Ghostbusters: Rupturing Ghosts of Developmentalism Through Living Stories

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Abstract

The ghosts of developmentalism haunt Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), perpetuating normative assumptions about children, learning, and teaching. In this paper, we trace the prevalence of developmentalism and propose a shift from *learning stories* to *living stories* in ECEC classrooms. We champion daily ruptures in classrooms and curricula to disrupt developmentalist scripts. Future educators can become "ghostbusters" of developmentalism, dismantling its grip on childhood and learning. As educators whose formative experiences were shaped by these scripts, we foreground scholars who question developmentalism from within lived and pedagogical tensions. Our argument is thus both a theoretical and personal reckoning with the structures that have long defined ECEC. In doing so, we examine how shifting post-secondary ECEC programs to foreground the transformative potential of daily ruptures embraces relationality, subjectivity, and superdiversity to challenge rigid, linear frameworks that marginalize diverse ways of knowing, being, and relating.

Key words

developmentalism, early childhood education and care, educators learning stories, superdiversity

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Ghostbusters: Rupturing Ghosts of Developmentalism Through Living Stories

In what we refer to as the "ghosts" of developmentalism, dominant narratives of childhood and education position children, educators, and families within a seamless, problem-free trajectory—one that erases the complexities of lived experience and the histories each individual carries into the early childhood classroom. These narratives, conceived by developmentalists creating curricula through imagined "norms," do not reflect reality, as no person, including the young children and educators for whom these curricula are designed, moves through education untouched by social, cultural, and personal disruptions or complexities. Yet, traditional Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) spaces and curricula continue to cast children and educators in static, predetermined, and predictable roles, sustained by the illusion that learning unfolds in a neutral, linear progression (Cannella, 1997). In fact, the Ontario's *Early Learning for Every Child Today* (ELECT) framework (2014), provides a "continuum of development" chart, which outlines developmental sequences across domains including social, emotional, language, cognitive, and physical, presenting learning as a progression from one expected behaviour to the next. For example, in the *Language and Literacy* domain, the continuum charts a child's development from "using verbal and non-verbal communication" to "conversing with peers and adults" (p. 42) in an undeviating fashion. These sequences construct a vision of childhood as unfolding in a linear, normative path where differences can be read as delays or deficits. The underlying assumption is that development occurs universally, overlooking the multiplicity, context, and variability of children's lives.

As Lisa Farley (2018) reminds scholars, dominant discourses of childhood "masquerade as universal and natural" (p. 2), despite being constructed from studies involving a narrow selection of - often white and middle class - children. By privileging the developmental milestones of this group in the name of objective standardization, these discourses flatten the texture of subjectivity and collapse the experiences of children and educators into fixed roles and pathways that deny the intricate ways in which identity, power, and history shape teaching and learning. The persistence of developmentalism within post-secondary ECEC curricula reinforces the grip of these reductive narratives, limiting how educators and children can come to know themselves and others within educational spaces. Developmentalism not only flattens the personhood of children and educators, it also silences other ways of knowing, being, and relating, pathologizing that which does not fit into the confines of linear development (Farley, 2018). Yet, as Mariana Souto-Manning (2021) reminds us, the wounds opened by decades of developmentalism make room for something else to emerge. To break from developmentalism is to recognize education does not exist in a space of certainty, but in one where experience and learning remain subjective - fluid, relational, and intimately entangled with the diverse history, culture, and power each individual brings to the classroom.

In this article, we show how dominant discourses of ECEC impose false narratives of who children and educators should be, flattening the complexities of lived experience into a framework that assumes neutrality and universality. That said, many ECEC scholars do not shy away from complexity, contradiction, or discomfort and theorize from

