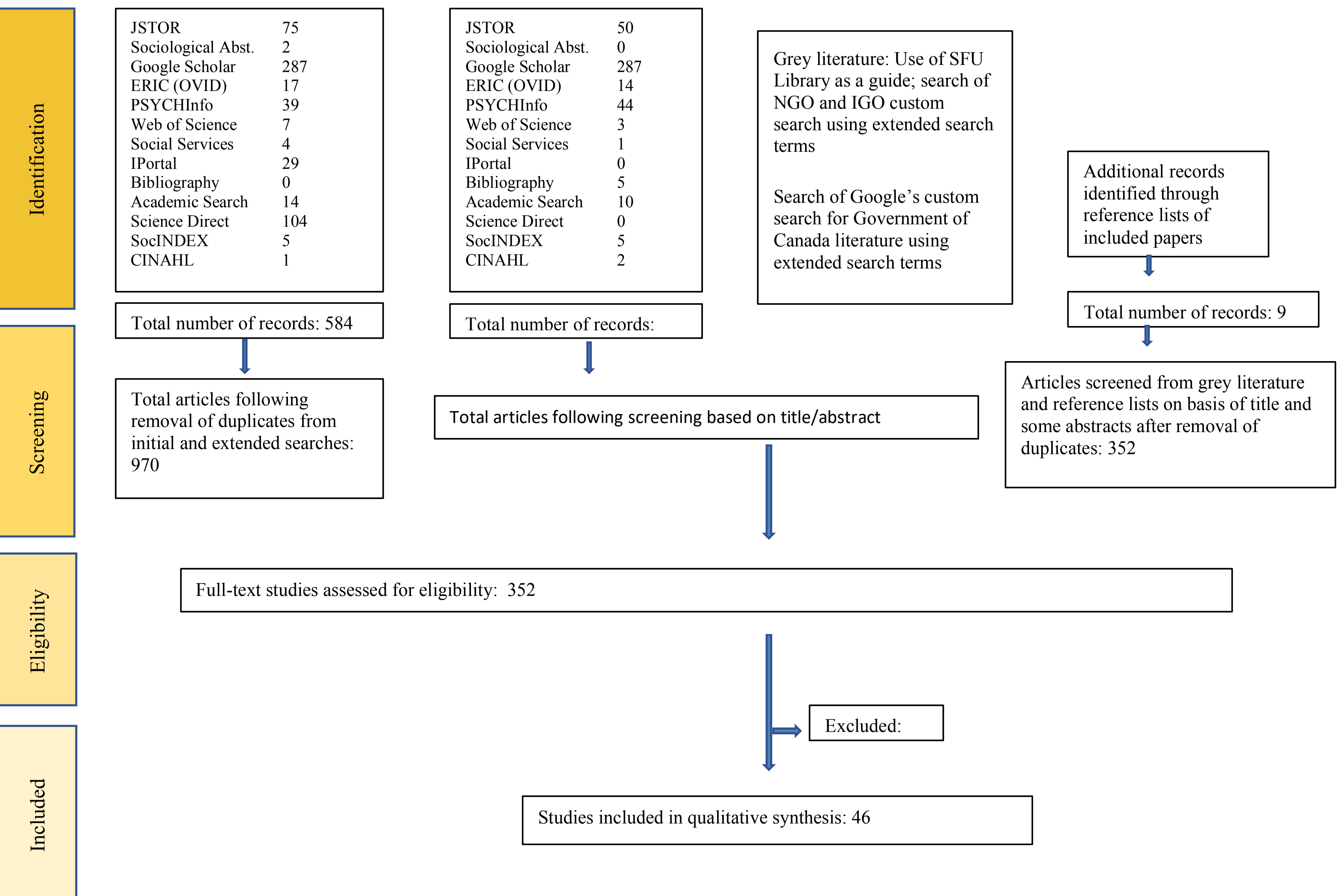
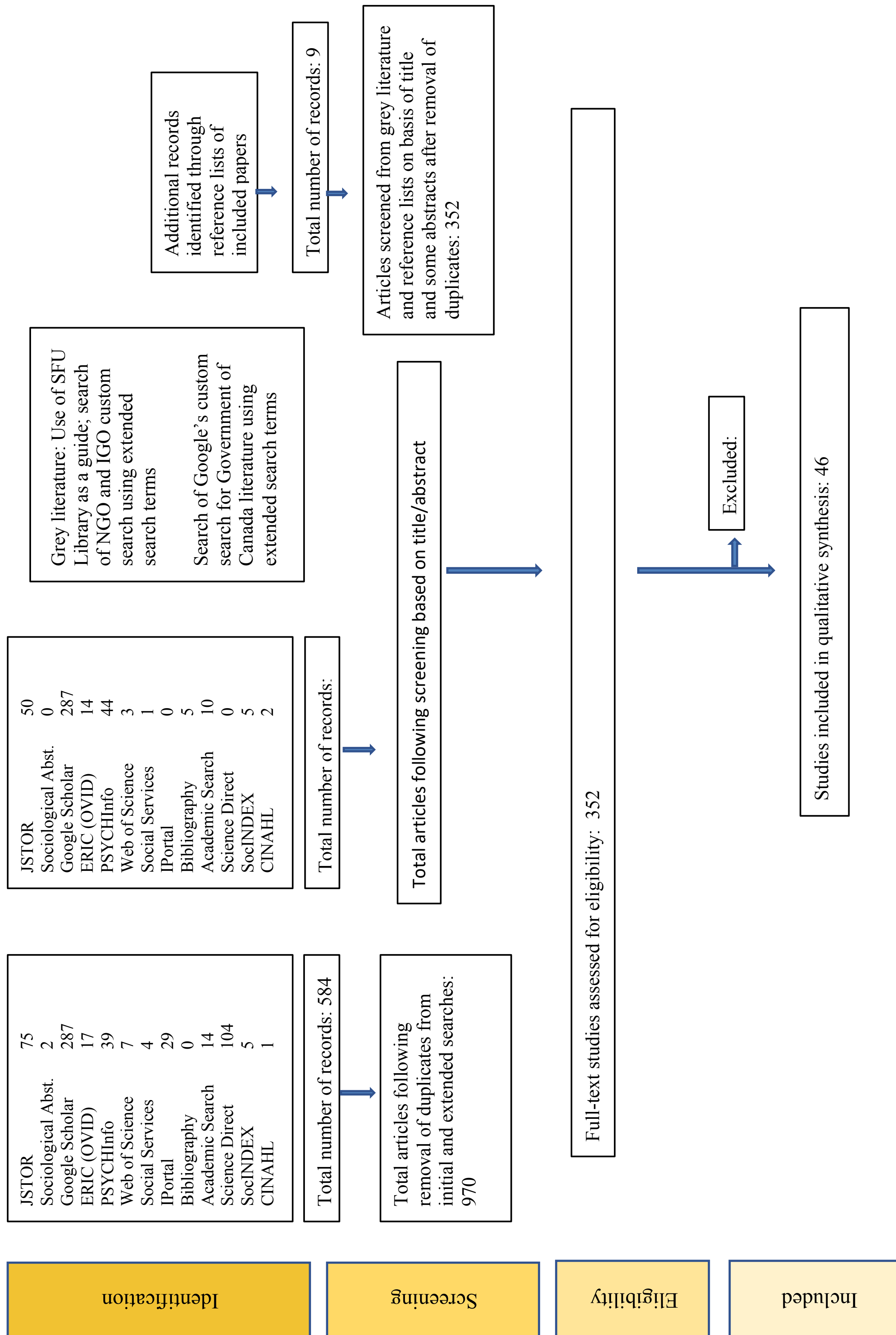


Figure 2: **RQB PRISMA Flowchart**



Chapter 6: Using Social Reproduction Theory to Conceptualize Educator Dispositions in Early Learning and Child Care: A Bourdieusian Analysis

Introduction

Mounting research suggests that quality early learning and child care can offer short- and long-term social and educational advantages for Indigenous children and families (Ball, 2004; Taylor, 2017; TRC, 2015). The steady move of Indigenous families into urban settings has placed pressure on all early learning and child care programs to meet the needs of Indigenous families (Scott, 2013). Social supports, including those in the early learning and child care context, are critical for some Indigenous families living in urban contexts "to help address cultural and family discontinuity, poverty and marginalisation brought on by the legacy of colonialism and assimilation" (Hare & Anderson, 2010, p. 21). Formalized early learning and child care environments can offer a range of beneficial outcomes for children and their families, including those families who experience periods of vulnerability. Thus, it is imperative to examine the complexities involved in the pedagogic choices of those working with Indigenous children and families in an urban mainstream early learning and child care setting.

This paper shares findings of a secondary theoretical analysis of qualitative data from a case study using a methodological approach originally envisioned by French social theorist Pierre Bourdieu, offering a "metonia" or "new gaze" on social phenomena (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Driven by methodological concerns, this perspective provides the opportunity to see practices in new and innovative ways. A vital issue for Bourdieu was research methodology and its interrelationships with power, gender and race (Bourdieu, 1979/1984). Social reproduction theory rejects the dominant narrative that schooling systems such as early learning and child care serve as a great equalizer for children and instead hold potential to do the opposite by exacerbating inequalities (MacLeod, 2008). Analyses using social reproduction theory can shape discourses regarding quality for Indigenous families seeking child care in the

urban context. Reproduction theories such as Bourdieu focus on examining how class structures such as schooling impact future educational outcomes for children.

The paper is divided into three main sections. First a review of the context of urban early learning and child care for Indigenous families will be presented. This is followed by an elucidation of principles and methodological practices of Bourdieu's social reproduction theory. The application of Bourdieu's methodological approaches to the qualitative data follows. The final concluding section will consider the potential of social reproduction theory for future research studies.

Urban Early Learning and Child Care for Indigenous Families

Early learning and child care is a critical policy and practice issue for Indigenous families in Canada. Although Indigenous peoples have faced a long history of colonization, the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples as outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2008), are both recognized and expected to be upheld by all levels of government. In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released findings and calls to action that included dozens of recommendations on topics related to child welfare, preserving language and culture, and strengthening information on missing women and children (TRC, 2015). Specific to early learning and child care, a recommendation called upon the federal, provincial, and Indigenous governments to develop relevant early childhood education programs for Indigenous families (Taylor, 2017).

There is compelling evidence that quality early learning and care has a positive and longitudinal academic and social impact (Landry, 2008; Niles et al., 2007). A supportive stimulating environment can also meet a wide range of objectives, including child care, early learning, and supports for both children and their primary caregivers (Friendly & Prentice, 2009).

Ball (2004) claims that the promotion of early learning and care can mobilize Indigenous family wellness. Thus, not only does early learning and care involve the focus of development in the early years, the promotion of such programs can also promote the holistic wellness of families.

Quality early learning and child care can provide Indigenous families and children with support while parents advance their education and/or engage in employment (Boulanger, 2018). However, Ball (2012) emphasizes that, “Indigenous children's early experiences in Canada vary along a continuum, from being raised in traditional cultural ways that tend to flourish in rural, remote, and isolated settings, to being raised in ways that greatly resemble the dominant Euro-Western hybrid culture that defines growing numbers of families in urban Canadian centres” (p. 287). Significant policy and practice-related gaps exist particularly in the provision of quality early learning and child care for Indigenous families living in varying contexts in Canada. Hare and Anderson (2010), in their examination of experiences of Indigenous families accessing programming in an urban Canadian setting, found that Indigenous “parents, children and their family members may experience transition into early childhood education differently than their non-Indigenous counterparts” (p. 26). The realities of Indigenous parents, both historically and socially grounded, play a significant role in their experiences of and navigation with early learning and child care programs.

Overall, there exists a dearth of research on the urban early learning and child care experiences of Indigenous children and families in Canada, with little comprehensive study of educator dispositions and programmatic factors. Questions persist regarding how and what early learning and child care programming and educator practices Indigenous families engage with in the urban context, as well as the reasons for families’ choice to remain in early learning and child care environments. It is unclear if and how early learning and child care programs and early

childhood educator practices in Canadian urban centres address and support Indigenous children and families' needs. Guided by Bourdieu's social reproduction theory, this paper examines how socially constructed barriers and systemic inequalities for Indigenous families in urban settings may be ameliorated through educator dispositions and early learning and care programming.

Bourdieu's Social Reproduction Theory

Social reproduction theorists (Bourdieu, 1979/1984; Giroux, 1983; Heath, 1983; Willis, 1977) examine how class structures exist through multiple generations. Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction seeks to explain the persistence of intergenerational social inequalities (Edgerton, 2014). Swartz (2012) outlines several "metaprinciples" that guided Bourdieu's theories, such as forms of power/domination, objective and subjective approaches to research and the role of critical reflection in research. Bourdieu's theory is also an example of a relational approach, in that it explicitly seeks to account for both structural and agentive aspects of life by attending to the relational dynamics that define and connect them.

Bourdieu's social reproduction theory is political in nature as well, as he saw research as a tool for liberation as well as a frame for asking questions and generating knowledge. Bourdieu commented often on how theory and practice are messy and vague, similar to everyday life (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). This alignment with poststructural ideas of process, multiplicity, unfinishedness and uncertainty is much like what Prout (2011) calls attention to for (early) childhood studies. Critical social theory epistemologies using methodological tools for analyzing existing practices can offer insights regarding power and practices that either support or limit the enactment of equity and social justice (Bourdieu, 1998).

