

Graduate Student Submission Guide for CAREC at CSSE



Submissions are due Wednesday, October 8, 2025 (23h59 Eastern).

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Submitting Proposals

1. **Visit the CSSE conference website:** <https://www.csse-scee.ca/conference-2026/> . This isn't where you submit your proposal, but you can find full information about the call for proposals.
2. **Log in to the CSSE members' portal:**
<https://www.assocsrv.ca/csse/index.asp?LANG=E>
3. **Renew (or purchase) your CSSE membership.** The person submitting each proposal must have a current CSSE membership. The submitter must be a member of CAREC (or another Association). Your membership is not your registration for the conference. Conference registration will open in January. *Note: Try to register a few days in advance of the proposal submission date, as the system occasionally has bugs.*
4. **Access the submission platform.** Submitters will be directed to the submission platform from within the members' portal. The submission platform and members' portal are separate websites with separate login information (e.g., can be different passwords).

Only current members may access the submission platform. We recommend you bookmark the submission platform once you're redirected.

5. **Submit your proposal and supporting details to the submission platform.**
Proposals must be received before the submission deadline. Proposals sent by any other means will be not accepted.

Types of Sessions

- **Multipaper sessions:** A multipaper session features several individual papers, usually on similar or related subjects. Presentations are followed by audience participation and, in some cases, discussant comments. Each paper receives an equal share of the session time. For example, in a 75-minute session with 3 papers, each paper will receive 15-20 minutes for presenting their work, with discussion to follow. This is the most common type of submission.
- **Symposia and panels:** A symposium/panel session provides in-depth examination of specific topics, often from a variety of viewpoints. The specific session format should align with the organizers' goals for the session (e.g., in-depth discussion of a single issue, a series of presentations on a related topic, interactive or artistic engagements, etc.). This is an option if you are working with a big group or have colleagues who write on similar themes. One person on the symposium/panel submits the proposal.
- **Roundtable sessions:** A roundtable session is a small group discussion centred on one or more individual papers. Papers will be grouped at tables in a large room. Each paper receives an equal share of the session time. For example, in a 75-minute session with 3 papers, each paper will receive 15-20 minutes for discussing their work, with a broader discussion to follow. A roundtable is an excellent way to present and receive feedback on your research. It is also a great option if this is your first time at CSSE. Note: Roundtable sessions may not have displays for multimedia material (ie PPT slides). Presenters are encouraged to use their personal devices for presentation materials or bring hard copies of any material they would like to distribute.
- **Poster sessions:** A poster session is an informal presentation and discussion featuring the use of graphic or other multimedia material. Poster sessions typically last 75 minutes, with recurring small-group discussions as delegates visit each poster. Poster displays should be at most 4 by 4 feet (1.22 by 1.22 meters) to maximize the number of posters that can be displayed in the poster gallery. Due to logistical constraints, CSSE is not able to accommodate video presentation equipment (e.g., a large screen) during poster sessions. This is another great option for graduate students who may be new to the conference circuit.
- **Arts-based sessions:** Arts-based sessions, including but not limited to performances, installations, galleries, studios, and other formats, utilize a wide range of arts-based research methods. The specific session format should align with the organizers' goals for the session. Sessions are typically 75 minutes long. This is similar to what many in education might consider an appropriate forum for workshops.

- **Themed discussions:** Themed discussions are designed for colleagues and community members to engage in discussions around a given topic, issue, concern, inquiry, or idea. Themed discussions should focus on conversation amongst all participants, not formal presentations. Submitters should identify at least 2 discussants who will attend the session to facilitate discussion with interested participants. Because the focus is on creating a decolonized space, this session type is not peer-reviewed. Instead, only an abstract is required. Abstracts should clearly outline the discussion topic and enable the Program Chair to ensure the topic and process(es) for discussion are anti-oppressive, feasible, and well-planned.

