

NARRATION-AS-ACTION:
THE POTENTIAL OF PEDAGOGICAL NARRATION FOR LEADERSHIP
ENACTMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CONTEXTS

by

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Abstract

In the field of Early Childhood Education (ECE), especially in the sector that focuses on provision of care and education for children under the age of five, the concept of leadership has been underexplored theoretically and empirically. The paucity in ECE leadership research has become particularly troubling because early education has recently been the subject of major policy changes. The changes are characterized by formulation of centralized ECE curricula and closer structural relations between ECE and formal schooling. These changes present a growing risk of narrowing the possibilities for thinking what ECE might be about/for.

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case research project was to study the leadership potential that an innovative practice called pedagogical narration has for reinvigorating public conversations that complicate and broaden the discussion about purposes and values of early education. Pedagogical narration involves a process through which early childhood educators create and share narratives about significant pedagogical occurrences with children from their early childhood settings with the purpose of engaging others in critical dialogue where questions about meanings, identities, and values are made visible and open for disputation and renewal.

The study focused on exploring what new possibilities for leadership enactment and leadership identities arise when early childhood educators engage with the practice of pedagogical narration. By drawing on Hannah Arendt's political theory, leadership was reconstituted as ethical and political action that is enacted through inserting into the public domain narratives that interrupt habitual thought, opening the space for new understandings of our plural existence.

Significant leadership events illuminated the potential of pedagogical narration for enacting leadership through: reconstituting ECE as a public space, mitigating habits of thoughtlessness, and pluralizing the identities of children. The study offers new conceptual options for theorizing and enacting leadership in ECE contexts, as well as providing a conceptual terrain from which new leadership identities for early childhood educators can emerge.

Preface

This dissertation is an original creation of the author, Iris Berger. Ethics approval to conduct this study was obtained from the University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board. The certificate number for this study is H10-01661.

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List of Abbreviations

Toddler's Childcare Reflective Interview - TCC, RI

Toddler's Childcare Probe Interview - TCC, PR

Toddler's Childcare Samples of Pedagogical Narrations – TCC, PN

Toddler's Childcare Observations – TCC, Observation #

3-5 Childcare Reflective Interview – 3-5 CC, RI

3-5 Childcare Probe Interview - 3-5 CC, PR

3-5 Childcare Samples of Pedagogical Narrations – 3-5 CC, PN

3-5 Childcare Observations – 3-5 CC, Observation #

Preschool Reflective Interview - P, RI

Preschool Probe Interview – P, PI

Preschool Sample of a Pedagogical Narration – P, PN

Preschool Observations – P, Observation #

Parent Co-op Preschool Reflective Interview - PCO, PI

Parent Co-op Preschool Probe Interview – PCO, PI

Parent Co-op Preschool Samples of Pedagogical Narrations – PCO, PN

Parent Co-op Preschool Observations – PCO, Observation #

StrongStart Reflective Interview – SS, RI

StrongStart Probe Interview – SS, PI

StrongStart Samples of Pedagogical Narrations – SS, PN

StrongStart Observations – SS, Observation #

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Chapter One

Introduction to the Study

Seen from the viewpoint of man, who always lives in the interval between past and future, time is not a continuum, a flow of uninterrupted succession; it is broken in the middle, at the point where “he” stands; and “his” standpoint is not the present as we usually understand it but rather a gap in time which “his” constant fighting, “his” making a stand against past and future, keeps in existence.

~ Hannah Arendt (1954)

A point of departure

I begin writing this dissertation from an understanding of research as the painstaking work of prying open a gap between past and future, finding a fissure in a world that preceded us and making a space for something new to appear in relation to this world. The main aim of *this* study is to investigate the possibility of opening such a gap for “inserting” a reconceptualized idea of leadership in early childhood education (hence forth ECE) into contemporary debates about education in general and educational leadership in particular.

At the heart of this inquiry lies my interest in studying the relatively unexplored potential that a reconceptualized idea of leadership in ECE has for broadening, deepening, and sustaining “complicated conversations” (Pinar, 2004) about the purposes and values of early education, while, at the same time, pluralizing the identities of the field of ECE and its citizens, namely, children, educators, and parents.

More specifically, this research project examines leadership enactments that arise when early childhood educators use a unique pedagogical tool called pedagogical narration. Pedagogical narration involves a process by which early childhood educators mindfully collect observational notes and other documented materials (i.e., photographs, samples of children’s

work, video and audio recordings and transcriptions of children’s conversations) that capture significant moments in children’s learning processes and lived experiences.¹ After an initial stage of self-reflection about the documented material, the early childhood educator engages the members of her community (colleagues, children, and parents) in thinking, discussing, and negotiating the possible interpretations and implications of the documented event. Later, the educator collects the reflections and multiperspectival interpretations about the children’s experiences from the various participants (these may be children, parents, and colleagues) into a written narrative that is shared with the community in the form of display or presentation (often as a text supported by visual images) for further dialogue. The interactive processes involved in creating the pedagogical narrative can open up a space where new insights about the complexities of teaching, as well as children’s ways of being, thinking, learning and acting in pedagogical spaces emerge. These insights have the potential to orient future (more) responsive and ethically-rich pedagogical ventures in ECE contexts.