When applied to the field of early learning and child care, social reproduction theory challenges the dominant discourse suggesting early learning and child care serves as a great

equalizer for children and families; instead, these environments can exacerbate inequality (MacLeod, 2008). Bourdieu believed that oppression operates in a "covert and natural way to privilege those in the dominant group" (Musoba & Baez, as cited in Reavis, 2019, p. 83). Many of Bourdieu's fundamental ideas are useful tools for critically examining policies and practices in early learning and child care. Bourdieusian conceptual tools, according to Klibthong (2012), offer "refreshing epistemological and reflective radars for re-imagining and enactive pedagogical practices" (p. 71).

Bourdieu's theory of reproduction can be used to help deepen understanding of persistent inequalities experienced by Indigenous families in the early learning and child care system. It offers a rich consideration of the social inequalities and the potential for either reproduction or challenges to these inequalities. Bourdieu's critical social reproduction concepts and components to inequality (habitus and capital) offer a "kaleidoscope" for examining the dynamic characters of the processes involved in early learning and child care programs that work with Indigenous children and families. Bourdieu identified components of inequality in the education context that apply to the early learning and care environment: capital, habitus and field.

Capital

The influence of capital on early learning and child care for Indigenous children and families manifests in various forms, including economic, political, cultural, and social. Bourdieu (1989) theorized the importance of "capital" as a potential "power" resource for individuals. He ascribed this concept to the role that societal systems such as schooling can play in reinforcing the culture of the dominant group within society. Early learning and child care programs play the same role as school systems (Fleer, 2000) as they constitute the first "institutions" that children attend without their families (Hayden & Macdonald, 2000). This inscription of social order can

hide in systems of education, language, judgements, and values, leading to a subconscious acceptance of hierarchies (Bourdieu, 1986).

One of the key arguments for Bourdieu is that differences start at birth and escalate over time: “the initial accumulation of capital, the precondition for the fast, easy accumulation of every kind of useful capital, starts at the outset, without delay, without wasted time, only for the offspring of families endowed with strong capital; in this case, the accumulation period covers the whole period of socialization’’ (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 249). Capital transmits in the home, starting at birth; as a result, class differences exist through the power of capital by the time children enter the school system. During the early years, families’ capital can influence early learning and child care experiences. Some families may not feel as comfortable in early learning and child care environments and thus may have a harder time interacting with educators. Educators may interpret this difficulty as an indication that families are not as invested in their children’s early learning and child care as other parents.

Bourdieu’s social reproduction theory (1979/1984) includes both cultural and social capital. Families engage in *cultural capital* in their everyday lives as it “provides the means for a non-economic form of domination and hierarchy” (Gaventa, 2003, p. 6). For Bourdieu, one’s actions and decisions operate below a certain level of consciousness and thus often appear “normal” and go unnoticed. Such decisions result in the maintenance of the prevalent social order of class structures and hegemony. Children born to families will maintain that status as well as reproduce it.

Lareau and Weininger (2003) argue that cultural capital necessitates adaptive competencies such as fluency with schooling and related practices, expectations, social skills such as cultural knowledge, and a “strategic conception of agency” (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014,

p. 196). In the early learning and child care context, educator competencies work to enhance families' ability to impact children's outcomes by aligning skills between home and centre as well as effectively liaising with the early learning and child care environment. Lareau and Weininger (2003) further determined that skills in the social realm are aspects of cultural capital as the concept focuses on "microinteractional processes whereby individuals' strategic use of knowledge, skills, and competence comes into contact with institutionalized standards of evaluation" (p. 569).

Edwards and colleagues (2003) broadly define *social capital* as the values that people hold and the related resources people are able to access, resulting from and of socially negotiated ties and relationships. Social capital includes individual behaviour and structural factors that set "social relationships, social interactions and social networks in context" (Morrow, 2001, p. 4). For Bourdieu, social capital is deeply linked to a number of resources, or "capitals," that determine both social standing as well as potential trajectory and family aspirations. As social capital derives primarily from family and other social relationships, it is closely shaped by the status of the individual or family concerned (Bourdieu, 1990). Bourdieu, according to Gilles (2004), views families as drivers of social capital, but focuses on family engagements that perpetuate inequality.

Families who have access to resources can use such capitals to ensure advantage for their families. In Gilles (2004) perspective, social capital is a resource full of potential personal advantage that individuals can accumulate, invest in and deploy if needed. Individuals born into families with varying access to capital experience varying levels of access and social positioning. Experiencing vulnerabilities or being tied to certain social positions related to race, class and gender limits access to advantages (Skeggs, 1997). From this perspective, Gilles asserts that

social capital is highly class-specific and can work to propagate social inequalities (2004). Working within this system are also systemic processes that work to preserve, protect and reproduce privilege (Bourdieu, 1986).

Habitus

Bourdieu (1986) conceptualizes *habitus* as internalized and embodied social structures. These "cultural unconscious or mental habits or internalized master dispositions" (Bourdieu, 1989 as cited in Houston, 2002, p. 157) refer to individuals' orientation toward the world and are primarily based on class position. Habitus is the learned or embodied form of a person's dispositions by which one orients to the social world, stemming from social structures and, in turn, reinforcing perceived social structures (Bourdieu, 1986). Habitus explains how individuals respond to stimuli in certain contexts, ascribing the innate link between individual actions and societal structures (Musoba & Baez, 2009). Topper (2001) states that habitus includes both "regular and immediate responses to a wide variety of situations without recourse to strategic calculation, conscious choice, or the methodical application of former rules" (p. 38). Habitus operates beyond one's conscious will or control, and, as Swartz (1997) describes, "a set of deeply internalized master dispositions that generate action" (p. 101).

As habitus is internally embodied, early childhood educators' values, beliefs and dispositions become visible through their pedagogical choices (Klibthong, 2012). Bourdieu posits that habitus can induce several possible practices and "is a kind of transforming machine that leads us to 'reproduce' the social conditions of our own production, but in a relatively unpredictable way, in such a way that one cannot move simply and mechanically from knowledge of the conditions of production to knowledge of the products" (1993, p. 87).

Habitus has the potential to reproduce inequality as those in privileged positions may act in ways to ensure opportunities for some children, while others can only access a limited set (Dumais, 2005). Bourdieu termed habitus “socialized subjectivity” as it shapes the parameters of an individual’s sense of agency; according to Edgerton and Roberts (2014), “it entails perceptual schemes of which ends and means are reasonable given that individual’s particular position in a stratified society” (p. 195). Although high quality early learning and child care has the capacity to mitigate later educational (children) and socio-economic (family) inequality, the greater the habitus incongruence an individual may experience, the less cultural capital they may possess. Bourdieu (1979/1984) argued that a meritocratic-appearing system such as early learning and child care can perpetuate existing inequalities because of its hidden value system that privileges some from higher status backgrounds. In turn, lower status individuals, due to their habitus, may inadvertently self-select themselves out of the hierarchy in education (Dumais, 2006). For Indigenous families choosing a path of early learning and child care in a mainstream setting, this system may result in a lack of representation of Indigenous families in early learning and child care. According to Ball (2014), Indigenous children are less likely to attend early learning and child care programs compared to non-Indigenous children.

Early childhood educators’ internalized dispositions determine both practices with children as well as approaches to relationships with families. Educators are in turn affected by the policies and structures surrounding their practices. Ritzer (1996) suggests that “habitus is a structuring structure; that is, it is a structure that structures the social world. On the other hand, it is a structured structure; that is, it is a structure which is structured by the social world” (p. 541). With habitus, according to Edgerton and Roberts (2014), individuals can sense both agency as

well as choice; it often results in the perception that the ends and means seem reasonable based on the individual's position in an inequitable society.

Organizational habitus refers to how children and families operate through early learning and child care settings, and how early learning and child care programs help to shape families' perceptions of what and how programs should be available to them (Diamond et al., 2004). The structure of an early learning and child care program, including its mission, the available resources, and the interactions between educators and families, all influence a particular organizational habitus. Some early learning and child care programs differ in terms of their structural capacity to meet the needs of all children and families. Moreover, as some families may not feel as comfortable with the environment, they may not interact with the program; the program may interpret this habitus from families as an indication of a lack of investment in the program (Dumais, 2006).

Habitus can be used as a method for analyzing dominance and oppression in groups, and as such, McClelland (1990) asserts that any examination of racial discrimination and/or disadvantage is strengthened through the application of habitus. Habitus is a means by which attitudes of cultural superiority deep-rooted in daily interactions play out; such dispositions, further influenced by race and social class, can act as an independent force structuring habitus (Reay, 2004). Reay (1995, as cited in 2004) expands notions of habitus to include how race impacts contexts such as the early learning and care environment:

> Habitus is a way of looking at data which renders the 'taken-for-granted' problematic. It suggests a whole range of questions not necessarily addressed in empirical research: How well adapted is the individual to the context they find themselves in? How does personal history shape their responses to the

> contemporary setting? What subjective vocations do they bring to the present and how are they manifested? Are structural effects visible within small scale interactions? What is the meaning of non-verbal behaviour as well as individuals' use of language? These questions clearly raise issues of gender and 'race' alongside those of social class (p. 437).

Thus, examining habitus can be used to reveal how race is embodied through actions as well as nonverbal communication. It can further correct any naive claims suggesting the ease of transformation of social identities by, according to McNay (1999), "highlighting the rootedness of class, gender and ethnic divisions" (p. 106).

Mills (2008) suggests that habitus, although able to shape individual choice, does not necessarily determine choice. Although some individuals acknowledge the potential constraints of social contexts, others "may recognize the capacity for improvisation and tend to generate opportunities for action in the social field (p. 28). Thus, awareness of choice can hold potential for transformation through action. Insights created through awareness of both constraints and opportunities generated by habitus can lead to a clearer consciousness (Terreni, 2014).

Field

Habitus cannot be understood solely in isolation (Bourdieu, 2005). Habitus is embedded in historical and contemporary ways within social interactions and in a variety of settings as they relate to a sense of belonging. These settings are referred to as field. Individual behaviour is the consequence of habitus and capital interacting with field. Field includes the formal and informal norms that govern a specific social sphere such as an early learning and child care centre (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014). Fields, according to Edgerton and Roberts (2014), "overlap and exist at various levels, with smaller fields (e.g., family) nested in larger fields (e.g., educational

field)" (p. 195). Field is a place where families actualize habitus, but also a place where habitus is produced (Graue & Sherfinski, 2011; Lee & Bowen, 2006). When a family's habitus aligns with the field, or is familiar to the family, families in turn may receive a social advantage.

Bourdieu did not consider habitus by itself as a mechanism for creating action. Rather, field interacts as a trigger for habitus, thus evoking particular contexts between individuals. For Bourdieu (1996), field as a social space includes a network of relations between positions. Such triggers can be felt particularly strongly or become more visible for families in times of conflict or struggle (Wacquant, 2016). The struggles occurring in field include conflicts related to power and control of status, recognition, capital and resources (Bourdieu, 2005). Thus, field is relational in nature, characterized by specific regulative principles or "rules of the game." These rules are subject to power struggles as different interests may seek to control the capital (and "rules") in a particular field (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014). When families do not possess capital and power relevant to the purposes of a particular field, contestation may exist, often involving struggle and tension (Wacquant, 2007).

Relationships highly depend on field and the unwritten rules and expectations designed by those in power. When young children enter early learning and child care, Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) suggest they may be loaded in favour that reflects middle-class life. Thus, a middle-class young child and their family, "encounter a social world of which it is a product, it is like a 'fish in water:' [they do] not feel the weight of the water and take the world about itself for granted" (p. 127). For a child and family who are not necessarily advantaged, their habitus may cause them to feel disquieting and out of place. Children and family experiences in the early learning and child care environment may be inhibited structurally despite the innate abilities

families may possess; this process becomes reproductive rather than transformative in nature (Walker, 2017).

Prior research focused on Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction operationalized various concepts like capital, leading some critics to suggest the term capital is now conceptually unclear (Kingston, 2001; Lareau & Weininger, 2003). Some critics discount Bourdieu's theory in its entirety, casting doubt on its usefulness (Kingston, 2001). Another criticism suggests that research using Bourdieu does not account for the correlation between socioeconomic settings and academic achievement (Kingston, 2001). The static ways to view cultural capital limits the role that family agency may play in their choice of engagement with early learning and child care. Acknowledging the fluidity of cultural capital could result in a clearer understanding of Indigenous families' experiences in the urban context in particular.

Nevertheless, many studies demonstrate social reproduction theory operating in the way that Bourdieu theorized (Aschaffenburg & Maas, 1997; DiMaggio, 1982; Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999). Taken together, capital, habitus and field hold significant explanatory potential (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014). Numerous qualitative studies offer prolific explanations of the roles that habitus and capital play in the relationships between educators and families (Lareau, 2003; Lareau & McNamara Horvat, 1999). Nevertheless, a dearth of examination remains. How can social reproduction theory support understanding regarding how educator dispositions can address socially constructed barriers and systemic inequalities in the early learning and child care context for Indigenous children and families?

Background Context: Qualitative Data of Educator Dispositions in the Early Learning and Child Care Sector

The qualitative dataset informing this study derives from an initial project involving the author as co-primary investigator. The research project *Quality Indicators and Dispositions in the Early Learning and Child Care Sector,* sponsored by the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care and in collaboration with MacEwan University, utilized a multi-phased research approach. In the first phase of the project, researchers conducted a scoping review to identify existing evidence of quality indicators and desirable educator dispositions (Freeborn et al., 2021a). This information was then used in the second phase for determining the methodological structure and guiding questions for interviews and focus groups with Indigenous families as well as educators who work with Indigenous families (Freeborn et al., 2021b). Finally, the third phase of the research project involved a case study of two early learning and child care sites, identified by educators and families in the focus groups as being of "high quality." These sites included 1) an Indigenous-focused centre, and 2) a centre with experience working with Indigenous children and families.