Preparing Your Submission

- Provide a **title** written in plain language stating what the session is about. This may seem self-evident, but each year we see session titles that do not convey enough information and therefore do not attract an audience. An example of a clear and concise title is "Reproductive In/Justice and Indigenous Women" by Dr. Keri Cheechoo. Titles are entered into a text field in the submission platform.
- Include an **abstract, not longer than 250 words, written in plain language**. CSSE uses the abstracts for the conference program, and your colleagues will use them to plan their session attendance. Please be concise, coherent, and catchy. Abstracts are entered into a text field in the submission platform.
- Enter up to five **keywords** for your proposal
- Enter all **author and co-author information** for the proposal. This enables us to identify and troubleshoot conflicts at an early stage (e.g., presentation times). Author and co-author details are entered into a pop-up field in the submission platform.
- Enter all proposal details:
 - **Purpose (250 words max):** What do you intend to argue? What critical stance are you advancing? How will your argument challenge dominant discourses or offer new insights into the lived experiences of children, education, pedagogy, etc?
 - **Perspective(s) or theoretical framework (250 words max):** Who are you thinking with? Which critical theorists, scholars, or frameworks inform your analysis? How do these perspectives shape your understandings?
 - **Methods and/or techniques (150 words max):** How will I conduct the research? Who am I co-constructing knowledge with? What methodological approaches guide your study (e.g., participatory research, ethnography, critical discourse analysis)? How will you collaborate with others (children, stakeholders, more-than-humans, texts) to co-create knowledge in this process?
 - **Data source(s) (150 words max):** What texts and materials will be analyzed? How do these materials contribute to understanding critical aspects of research in early childhood?
 - **Results, conclusions, and/or interpretations (250 words max):** What critical insights, challenges to existing theories, or new interpretations do you anticipate?

- How might your research reshape existing narratives about children, childhoods, or educational practices?
- **Educational importance of the study (150 words max):** Why does this matter for early childhood education? How will your study impact scholarship, policy, or pedagogy? What are the broader implications for how we understand and support children and childhoods in educational contexts?
- **References (no word count)**
- **Supporting agencies (not required):** Identify agencies that provided funding or support for the work presented in this submission.
- **Generative Artificial Intelligence Use Disclosure:** Were any generative artificial intelligence tools (e.g., large language models) used in the preparation of this proposal or its underlying research? (yes/no/specific details)
- **Copyright Notice**
- **Reviewer Notice:** Authors who submit a proposal are expected to serve as a reviewer for the group(s) they submit to. After you have submitted your proposal, please complete the reviewer information form to help us understand your area(s) of expertise. Proposals will be assigned to reviewers after the call for proposals has closed.
- Click to submit, and a new page should appear with: **Success!** Your abstract has been submitted.
- Make sure the text you enter is **de-identified**. Identifiers including author names and institutional affiliations must be removed for peer review. To de-identify your proposal: replace identifying citations with "Author, Year" in the text and reference list. For example, "As we have written previously (Smith et al., 2021)..." should read "As we have written previously (Author, 2021)..."

Abstract Advice

- **Be Clear and Direct:** Use active voice and concise language to present your argument as if the paper is already completed. Avoid future tense ("I will") and over-explaining. Instead, use phrases like "I argue" or "I contend" to state your main points directly.
- **Focus on the Argument:** Outline the argument you plan to examine, ensuring each sentence connects logically to the next. Avoid broad statements and unnecessary phrasing to save space.
- **Contextualize Your Work:** Situate your proposal within broader field discussions, showing how it contributes to early childhood research. Rather than over-justifying your project's importance, focus on how you are addressing a specific problem.
- **Be Specific and Organized:** Structure your abstract clearly using numbers or logical transitions. For example, "First, I argue... then, I demonstrate..." This helps maintain flow and clarity.
- **Keep it Engaging and Error-Free:** Review carefully for typos, clarity, and conciseness. Avoid jargon, and make sure your abstract is polished, engaging, and doesn't bury the lead.

- **Be Mindful of Space:** Write only what is necessary, cutting excess details and avoiding information better suited for the full paper.
- **Separate Problem from Solution:** Clearly distinguish between the problem you're addressing and your proposed solution. This helps keep the abstract organized and focused.
- **Use Plain Language:** Avoid complex phrasing and jargon where possible. Aim for an accessible abstract that readers can easily understand.
- **Be Realistic:** Keep in mind that your presentation time may be limited (15-20 minutes). Focus on what you can realistically cover, and avoid over-promising in your abstract.

Reminders and Other Things

- The submitter must be a **member of the group receiving the proposal**. In our case, the submitter would register CAREC. Submitters can check, renew, or purchase membership via the CSSE Members' Portal: <https://www.assocsrv.ca/csse/index.asp?LANG=E>. Afterwards, **when you submit your proposal, you choose CAREC from the drop-down menu**.
- A presenter may only serve as **first author once** per Association, for the entire conference. That is, while you are allowed to submit different presentations to Associations and SIGs within CSSE, one author cannot serve as first author for multiple papers within a single Association, or for multiple papers within an Association and its constituent SIGs.
- Decision emails will be sent to the submitter/first author in **early February**.