within rather than *above* the daily tensions of practice. Their understanding of ECEC in daily moments and meanings creates openings for educators to think beyond developmentalism. In the complex and diverse histories that educators and children bring into the classroom, we begin to see the limits of developmentalism—not as a neutral body of knowledge, but as a discourse that erases what it cannot account for. Drawing on the notion of *learning stories*, we suggest that shifting from learning stories to *living stories* invites new ways for educators to encounter children and their families and foster the relations that bind them. Learning stories, an assessment framework used alongside Te Whāriki (New Zealand's early childhood education curriculum), positions assessment in early childhood education as relational, individual and contextual, reflecting children's unique learning dispositions and working theories (Carr, May & Podmore, 1998). The narrative framework of learning stories encourages the democratic participation of educators, children and families in children's learning experiences and offers a holistic alternative to traditional forms of assessment by recognizing the children's individual learning processes and working theories, reflecting creativity and unique ways of knowing, and including documentation strategies such as photographs, artifacts and narratives of the learning experience (Carr, May & Podmore, 1998). We, the authors, extend the idea of learning stories to *living stories* to reflect the lived and living - in real time - experiences of young children as a pathway to recognize the multiple and unique social, historical and cultural contexts of children and families. We position living stories as a new lens to understand relational encounters in classroom settings and beyond. While learning stories ask the question 'what learning is happening here, living stories explore 'who are we becoming together'. In these openings, the possibility of transformative relationality can be seen, and teaching and learning become more than the fulfillment of developmental aims. These are the moments that rupture, or bust, the trajectory of developmentalism, making space for pedagogies that are more ethical, responsive,

and open to the uncertainty of subjectivity - ones that shift "curriculum as plan" to "curriculum as complicated" (Pinar, 1994, 2019).

It may be time for these dominant narratives to be declared outdated as the increasingly diverse and multilingual families, children, and educators who participate in Ontario's ECEC settings are recognized (Abawi, Berman, & Powell, 2019; Butler, 2021). To support this declaration, we consider the emergence of scholarship in ECEC related to the concept of *superdiversity* (Chan & Ritchie, 2016; Chan, 2020), a term coined by Steven Vertovec (2007) to describe the complexities of contemporary global migration patterns and their associated demographic complexities in settler societies such as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (CANZ). With scholars of superdiversity, we argue that ECEC now, more than ever, requires a shift from a static, Eurocentric view of child development to one that embraces the real, lived experiences of families and children who participate in ECEC settings. In order to recognize and build on the emergent conditions of superdiversity in CANZ societies, Paul Spoonley (2014) suggests that scholars and educators must fully come to terms with the many configurations of power differentials, rights, and policies afforded to those who "fit in" to recognized groups within settler societies. Superdiversity draws attention to new patterns of inequity and prejudices (Meissner & Vertovec, 2015; Chan & Ritchie, 2016), pointing out the necessity to examine and critique educational policies such as curricula in terms of how they respond to new global migration flows and to rethink pedagogies to address these complexities. It is through the rupture of developmentalism that new realities such as superdiverse populations of families, children, and educators emerge in place of the previous fixed Eurocentric views of teaching and learning.

As educators and scholars who have both lived and studied within the Ontario education system, our selection of literature emerges not only from academic engagement but also from our lived experiences as racialized, gendered individuals negotiating the tensions of developmentalist

curricula. We have intentionally curated this body of scholarship to foreground perspectives that disrupt dominant developmental paradigms and reflect the complexities of identity, culture, and relationality that shape everyday pedagogical encounters. In doing so, we aim to position our own subjective and situated knowledge not as supplementary but as central to reimagining what early childhood education can be.

Ghosts of Developmentalism: Dominant Narratives, Imaginary Children, and Real Wounds

By maintaining a framework that assumes neutrality and universality, developmentalism sanitizes what it means to be a child or an educator for the sake of the role each plays in traditional notions of education. That is, dominant developmental frameworks not only construct an idealized child (Berman & Abawi, 2019; Farley, 2018) - one that is white, middle-class, neurotypical, and able-bodied - but also position educators as passive facilitators of predetermined learning outcomes rather than co-constructors of knowledge in relationship with children (Delgado Vintimilla, 2014). For Farley (2018), nostalgic framings of childhood fabricate a more powerful position of adulthood while pathologizing entire communities through colonial hierarchies of humanity. These constructs of who children and educators ought to be define the purpose of education while rejecting experiences and complexities that threaten this very philosophy. In this way, developmental norms dictate what is considered *normal* for a child at a given age while pathologizing those who deviate from these expectations. These frameworks prioritize conformity to an imagined Eurocentric standard, erasing the differences that shape the lives of children and educators.