The Indigenous-focused site in the case study recently opened under the umbrella of an early learning and child care centre in operation for approximately 40 years and offers culturally based child care grounded in Indigenous cultures. The centre promotes the development of self-identity and a sense of belonging for children and families through Indigenous languages and traditional teachings. By acknowledging the historic loss of cultural teachings and focusing on the holistic wellness of both children and families, the centre seeks to engage in inclusive, culturally-based programming for both Indigenous as well as non-Indigenous children in a safe and nurturing environment.

The second site for the case study has been in operation for approximately 50 years with a mission to support families experiencing periods of vulnerability. This centre works with many Indigenous children and families on a regular basis and to meet their varying need by offering multifaceted programming, and an integrated service model. The centre views partnerships and relationships with other organizations in the community as pivotal for the removal of systemic barriers families face when accessing early learning and child care services. Please see Table 1 for more information about the participants and centres.

Table 5 (1): Overview of Case Study Sites

Centre Description	*Years of Operation*	*Program Focus*	*Staff Member(s) Interviewed*
Centre with Experience Working with Indigenous Families	Approximately 50 years	Multifaceted	Program Manager Curriculum Facilitator Family Liaison Worker
Indigenous-Focused Centre	Less than one year (Umbrella organization: 40 years)	Indigenous	Program Manager Room Lead

Researchers interviewed each centre's leadership team (two from the Indigenous focused centre, and three from the centre that works with Indigenous children and families; *n*=5) and collected documents such as policies and guidelines, samples of communication, and outreach materials. Obtaining and reviewing these documents offered further insights regarding the articulation of indicators of quality and related educator dispositions. Researchers also collected photographs of areas that children and families access to determine how indicators of quality and educator dispositions were being realized in the materials and environments accessed by children and families. This collection of data serves as the basis for secondary analysis for this paper.

Table 6 (2): Overview of Documents from Case Study

Centre	*Description of Documents*
Centre with Experience Working with Indigenous Families	1. Community report (2020) 2. Job description: Curriculum facilitator (2019) 3. Job description: Early childhood educator (2019) 4. Centre brochure (families) 5. Staff handbook (2019) 6. Parent handbook (2019)
Indigenous-Focused Centre	1. Newsletter – April 2020 2. Intake form for families 3. Centre brochure (families) 4. Parent handbook (2020) 5. Photos of indoor bulletin boards for communication with families 6. Photo of food served (stew)

What is important to note is that the results of the case study have been shared and stand alone as a robust reflection of the qualitative data; please refer to Mardhani-Bayne and colleagues (2021) for the full report. Overall, findings from the case study revealed a "spectrum of approaches" that can achieve determinants of quality and educator dispositions; a variety of approaches may be suitable depending on the child care context (Mardhani-Bayne et al., 2021). Both case study sites stressed the importance for educators to be curious and reflective and seek ongoing professional development opportunities. Leadership teams in both centres recognized the importance of educators engaging in relationship building with children and families and noted the importance of a strength-based approach to honour the variety and complexity of family experiences. Both case study sites focused on strong and strength-based images of both children and families, and this disposition influenced educators' planning, engagement, and reflection regarding their work with children and families (Mardhani-Bayne et al., 2021). This paper revisits the data using Bourdieu's social reproduction theory to critically explore programmatic and practice-based approaches in urban early learning and child care settings that work with Indigenous children and families.

A Methodology for Secondary Analysis: Examining Social Reproduction

According to Winkle-Wagner and colleagues (2019), "one way that qualitative research can connect to larger social issues such as inequalities by race, class or gender is to use social theory" (p. 11). Bourdieu's social reproduction theory offers the opportunity to determine how the lived experiences of families accessing early learning and child care are embedded in society. By examining educator and leadership dispositions, as analyzed through Bourdieu, researchers can potentially challenge the practice and policies that are used to either support or marginalize communities, thus bringing potential social change (Winkle Wagner et al., 2019).

For Harker and colleagues (1990), Bourdieu "works in a spiral between theory, empirical work and back to reformulating theory again but at a different level" (p. 3). This can result in the uncovering of "social class aggregations within complex societies and across different cultures" (Cicourel, 1993, p. 5). Exploring habitus, capital and field as methodological tools, according to Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), emphasizes the way in which "the structures of the world are predefined by border racial, gender and class relations" (p. 144). Emergent forms of data analysis allow data to lead researchers' interpretations (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The approach to data analysis for this study used Bourdieu's theoretical apparatus of social reproduction (1984): cultural capital (recognition of Indigenous families' funds of knowledge), social capital (engagement of informal/formal relationships), habitus (culture of promoting families' aspirations), and field (environment where aforementioned forms of capital occur) (Muzoba & Baez, 2009).

Qualitative secondary analysis engages in a reanalysis of pre-existing primary data to investigate new questions whilst minimizing further participant burden. Datasets from the case study in the initial research study were assessed for inclusion in this analysis using Bourdieu. To

mitigate possible misrepresentation with reanalysis and the removal of data from the context of the original research, the primary datasets came from interviews conducted by the author (*n*=2 from Indigenous-focused centre, and *n*=3 from the centre that works with Indigenous children and families). Audio recordings of interviews were transcribed. Using an inductive approach, the secondary data analysis was driven by interview data as well as supporting documentation. Bourdieu's social reproduction theory offers a focus of relevance for conducting the thematic secondary analysis of qualitative data, and not a deductive and predetermined set of expectations regarding the findings (Thomas, 2006).

I conducted multiple levels of data analysis. First, I read transcript data; this initial reading allowed for emergent thoughts, ideas, and reflections to occur (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Since data came from two sites, I read the transcripts for each separately and wrote detailed notes. I also wrote memos regarding the additional data that included site documentation such as centre policies, communication with families, and photos of the spaces to determine how the documents supported interview data. After reading the transcripts from each participant from both sites, I wrote detailed notes regarding the words chosen to describe various aspects of the early learning and child care environments and related educator dispositions.

Next, I used a coding process and compiled the code categories (e.g., relationships) so that I could develop a master collection of codes. This process followed Boyatzis' (1998) approach for developing codes and themes in qualitative research analysis. I summarized the raw data (interview transcripts) into content-based codes related to funds of knowledge, engagement in relationships, promoting family aspirations and the environment, themes initially determined through the case study process. The codes were short phrases to capture larger amounts of the data (multiple sentences or a paragraph); some transcript data in paragraph form included

multiple codes. I used the supportive documentation to confirm interview data as well as consider any additional emergent ideas (Straus & Corbin, 1990).

As codes were identified, I organized and clustered them based on any broader connections to one another. As the coding advanced, I created reflective memos throughout data analysis to interpret participant responses. I organized the codes to focus interpretations of responses through the lens of Bourdieu's concepts referenced above. For example, if a participant referenced a practice of relationships, I created a code for "social capital - practice of relationships." I further develop codes relative to the data and its potential connection to Bourdieu's concept. See Table 4 in the appendix for a sample of the coding process.

Table 7 (3): Overview of Interview Participants

Centre	*Description of Roles for Interview Participants*
Centre with Experience Working with Indigenous Families	1. Curriculum Facilitator (CF) 2. Program Manager (PM1) 3. Family Liaison Worker (FLW)
Indigenous-Focused Centre	1. Program Manager (PM2) 2. Room Lead (RL)

Findings

A Bourdieusian framework is useful for examining educators' dispositions when working with Indigenous children and families in the early learning and child care setting; yet, the form, amount, and/or lack of capital, habitus and field do not always easily predict the potential outcomes for Indigenous families accessing early learning and child care centres. Instead, interviews and the supportive documentation that conferred data from the interviews illustrate complex dynamics between individual agency and structural encumbrances, making the interrelated concepts of capital, habitus and field important to consider. I will first describe the

distinction between the two qualitative data sets for each site. Then, I will present findings across four themes related to: families' funds of knowledge (cultural capital), engagement in relationships (social capital), educator support of families' aspirations for their children (habitus), and consideration of the environments where capitals occur (field).

Although many similarities exist between the two sites in the case study, it is important to note the diverse approaches of the sites in their work with Indigenous children and families. Culturally focused programming at one site (Indigenous-focused centre) aimed to support the values and strengths of supporting children and families through a focus on the physical environment and use of a variety of materials, displays, images and music. Such field-based decisions, according to Mardhani-Bayne and colleagues (2021), promoted "a sense of belonging for children and families when they are able to see themselves reflected in child care spaces" (p. 12). The other site (centre with experience working with Indigenous families) focused on ensuring a broader sense of diversity, equity and inclusion not specific to Indigenous children and families. Rather, the leadership team sought to "embed perspectives of [many cultures] as rooted in each family, and that these cultures are represented in every room space" (Mardhani-Bayne et al., 2021, p. 10).

Despite the distinctions, both sites mirrored similar educator dispositions. Both centres placed emphasis on the need for educators to engage in opportunities for professional development. According to Mardhani-Bayne and colleagues,

> the educator as a professional is no longer stagnantly following their pre-professional learning; rather, educators across all sites actively seek opportunities to further their evolving professionalism through professional development (both internal and external),

opportunities to reflect on their practice, and maintaining a sense of curiosity for learning" (2021, p. 15).

Both centres also held a strength-based image of children and families; this image of the child and family "reflects educators' perspectives on socio-cultural learning and the role that cultures play in children's environments" (Mardhani-Bayne et al., 2021, p. 15).

Cultural Capital and Families' Funds of Knowledge

Funds of knowledge, defined by Moll and colleagues (1992), as "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills" (p. 133), practically exercised as resources found both in the household and within the community. The concept of funds of knowledge aligns closely with Bourdieu's cultural capital as both are characterized by "sets of gradually acquired and long-lasting dispositions which are manifested in skills, know-how and competencies" (Oughton, 2010, p. 69). Oughton (2010) suggests that cultural capital most closely aligns with families' funds of knowledge privileged through dominant discourses.

During the interview, a participant (PM2) from the Indigenous-focused centre referred to culture "as being so much more than race, socioeconomic status [and] religion," and emphasized the unique means by which each family embeds culture in their childrearing. Through an equal partnership with educators, early learning and child care curriculum can work to incorporate values, knowledge and skills of families and communities, thus honouring their "funds of knowledge" (Hedges 2010; Moll et al. 1992). An example of this came from the educators' honouring of children engaged in imaginary play with guns; one interview participant from the leadership team described the way that educators took the opportunity to understand how the use of guns in play focused on hunting for food activities. The interview participant (RL) shared that educators view children at the centre as "worthy of getting to know, not just getting to mind."

Cultural supports at the centre with experience working with Indigenous families reflect a strong image of the child and family and the centre's desire to honour families' funds of knowledge. This includes situating educators as learners in the early learning and care environment. The centre's community report highlights family opportunities to share their culture and knowledge with educators and other families through cultural teachings on a regular basis such as workshops. One participant (FLW) during the interview shared that the centre likes to "guide our practice around the families that we serve."

Funds of knowledge can be authentically actualized and leveraged through multiple ways including demonstration, participation and worldview (Anderson et al., 2017). One participant (FLW) from the centre with experience working with Indigenous families shared that:

> If there's a Cree family that speaks Cree, we try to take the time to learn a couple of words, educate ourselves. We really like to incorporate their culture into our daily practice. So, for example, there is a family wall, and it says family in Cree. So just trying to incorporate those little pieces.

Another interview participant (CF) from the same centre shared that educators "make sure that children and families are represented in our spaces and so we're very intentional about creating conversations with families and asking families about the things that are important to them." The interview participant continued: "We seek to understand by talking with our families" and stressed that educators "don't want to misrepresent families' cultures."

Imperative to the practice of honouring families' funds of knowledge is leadership teams' role in ensuring that educators acknowledge, according to one interview participant (PM2) at the Indigenous-focused centre, that "families know children in ways that educators do not." An

interview participant (FLW) from the centre working with Indigenous families mirrored comparable sentiments and shared that

> It is important to really learn the best I can from the families about their culture, because each way they practice or the way they speak or the way they parent is completely different. So, I think as an educator, it's super important just for yourself and for your room to gain further knowledge about their cultural practices. And you always want to learn more about things that you don't necessarily experience in my opinion.

Another participant (PM1) from the same centre emphasized the imperative to understand how families themselves “see their culture and community and childcare.” During the interview they shared that

> when we see that family has an interest, we really do try to engage with them about what that is recognizing. We know that having membership with families is something that really supports them in attending the program. And when they're here, we can really support them and engaging with their child as well.

Another means by which the centre working with Indigenous families honoured families’ funds of knowledge is through the examination of biases that educators and staff may carry that could limit engagement and understanding. One of the first experiences in the onboarding process for new educators at the centre working with Indigenous families includes Indigenous training so that they get “a glimpse of the lens that we should be looking through,” according to one interview participant (PM1). The participant continued to share that they are working with families as well as outside organizations

> as we create our new strategic plan to ensure that diversity, equity, and inclusion are represented within all of our goals, objectives and tasks. And a part of that new strategic plan is going to be moving into being beyond anti-biased, but into anti-racist [and] being an anti-racist organization.

Applying leadership and pedagogic approaches that honour families' funds of knowledge in the early learning and child care setting suggests the multiple ways that families are being valued and recognized in these centre settings.

Social Capital and Engagement in Relationships

Social capital in early learning and child care contexts impact the well-being of children and families and set relationships, interactions and networks in context (Morrow, 2001, p. 4). Social capital includes relationships that establish group membership and offer potential power in the form of shared capital. Social capital theory is notoriously difficult to practically consider because the theory itself posits that individuals selectively form relationships in the pursuit of anticipated resources or opportunities (Bourdieu,1986).