Reviewer Criteria

When preparing a proposal, it can be helpful to know the criteria reviewers are expected to follow. Using a numerical scale (e.g, score 1-5), two reviewers will be asked to assess your proposal on the following criteria:

1. Clarity of the proposal
2. Appropriateness of citations grounded in relevant literature (or equivalent)
3. Relevance and soundness of theoretical rationale (or equivalent)
4. Rigour of methodology or research design
5. Trustworthiness of results and conclusions
6. Significance to the field

Sometimes you will receive written feedback on your submission with the results; other times you may just receive the decision (Accepted/Rejected). There are also occasions where you may be offered a place in a session type that was not in your proposal (e.g., multipaper submission, accepted for roundtable). Program chairs have the discretion to assign accepted proposals to the **most appropriate format**. In addition to authors' preferences, session formats depend on available space, infrastructure limitations, and the number of proposals CSSE receives.

Contact Information

If you have any questions about writing and submitting your proposal, please reach out to us:

Emily Ashton, emily.ashton@unb.ca

Nancy van Groll, nancyvangroll@capilanou.ca

Alex Paquette paquette.alexandra@uqam.ca (French Translation)

Sample Abstracts (note these are in a previous format; each section now has a separate word count)

Abstract 1 (Roundtable):

This roundtable presentation explores the pedagogical self study practices of three PhD students embarking on their own research projects. The presenters argue for a reimagining of emancipatory purposes in educational research by engaging in one's own pedagogical practices as an alternate starting point. The presenters draw on Biesta (2020) who outlines an important skepticism in emancipatory assumptions in research in classrooms with educators as he questions, emancipation as knowledge recovery or "whether to think of emancipation in these terms is actually the most *unemancipatory* intervention of all" (p. 22). Drawing on Gert Biesta (2020), and Sharon Todd (2003) the presenters address a concern of attempting to change a situation for the better, within an education that clutches an epistemological certitude therefore turning ethics into rhetoric. They resist this notion and attempt starting from a different place, by recalling three examples of self-study that include walks through the Credit River watershed, speculative storytelling the futuristic squirrel, and forest walking near the Humber River with deer to draw out possibilities for pedagogical cultivation. The presenters conclude with a discussion with participants about their own pedagogical practices when engaging in research in classrooms.

Abstract 2 (Multipaper):

In this paper, we expose child observation's monstrous, devouring and colonizing origins and capacities, while inciting observation practices' potential in envisioning complex and ethically relational worlds that attend to interdependencies and challenge linear temporalities. Current socio-ecological concerns that question human and more-than-human very survival, the emergence of new materialism theories (Lenz Taguchi, 2013), long-held Indigenous epistemologies that disrupt human centrism (Donald, 2016), and the assumption that the observer (educator) can be separated from the observed (child) or severed from a world full of liveness and movement, call upon us to reconfigure our conceptual and methodological orientations to observation. This inquiry involves interdisciplinary, conceptual and embodied experimentation (visualization, art making, storying-speculating) as reinvisioned observational methods that are sensitive and available to the complexity and fragility of the multiple relations

that sustain and nourish children's lives (Reed, 2022; Taylor, 2017). We argue that grounding observation in relational ethics may heighten educators' curiosity and awareness to children's embeddedness in multiplicity of agentic relations and encounters that reciprocally affect children's becomings. Educators' subjectivities can transform from spectators/observers of children's behaviour to co-weavers of the tapestries of children's lifeworlds. The paper proposes tools to engage with the practice of observation in experimental, relational ways.

Abstract 3 (Multipaper):

In *The Child to Come: Life after the Human Catastrophe*, Rebekah Sheldon (2016) notes the shift in the image of the child, from "the child in need of saving to the child that saves" (p. 2). This presentation addresses the rise of youth activists in climate justice movements, emphasizing the transition from protected to protector. However, public discourse often frames youth activists as solitary heroes, overlooking the importance of collective action (Deszcz-Tryhubczak, 2020). Drawing on decolonial and speculative young adult fiction, such as Cherie Dimaline's *The Marrow Thieves* and David Robertson's *The Misewa Saga*, we explore narratives of mutual aid and collaborative survival in response to climate crises. These works challenge humanist framings of children as lone saviors, instead situating them within complex ecologies that highlight Indigenous relations with land, language, and more-than-human kin. Using Daniel Heath Justice's (2018) framework, we ask how children's literature can help us rethink our roles in ecological futures: "How do we become good ancestors? How do we learn to live together?" Acknowledging our position as white, settler-Canadian educators, we emphasize the need for relationships built on learning from Indigenous perspectives, aiming to imagine futures beyond settler-colonial frameworks (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