Such a construction of children and education is perpetuated through dominant discourses that frame childhood as a site of innocence, purity, and linear development, erasing histories of oppression and resistance that shape children's lives (Bernstein,

2011; Farley, 2018; Garlen, 2018). As Julie Garlen (2018) argues, discourses of innocence are not only universalized but racialized, tethered to whiteness and notions of racial purity. The innocent child - characterized as white, untainted, and deserving of protection - reinforces racial hierarchies by positioning innocence as a privilege extended to some but not all (Garlen, 2018; Bernstein, 2011). As such, dominant discourse continues to wound some groups of children and educators more than others, as the developmental theories of ECEC continue to uphold only histories of the white middle class. Thus, for Adam Davies, Maria Karmiris, and Rachel Berman (2022), the pervasive influence of developmentalism continues to privilege the narratives of some above others. As these thinkers argue, the dominance of traditional developmental theories, continue to shape post-secondary ECEC curricula, often marginalizing alternative perspectives and diverse ways of knowing. The perpetuation of this curriculum continues to shape the lives of children and educators alike. For example, Davies et al. (2022) describe how neurotypical, white, middle-class models of development are presented as the norm, while Indigenous, queer, disabled, or racialized experiences of childhood are treated as deviations or exceptions - if they are acknowledged at all.

Canadian scholarship regarding the experiences of newcomer and racialized families participating in ECEC settings point to barriers to accessing quality, regulated ECEC programs such as financial costs, spatial accessibility, and a lack of culturally responsive programming (Butler, 2021; Brown et. al, 2020). Financial barriers include the high costs of quality childcare, with many low-income families choosing unregulated childcare that may be of lower quality (Butler, 2021). Spatially, many low-income, racialized families often rely on public transportation or travel long distances to access childcare. In addition, spatial stigma, defined as the "negative portrayal of low-income areas by the media and in public discourse," compounds these challenges (Butler, 2021, p. 30). As many scholars recognize, cultural and racial norms reflected

by these barriers are often highly Eurocentric, and the lack of culturally relevant pedagogy that contradicts them makes it less likely that racialized and newcomer families see themselves represented in early years programs (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2006; Butler, 2001; Awabi, Berman, & Powell, 2021).

The Challenge for Educators

Systemic barriers and assumed norms not only shape the experiences of racialized families in early childhood education, they also place educators in a difficult position, as what they experience and what they were taught in post-secondary training do not always align. As educators, we found ourselves entangled in this tension - torn between a desire to better serve the diverse and complex children and families in our classrooms and the rigid expectations that define what it means to be a "good" educator. Though Deborah Britzman's (2003) work does not focus on early childhood education, her analysis of the "good" educator emphasises the way educators are frequently defined by supervisory roles such as enforcing rules, assessing development, and managing classrooms. This tension is echoed in Rachel Langford's (2007) critical analysis of Ontario pre-service classrooms, where she explores how the "good" early childhood educator is often constructed as one who abandons deep cultural difference in favour of standardized developmental practices. Langford's work illustrates how professional identity is shaped through an implicit demand for conformity, silencing educators' cultural identities and histories in the name of developmental neutrality.

This prescriptive role, laden with assumptions about authority and control, produces a fundamental tension between who an educator is and who they must become for the sake of children's education. Cristina Delgado Vintimilla (2014) reflects on how early childhood educators are positioned as "facilitators of fun" (p. 83), a formulation that reduces pedagogy to management and children to consumers of experience. Dragana Mirkovic, Ellouise VanBerkel, and Lisa Farley (2023) extend this conversation, tracing the ways pre-service educators wrestle with the demands of their profession. Through focus group discussions, the authors explored how educators often experience their professional identity as a site of internal struggle, where they must uphold dominant discourses of childhood and development, even as they recognize how the imposition of developmentalist narratives wounds those who will never fit them. The expectation to conform to the developmentalist frameworks does not simply shape pedagogy; it inscribes itself onto the subjectivities of educators navigating a split between personal knowing and professional obligation.

Beyond Developmentalism

For us, these ghosts of developmentalism linger within educational structures, shaping spaces designed for children and educators who do not exist. These spectral figures of the imagined child and the ideal educator haunt the classroom, enforcing norms that fail to account for the complexities of the living stories of real children and teachers. The architecture of ECEC is built upon these ghosts, resulting in disciplinary frameworks, standardized assessments, and rigid developmental milestones that enforce conformity to these imagined ideals. Traditional post-secondary institutions perpetuate these ghosts by training future educators within frameworks that prioritize universality and neutrality over complexity and relationality.