To think about leadership in relation to the practice of pedagogical narrations, then, entails thinking about leadership differently than it is typically conceived in the school leadership literature (see discussion below). In this thesis, I am making a case for a particular use of the word “leadership.” The present study is not an attempt to give a definite answer to the question of what leadership in ECE is. Instead, I wish to open up the phenomenon of leadership for new thinking by examining, theoretically and empirically, what (new) understandings of the notion of leadership are possible, relevant, and productive for the field of ECE within contemporary political and pedagogical contexts. This attempt is anchored in the belief that a different

¹ For an example of a pedagogical narration, see *Understanding the B.C. Early Learning Framework: From Theory to Practice* (pp.17-22) accessible online at http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early_learning/pdfs/from_theory_to_practice.pdf

conceptualization of leadership produces different possibilities for action in the world (Mackler, 2008).

One of the conceptual difficulties of reframing the notion of leadership lies in the word leadership itself. The concept of leadership has been saturated with images of individuals in positions of authority and leaders are typically thought of as possessing particular traits, knowledge, and skills (Giles & Morrison, 2010; Wood & Case, 2006). In educational contexts, leadership is often associated with administrative power and assumptions that effective leadership results in efficient achievement of pre-defined educational goals (Biesta & Miron, 2002; Giles & Morrison, 2012; Rosemary & Puroila, 2002). Managerial approaches to educational leadership (and leadership in general), which to a large degree govern our thinking about leadership, have been deemed by a number of ECE scholars as immaterial to the field of ECE (see for example, Hard, 2005), because administrative approaches to leadership often overlook the relational experiences which make up a central pedagogical value in ECE (I discuss this later in this chapter). The present study, then, explores the possibility of the practice of pedagogical narrations for reconstituting ECE educational leadership as a relational, and therefore, political and ethical phenomenon with central import in ECE settings.

To frame leadership as relational, political, and ethical, I draw extensively on the political thought of Hannah Arendt (1906-1975).² Arendt's (1994, 1958/1998, 2005) mediation on political theory became a rich conceptual reservoir for this study, because Arendt associated political action with acts of storytelling or narration. Arendt's storytelling is a multilayered construct with distinctive ethical dimensions. Acts of storytelling were, for Arendt, a generative

² In Chapter Three, I provide an extensive account of Arendt's political theory and I elaborate on its relevance to the present study.

source for enlarging the meanings of our plural existence as much as they were a methodology for interrupting historical processes and habits of thoughtlessness (see also, Disch, 1994; Kristeva, 2001). Stories, once they are told and made public, gain the potential to expand the *web of human relations* by revealing the plurality of perspectives on a common public matter. As the Arendtian scholar Lisa Disch (1994) clarifies, the task of the Arendtian storyteller is not, however, to give a descriptive account of an experience; rather, storytelling is about telling a provocative story that stirs people *to think what they are doing*. For Arendt narratives are agentic (see Tamboukou, 2011); they illuminate the contingency and complexity of our human condition, and as such, they reinstate possibilities for renewal or change. Arendt was interested in narratives about unexpected moments or events, in particular, moments in which certainties surrounding values and identities are shaken and destabilized. When “tales of the unexpected” (Canovan, 1998, p. vii) are inserted into a public sphere, they pause our perception of the linear flow of time and in the “gap” that has temporarily opened, new understandings of human existence can emerge. Narrators, thus, have an important role in Arendt’s political approach. Narrators not only ‘capture’ extraordinary moments in order to make them into objects of thought and question for their political community, narrators also reveal the ‘protagonist’ of the event in her or his unrepeatability and uniqueness that emerged in the eventual moment. In Julia Kristeva’s (2001) words: “The art of [the Arendtian] narrative resides in the power to condense action into an exemplary space, in removing it from the general flow of events, and in drawing attention to a ‘who’” (p. 73).

Framing leadership from an Arendtian perspective shifts the terms of discussion about leadership. Leadership is no longer bound to a position, but is manifested in the willingness to speak and act, or tell a provocative story in a public forum. It is on the grounds of Arendt’s

proposition of narratives' agentic potential that I seek to understand the possibilities for leadership enactments as afforded by the process of pedagogical narration in ECE settings. Seen from this perspective, acts of leadership are linked with early childhood educators taking on the position of narrators and initiators of dialogue and critical reflection about possible meanings of stories pertaining to children's lived experiences. Eliciting multiperspectival interpretations of documented moments can illuminate and make visible the creativity and complexity of young children's thinking and learning, at the same time as they can elucidate and make visible the creativity and complexity of the early childhood educators' practice. Moreover, when the pedagogical narratives begin to circulate within the community, they have the potential to challenge and expand the discourses and identities that are commonly assigned to the field of ECE, including the identities of educators, children and parents.

Contextualizing the study

The political context

Proliferation of ECE policy

The importance of investigating alternative frameworks for leadership in the early childhood arena is rising due to the fact that the field of ECE is presently confronted with unprecedented political attention both internationally and locally (Langford, 2010; McTavish, 2012; OECD, 2006).³ Over the last decade, national and provincial governments in a significant number of countries, including Canada, have created centralized early childhood curricula documents and have established closer structural relationships between early childhood and the

³ Part of the interest in ECE at the policy level was manifested in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) extensive review of Early Childhood Education and Care across twelve volunteer countries, including Canada, from 1998-2000.

formal education system.⁴ As well, current market-based policy (see below) emphasizes the relationships between ECE and future economic growth (Prentice, 2009). The changes that take place at the policy level raise questions about opportunities for early childhood educators to be active participants or active respondents to change rather than “just observers of this moment in the field’s evolution” (Goffin & Washington, 2007, p. 3). Dahlberg and Moss (2005) muse that: “We are at a historical moment when it has become urgent to raise the question: what are the possibilities for institutions for children and young people?” (p. 2).