Sample Proposals

Sample 1 (Multipaper):

Title: Moving beyond the recycling of mechanistic practices in teacher education: Reimagining practicum mentorship through collaboration, relationality, and experimentation

Purpose: In early 2021, in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, a pedagogical project was initiated: the formation of a small outdoor cohort of 3-5-year-old children and 2 educators. This was partially in response to social distancing and the risks of infection but more significantly the pandemic presented an opportunity for us to re-establish our pedagogical intentions and begin to cultivate new ways of living and learning with children. Our hopeful response to the pandemic facilitated a deepening of our relationships to place and one another amidst a world increasingly fearful of the other and distanced through isolation. This outdoor cohort became a place to think otherwise about relational pedagogy and what Vintimilla (2021) would refer to as life-making processes. At the intersection of practicum advisor/pedagogist, mentor teacher and student we think with van Groll and Kummen (2021) who lean on Alexis Shotwell's (2020) question: *What relationships do we want to grow out of this crisis?* This question orients us to engage with the disruptions that the pandemic presented as an opportunity to create new narratives through the invitation of practicum and processes of pedagogical mentorship. Here we hoped to cultivate a disposition towards collective thinking, speculation, and experimentation; to reconceptualize practicum as more than an assessment of skills and abilities; and move beyond the recycling of mechanistic practices in teacher education.

Perspective(s) or theoretical framework: This pedagogical mentorship is informed by the reconceptualist orientation of the *British Columbia Early Learning Framework*, which holds within it, an overarching vision of “Respectfully living and learning together” (Government of British Columbia, 2019, p12). We also draw upon the position paper *The Role of the Early Childhood Educator* (Early Childhood Educators of BC, 2022). The position paper perpetuates a profound re-envisioning of the educator and the dispositions that are necessary in cultivating and activating pedagogical leadership within localized contexts and in response to 21st century issues and concerns.

Methods/Techniques: As a university faculty in Western Canada, we have been developing a ‘designated host centre’ practicum model to cultivate intentional pedagogical relationships and mentorships. This model places diploma and degree ECCE students in consecutive practicum placements within the same early years centre with a consistent mentor teacher and a pedagogist. Through this orientation, students become immersed in the culture of an ECCE setting through long-term inquiry and practices of pedagogical documentation. Our presentation illuminates how the ‘designated host centre’ practicum model is continuing to cultivate leadership and emerging ethical and responsive dispositions within student educators.

This undertaking is a qualitative pedagogical project - utilizing phenomenological approaches to thinking, writing, documenting, and experimenting together. We recognize the role that in-process documentation plays in transforming understandings and practice for educators as "a 'methodology' in the sense of an active will of complicating what we know about our practices, to put ourselves in motion to be in a process of change and invention, not knowing the end state" (Lenz-Taguchi, 2010, p.91; see also Hodgins, 2012; Olsson, 2012)

Data Sources: Our presentation contains lively examples of mentorship that include in-process, messy, rhizomatic documentation practices that compel curriculum and decision making within our collective. We also include personal accounts of lived experience, sharing the impacts of these methodologies on our practice as a mentor-educator and pedagogist.

Interpretations: This mentorship process shifted emphasis away from objective observation towards inquiry processes that are alive, relational and which nurture a responsive disposition in the context of a global pandemic. Our approach is concerned with welcoming the student as an active contributor to the collective culture (Hodgins & Kummen, 2019). With this orientation, we are actively resisting an approach to practicum pedagogy that adheres to a linear line of progression or the implementation of a series of activities that simply evaluate a student's skills. Here, we deliberately position the student as an educator-in-formation (Todd, 2001) as they learn to engage with the complexity and potentiality of ECCE (Langford, 2007; Vintimilla, Pacini-Ketchabaw and Land, 2021).

We see this project as encouraging an ethos that is characterised by a radical openness to the other. This openness creates conditions for mentorship where relationships flourish; where many ideas intersect allowing room to speculate, shift, shape, and re-shape each other's thinking; and where new understandings of learning mobilize change and spark radical shifts in practice that strengthen our local ECCE communities. This project demonstrates how documentation processes are integral to practice in ECCE settings, becoming a site for dialogue, experimentation and speculation between student-children-mentor-pedagogist.