As Berman and Zuhra Abawi (2019) highlight, the wounds made by developmentalist frameworks are clear on the children who do not fit the idealized notion of the child. Educators see the wounds in the child who is constantly pulled out of play for remediation, the one labeled 'behind' for not speaking English at home, or the child whose sensory sensitivities are framed as behavioural problems rather than invitations to rethink the environment. For these scholars, a paradigm shift to more Reconceptualist approaches is essential for reimagining the ideal of the child and disrupting the modernist notions of progressive development. Berman and Abawi note how Reconceptualist scholars have long challenged hegemony in ECEC,

arguing that dominant theories of child development privilege linear progress, universality, and neutrality while ignoring the ways in which children and educators shape and are shaped by the histories, politics, and power that are embedded in their lives. Reconceptualist scholarship uncovers the ways in which childhood has historically been defined not by stories of the child's own experience, but by adult anxieties, colonial legacies, and ideological investments in a particular kind of future (Berman & Abawi, 2019; Cannella, 1997; Farley, 2018). Educators can lead the Reconceptualist charge away from developmentalism, creating daily ruptures that challenge the dominant scripts of childhood and teaching. These daily ruptures emerge through small, everyday acts of resistance that surface in moments of uncertainty, contradiction, and relational encounter. This shift from learning stories to living stories can rupture the very fabric of what it means to be an educator.

Learning or Living Stories? Making Room for Relationality

The shift from learning stories to living stories holds special meaning for us as authors and educators as the insight was born from sharing the stories of our own wounds as newcomer immigrant young children to Canada. Being non-English speaking children in ECEC settings and required to participate in developmentally based ECEC curricula has forever shaped our views on identity, privilege, and belonging in early childhood education spaces. We recognize that identities cannot be freely chosen and to suggest otherwise is deeply problematic (May & Sleeter, 2010). Identity is shaped and constrained by an individual's positioning in society, which itself is a product of and associated with, a specific set of power relations. Here again, in children's identity creation in ECEC, we find the ghost of developmentalism haunting the already complex process of being human.

In his 1994 work, William F. Pinar used the notion of *currere* to grapple with the way subjectivities can challenge the idea of *curriculum as plan*. For Pinar, (1994, 2019) dominant narratives and prepackaged curricula obscure the subjective and transformative aspects of teaching, settling for scripted curriculum that limits meanings of teaching and learning. Instead, Pinar (2019) emphasizes the deeply subjective, lived, and often disorienting process of learning to teach. For this author, resisting "curriculum as plan" means embracing the uncertainties of teaching. An alternative, "curriculum as lived," allows for the possibility that both educators and children might be undone in ways that open new paths for meaning and relationality (Pinar, 1994, 2019). *Currere*, in this sense, is not merely a method but an ethical and pedagogical stance, an invitation to view curriculum as a complicated conversation where educators and students are entangled in the histories, stories, and social forces that shape their daily lives. In resisting "curriculum as plan," educators create openings for disruptions: those small but significant acts of refusal that challenge developmentalism's hold on early childhood education, making space for more relational, situated, and lived experiences of learning.

For Souto-Manning (2021), resistance manifests in interrogating how dominant discourses fail to account for lived realities, particularly as they pertain to pandemic and post-pandemic teaching and learning. Drawing on Arundhati Roy's concept of the pandemic as a portal, Souto-Manning argues that the global crisis exposed the fault lines of education as usual, making visible the ways in which returning to "normal" means re-inscribing systemic harm. She calls for transformative ruptures that do not restore stability but reimagine education altogether—ruptures that refuse the inevitability of dominant narratives and instead insist on more just and equitable futures. For my co-author and I, our pandemic work with learning stories - completed with families during and after the pandemic - highlighted shifts in education that opened up new meanings of what ECEC could be.

Taking our cue from Pinar (2019) and Souto-Manning (2021), we turn to the early childhood classroom not as a space of preordained outcomes but as a site of rupture, where learning is continually unsettled by the small, often unnoticed moments that refuse curricular certainty. These moments - an unexpected pause in

play, a child's gaze that lingers too long, a whispered word misunderstood - are unplanned, messy, and sometimes disorienting. They trouble our own and others' meanings of teaching and learning. Here, we find resonance with Mirkovic et al.'s (2023) concept of *micro-memories* - those fleeting, affectively charged moments that carry emotional and historical weight, traces of past experiences that resurface in the present. Rather than aligning with developmentalist frameworks that frame learning as a linear, neutral progression, *micro-memories* suggest that subjectivity in the classroom is shaped by past encounters, unresolved tensions, and deeply personal histories. They are moments that live on, sometimes subtly, shaping how children and educators come to know themselves and each other.