In British Columbia (B.C.), early education has been at the vanguard of government policy initiatives with major changes in early education policy occurring over the last decade. In 2005, the B.C. Ministry of Education was assigned the responsibility for Early Learning, which meant that for the first time in history the B.C. Ministry of Education has had direct involvement in the education of children under age five. Since 2005, two early education policy documents: *British Columbia Early Learning Framework* (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2008) and its implementation guide: *Understanding British Columbia Early Learning Framework: From theory to practice* (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2009), have been produced by the B.C. Ministry of Education. While these policy documents are not mandated (except in StrongStart centres, see below), they were created with the purpose of guiding the work of early childhood educators in providing rich learning experiences for children ages birth to five in various early childhood settings in B.C. (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2008). In addition, the B.C. Ministry of Education began to fund early learning programs for children under five and their caregivers. The StrongStart early learning programs have been offered in classrooms in a growing number of

⁴ These policy changes have been summarized in a report by the B.C. Early Childhood Learning Agency (April 2009)

public schools across B.C. since 2007.⁵ While a public system for the education of four-year-old children was proposed in the Early Childhood Learning Agency Report in 2009, the path on which the B.C. government is currently proceeding with regard to early education is unclear. Moreover, despite the changes at the policy level, training requirements for ECE licensure remained at the one-year, college diploma level and remunerations for the ECE sector continue to be well below the pay for teachers who are employed by the public education sector (Government of Canada, Service Canada, Early Childhood Educators and Assistants). In B.C., most early childhood centres operate as private not-for-profit organizations with minimal support from public bodies (Child Care Canada, Childcare Resource and Research Unit, CRRU). In this light, it is important to note that the demands made by a newly introduced reflective practice such as pedagogical narration have not been adequately addressed in terms of professional development or structural conditions.

Neoliberalism and depolitization of education

An increasing number of ECE scholars link the global changes in early childhood policies over the last decade to the constant seepage of neoliberal agendas into the educational arena (Brown, 2009; Burman, 2005; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Duhn, 2008; Duncan 2007; Fielding & Moss, 2011; Woodrow, 2008). Neoliberal ideology has risen to the forefront of international policies over the last two decades (Fielding & Moss, 2011). While commonly equated with the rise of a radically free market economy, Brown (2005) convincingly argues that neoliberalism needs to be addressed as a “*political rationality*” (p. 38, original emphasis). As such, neoliberalism reaches beyond the economy to disseminate market values to noneconomic domains and institutions (including education) to the point that every policy is submitted to

⁵ See B.C. Ministry of Education website, Early Learning Initiatives
http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early_learning/strongstart_bc/

instrumental consideration of profitability. Brown (2005) points out that the market is in fact not 'free.' Rather, the market has become the regulative principle of the modern, capitalist state as more policies and interventions are deemed necessary for dissemination of social norms that facilitate competition and rational economic action. Within this (distorted) political milieu, citizens are constructed as individualized, entrepreneurial, rational actors whose success is measured by their ability to provide for their own needs, and contribute usefully to the labour needs of the market. Brown (2005) poignantly argues that neoliberalism constructs citizens in such a way that

reduces political citizenship to an unprecedented degree of passivity and political complacency. The model neoliberal citizen is one who strategizes for her – or himself among various social, political and economic options, not one who strives with others to alter or organize these options. A fully realized neoliberal citizenry would be the opposite of public-minded; indeed, it would barely exist as a public. (p. 43)

Seen from the backdrop of a wider transformation of global political values, the proliferation of ECE curricula and the increased standardization of ECE practice signal a worrisome trend toward mainstreaming ECE practice and intensifying technologies for governing children in the ECE context (Dalli, 2010; Duncan, 2007; Fraquhar, 2010, Moss, 2007; Lenz Taguchi, 2009; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). Threats to plurality, creativity, and renewal in the ECE domain stem not only from the standardization of the field but also from the fact that a number of ECE policies across Canada (and elsewhere) have been conceptualized with a neoliberal rationality that produces particular discourses of childhood and early education. For example, by analyzing a range of policy documents from several provinces in Western Canada, McTavish (2012) was able to show that in the policy documents childhood was commonly discussed as a commodity and an investment for the future (see also Prentice, 2009), while early education was largely embedded in a discourse about "school readiness," increasing "learning

outcomes” for young children, and providing solutions for a variety of social issues (i.e., poverty). The problem is that as the discourses of readiness, cost-effectiveness, and academic performativity become the dominant and ‘natural’ way of speaking about children and early education, they inevitably limit public thought and imagination about what else early education might be for/about. In addition, neoliberal discourses marginalize distinctive ECE pedagogical approaches founded on notions of reciprocal relations, collective inquiry, dialogue and community building (Duhn, 2008; Duncan 2007; McTavish, 2012).