The leadership team at the centre working with Indigenous children and families shared the centre's desire to seek collaboration with families through authentic partnerships. As found in centre documents, the three core values of relentlessness, inclusion and collaboration, according to an interview participant (CF) "really speak to engaging with families in an authentic way that creates partnership and relationship. And that means seeking to understand." The participant expressed a desire for all working at the centre to "enter into relationship with children and families - authentic, reciprocal relationships," and thus placed expectations on educators to engage in regular conversations that were meaningful to families. Another interview participant

(PM1) from the same centre shared that “we recognize that part of building a relationship with children is building a relationship with [the parents], so that is really key from day one.”

Engaging in a practice of relationships included reflective questions at the centre working with Indigenous children and families. One participant (CF) shared a series of questions representing meaningful conversations with families:

> What do you want for your child while they're in child care with us? How does your child like to go to sleep? How does your child like to eat? Do they use their hands? Do they like to use utensils? So they're very purposeful and intentional about engaging with families about their own cultural and community practices because that's how you make relationships.

The participant expanded this concept of a practice of relationships by sharing that educators “seek to understand another perspective, and you listen, and you form relationships in that way” in the process of “creating community with children and families.” A focus on creating community and seeking to understand aligns closely with notions of social capital as social relations based on trust and reciprocity.

Seeking opportunities to “create that bridge between childcare and home,” according to one participant (PM1) from the centre working with Indigenous families, implies clear expectations of educators to engage in relationship building with families. The participant also shared that “the expectations [that we have for educators] are pretty simple.” Engaging in regular and frequent opportunities for relationship building means that when according to this interview participant “they see an interest or something happening with families” educators can rely on that relationship to support families.

Placing families as experts in early learning and child care spaces fuels relationship building and the formation of trust. As another interview participant (FLW) from the centre working with Indigenous families shared, “we take their lead to follow their expectations.” At the Indigenous-focused early learning and child care centre, honouring social capital with each child and family occurred through a sense of identity and belonging. One participant (RL) shared that

> We welcome our families to come in when they bring their children in. We've had two young boys in our program and their grandfather would always drop them off. We always just enjoy conversations and catch up. Anything from what they do when they're at home, who they go visit, their families, even from talking about sports and things like that. So it's been nice just building those relationships for sure.

For the Indigenous-focused centre, embracing relationships with many family members and diverse family structures ensures that all families feel welcome at the centre. This desire to engage in relationships and relationship building appeared woven throughout the documentation, including communication with families through the centre newsletter.

Several qualitative evaluations of early learning and child care programs examine effectiveness in supporting social capital development for families by connecting them with other families as well as informational resources (Shan et al., 2012; Vesely et al., 2013). This appears to occur in the Indigenous-focused centre through regular parent groups that include such culturally based activities as making bannock and creating talking sticks. The centre working with Indigenous children and families also engaged in programming for families, such as regular visits for families with Indigenous Elders.

Habitus and Promoting Family Aspirations

Bourdieu's references to habitus, a "system of dispositions" (1990) is the tendency for a child (or family) to approach daily experiences in certain ways. While habitus is transformed in small increments over time and through various experiences, early assessments of children and families by educators may leave permanent impacts on their future experiences. With habitus, educators act as social agents, inscribed by past experiences, including preservice and ongoing professional learning (Houston, 2002).

Participants from the centre working with Indigenous families spoke directly during the interview about the development of reflexive practice in their educators to ensure they support authentic relationships with children and families. Educators are encouraged to reflect on individual approaches to families and their practices that support children's identity to deepen their understanding and relationship with Indigenous children and families. Although specific approaches varied between the sites, they both shared a strong focus on this practice of relationships and recognized the complexities of experiences for children and families, even within a strength-based approach.

There existed a dearth in overt connections to habitus through specific references to family aspirations through agency in both interviews and centre documentation. One interview participant (PM1) from the centre working with Indigenous children and families shared during the interview the hope of educators that families "feel like they belong, that we've supported them, their ability to advocate for their child."

Early learning and child care educators play a key role in demonstrating dispositions that build trusting relationships with families and encourage and alert families to "the various affordances that are available in the environment" (Clarkin-Phillips, 2018, p. 97). As

consideration continues to be given to supporting children and families experiencing periods of vulnerability, those involved in early learning and child care need to be critically reflective of their role in providing programming for children and families that help to realize their aspirations (Clarkin-Phillips, 2018).

One interview participant from the centre working with Indigenous children and families facilitates educators in their development of reflexive practice. To ensure authenticity in their support of children and families, for instance, the participant (CF) shared that "in [one of the rooms], educators are working on helping young toddlers have agency and autonomy because that is such a powerful thing for them to have. [The educators] are creating a community that helps children be recognized and see their ideas fulfilled."

Field and the Environments Where Capitals Occur

For children and families to experience continuous wellbeing, they need to engage with a positive network, or field, of relations with educators (Mills & Gale, 2007). Field represents the social and institutional places where an individual may be socially positioned. Field can signify a struggle for power over resources (capitals) deemed with value and legitimacy in the field of early learning and child care. The centre working with Indigenous children and families honoured multiple Indigenous cultures represented in every room space. The centre sought to honour families in these spaces. For example, one interview participant (PM1) shared a story of a family whose connection to their Indigenous culture holds significance to them, and "they live out those practices daily, so we want to bring activities, experiences or whatever they need to see themselves represented in the play rooms." Having a sense of belonging in the centre is something, according to an interviewee on the leadership team, that supports children's

attendance in the program. According to Nordtømme (2012), Bourdieu's concept of field can reveal "children's access to positions within play situations" (p. 321).

The Indigenous-focused centre placed a strong emphasis on the physical environment of the centre to ensure that children have varying opportunities to engage in play through nature and a natural setting. The centre, according to one interview participant (PM2), reflects an environment that is

> super open, bright, very calming to come in to and usually smells like smudge which is amazing. It's very welcoming. It's such a good home feeling. We display a lot of our documentation that incorporate Indigenous experiences, everything that we're doing inside of our classrooms, all throughout the building.

The use of the Medicine Wheel to offer information to families and display children's activities at the centre suggests an intention to create a learning environment that reflects an Indigenous-focused approach. As physical spaces are not neutral, they offer a variety of expectations for both children and families (Clark, 2010). Shared meanings can create space which Lave and Wenger (1991) describe as a community of learners with peripheral participation and the situated perspective of learning (Bourdieu, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991). The concept of field draws attention to structures that make meaning and hold power for both children and families in the early learning and child care environment.

Discussion

To unveil dimensions of power relations occurring in early learning and child care environments requires that a consistently relational approach is adopted, and Bourdieu's concepts of social reproduction are efficient tools. Nevertheless, Bourdieu's framework does not fully illuminate ways in which early learning and child care contexts intersect with race,

ethnicity and socioeconomic background, particularly in cases where parents' capitals hold varying power despite policies and practices that aim to elevate the position of parent. Highlighting four aspects of engagement with parents - focusing on funds of knowledge, being in a practice of relationships, honouring family through a reflective understanding of experiences, and consideration of the environments where capitals occur - represent focal points of quality that correspond with broader contemporary discussions of quality as related to educator dispositions in early learning and care for Indigenous children and families.

Bourdieu’s (1977) explanation of the ways in which cultural capital through funds of knowledge is acquired first in a family setting and becomes incorporated into the child’s habitus suggests it is then transposed into the early learning and child care environment. As culture is arbitrary, the valued qualities attained in a home environment may lose value in another setting such as in an early learning and child care program. Recognizing the potential damaging effect of cultural arbitrariness, evaluating children and families against rigid criteria that does not reflect families’ funds of knowledge has no place in creating places of vitality (Carr, 2014; Makovichuk et al., 2014).

The honouring of and focusing on funds of knowledge takes a Freirean perspective based on mutual respect as the child or family also determines what is considered valid knowledge (Berstein, 1975, p. 85). This conceptualization of funds of knowledge can act as a powerful model for disrupting dominant discourses of deficit while at the same time actively constructing strength-based educators’ dispositions toward diverse communities. The need for critical self-consciousness within this process for educators is vital. Understanding dynamic socio-cultural perspectives and how children learn in the context of community requires educators to possess a

disposition for reflexive curiosity and, according to an interviewee from the centre working with Indigenous children and families, “a willingness to learn and to grow and to change.”

Social capital is not a static collection of personal interactions occurring in the early learning and child care environment; rather, it can be viewed as a network woven by families for a specific purpose. Such an entwined network, according to Wang (2008), “allows dynamic flows of resources from one link in the network to another in the process of accomplishing the goal” (p. 120). The nature of the network and the available resources are both key in social capital according to Bourdieu’s definition (Bourdieu, 1992). As social capital can be converted into other forms of capital, social capital deficit can deprive children and families in early learning and care settings of power and privilege-laden resources (Bourdieu, 1986). Centres that actively support and improve relationships between educators and families affect current and future engagement in the resources and networks associated with educational systems.

Families and educators engaging in a practice of relationships characterized by trust, shared expectations, and frequent interactions, tend to elevate children’s experiences in educational settings (Gamoran et al., 2012). Isolated families, according to Gamoran and colleagues (2021), “may lack access to information about how to help their children” (p. 296). Social capital through a practice of relationships between families and educators based on a desire to “meet families where they are at” recognizes families as experts and thus considers families as pivotal in the care of children in early learning and child care settings.

Bourdieu’s theory of habitus posits individuals with agency and the capacity to see opportunities for oneself as well as strive to realize these opportunities, albeit with limitations attached. The potential role that educators could play expands Bourdieu’s concept of habitus from sole focus on the educator–child relationship to include families (Bourdieu &

Passeron, 1977). Mills (2008) suggests that transformation occurs when “there is no longer acceptance of the rules of the games and the goals proposed by the dominant class” (p. 87). The dispositions of educators that engage in a relational and reflexive approaches with families that recognize the aspirations they hold for their children can contribute to recognition of opportunities and supporting families to take up those opportunities.

Nonetheless, the role of agent in early learning and child care surroundings often develops as an unconscious competence; the habitus of promoting family aspirations for their children is “a modus operandi of which [the educator] has no conscious mastery” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 79). Reflexive awareness and honouring family through processes is necessary; yet the principles grounding processes are beyond the grasp of consciousness and thus not be used through any sort of voluntary or deliberate transformation (Bourdieu, 1977). The intersection of habitus and agency suggests a causal relationship for potential promotion of family aspirations; it is “imperative to consider the continual interplay between both of these causal powers in order to explain agency” (Kemp, 2010, p. 150).

Bourdieu’s (1986) conceptual framework “[(cultural and social capital)] (habitus) + field = practice” help us understand the nature of relationships impacting Indigenous children and families in relationship with early learning and child care educators. These tools help us to consider notions of addressing inequalities through various practices. The dearth of consideration for the nature and extent of capitals, habitus and fields in early learning and child care contexts that both educators and children/families bring can lead to a destabilizing experience for many children and families. Educators’ and children’s positions in the classroom are informed according to Bourdieu by the hierarchy of capital individuals possess (Wacquant, 1998). Thus,

omnipresent are issues related social justice and equity when working with Indigenous children and families where potential unequal amounts of capitals exist (Bourdieu, 1998).

Many current early learning and child care policies are based on a misinterpretation of the nature of capital, which risks exacerbating, rather than compensating for, potential periods of vulnerability for Indigenous children and families. The centres engaged in the case study, identified as possessing aspects of quality for Indigenous families in early learning and child care, hold potential as exemplars for the mitigation of factors contributing to inequality and hegemonic practices. Although inequalities in early learning and child care may be partially addressed through educator dispositions and pedagogy, it remains important to honour the ways in which Indigenous children and families resist the dominant discourses of capital through their everyday lives and the resistance of dominant narratives around marginalized children and families (Nxumalo & Adair, 2019).

Leaders and educators in child care centres must critically reflect on their relationships with Indigenous children and families. While Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction was positively reinforced through this case study analysis, it is time to reflect on the broader role of early learning and child care services in terms of Indigenous family experiences, aspirations, and expectations. Relationships and early learning and child care contexts, and how Indigenous children and families appraise and interpret them, can act as either risks or advantages for experiences. The future of Indigenous child–and family-serving supports should be built from what we have come to know regarding the power of context to construct the urban early learning and child care environment, regardless of centre focus.

Bourdieu argues that reflexivity which is "an interrogation of limitations (social position, of field and of the scholastic point of view) …[is] constitutive of knowledge itself" (Schirato &

Webb, 2003, p. 539). Educator dispositions that include reflexivity highlight the potential negotiation of conflicting habitus-field fits in their role working with both children and families. The process of transformative learning relates closely to Boler and Zembylas' (2003) reference to "pedagogy of discomfort," an educator practice for disrupting learners by unsettling any taken-for-granted assumptions. For adult learners such as early learning and child care educators, learning experiences that create the feeling of uneasiness "have the potential to provoke critical reflection on deeply embedded dispositions that frame and inform professional practices" (Bourdieu, 1990, as cited in Nolan & Molla, 2018, p. 732). Findings of this paper suggest that preservice and professional learning opportunities for educators should include focus on a practice of relationships, image of the child/family and reflexivity that challenges assumptions and values related to practices in early learning and child care.