Importance of the Study: Locally, the impact of the 'designated host centre' model is strengthening pedagogical leadership skills in student-educators and nurturing a willingness to cultivate cultures of inquiry in their future early year's settings. Additionally, as a lab school this experimentation has a direct impact on curriculum development and course design for pre-service educators. More broadly, it is our hope that this paper presentation will open up dialogue about how post-secondary institutions can design practicum pedagogies that move beyond the recycling of technical practices that perpetuate an image and understanding of the educator as a technician (Moss & Petrie, 2002).

Sample 2 (Multipaper):

Title: The Ambiguity of Play: The Ethics of Opacity in Cultural Texts

Abstract (200 words max):

This presentation examines the potential of two mainstream media texts to challenge conventional understandings of children's play by attuning to their opacity. Through a critical analysis of the Canadian children's television classic *Mr. Dressup* and the global blockbuster film *Barbie*, we explore how these texts disrupt western hierarchies of play and childhood, and open up possibilities for rethinking their subjective, temporal, and material dimensions. Drawing on Édouard Glissant's (1990) notion that "a person has the right to be opaque," we argue for an ethical and ontological stance that values the immeasurable and resists assimilation. This right to opacity, we contend, extends not only to human beings but also to puppets, dolls, and other play objects with which children (and adults) interact. Ultimately, we propose that *Mr. Dressup* and *Barbie* invite us to embrace diverse forms of subjectivity, agency, and imagination that emerge when we engage with the opacity of play.

Purpose:

This presentation is theoretically underpinned by Édouard Glissant's (1990/2010) concepts of opacity and relationality. We explore how such philosophical ideas can disrupt developmental, standardizing, and universalizing educational frameworks and cultural understandings of childhood play. Glissant's notion of opacity, which opposes transparency as a form of violence and reductionism, provides a critical lens through which to analyze mainstream media texts like *Mr. Dressup* and *Barbie*. By resisting the urge to "know" or "understand" in the western sense, the study embraces the unquantifiable and irreducible dimensions of play and children's play with objects.

In the context of childhood education, Glissant's ideas are particularly generative as they highlight how identities and beings—whether children, adults, or play objects—interact with one another without losing their distinctiveness. This relational framework, which privileges encounters with Otherness rather than attempts at assimilation, allows us to rethink children's play in a more complex, inclusive manner. This perspective also challenges theories of intra-action (Barad, 2007), where subjects do not pre-exist their relating. The study draws on feminist, queer, poststructural, and posthuman analyses to examine how play and subjectivity emerge in media representations, offering a critique of how childhood and play are typically positioned within developmental and educational discourses. By theorizing with Glissant, we use this paper to suggest that educational practices might foster spaces where ambiguity, imagination, and relational complexity are embraced, rather than reduced or controlled.

Perspective(s) or theoretical framework (we used the conference categories but feel this is embedded throughout the proposal):

In his book *Poetics of Relation*, Glissant (1990/2010) plays with Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) image of the rhizome, calling it "an enmeshed root system, a network spreading either in the ground or in the air, with no predatory rootstock taking over permanently" (p. 11). The rhizome maintains, therefore, a rootedness, but refuses the imposing and murderous qualities of the totalitarian root. Glissant (1990/2010) examines both the rooting and rhizomatic tendencies of colonialism, extending throughout the world through discovery and conquest in what he refers to as "arrowlike nomadism" (p. 19), settling colonizers' languages and uprooting Indigenous ones.

This presentation, which will be spoken aloud for the first time in Tkaronto, and conceived, written, and spoken only in English, is made possible through this rhizomatic but ultimately rooted coloniality tied to the academy. We recognize the ethical complications of joining the emplaced Caribbean concepts of a Caribbean thinker with texts of white, western mainstream media and white, western presenters. It becomes an exercise of both generativity and extraction.

We wonder how play scholarship, often treated as *rooted* in theory, is also rhizomatic, and what colonial or decolonial tendencies may be travelling with it, with its own wayward nomadism. Aaron Trammell (2023) points out that play scholarship is often rooted in white supremacy, misogyny, and colonialism. Similarly, in early childhood education, educators often use developmental theory to interpret and understand children, attempting to determine “what rational desires underpin their (in)action, (un)compliance or progress/regression...this desire to know children is often presented as benign” (Viruru, 2001, p. 4).