Fielding and Moss (2011) argue that as the neoliberal focus on management and outcomes in education grows, the political and ethical aspects of the pedagogical work are being drained out of public discourse about education. Questions of political and pedagogical values are substituted for questions about efficacy. Biesta (2007b) claims that depolitization of education is the current political climate in many Western countries, where public deliberation about the purposes of education is diminished. Rather than thinking about education as “a public responsibility and site for democratic and ethical practice,” education becomes “a production process...governed by means/ends logic” (Fielding & Moss, 2011, pp. 23-24). Given these (anti)political realities, I believe it is necessary to pose new challenges and questions to education in general and to educational leadership in particular. It is time to recover the political dimension of educational leadership and to ask new questions of educational leadership. In the context of ECE these questions can be: How might early childhood educators invigorate public engagement and dialogue in matters pertaining to the purpose and value of education for young children? What role can educational leadership in ECE play in expanding and pluralizing the identities of children and early education in light of the proliferation of limiting neoliberal discourses? And finally, what pedagogical tools can support early childhood educators in taking

on a more public/political identity?

The ECE scholarly context

Reconceptualizing early childhood education

To better understand the potential of the practice of pedagogical narration for leadership enactment in ECE with a political dimension, I situate this practice within contemporary early childhood scholarly work. Since the 1980s, a growing number of theorists, informed by philosophical paradigms emphasizing the social, historical, and cultural construction of knowledge, have developed a body of literature that can be thought of as an alternative paradigm to mainstream or traditional understandings of early childhood pedagogy (Edwards, 2008). This movement, which is known in the literature as Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Education (hereafter RECE) (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Pence, 2005), challenged long-held assumptions upon which traditional ECE has been founded, such as the dominance of psychology and child development theory in the field (Cannella, 1997; Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Innacci & Whitty, 2009; Kessler & Swadener, 1992; Swadener & Cannella, 2007).

Drawing from an array of critical, feminist and postmodern perspectives, RECE leaders reconstituted the field of ECE as an ethical and political project (see, for example, Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). They began to question the existence of a universal, singular truth about the ‘developing child’ and the practices of early childhood pedagogy based on execution of developmental theories. They pointed out the ways in which a universal image of childhood dominates how we make sense of who children are, what they should be, and what educational responses they require (Burman, 1994, as cited in Pacini-Ketchabaw & Pence, 2005). RECE scholars centred their efforts on advancing equity and social justice for children, educators, and

families, while questioning the promotion of universal prescriptions for “best practice” and other “grand narratives” (Swadener & Cannella, 2007, p. 25).

An additional source of influence on contemporary ECE thinking comes from the municipal pre-primary schools in Reggio Emilia, Northern Italy.⁶ The schools were originated in the 1940s following the defeat of the Italian fascist regime, and were established with the purpose of raising a generation of *thinking* citizens and with a view of the school as a place for dialogue (Edwards et al., 1998). Thus, the educational project in Reggio Emilia has had from its inception a strong political agenda. Reggio Emilia’s educators, alongside parents, children and community members, have created practices that are centred on ongoing collaborative examination of the educational program through documenting children’s learning processes and sharing the documentation with community members in robust discussion and dialogue (I elaborate on the practice of documentation and its relation to pedagogical narration below). At the heart of their pedagogical philosophy is the idea of the “rich child,” a child who is full of ideas and creative possibilities and who is a participating citizen in the city’s social and cultural projects (Dahlberg et al., 1999).

Important for this thesis is the fact that changes in understanding *who* children are, as advanced by the RECE and Reggio Emilia, necessitate a reconceptualization of *who* early childhood educators are. Within the context of contemporary ECE thought, educators of young children can no longer be depicted as passive observers, or mere facilitators of the developing child. Instead, pedagogical thought in ECE has been shifting toward a view of education as

⁶ A steady growth in publications about the pedagogical practices of the Reggio Emilia approach (see for example, Edwards, Gandini, & Forman 1998; Fraser, 2002; Cadwell, 2003), as well as a generative exchange of ideas between Reggio educators and a diverse group of international ECE scholars (Giudici, Rinaldi, & Krechevsky, 2001; Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999), resulted in a world-wide interest in Reggio Emilia’s unique ECE philosophy.

entailing reflective praxis embedded in an ongoing, reciprocal inquiry into knowledge construction, children's learning processes, and pedagogical practices (see for example, Dahlberg et al., 1999; Clark & Moss, 2001). Current views in ECE research and theory promote an image of early childhood educators as researchers and ethical thinkers, who continuously reflect (with others) and make choices amongst diverse perspectives when formulating educative responses to children (MacNaughton, 2003a). As I will argue throughout this thesis, when education is cast as a generative process, founded on ethical, relational theory that remains open for "disruption of certainty" with regards to educational aims (Fenwick, 2009, p. 104), the 'position' of the educator must be reconceptualized. Educators can no longer be described as 'labourers,' implementers of predetermined set of objectives. Instead, educators become active listeners, initiators, and storytellers (in the Arendtian sense) responding to and initiating change. When education is open to what might emerge, educators engage with children, colleagues, and other community members in the important task of educational judgment, and thus, are engaged and engage others in acts of leadership. This is where the practice of pedagogical narration enters as a site with potential for reconceptualizing ECE educational leadership.

Pedagogical narrations

The concept of pedagogical narration, which has been introduced in the B.C. implementation guide: *Understanding British Columbia Early Learning Framework: From theory to practice* (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2009), has been adapted from similar pedagogical tools, such as *pedagogical documentation* (Rinaldi, 2006) practiced in the pre-primary schools of Reggio Emilia, discussed above, and *Learning Stories* (Carr, 2001), which

have become key elements in developing a national ECE policy in New Zealand.⁷ Pedagogical narrations, much like pedagogical documentation and Learning Stories, mark a significant shift from traditional understanding of observation and documentation in ECE. Traditional forms of observation and documentation in early childhood settings focused on assessment of individual children along the lines of a predefined set of criteria (i.e., developmental stages, predefined learning goals). The assumption had been that educators are to employ theories external to their context to gain an objective account of what the child can/should do through the lens of normative developmental scales associated with ages and stages (MacNaughton, 2003a).