Conclusion

The findings from the secondary analysis of qualitative datasets identify educator dispositions, through examinations of capital, habitus and field, that work to challenge Bourdieu's social reproduction theory. This evidence suggests that many approaches used in the case study sites derive significant positive benefits in providing support for Indigenous children and families. For educators and programs working with Indigenous children and families in an urban context, strategies to work with families such as working within a practice of relationships, honouring families' funds of knowledge, and engaging in reflective practices and ongoing professional development remain critically important.

At the same time, further research is required to determine how to best meet the needs of Indigenous children and families, including opportunities to engage directly with families. Observations of family-centre interactions, interviews with families and in-depth study of the

early learning and care environment would augment this work. A troubling paradox for Bourdieu, and one that surfaced herein, is that although educational systems potentially result in social reproduction of inequity, they are also places in which transformative social change occurs (Webb et al. 2002). Future research could focus on families' interpretations of cultural and social capital, habitus and field. Furthermore, the author as a non-Indigenous scholar has offered an analysis solely through the lens of Bourdieu, and not representative of an Indigenous epistemology. Such an inquiry would offer potential emancipatory based insight necessary to address the structural changes necessary to further support Indigenous children and families.

Table 8 (4): **Sample of Coding**

Question	Responses	Coding	Memos (Revisit)
What aspects of the program are working well for children and families?	I think that building relationships is a huge part in this. Everyone's really good at building those strong relationships, understand goals of what the parent wants to see happen. Kind of embed that in their daily practice, they definitely put out thoughtful provocations due to the children's interests. There's a lot of varieties of opportunities for them to learn through play, learn outdoors. We have extra supports if they need.	Engagement in relationships Learn alongside families Educator reflection in practice The environment	Social capital – can see the practice of relationships impacting family well being Habitus - reflexivity Field – family well being met with understanding of goals for children
	I think that is one of the things we're working on really encouraging and developing is that process of inquiries. So we've really been focused on organizing our planning time to help educators to develop reflective practices so that they are supporting children authentically.	Educator reflection in practice Importance of planning in reflective practice Support and engagement in relationships	Social capital - accessing families where they are at
	And that also goes for families. What is for us is that we've made connections with families that families feel like they belong, that we've supported them, their ability to advocate for their child. And hopefully we've also supported them in engaging with their child and noting all of those positive things that they are doing.	Engagement in relationships – belonging Supporting family advocacy (learning alongside families)	Social capital – sense of collaboration in their support and families feeling they can advocate for themselves Field – positive network of relationships
	Dad came back and he said, you have far exceeded anything that we could have ever expected from child care. You provide such awesome learning experiences for my child. You recognize that he has this interest in watching things, in things that move, and you are supporting him in a very specific way because of what you've noticed. So that's feedback from a young dad. So I think that some of the expectations that they come in with aren't necessarily the ones that they leave with as well.	Engagement in relationships Family aspirations as through child interests Recognizing funds of knowledge	Social capital Habitus – promoting family interests and aspirations Honouring cultural capital – disrupting expectations in a positive way
	A lot of it is relationship building with the families and the parents, the children, the siblings. We have a lot of sibling in our program as well, which is really great, coming up with their interests, but also incorporating the indigenous culture into that as	Engagement in relationships	Social capital- accessing information; funds of knowledge bilaterally exchanged

	well. An example would be like we're learning about the medicine wheel right now and all of everything that involves it.	Family funds of knowledge	Expanding teacher child relationship to include families (habitus?)
	I feel that the language and literacy has been a big one lately. I myself I'm learning Cree so it's been a learning experience, not only for the children, but for myself. Like I had a five-year-old in my classroom who taught me how to count to 10, which is pretty amazing. So knowing that they have at home, because they've learned it at home or different programs that they've been in before. So it's been great. There's a lot of support which is amazing.	Reflective practice – educator as co-learner Connection between home and program – practice of relationships	Also note here the co-learner environment – families note the habitus of including families Seeking to understand where families are at; honouring Indigenous funds of knowledge.

Chapter 7: Disillusion with Post-Secondary Decolonization: Autoethnography of a Settler in Academic Spaces

I go to university and listen, and think about things I've never thought before, and think in a way I've never thought before, and feel rejuvenated in new ways of looking at and thinking about the world.

- *Educational Policy Studies 591 graduate studies course, personal reflection, September 2002*

The most influential and robust transmission of discursive truths is through education (Dudgeon et al., 2011; Darlaston-Jones et al., 2014; Walton et al., 2014). Post-secondary institutions can offer sites to contest dominant discourses despite existing tensions regarding higher education's role as a public good. However, this challenge must exist in a formative and deliberate manner that offers the reflexive critique necessary to facilitate such renegotiation (Darlaston-Jones et al., 2014). The current focus on Indigenizing curricula and pedagogy in post-secondary institutions in Canada emphasizes the inclusion of Indigenous epistemologies and voices into existing programs, hoping to affect change (Academia Group, 2016; Antoine, 2017; Cote-Meek & Moeke-Pickering, 2020; Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Johnson, 2016; Macdonald, 2016; Pratt et al., 2017).

However, this approach fails to question any dominant discourses regarding power and privilege that are the legacy of the settler-colonial relations that still dominate Canadian scholarly landscapes. Consequently, structural norms that shape political, economic, cultural, and social interactions throughout programming, policies and practice in post-secondary institutions remain unchallenged. Higher education can play a significant role in creating a "new space" for decolonization. Still, this shift requires a commitment to a relational and critical change in the frameworks and philosophies that currently inform post-secondary education.

Several calls for Indigenization and decolonization of scholarly approaches have started to reshape the way of being and doing in post-secondary institutions (Calderon, 2014; Tuck & Yang, 2012, 2014). In 2015, the term “indigenization” firmly entered the Canadian post-secondary education lexicon after the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s (TRC) release of 94 Calls to Action (TRC, 2015). Number 57 Call to Action seeks in part for public servants to be educated on the history of Indigenous peoples, including the legacy of residential schools, and urges “training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights and anti-racism” (p. 7) Through a shifting political climate, many universities vowed to engage in a concerted effort of reconciliation, from scholarly discourse to administrative decisions (Munroe, 2021; Sampson, 2019; Treleaven, 2018). In response, Canadian universities have rushed to "Indigenize” the academy.

Canada as a postcolonial environment is subject to “discourses of disadvantage and exclusion derived from the structural violence of systemic racism” (Darlaston-Jones et al., 2014, p. 3). Furthermore, a dearth of Indigenous epistemologies and voice exists in dominant pedagogical approaches in educational institutions (Silver & Mallet, 2002), including in early learning and child care post-secondary programs. Such pedagogical approaches in early learning and child care preservice education instantiate settler colonialism in both program-based curricular and individual instructional decisions. Although decades of scholarship, research and practice have positioned the field of early learning and child care to explore transformational cultural and theoretical perspectives (Atkinson, 2020; Ball, 2004; Nxumalo & Vintimilla, 2020; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015), linear, positivist, and fragmented thinking remain privileged in many post-secondary settings.

In this autoethnography, I consider Tuck and Yang's (2014) proposition to make "settler-colonial metanarrative the object of social science research" to "bring to a halt or at least slow down the machinery that allows knowledge to facilitate interdictions on Indigenous... life" (p. 223). The settler-colonial metanarrative has shaped how we have come to see ourselves in Canada; thus, the challenge lies in seeing the depth of individual and institutional settler-colonial habits, values, and epistemologies (Calderon, 2014). Employing autoethnography (Chang, 2013), this paper critically examines the experiences of a doctoral student who is also an early-career faculty member negotiating decolonization and Indigenization of post-secondary curricula while navigating an academic context within two universities in Canada.

Conceptual Framework

Writing this paper exposes the heavy lifting I needed to do in the critical work of recognizing the ingrained settler positionality omnipresent in any work related to the field of early learning and child care. Guiding this inquiry is Nxumalo's (2016) appeal for the early learning and child care field to account for settler colonialism's existence within existing practices and policies. Within the settler-colonial Canadian early learning and child care context, numerous recent gestures towards the decolonization of the field have occurred, as envisioned by the Truth and Reconciliation of Canada (2015). Nevertheless, frictions remain between such reconciliation, Euro-western developmental positioning of early childhood, and conceptualizations of curriculum (Nxumalo et al., 2018).

Nxumalo writes that "colonial legacies continue to have impacts on everyday life in multiple often taken-for-granted ways in the banalities of everyday early childhood pedagogies" (2016, p. 642). Nxumalo also shares ways that settler colonialism manifests within place encounters, referring "not only to territorial physicalities or materialities of place but also to the

specific stories, worldviews, as well as to human and more-than-human relations therein" (Nxumalo, 2016, p. 644). In settler-colonial societies such as Canada, popular discourses espousing diversity and inclusion abound, and set the standard for early learning and child care settings (Pacini-Ketchebaw et al., 2014). Nevertheless, rhetoric regarding diversity and inclusion can act paradoxically by assimilating Indigenous ways of knowing and being into dominant settler discourses. I apply this notion of dominant settler colonial discourse to include post-secondary preservice curriculum and pedagogy for early learning and child care educators.

Curriculum as a shaper of identity within a professional field also has an audience to which it speaks (Sleeter, 2002). If identity is a collectively negotiated and constructed process (Grande et al., 2015), the role of post-secondary curricula may be to produce particular kinds of professionals that align with a specific epistemology (Sleeter, 2002). Thus, we can examine identity as "[accounting] for both the fluidity of social processes and the more fixed markers of the 'given historical moment'" (Lyons, 2010 as cited by Grande et al., 2015, p. 107). Addressing settler colonialism in post-secondary curriculum requires considering how it inherently dispossesses Indigenous onto-epistemologies from academic spaces and places (Tuck & McKenzie, 2014).

Curriculum as a manifestation of education is inherently connected to settler colonialism (Au et al., 2016; Grande, 2015; Sabzalian, 2019; Templeton & Churuvu, 2020; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Au and colleagues (2016) detail program policies and pedagogical approaches impacting curriculum; they address settler attempts to exclude and revise curriculum and "remove all signs of [Indigenous] cultural and historical experiences" (p. 114). Nxumalo (2016) calls for a reconfiguration of settler colonialism's role in early childhood programming through practices with in-service and pre-service educators. Placing "coloniality at the centre of everyday early

childhood pedagogical encounters" is a challenging yet essential endeavour (Nxumalo, 2016, p. 643). It challenges teacher educators and preservice educators to centre Indigenous epistemologies in early learning and child care curricula (Templeton & Churuvu, 2020). To do this, Templeton and Churuva (2020) suggest preservice educators must disrupt the "settler-colonial curriculum [consisting] of the stories that have likely informed their cultural memory through their own childhood education" (p. 144). For example, educators who frame early childhood education through Euro-Western understandings of developmentally appropriate practice and school readiness may not cultivate different modes of relationality with their image of the developing child (Nxumalo et al., 2018). Addressing settler colonialism also requires attention to the dispossession of Indigenous peoples and epistemologies from colonized spaces and places (Tuck & McKenzie, 2014). I argue that this critical framework is also required for post-secondary instructors within their role in shaping their curricular and pedagogical choices.

It is no longer adequate to consider programmatic approaches solely focused on cultural pluralism and representation. As Templeton and Churuvu (2020) state, we must refigure curricular encounters to centre "the lived experiences, stories, and perspectives of Indigenous peoples in curricular narratives that value their ways of knowing and being – a shift toward disrupting the settler-colonial project of erasing Indigeneity" (p. 145). This shift must start with post-secondary institutional decisions regarding the Indigenization and decolonization of programming and individual instructors' pedagogical approaches when working with preservice educators.

As Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) share, a significant debate exists over the meaning of Indigenization in higher education, with contestations between perspectives and priorities. They note a spectrum for Indigenization:

> Indigenous inclusion, reconciliation indigenization, and decolonial indigenization – exist on a spectrum. On one end of this continuum, the academy maintains most of its existing structures while assisting Indigenous students, faculty, and staff in succeeding under this normalized order, and on the other end, the university is fundamentally transformed by deep engagement with Indigenous peoples, Indigenous intellectuals, and Indigenous knowledge systems for all who attend (p. 218).

Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) suggest that while many academic environments offer rhetorical promises to "reconciliation Indigenization," in practice they remained hindered by "Indigenous inclusion," and decolonial Indigenization is realistically not considered by most university administrators.

Applying a settler-colonial theoretical lens considers how rhetorical discourses are an omnipresent yet largely unseen component of academia. Moving away from such discourses requires us to employ an unsettling reflexivity (Hamdan, 2009). This autoethnography seeks to embody a decolonial potential to ask what Calderon (2014) sought: How do we unsettle our colonial-blind epistemologies to engage in reflexivity that contributes to decolonizing methodologies in the academy?

Autoethnography in Theory and Practice

Autoethnography as an approach "describes research method that foregrounds the researcher's personal experience (*auto*) as it is embedded within, and informed by, cultural identities and con/texts (*ethno*) and as it is expressed through writing, performance, or other creative means (*graphy*)" (Manning & Adams, 2015, p. 188). Postmodern shifts in epistemology and methodology that challenge universal "truths" and dominant narratives within social science

inquiry offer the opportunity for autoethnography to develop as a viable approach. Autoethnography draws upon feminist theory and, according to Ellis and colleagues (2011), holds promise to "resist colonialist, sterile research impulses of authoritatively entering a culture, exploiting cultural members, and then recklessly leaving to write about the culture for monetary and/or professional gain" (p. 247).