The texts we think with in this paper are about playthings, imagination, language, and identity. We argue that such things, combined with Glissant's ideas of Relation, transparency, and opacity, open up non-innocent possibilities for uprooting narrow, western valuations of play.

Methods and/or techniques:

Our methods for this theoretical paper draw heavily on Glissant's (1990/2010) critique of transparency, which he describes as a violent process that reduces individuals, cultures, and ideas into knowable, comprehensible, and measurable entities. By making something transparent, we expose it to scrutiny, stripping away its complexities. In contrast, our speculative and philosophical inquiry rejects such reductionism. Rather than revealing ‘truths’ about cultural texts or their meanings for children, we celebrate their opacity—their irreducibility and unknowability.

We employ a combination of speculative philosophy, poststructural, feminist, queer, and posthuman analysis to think with *Mr. Dressup* and *Barbie* (e.g., Ahmed, 2017; Butler, 1990; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Foucault, 1988). Poststructural analysis allows us to challenge fixed categories and binary oppositions (e.g., child/adult, nature/culture, knowable/unknowable), while feminist and queer theories help us explore how gender, fluidity, and power are constructed and represented within these media. Posthuman analysis further extends our inquiry into the relationships between humans and non-humans, examining how play and childhood are interconnected with broader ecological webs.

This multi-faceted approach allows us to move beyond seeking clarity or "truth" and instead embrace the ambiguity and complexity of play, childhood, and cultural texts. By resisting the drive to render these subjects and objects transparent, we uphold Glissant's concept of opacity as an ethical and ontological condition that cannot be controlled, reduced, or fully understood.

Data source(s):

Our data sources include two celebrated mainstream entertainment productions:

Mr. Dressup was a Canadian children's television program, starring Ernie Coombs, that ran on the Canadian Broadcasting Company for 29 years from 1967 to 1996. The series is a national treasure and is considered one of Canada's most beloved children's television series (Mullen, 2018). The show starred Ernie Coombs, or Mr. Dressup, who interacts with human and puppet characters, most notably Casey, a 4-year-old child, and Finnigan, a dog, both played by puppeteer Judith Lawrence. The show is characterized by slowness and everydayness as Coombs speaks, draws, and otherwise interacts with child-viewers and cast. The slow pace is unique to many children's movies and programs, especially today (Mullen, 2018). Furthermore, Mr. Dressup emphasizes a slow childhood that remains counter to accelerated childhoods, hurried by developmental pedagogies (Clark, 2022).

The *Barbie* film (2023) reimagines the iconic doll's world, blending fantasy and satire to explore themes of identity, gender, and societal expectations. It follows Barbie as she transitions from her perfect, plastic life in Barbieland to confront real-world complexities. The film challenges stereotypes associated with Barbie, presenting a more nuanced view of femininity, empowerment, and individuality. Culturally, *Barbie* is significant for play and childhood as it reflects shifting gender norms, relations with non-humans, and encourages critical thinking about representation, agency, and self-expression. By reinventing an influential childhood figure, the film invites dialogue on the evolving roles of toys and play in shaping childhood.

Results, conclusions, and/or interpretations:

The results of this analysis align with Glissant's assertion that opacity is inherent in any reading of a text, making definitive conclusions elusive—an outcome that reflects the very nature of the texts themselves. By applying Glissant's philosophy, the act of analyzing filmic and televised events such as *Mr. Dressup* and *Barbie* becomes an ongoing, playful, and open-ended process. The impossibility of fully clarifying art, ideas, and positionalities is not a failure but a critical engagement with the rhizomatic, fluid nature of art and meaning, as noted by Deleuze and Guattari (1987). They argue that a rhizome has no clear beginning or end, existing perpetually in-between, much like the subjects of this analysis.

The study does not conclude with answers but opens new questions: How have *Mr. Dressup* and *Barbie* reshaped ideas of play, subjectivity, and identity in childhood? What lines of flight—the alternative, unexpected possibilities—have their embrace of opacity enabled? These texts, through their dedication to ambiguity and fluidity, challenge normative educational and cultural expectations of play and children, inviting interpretations that resist closure and celebrate complexity.