Alternatively, the idea of early childhood educators creating interpretive narratives about children's lived experiences to gain better understanding of the pedagogical practice and children's learning processes reflects ECE perspectives that are grounded in social constructivist and social constructionist orientations (Anning, Cullen, & Fler, 2009; Carr, 2001; Dahlberg et al., 1999). Recently, practices such as pedagogical documentation (Reggio Emilia), Learning Stories (New Zealand), and pedagogical narration (British Columbia) have arisen, not only as an innovative pedagogical practice, but also as a way to resist universalized views of knowledge and being. As Olsson (2009) explains, the focus of the documentation process is less on an individual child's progress and more on trying to *understand* the kinds of relationships, thoughts, actions and situated learnings that occur through encounters between the children themselves, between the children and adults, as well as between the children and their cultural and physical environment.

⁷ Both the practice of documentation from Reggio Emilia and Learning Stories from New Zealand are credited as a source of inspiration for the concept pedagogical narration in the document: *Understanding the British Columbia Early Learning Framework: From policy to practice* (2008, p. 13).

Practices of observation, documentation, and narrative interpretation of children's experiences (such as pedagogical narration) are no longer seen as direct representation, or as a true account of what happened. Rather, the documented material of children's words and experiences is viewed as an occasion for dialogue through which educators, children, and parents share and negotiate their different perspectives and understandings about the documented event; each perspective enriching, challenging, and broadening the possibilities for interpretation and future pedagogical response/action. Pedagogical narration, thus, is not simply about recording children's actions; it is about collective interpretation and critical meaning making. As such, pedagogical narration has implications for leadership that is associated with sustaining a democratic pedagogical practice that affords participation, visibility of plurality of thought, and continual process of discussion and disputation (Dahlberg & Moss, 2008; Rinaldi, 2001). Writing about pedagogical documentation, Rinaldi (2006) addresses this idea eloquently:

They [the documentations] are three dimensional writings, not aimed at giving the event objectivity but at expressing the meaning-making effort; that is to give meaning, to render the significance that each author attributes to the documentation and the questions and problems he or she perceives with a certain event. These writings are not detached from the personal biographical characteristics of the author, and we are thus aware of their bias, but this is considered an element of quality. (p. 71)

The process of pedagogical narration, thus, does not assume neutrality or objectivity on the part of the educator; it entails making educational judgment and taking responsibility for one's perspective in *relation* to other perspectives. For example, the educator needs to make decisions about choosing the experience to be recorded, analyzed and narrated. Even at this first stage, there is an element of selection and an act of judgment with regard to the value and significance of the event that is chosen. Second, the educator has to make decisions about the choice of words that will frame the narrative and give it a particular meaning (the ethics and politics of the text). Moreover, the educator needs to engage critically with the meanings and

possibilities that arise from the event that was observed and struggle with difficult questions, such as: How can ‘*what happened*’ be interpreted? Why would one interpretation be chosen over another? What is the image of the child and the educator that this interpretation reveals? What can we learn about children’s ways of learning and being, and how will this new understanding change the learning environment, the direction of the curriculum, or the relationships with the children? How might this event change the view of the educator about herself and her practice? The pedagogical narratives can act as a constant reminder that pedagogical relationships are fraught with ethical and political choices that necessitate a critically engaged public. When the pedagogical narratives are shared, the educator takes further responsibility in narrating the collective version of the story by being attentive to how others’ perspectives might have changed the initial narrative. And as Dahlberg and Moss (2005) remind us, pedagogical narrations gain political meaning as the narratives enter “the political sphere, making what is visible subject to interpretation, critique and argumentation” (p. 157).

This kind of pedagogical work has potential to affect how early childhood educators perceive their professional identity, because through this process of reflection, narration, and dialogue with others, early childhood educators gain the possibility of becoming clear(er) about what they are doing and why (New, 1998). They become more articulate about their understanding of practice and more comfortable to enter a critical dialogue with others, remaining open to uncertainty and to the possibility of encountering different perspectives. Coulter and Wiens (1999, 2008) propose that becoming clear(er) and articulating what is meant by education and about what one is trying to do as an educator, is an important aspect of educational leadership. They suggest, with a distinctive Arendtian tone, that educational leaders initiate and sustain conversations that bring communities together to discuss and debate what is

good and worthwhile and to figure out how to create a common world together. In this process of making practice visible and contestable, new thoughts and new ideas about what ECE is about and what it might be emerge alongside new possibilities for enacting childhood and educational leadership. In a similar vein, Dahlberg and colleagues (1999) explain the value of the practice of documentation as follows: “the greater our awareness of our pedagogical practices, the greater our possibility to change through constructing a new space, where an alternative discourse or counter discourses can be established to produce new practice” (p. 153).

As reflective practices, such as pedagogical documentation, Learning Stories, and pedagogical narration have inhabited contemporary ECE practice; they have become a fertile ground for research and theorization. The meanings of these practices and the possibilities they create for rethinking ECE in more critical and ethical ways are currently the subject of scholarly debates (I will discuss this further in Chapter Two).⁸ The current study makes a particular contribution to this conversation by suggesting that the practice of pedagogical narration affords a new way to enact ECE leadership.