One such moment emerged through our engagement with learning stories during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, as we navigated the layered uncertainties of teaching within a world abruptly reconfigured. In the small squares of our virtual classrooms, stories - both spoken and unspoken - spilled through the screens. Parents leaned in to offer a guiding hand, siblings drifted through the background, pets were hoisted into view for eager introductions. These seemingly minor interruptions lingered in our memories, becoming *micro-memories* that unsettled the boundaries between home and school, between teacher and learner, between presence and absence. In their ordinariness, these moments pulsed with affect and ambiguity, revealing the elasticity of our relationships and the porousness of the early childhood classroom. They offered a sense of *currere*, as the subjectivities of students, educators, and families flooded the screen, disrupting curriculum as plan (Pinar, 2019) and reminding us that the most powerful pedagogical encounters are often the least expected.

As we documented our students' experiences through learning stories, we simultaneously worked on a chapter tracing the ruptures and reconfigurations of pedagogy within the pandemic (Mirkovic & Kamdar, 2022). Giamminuti (2009) speaks of a "sense of we" (p. 29), a shared experience that, for us, took shape not despite distance but within it, both online and as in-person learning returned. Teaching became an act

of movement to the shifting meanings of education - an ongoing practice of wondering with children and families, working with parents to craft learning stories, and navigating living as we all re-entered learning spaces already transformed.

In working with families to craft learning stories, we found ourselves documenting not just the trajectories of children's learning, but the deeply entangled living stories of educators, families, and children - narratives in motion, textured by history, disruption, and the quiet insistence of relation. Our work, which was virtual teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, shifted power imbalances that documentation and assessment in the classroom often perpetuate. While educator's using documentation and learning stories usually determine what is being photographed and what learning goals are being demonstrated, living stories shifted us to family-led inquiries, where families and children took photos of their work and determined what learning they would photograph and send in to shape their stories. Suddenly, we had photos of a dog resting its head on a child's lap as they traced letters on a worksheet, family altars and artwork quietly visible in the background, or a parent capturing a child's block tower beside a shelf of family books. It was at this moment we realized we had been working with children and families to craft living stories, not just learning stories.

For us, the shift from learning stories to living stories signals a moment of rupture, one that rejects the idea of children as passive subjects of developmental assessment and instead situates them as active participants in meaning-making. While developmental approaches position personhood as beginning in the classroom, living stories allow us to embrace superdiversity and showcase how the histories of children and educators begin before and beyond the classroom and are always already entangled with the lives of families and communities. By choosing to see a child's experience as a living story, an educator resists developmentalist scripts and instead embraces relationality, subjectivity, and the complexities of becoming together. By acknowledging the lived and living stories of children, families, and educators, we "messy" the sanitized educational space with the shifting lives of those in the classroom.

That is, lived and living stories resist developmental scripts by refusing the notion that children and educators are fixed subjects progressing along predetermined trajectories. While developmentalism often flattens experience into stages and outcomes, living stories embrace the messy, relational, and deeply affective dimensions of education, allowing the histories of children, educators, and families to unfold in their own time and terms. In witnessing and documenting how the living stories of educators, families, and children intersect, educators do not simply observe learning, they participate in the ongoing negotiation of meaning, where subjectivities emerge in relation, rather than in isolation. Through this, education becomes not a script to follow, but a shared, evolving encounter with the complexities of being and becoming together.

This shift from learning stories to living stories finds resonance in Pinar's (1994, 2019) notion of *currere* as a lived, affective, and deeply subjective engagement with curriculum. If *currere* invites educators to see curriculum not as a predetermined script but as a complicated conversation shaped by personal and historical entanglements (Pinar, 2019), then living stories become a pedagogical gesture toward this relationality. As educators, we crafted living stories with children and families and found ourselves engaging in a kind of autobiographical reckoning - one that did not simply document learning but revealed the ways in which past, present, and future coalesce within the classroom. These stories, much like *currere*, became a way of attending to the subjective dimensions of teaching and learning. In this way, the shift to living stories does not simply mark a methodological change but signals a deeper commitment to ECEC as an ethical practice that resists closure, embraces complexity, and foregrounds the lived and living narratives that shape what it means to learn and to teach.