Educational importance of the study:

In early childhood education contexts, this study emphasizes the importance of fostering spaces that respect the complexity and ambiguity inherent in children's play. Centring Glissant's (1990/2010) assertion that "a person has the right to be opaque," we argue for an ethical and pedagogical stance that values the immeasurable aspects of play, resisting the urge to reduce children's experiences to easily defined outcomes or rigid frameworks. This right to opacity extends to play objects like puppets and dolls, which encourage imaginative and subjective exploration. By embracing the playful ambiguity of figures such as Mr. Dressup and Barbie, and

the analysis they invite, educators can nurture a more inclusive, philosophically rich understanding of childhood where diverse forms of subjectivity, agency, and creative expression are honoured. This approach encourages deeper engagement with the ethical and ontological dimensions of play, positioning it as a vital space for learning that transcends conventional educational metrics.

Sample 3 (Multipaper):

Title: CRT and its application in early childhood education teacher training

Overview of the topic

Under the guise and assumption that young children are too young or “racially innocent” to engage in activities that address racism and discrimination, colorblind perspectives have long guided ECE teaching practice (Escayg, 2019a, 2019b, 2020; Janmohamed, 2005). There is a pervasive false belief that children themselves are colorblind and “racially innocent” (Daniel & Escayg, 2019). that they live and operate in “race neutral” spaces. A long-held belief in a universal model of child development, dictated by the Western, Euro-centric perspective, children continues to underestimate in their ability to engage with these complex topics and racialized students’ lived experience of racism and discrimination has been dismissed (Escayg, 2020). Sadly, no place is this colorblind perspective more apparent than in early childhood education (ECE), our foundational education. Under the pervasive anti-bias curriculum, one of the most influential concepts of ECE teaching practice, “developmentally appropriate practice”, continues to encourage only superficial discourse and analysis of race in early childhood. Due to a fear of engaging in complex and troubling topics too early, “developmentally appropriate practice” is often cited as to why schools and educators fail to engage more deeply with the issues of racism and discrimination (Escayg, 2020). However, failing to engage in these discussions, teachers could unknowingly neglect the needs of their diverse students and fail to help them in developing their own cultural competencies (Farago et al., 2015). CRT and its key tenets can offer a lens in which to challenge the dominant ideology, the institutions that maintain the Euro-centric educational system in North America, and help explain the sustained inequity in education and educational systems. Beginning with ECE teacher education, this paper will aim to explore the ways in which critical race theory can be utilized at the foundational levels of early childhood education for both teachers and students. The primary question(s) to be explored will be: **How can ECE teacher education benefit from CRT and its key tenets?** Additional questions explored will be: **How can CRT challenge the anti-bias curriculum that dominates ECE practice? What learning tools unique to ECE could facilitate the exploration of complex topics with young students?**

Perspective(s) or Theoretical Framework

Broadly, this critical paper will discuss a brief history of CRT and its key tenets, its relevance to education, and will argue its particularly unique connection with ECE. It aims to bring these areas of domain together through a critical lens. Topics discussed will include the challenging of the pervasive anti-bias curriculum of ECE in Canada today, the whiteness of ECE teacher education, as well as the BC Early Childhood framework that informs early childhood

educator programs and teaching in B.C.. Lastly, this paper will highlight powerful learning tools in the ECE curriculum such as storytelling and play-based learning as ways to discuss and engage with topics of race and racism with young students.

Critical Race Theory in Education

Though there is no uniform agreement its key tenets, the following are those most recurring in the literature that help to shape the CRT perspective. In particular, those most relevant to this paper and its scope:

- 1) Racism as ordinary, permanent, and pervasive (Delgado, Stefancic, 2012)
- 2) Whiteness as property (Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1998)
- 3) Recognizing interest-convergence (Bell, 1989)
- 4) Challenging colorblindness, neutrality, objectivity (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005)
- 5) Acknowledging intersectionality and resisting essentialism (Crenshaw, 2017)
- 6) Amplifying experiential Knowledge – storytelling, counter-narratives (Ladson-Billings, 1998)

CRT scholars agree that CRT and its key tenets can offer conceptual tools, a framework, and an analytical lens in which to interrogate how race and racism is institutionalized and maintained (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Sleeter, 2017). Moreover, it can work toward the broader goal of dismantling all forms of oppression (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005), including those that exist in our educational systems.