Leadership within the ECE context

While the theoretical possibilities opened up for the ECE field by the RECE literature have set up the stage for conceptualizing an ECE leadership with more political and ethical dimensions (i.e., as reinvigorating political debates about ECE’s values and meanings), leadership in ECE continues to be an underdeveloped concept in theory and practice (Muijs, Aubrey, Harris, & Briggs, 2004). In a more recent study, Aubrey, Godfrey, and Harris (2013)

⁸ The adoption of Reggio Emilia’s practice of pedagogical documentation in countries outside of Italy has also been the subject of critique. When viewed through the lens of globalization, Grieshaber and Hatch (2003) question the transportation of pedagogical approaches from a different cultural and political context in a superficial (consumer-like) way (e.g., adopting the practical aspects of pedagogical documentation without attending to the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of this practice).

reiterated that research into ECE leadership is scarce and poorly theorized. They argued that most ECE leadership research relied on exploring the roles that ECE administrative leaders play in ECE settings by gathering data mainly through self-reports.

Challenges confronting leadership in ECE increase significantly due to the fact that early childhood educators have not readily identified with the notion of leadership (Hard, 2005; Rodd, 1994,1997; Woodrow & Busch, 2008). A major reason for early childhood educators to reject the notion of leadership is that the aforementioned traditional views of leadership; namely, forms of leadership that are closely associated with hierarchical structures and a single position that is typically held by a male figure, are deemed by early childhood educators as antithetical to the collaborative and relational ‘nature’ of the early childhood profession (Hard, 2005; Rodd, 1997; Woodrow & Busch, 2008). Historically, early education has developed outside of the domain of formal schooling, and this resulted in a relatively low social (and political) status of the field (Varga, 1997). Indeed, early childhood education, especially when it is thought of in terms of childcare, has been relegated to the private domain (understood as a private matter) and has been, until recently, largely invisible in public debates. An additional challenge to leadership in ECE is linked with the gendered nature of the early childhood profession. Most persons working in early childhood are women (Muijs et al., 2004). Relatedly, the professional identity of the early childhood educator has been constructed on notions of ‘caring’ and ‘niceness,’ rather than on taking a stance or articulating one’s position in public (Fasoli, Scrivens, & Woodrow, 2007; Grieshaber, 2001; Hard, 2005; Rodd, 1997).

What the three strands that make up the context for this study (the intensification of standardization of the field of ECE, the new theoretical possibilities opened up by the RECE movement, and the lack of conceptual and practical frameworks to support ECE leadership

enactment), suggest is the need for developing and investigating leadership frameworks that expand the identities of the early childhood professional as well as enable early childhood educators to engage with and actively respond to broad issues of intense social and political change, such as the current standardization of the ECE field in a rapidly changing, global context (Fasoli et al., 2007; Grieshaber & Cannella, 2001).

Purpose of study

The present study's first aim is to explore the potential for a reconceptualized idea of leadership in ECE contexts. The study is focused on understanding and theorizing leadership as it is enacted through the practice of pedagogical narration. The second aim of the study, then, is to examine how leadership is enacted through processes associated with the 'doing' of pedagogical narration (e.g., sharing the pedagogical narratives with the community through discussions and display of the narratives in a public domain through various means). An additional purpose of the study is to gain understanding of what leadership identities emerge when early childhood educators become instigators of action through initiating processes of dialogue and reflection about the pedagogical work through the practice of pedagogical narration. For example, since the practice of pedagogical narration requires that early childhood educators articulate and negotiate their pedagogical positions in public with members of their community (colleagues, children, parents), leadership identities may include organizing public events to share and initiate dialogue about pedagogical narrations, public speaking, as well as, revealing and negotiating one's pedagogical viewpoint with others. The possibility to expand leadership identities in early childhood education becomes significant and worthy of investigation in light of findings of previous research that indicated that early childhood

educators' reluctance to identify with notions of leadership had a negative impact on their leadership enactment (Hard, 2005; Rodd 1997).

Research questions and design

The research questions are designed to address the three interrelated purposes of the study. The first question addresses the theoretical aim by which this study seeks to broaden notions of leadership in ECE. The second question aims at exploring the enactment of leadership as action through practicing pedagogical narration. Finally, the third question is intended to examine the leadership identities that emerge when early childhood educators engage in this practice. The three questions that guide the study are:

1. How does leadership as ethical and political action afforded by the practice of pedagogical narration broaden and deepen conceptions of leadership in ECE contexts?
2. How is leadership as ethical and political action enacted in the practice of pedagogical narration?
3. What leadership identities emerge when early childhood educators enact leadership as ethical and political action through the practice of pedagogical narration?

Since the focus of this research is on studying leadership as a complex social phenomenon involving processes and interactions, I adopted a qualitative research design, using the multiple case study method. I chose to examine how pedagogical narration was practiced in four diverse early childhood settings in B.C.: childcare centre, preschool, StrongStart program, and parent cooperative preschool. The multiple case study method was particularly useful in acquiring an understanding of how enactments of leadership associated with the practice of pedagogical narrations can vary in early childhood settings with different purposes and structures. I generated and analyzed data that have been gathered over a time period of ten months (October, 2010–

July, 2011). The data was obtained through observations in the aforementioned early childhood sites, as well as through semi-structured interviews that I had with six early childhood educators who work in these sites and actively use the practice of pedagogical narrations. I also collected samples of pedagogical narrations from each site.