Autoethnography builds on personal experiences and, through storytelling, offers an opportunity for others to note commonalities with experiences in the same or similar setting (Boylorn & Orbe, 2014). Writing an autoethnography suggests a "postmodern, reflexive, theoretically engaged, vulnerable, open to critique [and] ethically interrogative" approach (Lynch & Kuntz, 2019, p. 58). As such, rigour, trustworthiness, reliability and validity are subjective, and thus autoethnographies situate research as a particular point of view, termed crystallization by Richardson (2000). Furthermore, Richardson (2000) suggests that autoethnography should be reviewed as an audience for its contribution to the field, reflexiveness, affectiveness, and whether it represents the author's lived experiences.

Autoethnography offers researchers the opportunity to implicate themselves in their studies and work, and challenge related institutions and communities (Adams, 2006; Ellis et al., 2011). Critical autoethnography further aims to identify and describe potential manifestations of power and privilege, developing "what Foucault considered subjugated knowledge or the form of knowledge that originates from people who do not fit the scientific framework and are excluded from discourse" (Oswald et al., 2020, p. 4). As a tool, positioning theory "helps with investigating how the self is constructed in discourse from the perspective of the individual (self-positioning) and of the wider society (other-positioning)" (Maydell, 2010, p. 6). By sharing narratives, I claim certain positions in relation to life experiences and my engagement with

others; through the negotiation of self and other-positioning, I can both rearticulate meanings as well as add new insights (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Thus, the process of analysis in autoethnography using positioning theory "can produce a holistic representation of self as articulated from inside and the identity construction as reflected by others" (Maydell, 2010, p. 6)

Designing a Critical Autoethnography

Methodologically, Ellis and colleagues (2011) emphasize how autoethnography "treats research as a political, socially-just and socially-conscious act" and acts as "both process and product" (p. 273). Although this paper emerges from my concurrent experiences as a PhD student and early career faculty member at universities in Canada, the process of engaging in this autoethnography has been a much longer in development. I have been made aware of the weight of settler research when working with Indigenous peoples since my master's program, and the kinds of ethical accountability that this engagement requires. A significant hesitancy continues to exist even as I craft this paper, as I wonder if it is possible to be self-reflexively critical regarding settler narratives so deeply entrenched in my ways of thinking and doing (Dalley, 2021). I choose to write this autoethnography as a confessional tale (Van Maanen, 1988) with the intent to contribute to the larger body of understanding regarding the complexity researchers have worked with, for and among Indigenous peoples (Menzies, 2001).

Three questions emerged to make sense of my personal and professional experiences and guide this inquiry: How does my settler identity interact with the structures relevant to an early learning and child care post-secondary program focusing on Indigenization? How does hegemonic discourse led by settler faculty continue to privilege certain scholarly activities and diminish others? What considerations are imperative in early learning and child care post-

secondary education that could support preservice educators in their work with Indigenous children and families?

I began to write a reflexive narrative in response to the questions using an approach that can be used to illustrate, through sociological introspection and emotional recall, how our biographic backgrounds, relationships, thoughts and experiences interact with our environment (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). To analyze the data, I considered my confrontations with and use of power, messy discourses, and potential social action (Fine, 2017). I also consulted with colleagues working in the same institution, including an Indigenous colleague, to receive a critical eye, insight, perspective, and challenges to my narrative. I also reread the narrative reflexively to consider emerging themes (Trotter et al., 2006). My goal was to challenge the dominant narrative embedded within myself through considerations of being in relations to amplify counter-narratives that may offer insight in response to my third guiding question.

The most important consideration was ensuring critical reflection throughout the process. Critical reflexivity, according to Calderon (2014), "requires us as researchers to reflect on our own subjectivities vis-à-vis empire and the inevitable linkages to anthropology as a colonial endeavour" (p. 7). This is the most challenging work, as personal ontological and epistemological groundings are by nature subconscious. As Tuck and Yang (2014) discuss, "social science disciplines have inherited the persistent drive to supersede the conditions of their operations from settler-colonial logic, and it is this drive, a kind of unquestioning push forward, and not the origins of the disciplines that we attend to now" (p. 229). To unveil our subjectivities requires that we first become aware of them, including how settler-colonial epistemology works to maintain the "invisible dimensions" of colonization (Calderon, 2014). A

shift from an epistemic space rooted in settler colonialism towards unsettling reflexivity requires understanding how knowledge came to be situated.

In this paper, I methodologically align with decolonizing autoethnography (Chandrashekar, 2018; Dutta, 2018; Woodworth, 2018), an approach that foregrounds an autoethnographer's accountability to decolonization. While decolonization holds multiple meanings and interpretations, in settler colonial contexts, it can involve "resisting colonialism's material and epistemic violence, the returning of Indigenous land, and the regeneration of Indigenous political, educational, and knowledge systems" (Simpson, 2016, p. 21;Tuck & Yang 2012). As autoethnography can represent "a call to witness" and affirm something that otherwise may remain hidden and unavailable (Sparkes 2002), decolonizing autoethnography can make aware, unpack and challenge the profound ingraining of colonial violence in academic institutions as well as in everyday life (Dutta 2018).

Settler Narrative in Interaction with Privilege

The section below includes my personal recollection and analysis of critical events as I evolved in understanding who I am as a white settler academic and researcher in post-colonial educational and professional settings. Although my narrative is situated within a Canadian post-secondary context, I consider the themes globally applicable when grappling with settler scholars' role with Indigenous-focused post-secondary learning content. I continue to question if it is okay for me as a white settler to hold this topic and space so tenderly through narrative instead of the harshness it indeed deserves. Nevertheless, this process is part of a means to find ways to remain in discomfort and synchronously build resiliency to confront and be confronted by complicity.

Personal and Professional Reckoning: Despite Legacy

The approach I choose to reflect on the "teachings" from nearly a half-century is in many ways archaeology turned toward myself. Dale (2014) recalls that when archaeologists reconstruct how people lived long ago, they often resort to fragments of artifacts as they cannot necessarily hold absolute truths regarding historic human life. As Ingold (1999) mentions, "the problem, it appears for archaeologists is that they are always too late" (p. ix). In many ways, I find myself similar position; Chelsea Freeborn from the past seems almost as far away. Nevertheless, I can in some ways recollect tangible fragments of historic artifacts such as TV programs watched, songs heard, and experiences recalled, as they can reveal possible ways in which my settler self came to be.

I come from a long ancestral line of settlers. As I engage in the fallout of such a legacy that binds me to historical and social properties (Gordon, 2011), I work to gain a more profound grasp of how I came to be where I am today. I am a multi-generation Canadian on my father's side and hold deep-seeded multigenerational roots from my father's and my mother's sides in Northwestern Europe. European colonial history, both through actions and legacy, has caused more hardship to the human world than any other collective consciousness, and my roots trace solely back to this heritage. In fact, I recently learned of my great grandfather's active involvement in apprehending and re-imprisoning men, women and children during the Riel Rebellion of 1885 (Biography of J.S. Freeborn, 1937).

As a white settler, I grew up occupying nêhiyaw-askiy (Cree), and Cade Wicashdabi (Nakota Sioux) Nations on Treaty 6 land. This occupation was far from any consciousness I sought to explore in digging deeper into the colonial past of a community partially ascribed with the word "Fort." I have no memory of even considering Indigenous peoples besides the odd

empathetic story my mother came to share while working throughout my childhood at a maximum-security penitentiary. This dearth of knowledge followed me throughout my youth; the existence of a "blind privilege as a form of oppression upon others" (Dale, 2014) would hardly be considered unique for those examining white privilege, and certainly not for those who have experienced it (DuBois, 1994; Fanon, 2008; Larbalestier, 2004). Paulette Regan, a lead researcher with Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, warns of a "critical lack of settler self-reflectivity" in prescribing for means of unsettling settler perspectives (2010, p. 33).

Despite this legacy, I entered adulthood whilst ignoring the residue of white privilege that accompanied me throughout my journey. I did not acknowledge the blind spots and the heavy lifting needed from me to undo acculturation into racism, neoliberalism, and colonization. Nevertheless, I somehow craved critical analysis and connecting career with purpose. And yet, good intention alone is overtly insufficient.

What good is consciousness alone? Is consciousness without action as deconstructive as ignorance or disregard? What kind of action is merely a feeble attempt to feel better about one's personal meaning of life?

- *Educational Policy Studies 562 graduate studies course, paper excerpt, February 2003*

In a move towards professional legitimization, I entered graduate studies. I had the privilege of learning from foundational critical theorists such as Freire, Foucault, Bourdieu, and members of the Frankfurt School. For the first time, I was given freedom, space and encouragement to challenge knowledge and truths. During my master's degree, a student in the Indigenous education stream in my program offered a damning presentation on the perpetual colonization of Indigenous education. Following the presentation, I asked the student what a

non-Indigenous student could do to support decolonization. The student responded by stating it was not her role to tell me how to fix the mess I was part of creating. It was the first time I saw myself as a settler. This disconcerting experience at first left me shocked and hurt. I meant well in my question and hoped to engage in productive dialogue. What did not occur to me at the time, and took years to realize, was similar to Ashton's (2015) conclusion: "Those who ensure the violences of settler colonialism somehow bear the burden of resolving it for those who most profited from it" (p. 83). This realization continues to follow me to this day, and I am reminded of it again and again when colleagues suggest that a guest speaker, focus group participant or advisory council member somehow through their participation in a settler-created action should feel in some way an obligation to play a role in settler-defined resolutions.

Sarah Ahmed (2012) also described her experience after being recruited to a university committee regarding diversity policy as one that "felt like being appointed by whiteness (even if the appointment was intended as a countering of whiteness)" (p. 4). She suggests this offering from settlers to Indigenous peoples as a version of Derrida's idea of conditional hospitality, othering those whose services you seek and treating them as "guests, temporary residents in someone else's home" (p. 43), welcomed only on the condition that what they say would not rock the structural settler boat. Ahmed further considers Foucault's notion of technology of inclusion: "You include 'the others' in the legitimizing or authenticating of the document whether or not their views are actually included" (p. 94), offering "inclusion to maintain the form of exclusion" (p. 43).

I am ecstatic about the prospect of working for [this Indigenous peoples'] organization. I strongly welcome the opportunity to work towards its aim for a better understanding of

Indigenous issues through advocacy, as well as bringing Indigenous groups together to further understand the implications of the U.N. Convention on Biological Diversity.

- *Segment of cover letter from internship application, December 2004*

Following graduate studies, I moved to the Philippines on a Canadian government-sponsored internship to work for an Indigenous people's organization. The organization welcomed me with open arms. The experiences I gained in the Philippines and travelling to Kenya during this internship to offer workshops for Indigenous organizations and community members in the regions stay with me as some of the most influential moments of my career. Although I began the internship positioned to offer my "expertise," I gained deep learnings through opportunities to reframe myself as learner. And yet, privilege followed me.

Despite occasional and overt moments of discomfort with my privilege, I fully engaged in what I thought was decolonial work with Indigenous organizations in Southeast Asia and Eastern Africa. With financial support from the United Nations, we hosted numerous workshops for Indigenous organizations regarding their rights under the United Nations Convention on Biodiversity. I realize now that I remained in the role of settler and continued to benefit from unequal power relations that underpin settler colonialism. Despite these circumstances, I was welcomed into an Indigenous organization and only realize now that so much of my desire to work in this role stemmed from what Miller (2003) describes as a "longing for belonging." I actively denied the racialized structural power relations that produced my ability to feel such a sense of belonging: I denied my privilege of being placed in a relative position of power despite my lack of knowledge or background regarding Indigenous people's lived experiences in the area; I denied my ability to bring my family along for the adventure and live comfortably off my limited salary due to the unequal dollar exchange; I denied holding a powerful voice in the office

environment despite my role as "intern;" I denied my ease of communication whilst conversing in my home language at the office. Part of unpacking such experiences in the present requires what Rifkin (2013) refers to as the settler common sense that includes the need for attentiveness to racial contours and various subjectivities.

> *Just a heads up, it is cultural protocol for women to wear skirts to a pipe ceremony. There will be 3 pipe ceremonies during the gathering, one on each morning before breakfast. So, pack a skirt! We are excited to have you here.*
>
> - *Email received prior to attending an Elders and youth gathering, August 2009*

Upon returning to Canada, I began working for a human rights organization. Opportunities arose during the many years I worked in this capacity to engage with Indigenous peoples and communities, and I reconnected with an Indigenous scholar and mentor I met in graduate studies who was on the board of the organization. I was offered many opportunities to work with Indigenous communities, including attending an Elders and youth gathering as a "special guest." To consider this experience from a nuanced and self-reflective lens, and in an "attempt to explore and interrogate sociocultural forces and discursive practices" (Manning and Adams, 2015, p. 190), I now can see the role I continued to play as settler, seeking information and expecting knowledge. My desire for belonging, and what scholars of settler colonialism might even see as a push for self-indigenization, was really another demonstration of displacement. This is now painfully clear in one exchange I experienced with an Elder who shared her story of and experiences in a residential school. After sharing her story, I approached the Elder to thank her for sharing her painful history, and I began to weep. The Elder embraced me, exchanging words of empathy for my emotions. This instance, to paradoxically re-

instantiating inequitable colonial relations, only became clear to me in critical reflection years following the exchange. This same metaphor is what Paulette Regan (2010) has adopted:

> To my mind, Canadians are still on a misguided, obsessive, mythical quest to assuage colonizer guilt by solving the problem . . . we avoid looking too closely at ourselves and the collective responsibility we bear for the colonial status quo. The significant challenge that lies before us is to turn the mirror back upon ourselves and to answer . . . How do we solve the settler problem? (p. 11)

I was subconsciously expecting this Elder to help me solve my problem of guilt and anguish for her story. And yet that moment was so pivotal in deepening my understanding of the importance of being in relations with others. In what now I see as naïveté regarding my personal experiences with settler colonial relations, I had aspired to achieve exemplary and fully decolonized relationships with Indigenous peoples whilst expecting the brunt of that work to come from Indigenous communities. So often feeling benevolent and "deserving of appreciation" for working in Indigenous communities, both locally and internationally. Ignorantly I assumed that I was doing "the good work" reflective of my empathy and conscientization.