Embracing Micro-memories

This commitment to lived and living stories aligns closely with Mirkovic et al.'s (2023) concept of *micro-memories*. This notion reminds educators that the personal and professional are always already entangled, as fleeting yet affectively charged moments subtly disrupt dominant narratives of education in the everyday classroom. Just as *currere* and living stories foreground the ways in which histories, relationships, and subjectivities shape learning (Pinar, 2019), micro-memories reveal how experiences linger in the present, bursting through at any given moment and re-emerging in ways that complicate linear notions of development (Mirkovic et al., 2023). In our work with living stories, we came to see how micro-memories surfaced in the everyday exchanges among children, educators, and families - through the sudden recollection of a past lesson, the quiet hesitation before trying something new, or the way a child's story unexpectedly wove into an educator's own remembered experience. These moments were not monumental or consciously recognized, but they carried the weight of personal and collective histories, subtly shaping the trajectories of learning in ways that could not be accounted for in traditional, developmentalist frameworks.

By attending to these micro-memories, we saw how learning was not simply a process of moving forward but also of returning - to the past, to unresolved questions, and to affective traces that shape how children and educators engage with the world. This resonates with *currere*'s insistence that curriculum is not just about planning for the future but about reckoning with the past and present in ways that allow for new possibilities to emerge. In this sense, living stories can offer a rupture in the fabric of traditional education as they open to micro-memories and *currere*, converging as ways of resisting education as a linear, neutral process. Instead, an opening is revealed that offers ways to embrace the complexities of subjectivity that make learning deeply relational.

The Future of Post-Secondary ECEC Education: Toward Ethical and Situated Pedagogies

Despite Ontario's increasing demographic diversity, post-secondary ECEC programs still uphold dominant discourses of childhood and education that idealize particular notions of educators and children (Grieshaber & Blaise, 2019). These programs remain entrenched in Eurocentric developmental models

that privilege normative understandings of learning and behaviour while marginalizing alternative perspectives, such as newcomer, racialized, and/ or Indigenous belief systems and ways of being (Grieshaber & Blaise, 2019). The persistence of these frameworks means that culturally and linguistically diverse ways of knowing and being are often positioned as deviations rather than valuable contributions. As Davies, Karmiris, and Berman (2022) argue, challenging the hegemony of developmentalism in ECEC requires critical engagement with alternative discourses that better reflect the complexity of children's (and educators) lived realities. By shifting away from rigid, prescriptive approaches to ECEC, post-secondary programs can instead create space for the multiplicity of experiences and challenges each family brings into the classroom.

The work of Kimberly Bezaire and Lisa Johnston (2022) extend this conversation by advocating for the centring of subjectivity in pre-service ECEC education. They argue that prevailing approaches to teacher preparation often "under-mind" (p. 436) educators, suppressing their cultural knowledge, lived experiences, and emotional realities in favor of a narrow, objective stance rooted in Eurocentric and developmentalist ideologies. This erasure of subjectivity not only disconnects educators from their own sense of self but also diminishes their intellectual and relational capacities, which are essential for meaningful engagement with children and families. Bezaire and Johnston create space for educators' personal narratives and critical reflections to shape pedagogical approaches and call for a shift in pre-service programs toward honoring this complexity and diversity. Their work resonates deeply with our call to rupture developmentalist legacies and re-imagine post-secondary ECEC education as a space where educators are not trained to replicate dominant discourses, but rather are invited to think, feel, and teach otherwise.

Superdiversity as a Framework

Turning to superdiversity as a framework for learning offers a way to view difference as an asset rather than a challenge in the everyday ECEC classroom. As Vertovec (2007) describes, superdiversity acknowledges the layered and intersecting identities that individuals bring into learning environments, moving beyond simplistic categorizations of diversity. In the context of post-secondary ECEC education, embracing superdiversity means recognizing that children and educators are embedded in complex social, cultural, and linguistic landscapes and communities that influence each other's ways of being in the world. By fostering an educational environment that actively incorporates these diverse perspectives, future educators can move beyond deficit-based approaches and instead see difference as a source of strength and innovation (Vertovec, 2007).