Positioning myself

I see it as my responsibility at the outset of this dissertation to make visible, as much as possible, how the selection of theories and inquiry processes that are included in this study indicate choices that I made based on my experiences and understandings, as well as my commitment to re-politicize early childhood practice by broadening the concept of leadership in ECE. Discussing my stance can be seen as an invitation for dialogue and recognition of the limited possibility of an individual to claim a complete understanding.

The imperative to re-politicize the field (make it visible/public and contestable) stems from my concerns regarding the ECE field's long history of political negligence and public invisibility. This resulted in limited possibilities to conceptualize (or imagine) what ECE might be about (ECE is conventionally understood either as a site for caring for young children's needs or a program for school preparedness). One of the contributing factors, but certainly not the only one, to the lack of political engagement in the potential meanings of ECE has been the field's close alliance with developmental psychology. As long as the education for young children is understood and discussed *mainly* within the framework of psychology, there is little room for contestation and debate about its purposes (I elaborate on this point in chapter two).

In 2003 I took a position with the Institute for Early Childhood Education and Research at the University of British Columbia (UBC). I came to this position after twelve years of teaching in preschool settings. My background as an early childhood educator and my own

experience using the practice of pedagogical narration and witnessing its power in engaging the community in lively conversations about children's learning, thoughts, and creations, support my belief that the practice of pedagogical narration has potential for rethinking leadership in ECE. My efforts at UBC have focused on increasing awareness of early childhood education as a unique pedagogical approach, as well as creating and maintaining dialogues among early childhood researchers, students, and professionals across the preschool and school settings about salient issues pertaining to the field. In 2006 I was invited to participate in an Advisory Group to the B.C. Ministry of Education. The role of the Group was to consult with the Ministry in the creation of a curriculum framework for the education of young children. This personal encounter with the process of policy making led me to question who participates in discussions and decisions about how ECE in B.C. will be conceptualized in policy documents. I began to wonder what opportunities are available for early childhood educators in the field to become more involved in the broader political struggles of our time through, for example, contributing to the conceptualization of ECE by sharing pedagogical narrations with members of their communities and opening a public dialogue about ECE matters.

When I applied to the EdD in Leadership and Policy Program at UBC, I already had a deep interest in the notion of leadership and the possibilities it might hold for the ECE field. While my initial inclination was to think about leadership in ECE in terms of participation and action, I did not have the theoretical tools to endow this view of leadership with a conceptual framework and a vision for practice. The encounter with Hannah Arendt's thought and the work of RECE researchers, as well as reviewing the scholarly literature pertaining to leadership in early childhood, were significant milestones in the development of my thinking about the concept of leadership and a major catalyst for this research project.

My aim in this study is not to create another regulating idea of leadership (this will be antithetical to Arendt's non-teleological notion of action and change), but to propose a possibility and make this proposition *public*, sharable, and open to debate. My purpose is to insert into the public domain important leadership stories about educators, children, and parents whose speech and action required my narrative response.

I recognize that I speak from a situated position as a middle class, educated, white, Jewish (and former Israeli), woman, located professionally in an academic institution. I am also aware of the 'danger of cultural imperialism inherent in any project' based on ideas that may reflect a white middle-class background (Schutz, 1999, p. 92). While I cannot deny that these social categories may reflect particular ways of being and thinking, thinking with Arendt's distinction between *what* and *who* we are, I see these social categories as a reflection of my *what*-ness (characteristics that I share with others), not my *who*--ness (a uniqueness that is revealed through speech and action). My hope is that through the processes of narrating this study, I will gain an opportunity to disclose myself to the reader(s) as a *who*. A disclosure of *who*--ness can only happen in an interactive space and is not within the control of the author. Knowing *who* I become through writing and speaking about this research will emerge in contexts where its narrative is shared with others and responded to by them. That also means that when this dissertation enters the public domain, I must accept that its meanings will emerge in the spaces between speaking and acting people, and I must take the risk of not knowing (not being able to control) how it will be taken up in the 'world.'

Significance of study

This study makes a significant contribution to the scholarly literature about educational leadership in ECE. Not only does the study bring to light a new way to think about and to enact

leadership in ECE, it also offers a nuanced theorizing of leadership in ECE through interpretations of Hannah Arendt's political theory. A reconceptualized notion of ECE leadership can contribute to re-envisioning the field of ECE as loci for ethical and political action (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). This study may inspire early childhood educators to gather the courage to initiate dialogue and sustained enquiry into the multiple potentials of early education, while invigorating community engagement and enlarging public perceptions about young children. In addition, this study can open up new possibilities for expanding identities of early childhood educators who may begin to see themselves as public personas, or as participants with others in actively renewing conversations about what ECE might be.

Overview of chapters

In Chapter One, I introduced and contextualized the study and the research questions within the current neoliberal political climate and the Reconceptualizing ECE movement. I pointed out the unique problematics of leadership in the early childhood field in order to highlight the need for studying a new approach to leadership in contemporary ECE contexts. Chapter Two offers a review of literature relevant to the topic of leadership in ECE. The review underscores how the historical construction of the identity of the early childhood educator as a maternal, apolitical figure works against leadership identity constructions in ECE contexts. I refer to current approaches to educational leadership that shift the thinking about leadership from a position in a hierarchy to leadership as a relational phenomenon. Chapter Three provides a detailed account of Hannah Arendt's political thought and its relevance to the present study as a theoretical and methodological grounding. In Chapter Four, I describe and explain the methodology and the research methods taken up in this study, including methods of data

generation and analysis. I also introduce the four research sites and the key participants in the study.