> *It is important for me to offer opportunities for pre-service educators to challenge omnipresent "power" to analyze, replace and/or reframe assumptions that are often unquestionably accepted and perpetuated as representing commonsense.*
>
> - *Excerpt from teaching dossier submitted with PhD application, February 2018*

Years later, the opportunity to further my education through a PhD in Human Ecology/Children, Youth and Families was a means to re-engage with justice-driven work. Coursework fit nicely into my critical theorist Master of Education past and made me rethink how new subject matter could be considered in the world of "posts" and "neos." Ahmed (2012)

notes "how the presumption of our own criticality can be a way of protecting ourselves from complicity" (p. 5). I did not enter or continue into the PhD as an experiment to explore my yet-to-be-defined ideas about empathic settler-ness. I can feel quite idealistic about what I have learned regarding the process of decolonizing my settler's consciousness reveals through the personal as well as the realms of political, social and academic.

Prior to the start of my PhD studies, and around the time of the released final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015), I became a faculty member in a post-secondary early learning and child care degree program; an inspiring 'push' toward Indigenization began for the program and course curricula in the department. Although full of great intentions the path for Indigenization was not clear. Many pedagogical choices were made without reflexive considerations. What experiences led me to hold certain philosophies and values? How did my response, participation in, and lack of action regarding Indigenization of the program inform my craft and role as a scholar? By not considering my pedagogic path to where I am I did not need to engage in rigorous reflection, and thus did not necessarily meaningfully connect to the process of Indigenization. If Indigenization means "a daily existence conditioned by place-based cultural practices" (Corntassel & Bryce, 2012, p.153), the role for a settler privileged to be included in such struggles is, without question, to seek to ensure that any engagements do not muddle acts of revitalization and resistance.

I question my role as a settler presenting this information to students. I have asked a friend and critical colleague to speak with students about Indigenous epistemologies. I also have asked students to co-present on readings regarding the history and legacy of colonization to further support a co-learning environment.

- *Email correspondence to another instructor regarding a course, September 2021*

My personal troubling of the process of Indigenization and the subsequent role of instructing an Indigenous-focused course, despite my earnest attempts to situate myself as a “co-learner” within the environment and relying heavily on Indigenous guest speakers, left many tensions unresolved. The inclusion of an Indigenous colleague as a course reviewer suggests a move to assuage what Andersen and Taylor (2005) suggest as “settler-society anxiety” (p. 5). There was indeed a desire to be “inclusive and sensitive” but not so much that the faculty (me) had to give up power or privilege or that such a move would be entertained as a viable option. By involving the Indigenous colleague at the level of course development also suggests an attempted “settler move to innocence” (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Mestenhauser (2011) addresses the importance of the dispositions of academics to go beyond existing Western paradigms to achieve transformation. The experience of teaching this course confirmed to me that instructors, and the post-secondary institution as a whole, have a substantial role to play in decolonization. I further reflect: What is harm and what is help? Is positioning yourself as helpful harmful?

Problematization is a term coined by Foucault (2002) for analyzing and relating elements of a normative system of knowledge. According to Lynch and Kuntz (2019), “researchers can make a topic out of something integral to them, which becomes recognized as newly relevant and meaningful through relations of power with truth” (p. 160). Problematization can create novel politics of truth by extracting normalized concepts and making them conscious and thus open to critical reflection. My role as faculty member contributed to implying universal consensus regarding theories and knowledges presented to students through the course outline, reading materials, pedagogical choices, and assessment techniques. My role as a knowledge “gatekeeper” can be perilous and detrimental (Lawson, 2009). Echoing these experiences are the struggles against power and control involved in becoming a critical academic (Bernstein, 2000).

How does this work conspire through oppressive teaching and research? How many blind spots still exist despite a deep examination of biases (Walter et al., 2017)? Which inaccurate dominant discourses promote "truth" through the subconscious (or conscious) failing to question who defines it (Hiraldo, 2010; Kaur Badwall, 2013)? Reflecting on the audience for research inspires reflexion and can make values more explicit. By whom, for whom, for whose benefit, and at whose expense?

> *My involvement with [Indigenous families and early learning and child care] is part of both a personal as well as professional journey of growth and reconciliation. This includes creating a personal meaning of allyship and recognizing the privilege associated with my non-Indigenous settler identity.*
>
> - *School of Public Health 623 graduate studies course, journal entry, October 2019*

In pursuing my doctoral studies, my well-intentioned settler-self sought to consider Indigenous research epistemologies when engaging with Indigenous families around early learning and child care. At the outset of the work, I identified concerns regarding my ability to engage respectfully and "in relations." My engagement with this body of research was met with many questions from both non-Indigenous and Indigenous colleagues. Smith's (2008) challenge of Western research approaches include the absence of community benefit from research and the treatment of Indigenous peoples as subjects of study. As a settler graduate student, why would I consider work in this contested space? Why do so few settler scholars "research the limits of their own epistemic biases and seek out Indigenous scholars and Indigenous critiques of the Western modernist hegemonies" (Marker, 2019, p. 510)?

In diverse ways, settler scholars living in settler-colonial regions have started to look inward. I have taken an interest in self-transformative analysis. For Jemal (2017), inaction is the endorsement of the oppressive status quo. Challenging the intentionality of work, how do we examine presumptuous content in curricula? How do we position ourselves for an alternative that may in turn put one's own position into question? As George (2019) states, "exploring Indigenous perspectives on decolonization often leaves me wondering if post-secondary institutions in Canada are willing and capable to effectively decolonize their own institutions because it means sacrificing privilege, power and control" (p. 75). The dilemma remains in negotiating institutional policy while at the same time engaging in practices for operationalizing decolonization practices in academia.

Discussion: Disrupting the Academic in the Academy

I seek to capture the complex and at times contradictory nature of the interaction with multiple discourses and examine how my identity shaped my experience with programming and pedagogy in a post-secondary environment. I write this autoethnography knowing that such an endeavour can carry with it a modicum of regret (Dashper, 2015) and possible critique for my framing of various issues. The remainder of this paper is arranged around three overarching themes emerging from the analysis of my personal narrative: confronting professional dissonance, disentanglement with institution, and a reflexive pedagogical shift. Acknowledging that autoethnography is both a process and a product (Ellis et al., 2011), my findings reflect both the processes leading me into this work as well as the impacts that emanate.

Confronting Professional Dissonance

Decolonization as a settler requires the recognition that colonialism continues to pervade the deepest aspects of academic life, including the ontological and epistemological foundations

that form instructors' beliefs, understandings and interpretations (Cote-Meek, 2014). To decolonize post-secondary programs, "non-Indigenous educators must commit to the challenge of becoming aspiring allies who learn to take more time to listen and to observe rather than to speak. Such a commitment is necessary to create more space for Indigenous Peoples within the academy" (Mitchell et al., 2018, p. 355). To create this "new" space for Indigenous onto-epistemologies without conditions risks disrupting the existing academic social order as "these onto-epistemologies both challenge Western epistemic universality and potentially expose the violence that has historically been required to assert that universality" (Stein, 2020, p. 167).

Mitchell and colleagues (2018) share that decolonization of the self and academy are intrinsically connected. For individual instructors to make the necessary changes, the institution must change to ensure safety and policy alignment to support the engagement in deep reflexivity. This alignment must occur in many ways. Many scholars have not actively sought opportunities to acknowledge their lack of understanding, recognize their privilege and disproportionate power in the classroom, or their role in the oppression of Indigenous peoples in their field of study. Acknowledgement of oppression of others while remaining blind to the inherent and continuing colonial relationships within which academia remains entrenched supports a continuing dominant cultural narrative (Mitchell et al., 2018). According to Mitchell and colleagues (2018), failing to recognize relationships present within a colonial setting, and a commitment to shift power through the reorientation of knowledge systems as suggested by Gaudry and Lorenz (2018), efforts to Indigenize academia "may ultimately reflect the same colonial frameworks used to justify policies of assimilation" (Mitchell et al., 2018, p. 355).

As a settler scholar, I see opportunity and responsibility for creating challenging and transformative co-learning spaces. I must continue to ask reflexive and difficult questions when

working with Indigenous individuals and communities. Cultivating critical reflexivity, according to Taylor (2021), while essential, is not sufficient; rather, “in decolonizing pedagogies, exercises in centring one’s individual, family, and ancestral relationships to Land, territory, and Indigenous land protectors and treaty partners can go a long way in refusing colonial logics of elimination, replacement, and erasure” (p. 61). It is only in facing the full extent of the epistemic, political, and ecological dimensions of coloniality that (future) educators and faculty members might develop a critical skepticism toward the limits of agendas of educational inclusion. Only then might they educate in ways that begin with the question: What kinds of relationships are we honouring in our learning?

Disentanglement with Institution

Curricula “cannot disconnect itself from its social context, from the ideas that underpin its existence and, more specifically, from the construction of state” (Vandenbroeck et al., 2011, p. 56). In the early learning and child care post-secondary program with which I worked, this was conveyed through a social constructivist approach in both curriculum and pedagogy. Regardless, the implication that equity, rights and voice for Indigenous children and families are shared ideals by nature of this epistemological stance “negates the violent histories [and present conditions] in which such concepts have been implicated” (Ashton, 2015, p. 86). Discourses of inclusiveness and child/family-led relationships do not necessarily align with challenges to settler colonialism, and this lack of acknowledgement further problematizes any post-secondary institution’s attempt to Indigenize curricula and pedagogy without deep and critical awakening of programmatic and pedagogic choices. This includes the recognition and decolonizing approach that challenges the politics and processes of settler colonialism that have, according to George (2019), “disrupted the core of Indigenous life, the family unit” (p. 73).

One of the biggest challenges is what George (2019) suggests is needed to be effective: “decolonizing processes must dig deep beneath the surface of the neo-liberal, corporatist illusion of democracy that most favours private, economic profits over holistic growth” (p. 87). Such a dream is predicated on the dissolution of a system of oppression and a new social, economic and political framework for post-secondary institutions. George (2019) suggests that “many Indigenous people feel that Canadian institutions are not digging deep into their colonial foundations and merely painting over with Indigenous art” (p. 88). Confronting Eurocentric ideologies and their foundational role in the post-secondary environment must include first and foremost the detachment of colonial attitudes, governance and policies, followed by the re-contextualization of “Indigenous earth-based ways our ancestors regenerated their identities” (George, 2019, p. 89). How that would work I am not certain, but I am certain it is not for me to determine.

Henry and colleagues (2017) argue that “analyses of racism, racialization and Indigeneity in the academy are notable by their absence” (p. 300). They further suggest that “many efforts… most often amount to no more than well-worded mission statements and cosmetic changes” (p. 300). A focus on diversity, equity, inclusion and Indigenization (EDII) in educational institutions does not equate to meaningful challenges by instructors to the colonial and racial structures framing the post-secondary environment (Ahmed, 2012; Couthard, 2014). Furthermore, as a settler, my knowledge systems and constructs dominate the post-secondary classroom.

Coulthard (2014) reminds us that within institutional politics of recognition, making Indigenous subjects the object of concern can work to divert attention to the colonial relationships of power structuring that very concern. Preservice educators and faculty members alike need opportunities to conduct inventories of their own institutional miseducation, not as a

series of omissions and "silenced voices" but as an organized erasure and transcendence of the violence of colonization—as essential to and part of the everyday workings of settler colonialism (Schick & St. Denis, 2005). Non-Indigenous students and faculty members need a framework to help them answer the most urgent question that arises for those who listen deeply and invest in learning sincerely: Why have I never been taught this?

A Reflexive Pedagogical Shift

Indigeneity in early learning and child care curricula for preservice educators can be a contentious phrase depending on the socio-cultural and political lens from which it is considered. Mellor and Corrigan (2004) argue that the absence of Indigenous knowledges in post-secondary curricula can be viewed as a further tool of assimilation. Nakata's (2007) theory of Indigenous knowledges suggests that knowledge about, with and for Indigenous peoples occurs within cultural borders, and thus requires critical reflexivity to consider "how this informs an epistemological and ontological understanding of one's cultural and social positioning" (McLauglin & Whatman, 2015, p. 94).

Hytten and Adkins (2001) suggest that reflexivity cannot be done in isolation, and "as members of the dominant culture, we cannot construct socially just educational practices alone; it is arrogant and preposterous to think we can" (p. 448). By nature of my authoritative and powerful role in the post-secondary classroom and being a member of the settler dominant culture, I am painfully lacking critical perspectives. Reflexivity through the process of autoethnography can offer opportunities to consider what a decolonizing classroom can look like, and how we can engage with others for critical conscientization. Giroux (2004) spoke to this when he suggested that the power within existing dominant discourses relies in the realm of ideas as well. Thus, Giroux suggests that scholars must act politically through their engagement

"in the hard work [to] orient their teaching for social change, connect learning to public life, link knowledge to the operations of power, and allow issues of human rights and crimes against humanity in their diverse forms to occupy a space of critical and open discussion in the classroom" (2004, p. 77). Giroux suggested that scholars must mobilize to challenge any illusion of unanimity that dominant discourse propagates. Giroux's positioning offers potential and hope where so much constraint and stagnancy currently exist. When I imagine a reflexive pedagogy, I consider my obligation as well to enact a new way of thinking, doing, and teaching that stems from such insight.