CRT in Early Childhood Education

In shifting away from colorblind perspectives, the field of ECE now finds itself using an anti-bias curriculum. Commonly cited as the pioneers of the anti-bias curriculum and anti-bias education, researcher Denman-Sparks and the A.B.C. Task force (1989) (Escayg, 2018, 2019b; Farago et al., 2015) introduced the anti-bias approach as “an activist approach to challenging prejudice, stereotyping, bias, and the isms” (Escayg, 2019b). The chief benefit of this approach is its acknowledgment of children’s ability to construct and engage in racialized discourse. However, despite these positive strides, this approach fails to address power, privilege and whiteness, thus resulting in a limited view of racism. The anti-bias curriculum also lacks pedagogical strategies to obtain the recognition of constitutive elements of power and privilege in the construction of racial difference, including that of whiteness” (Escayg, 2020, p. 4). Furthermore, although today’s teacher education programs commonly declare their commitment to social justice, culturally responsive teaching, and the incorporation of indigenous ways of knowing and learning into their curriculum, cohorts of preservice teachers remain predominantly white middle class women, and only a few required courses are devoted to these topics in teacher training and education (Escayg, 2019; Leonardo & Boas, 2021; Sleeter, 2017).

Unless ECE educators are explicitly taught to recognize and engage with topics of race and racism throughout their work and practice, they risk failing to meet the needs of their increasingly diverse student populations (Farago et al., 2015). Janmohamed (2005) argues that ECE teachers must be trained to use this critical lens when engaging with race and its systemic structures, without doing so, “they will be stuck in the notion that early childhood work is charitable, rather than becoming agents of change” (p.163).

Educational importance of this paper

How can ECE benefit from the CRT perspective? We can begin by illustrating the importance of incorporating the CRT lens into ECE, in looking at teacher education training. Building the tenets of CRT into our foundational education early on, could help us to better equip our ECE educators and students to question, disrupt and dismantle racism. After all, the ultimate goal of education – to transform and advance our society, requires that we provide all peoples with the necessary tools in which to create a more just and equitable society.

Sample 4 (Poster):

Title: BC Early Childhood Educators' well-being, emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic

Overview of topic: Though finally recognized as “essential workers” during the COVID-19 pandemic, recent studies have revealed the disparities ECEs experienced in their psychological, physical well-being compared to other professions during this time (Eadie et al., 2021; Swigonski et al., 2021). Health outcomes and quality of life were also reported to be worse for ECEs from racialized backgrounds and those who had children of their own. This was especially true for ECEs who identified as Latina and Black (Souto-Manning & Melvin, 2021). In fact, across the world, ECEs reported experiencing a pileup of environmental, occupational, and racial stressors in an urban-intensive settings during COVID-19 (Bigras et al, 2021; Eadie et al., 2021; Quinn et al., 2022; Rahman, Islam, & Boyd 2022; Swigonski et al., 2021;). ECEs believed these disparities were influenced by an increased workload, their experience of feeling undervalued by the government and media, the pressures they experienced when supporting colleagues, parents and children at the expense of their own mental health (Berger et al., 2021). In Canada, the COVID-19 pandemic only exacerbated an already underfunded and struggling system of childcare that was facing low recruitment and an already existing staffing crisis. In 2020, more than 70% of childcare centres reported having to lay off all or some staff. While some were re-hired as centres opened back up, many did not return to work (Beach et al., 2023). The Early Childhood Educators of BC organization reports that nearly half of all childcare centres in BC are losing employees at a rate quicker than they are being hired (ECEBC, 2023). Moreover, Ontario’s College of Early Childhood Educators found that of 58,867 ECEs registered with, 44% do not work in licensed childcare at the moment, leading researchers to believe that many have experienced a burnout of working in this profession and will not return unless quality of work and compensation are raised (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2021).

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to report on and contribute to the literature on the experiences of ECEs, including their health and wellness as we transition from the COVID-19 pandemic, working in the province of British Columbia.

Data source(s): We are in the midst of data collection drawing from the available literature and already established measures of stress and well-being. Our, online Qualtrics survey is being distributed to ECEs that are currently working in B.C.. The data analysis will include both descriptive and correlational analyses. While data collection is currently in progress we anticipate the survey aspect of our study will be completed at the time of the CSEE conference.

Significance: Survey findings will inform the necessary discussion about ECE well-being and needs in B.C.. In our discussion we will highlight ways to address the wellness of ECEs. As new data emerges in other regions of the world, it is important that we do not lose the voice of ECEs and the lessons that were learned during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic brought with it a need to bring a sharper focus early childhood educators well-being not only during COVID-19, but also their overall wellness as we move forward.