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Special Issue: Disability Justice in ECE

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Disability Justice in ECE—Foregrounding Counter-storytelling Practices

This special issue invites those within the field of early childhood studies to consider the role of developmentalism in continuing to shape some taken-for-granted assumptions within ECE. Specifically, both featured articles consider how practices of *sanism* and *ableism* remain unacknowledged default positions within ECE in a manner that perpetuates practices of exclusion or conditional inclusion. In the works of both Davies and Vale within this special issue, each has respectively applied concepts from the fields of Critical Disability Studies or Mad studies or the New Sociology of Childhood for the purposes of foregrounding counter-narratives.

The counter-narratives presented here contribute to an already vast and growing body of knowledge that demonstrates what happens when early childhood educators have decided that they already know the narrative storyline and how it will unfold. *Developmentalism* is indeed that narrative storyline early childhood educators are required to learn and know. It can pose and has posed persistent challenges within the field because of the ways in which children and early childhood educators themselves embody lived experiences that perpetually disrupt the normative assumptions that remain embedded within the narrative storyline known as developmentalism.

Thus, the two articles featured in this special issue offer counter-stories that identify the role of developmentalism in shaping the normative order within ECE. Davies does so by focusing on their experiences of conditional inclusion and exclusion as an educator within early childhood programs in Ontario. By focusing on their lived experiences at the intersections of disability justice and Mad studies, Davies invites readers to consider the perils of sustaining the hegemony of developmentalism while pointing towards the potential of facilitating opportunities for multiple storytelling and sense-making strategies. In a distinct way, Vale offers a consideration of how scholars and educators might attend to and foreground the voices of children diagnosed with ADHD in a manner that demonstrates how select children perceive themselves as well as experience learning in the early years through practices of exclusion. In so doing, both Davies and Vale consider the importance of refusing ableism as an ongoing default position within ECE in order to make room for practices of inclusion that might have the potential to welcome and embrace all forms of embodied representations and experiences.

As a guest editor of this special issue, it is my sincere hope that the articles featured here offer an entry point into what might be possible when scholars and educators seek to apply some, if not all, of the tenets outlined in a disability justice framework (Berne, 2015). Thus, I close this introduction with an echo of the question posed in the Call for Papers that initiated this special issue (Berne, 2015, par 25): “How do we move together—as people with mixed abilities, multiracial, multi-gendered, mixed class, across the orientation spectrum—where no body/mind is left behind?”

Berne, P. (2015). Disability justice – a working draft by Patty Berne. Retrieved on December 2, 2023 from: <https://www.sinsinvalid.org/blog/disability-justice-a-working-draft-by-patty-berne>