Although many future early learning and child care educators are eager to learn pedagogies that promote cultural responsiveness and inclusion, are we still framing inclusion in settler ideals? St. Denis (2011) argues that curriculum and pedagogical reform framed within agendas of inclusion/recognition of Indigenous culture, history, societal and family structures are not enough if they don't help educators (and post-secondary instructors) critically analyze how systemic racism and economic exclusion interlock to recreate colonial power. Put differently, we might distinguish between, on the one hand, preparing early learning and child care educators who see their role as supporting Indigenous children and families within an increasingly diverse settler-colonial society and, on the other, preparing educators in ways that learn from Indigenous struggles to transform a settler-colonial society and shift its nation-to-nation relationship with First Nations.

Inconclusion

If we mean to prepare pre-service early learning and child care educators for the important work of decolonization, we must transcend learning beyond the student to include teaching faculty and program development as well. Post-secondary institutions can respond

profoundly to the Calls to Action issued by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015). As Stein (2020) shares, “in order to interrupt and transform enduring colonial relations, settler [academics] and settler-dominated institutions will need to reckon with how the values that have thus far oriented colleges and universities contribute to and benefit from ongoing colonialism – and will need to consider the possibility that reconciliation itself might be impossible” (p. 168). Personal critical reflexivity holds some potential to realize a reconciliatory pedagogy that could support the transformation of the field.

As a new academic, I have considered again and again what responsibilities I have and how my responsibilities influence my work. This autoethnography is but one way to make conscious professional and pedagogical choices; critical reflexivity must remain a dynamic aspect of my scholarly work if this process holds any transformative potential. The interrogation and unsettling of a settler self within academe is only a starting point for a renewed politics of decolonization and a potential opportunity to create invitational spaces for co-creating possibilities.

As a researcher committed to decolonial scholarship in post-secondary environments, I must become vigilant in the ways I may reproduce colonialist forms of knowledge. This gap in knowledge awareness “maintains the dialectic of colonizer/colonized framings in research” (Calderon, 2014, p. 11). As Ellis and colleagues (2011) further note, researchers “retrospectively and selectively write about epiphanies that stem from, or are made possible by, being part of a culture and/or by possessing a particular cultural identity” (p. 276). Moreover, a decolonizing model based on reflexive relations and an ongoing process of decolonizing the self, curriculum, and research topics must be informed by Indigenous epistemologies. This work is only beginning, or has yet to actually begin.

The post-secondary environment holds promise in advancing informed educational contexts of teaching and learning in which Indigenous and settler peoples work together towards conscientization, transformation, and liberation. Decolonizing higher education can create reconciliatory spaces for Indigenous students and scholars, educate settler students and faculty, and impact the greater early learning and child care field through the further professionalization of the workforce. These changes require the conceptualization of critical, reflexive, and relational engagement with ongoing colonialism and intersecting systems of oppression. As Lewis (2012) notes "we must rethink our collaborations, our contexts, our privileges and our practices, and conceive of them ethically in anti-colonial terms as a process that is never complete" (p. 237). Achieving "decolonization" as a settler is not possible; rather, this work is a never-ending process of critically reflecting one's actions, thoughts and pedagogical decisions. As someone embodying settler subjectivities I strive to use this ongoing awareness to impact my research and teaching in a post-secondary context.

Chapter 8: Learning “In Relations:” A Conclusion

Through a multi-paper dissertation, I sought to answer the following questions: What does current literature share regarding indicators of quality and educator dispositions in early learning and child care for Indigenous children and families? How do educator dispositions and learning environments shape quality for Indigenous children and families? How can post-secondary instructors engage in meaningful decolonization of early learning and child care preservice education?

The first study, utilizing scoping review methodology, revealed that many Indigenous families seek early learning and child care that supports family and community culture, autonomy and self-determination. Indigenous families, educators and community members must be at the centre of determining quality to reflect experiences, perspectives, and cultural contexts aptly. In addition, educator disposition of fostering trust in educator-family relationships is pivotal for some Indigenous families. Many of the studies in the scoping review highlight diverse viewpoints and the need for ongoing engagement with Indigenous families to centre their voices in policies, programs, and practices. Gerlach and colleagues (2017) state that "any initiative to create more power balanced relations between the early learning sector and families is of great value. Providing voice to the parents, family and community is one way they combat these imbalances" (p. 1770).

The varying strategies to realize quality suggest that both culturally focused programs and other programs working with Indigenous children and families can achieve positive outcomes despite divergent approaches. Recognizing that families are the experts in their children and thus know them in ways that educators cannot, educators view families and their relationships with them as pivotal in the care of children. What remains critical is centre

leadership support for developing educator dispositions such as co-learning with families, seeking a practice of relationships with children and families, and educator reflexivity.

The second study conducted a secondary analysis of qualitative data using Bourdieu's social reproduction theory and exposed the possibilities of educators as reflective facilitators that, through dispositions, can address socially constructed barriers for Indigenous children and families. Bourdieu's theoretical contributions framed the investigation of how educator dispositions construct experiences and quality in early learning and child care contexts. Future research may consider additional lenses of examination, such as anti-colonial, critical posthumanist or place-attuned orientations.

The educator as a professional is no longer stagnantly following their pre-professional learning; instead, educators actively seek opportunities to further their evolving professionalism through engaging in professional development, cultivating opportunities to critically reflect on their practice, and maintaining a curiosity for learning. Educators learn alongside children and families to inform curricular decisions (Makovichuk et al., 2014). Educators use understandings gained from this learning to create places of vitality for children and families. Educators can only realize desires to learn with the full support of and strategic decisions from the leadership team for sustainable learning processes of educators.

The final study, an autoethnography, bared notions of research and scholarship in early learning and child care and Indigenous families that benefit from a reflexive, relational approach. Styres (2017) writes that "locating oneself in relation to everything one does is one of the key foundational principles in Indigenous research contexts. The only place from which any of us can write or speak with any degree of certainty is from the position of who we are in relation to what we know" (p.7). Post-secondary instructors are uniquely positioned to influence educators'

perspectives, positionalities, and dispositions in the planning for and providing of early learning and child care for Indigenous children and families.

Findings of this dissertation highlight the need to focus on relational practices between Indigenous families and educators in early learning and child care. According to Gerlach (2018), "relationality provides the necessary epistemological scaffolding to actualize the underlying motives, concerns, and principles that characterize [decolonization]" (p. 2). Embodying relationality can be a practical means for decolonization both in the field and within academe. Cree scholar Donald (2012) supports ethical relationality in particular that "does not deny difference, but rather seeks to more deeply understand how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other" (p. 45). Decolonization thus reflects engaging in relating from a foundation of knowledge, respect, reciprocity, and cultural humility. To engage in relationality, colonial histories must first be revealed for "right relations" to take root (Collard et al., 2015; Regan, 2010). Learning in relations requires spaces and pedagogies to substantially shift through reflexive settler consciousness; learning in relations also requires the micro to macro recentering of Indigenous sovereignties and resurgences.

Through reflexivity, the uncovering of individual and institutional blind spots, questioning assumptions, and allowing oneself to be affected and transformed can occur. Taking relationality seriously as settlers means that we need to "learn to see our privilege, our own context, our own deep colonizing. We have to learn to think anew—to think in ways that take seriously and actually respond to information, understanding and knowledges as if difference confronts us with the possibility of thinking [and acting and relating] differently" (Johnson et al., 2016, p. 3). Critical reflexivity is an essential tool in "navigating a moral path" in any scholarly approach that seeks to be decolonizing (Bishop, 2005). Grounding work in a critical relational

epistemology, according to Gerlach (2018), "shifts the focus... to thinking critically about self in relation to the knowledge construction process" (p. 4).

Thus, learning in relations is a highly personal endeavour and involves a willingness to engage reflexively in discomfort and uncertainty. For Gram-Hanssen and colleagues (2021), "with a global pandemic, a lingering economic crisis, climate change-related disasters, intensified social unrest and profound responses to social movements, the power contained in our relationships with one another and the necessity of dismantling systemic oppression have come clearly into focus" (n.p.). Despite these contexts, engaging in and embodying learning in relations may offer a transformative way forward. However, being in relations takes place in relationships, and developing relationships takes time and requires trust.

To tackle potential despotic pedagogies and practices, reconceptualizing equity, diversity, inclusion, and social justice will require more than an occasional professional development workshop or webinar (Allen et al., 2020; Rodriguez & Morrison, 2019). The use of intersectionality to examine pedagogical, programmatic, and policy choices at the post-secondary level can help to unravel affiliations between marginalized social identities, their intersections, and how oppression can shape an individual's epistemologies (Museus & Griffin, 2011). Additionally, intersectionality can encourage educators and academics to critically consider how disparities and hegemonies impact marginalized peoples (Duran, 2019). Fuentes and colleagues (2021) "urge educators to consider how their own socio-cultural backgrounds and positions may influence how they foster and address efforts in their syllabi" (p. 73). Not only do safe spaces need to be created where Indigenous voices lead the process, but instructors must be able to engage in critical thinking regarding their pedagogical practices for students to do the same (Garneau et al., 2021). For Small (2018), decolonizing the mind is a complicated endeavour.

Essential for decolonization is understanding how to create meaningful structural change that will support pedagogic choices in an early learning and child care post-secondary program. Decolonizing academia is not a new concept (Fanon, 1963; Said, 1979; Spivak, 1988). The proliferation of settler knowledge continues as "an institutionalized mechanism to co-opt Indigenous epistemologies for [neoliberal] gain" (Tuitt & Stewart, 2021, p. 103). Smith (1999) argues that decolonizing academia

> involves the unmasking and deconstruction of imperialism, and its aspect of colonialism, in its old and new formations alongside a search for sovereignty; for reclamation of knowledge, language, and culture; and for the social transformation of the colonial relations between the native and the settler (p. 88).

Tuitt and Stewart (2021) suggest three key areas to consider with decolonization of post-secondary institutions: challenging admissions and hiring practices to increase Indigenous presence in programmes (both student and faculty); conducting an examination of the structures that "influence knowledge construction" such as curriculum and assessment choices; and, investigating the reward structures in academic programs to determine if "research, teaching and service relate to Indigenous and minoritized communities or from a decolonial perspective" (p. 109). The authors wish to move beyond common discourses in equity, diversity, inclusion and Indigenization (EDII) to "the hard work of decolonizing the mind, questioning the epistemological assumptions (ways of knowing) that privileges some forms of knowledge over others and reinforces traditional western/Eurocentric values" (p. 110). Tuck and Yang (2012) further challenge common discourses to suggest that any use of the word decolonization is a harmful metaphor unless it pursues an agenda of returning Indigenous Land to Indigenous stewards.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) offers impetus for a new approach to collaboration between Indigenous and settler academics. The final report includes 94 calls to action, with many related to education and teaching (TRC, 2015, pp. 319-337). The TRC further calls upon all levels of government to fully adopt and implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). UNDRIP enshrines the rights that "constitute the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the Indigenous peoples of the world" (Art. 43). This includes Indigenous peoples' rights to develop and strengthen social and political institutions (UNDRIP, 2007). Decolonization is a process that must include bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic, and psychological divesting of colonial power (Smith, 2012). This can occur through undoing "the privileging of dominant Euro-centred cultural values and beliefs in education, scholarship, knowledge production, the legitimization of intellectual capital, and the networks and systems of power" (Styres, 2017, p. 19).

The idea that "there are no spaces that are not colonized" (Anderson, 2004, p. 239) reinforces the need for decolonization to be all-encompassing. For McDowell and Hernández (2010), a potential decolonizing agenda in academia

> does not routinely dismiss Western science... but contributes to just practices and cultural democracy through (a) critiquing and challenging colonial agendas, (b) acknowledging the legitimacy of indigenous and previously subjugated knowledge and performance, and (c) centring liberation-based healing practices. (p. 94)

Addressing and eliminating oppression is not a straightforward undertaking; it requires fundamental changes to settler ontologies and epistemologies, both individually and as a society (Held, 2019). Settlers must first question and then radically change individual and collective

epistemologies to halt the cycle of perpetuating colonial power (Barker, 2010). Paramount to this process is to validate Indigenous worldviews, knowledges and laws in settler institutions (Henderson, 2000, p. 252). This challenge for validation aligns with Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed and the notion that learning occurs only "within the existing participatory relationship with natural, cultural, and historical reality" (Henderson, 2000, p. 252).

Responding to such a challenge cannot be solved through simple solutions and must include critical reflection. The findings of this dissertation have left some questions unanswered. For this reason, this dissertation will not conclude with a presentation of specific recommendations for policy and practice, often viewed as an "obligatory end" in contemporary educational research (Morrison & van der Werf, 2016). Although intended as a dissertation that leads to policy changes (Lingard, 2013), in that its findings may help inform future policy directions, the influence of this research on future policy decisions may be more subtle.

Thus, the nudges and nuances omnipresent in all three studies that potentially influence decision-makers' thinking may be as valuable as a lengthy list of specific recommendations for action. This dissertation may prompt critical reflection regarding the possibilities for future early learning and child care workforce development policies to explicitly address equity and quality considerations related to Indigenous children and families. I reverberate Tayler's (2016) calls for collective courage in enduring research outcomes that reveal which parts of policies, programs and practices matter most to Indigenous children and families in early learning and child care contexts. The analyses within this dissertation may help policymakers and post-secondary instructors embrace the complexities of early learning and child care and engage relationally and reflexively towards decolonization - just as educators can with the Indigenous children and families with whom they work.

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