Fostering Everyday Ruptures

We believe one way to lean into more transformative education is by highlighting the small, everyday ruptures can be acts of resistance that open up space for future educators to contemplate the ethical nature of their work. For Souto-Manning (2021), resistance arises in interrogating how dominant discourses fail to account for lived realities, particularly as they pertain to pandemic and post-pandemic teaching and learning. In ECEC classrooms and post-secondary programs, such daily ruptures - like a shift from learning stories to living stories - are critical because they challenge deeply embedded inequities, allowing for pedagogies that honour diverse ways of knowing, being, and relating (Souto-Manning, 2021). Practice that emphasizes how daily ruptures can create the conditions necessary to move beyond standardized approaches that often erase cultural and communal knowledge and also redefine what it means to be children and educators. That is, in the rupturing, educators become the ghostbusters of the ghosts of developmentalism, intentionally opening space for new avenues for thinking, being, living, and becoming in ECEC.

Furthermore, post-secondary ECEC programs must recognize that children, families, and educators are all actively living and creating stories, all of which contribute to learning inside and outside of the classroom. Learning does not exist in a vacuum; rather, it is a dynamic process. For this reason, curriculum in post-secondary ECEC programs should reflect the narratives of those engaged

in early learning settings to ensure that pedagogy is responsive to the realities of diverse communities (Vertovec, 2007), not simply tailored to idealized children and educators who do not exist.

For Susan Grieshaber and Mindy Blaise (2019), moving beyond developmentalism requires incorporating alternative perspectives such as post-structural, feminist, and postcolonial theories that challenge dominant assumptions about childhood and learning. This means creating curricula that honour multiple ways of knowing and being and integrating perspectives that move beyond the traditional confines of developmentalism. These perspectives make room for a more complex and inclusive approach to education, ensuring that early learning spaces reflect the richness of children's lived experiences rather than conforming to narrow developmental expectations. By doing so, post-secondary ECEC education can become a space where educators are not merely trained to replicate existing norms but are encouraged to think critically about their roles and responsibilities in fostering ethical and complicated early learning environments.

Ruptures in ECEC not only reshape practices within classrooms but also have profound implications for post-secondary ECEC education, fundamentally altering how future educators are trained and how knowledge is constructed within the field (Davies, 2022). In post-secondary ECEC education, the ruptures Reconceptualist thinking offers can challenge traditional frameworks that prioritize Eurocentric developmental models, standardized assessment, and rigid pedagogical approaches instead of making space for more justice-oriented, community-driven, and relational ways of teaching and learning (Davies, 2022; Davies, Karmiris, & Berman, 2022). The increasing diversity in Ontario classrooms makes this shift especially critical; Eurocentric approaches are no longer (and never were) enough. By centering the lived experiences of children, families, and educators, particularly those who have been marginalized historically, these disruptions push ECEC programs to interrogate whose knowledge is valued, whose voices shape curricula, and how future educators are prepared to engage with diverse communities. For us,

this is not only a theoretical imperative but a personal one. The scholars and stories we centre throughout this paper are those that have helped us name our own experiences, affirm our questions, and imagine pedagogical alternatives rooted in ethical relation rather than compliance. Thus, instead of perpetuating the ghosts of developmentalism, post-secondary ECEC programs can be spaces to think together about how intentional, daily decisions that embrace the messy, unfinished work of education itself allow educators to be ghostbusters.

Conclusion: Ghostbusters!

In making the shift from learning stories to living stories, we find ourselves confronting the ghosts of developmentalism, those persistent spectres that haunt ECEC with their demands for universality, predictability, and idealized notions of an educator and child that do not, and cannot, exist (Berman & Abawi, 2019; Davies, Karmiris, & Berman, 2022: Langford, 2007). Yet, in the everyday ruptures and micro-memories of the classroom, we catch glimpses of other possibilities, openings where the static roles of children and educators give way to dynamic, unfolding subjectivities. To engage with these ruptures is to resist the haunting scripts of developmentalism, to refuse the sanitized narratives that insist on preordained trajectories. Instead, living stories invite us to linger in uncertainty and to witness and honour the histories, struggles, and complexities that children, educators, and families bring into educational spaces every day. In doing so, educators take up an active role, not as passive observers of learning, but as co-constructors of meaning, as participants in a relational, unfolding process of being and becoming together. So, in facing the ghosts that linger in ECEC, educators do not turn away. Instead, we take up the challenge of confronting them, dismantling their grip on how childhood and education are imagined. By crafting living stories, we have the potential to reclaim the space for subjectivity, complexity, and relationality, forging new pedagogical possibilities that disrupt the dominance of developmentalism. In the words of a famous team of ghost hunters: When it comes to the ghosts of developmentalism - who you gonna call?

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