Chapter Five, Six and Seven make up the analysis chapters of this dissertation. In each of these chapters I utilize an Arendtian concept as an analytical frame to think with the data. In Chapter Five, I engage with Arendt's concept of the *public/common world* to explore leadership enactment as the creation of public spaces where pedagogical narrations about ethical and political issues provoked children, educators, and parents to take a stance in public. In Chapter Six, I employ Arendt's metaphor of *the wind of thought* to examine how leadership was enacted when the processes of pedagogical narrations brought early childhood educators to a more complex understanding of their practice. In Chapter Seven, I draw on Arendt's concepts of *plurality* and *nativity*, to illuminate how pedagogical narrations afforded the emergence of new identities for educators and children, endowing leadership through pedagogical narrations with a significant ethical dimension.

In the final chapter, Chapter Eight, I draw conclusions from the study and I propose points for future actions and research. I highlight the theoretical and practical implications of this study for ECE leadership, ECE pedagogical practice, ECE policy, and ECE pre-service education.

Chapter Two

Literature Review: Issues Facing Leadership in Early Childhood Education

This chapter provides a review of the literature relevant to the study of leadership in ECE. The review highlights significant challenges for ECE leadership on both the conceptual and practice levels. Challenges to ECE leadership were consistently related to the early childhood educator's professional identity, the low social status of the ECE field, and the gendered nature of the ECE sector. In this review, I also situate the current study within the theoretical and methodological frameworks that underpin the new studies of educational leadership (see Biesta & Miron, 2002).

The relatively low number of studies and the relative lack of conceptualization of what leadership in early childhood context might be are noteworthy (Muijs et al., 2004). In Canada, the scarcity of literature on early childhood leadership points to a void in academic inquiry into this topic. Due to the lack of Canadian literature on the topic, I relied mostly on literature from countries that have a similar early childhood history and fairly comparable political agendas (i.e., Australia, United States, United Kingdom, and New Zealand).

Implications from the literature review can be summarized as follows. There is a dire need for leadership theorizing that will open up a space for changing the dominant image of the early childhood educator as an apolitical figure who tends to reject the notion of leadership. Powerful ECE leadership projects focus on the pedagogical (rather than managerial) aspects of leadership. As well, these projects broadened the notion of leadership to include acts of critical reflections and community engagement that 'spill' beyond the walls of the school. From a methodological point of view, the new studies of educational leadership, where leadership is understood as a complex, interactive phenomenon enacted within socio-political contexts, the

study of leadership shifts from studying leadership as a set of qualities and behaviors to studying leadership in/as action.

The problematics of leadership in ECE

ECE Leadership in search of identity

Leadership in early childhood has been haunted by a set of particular issues. For example, a number of researchers suggest that early childhood practitioners do not readily identify with the concept of leadership (Hard, 2004; Hard & O’Gorman, 2007; Rodd, 1994, 1997; Kagan, 1994; Nupponen, 2006; Woodrow & Busch, 2008). In her original edition of *Leadership in early childhood: The pathway to professionalism*, Jillian Rodd (1994) argued that, “members of the early childhood field have been noted for their reluctance to identify with the concept of leadership as part of their professional role” (p. 1). This tendency amongst early childhood educators was evident in Rodd’s studies despite the fact that historically early childhood educators have functioned in relative independence from policy. Until the late 1990s official governments ECE policy in the U.K. and Australia (as well as in many other parts of the world) focused primarily on structural regulations for early years settings (i.e., staff-child ratio), while decisions regarding the ECE programs’ content and goals were in the hands of early childhood educators (OECD 2000a, OECD 2000b). This relative independence necessitated, according to Rodd (1994), that early childhood professionals develop a set of skills for independent decision-making associated with leadership capacity (Rodd, 1994). In a later study, carried out in the U.K., Rodd (1997) claimed that the reluctance of early childhood educators to identify with the leadership aspect of their role stemmed from the reliance on dominant images of leadership and a lack of understanding of what leadership could mean in early childhood settings. Rodd’s 1997 study examined the perceptions of leadership among early childhood centre coordinators. Rodd

(1997) pointed out that the activities that leaders of early childhood centres felt most comfortable performing were “managing the centre, working with parents, and supervising staff” (p. 45). In contrast, staff evaluation and development, handling confrontations, being assertive, and speaking in professional meetings, were identified as activities that the early childhood leaders were not comfortable with. Furthermore, leadership was conceived as an activity that takes place in the ECE centre, rather than an activity that can be enacted in the broad early childhood field.

Other researchers found that traditional leadership thinking, drawn largely from the business world, along with the tendency to conflate leadership with management and administration (i.e., applications of rules and procedures and finding efficient ways of operating), was seen by early childhood practitioners as antithetical to the ethical, collaborative, and relational dimensions of the early childhood profession, and therefore, was deemed inappropriate for the early childhood field (Hard, 2004, 2006; Hard & O’Gorman, 2007; Kagan, 1994; Rodd, 1994; Woodrow & Busch, 2008). For example, in a research project that explored the lived experience of ethics in the daily lives of early childhood educators who held leadership positions, Christine Woodrow (2002, as reported in Woodrow & Busch, 2008) concluded that the construction of leadership held by the participating educators was predominantly managerial and that the educators’ relationship with the notion of leadership was ambivalent. The educators saw the administrative or managerial conceptions of leadership as problematic, or undesirable, given the collegial and reciprocal relationships that were practiced in the early childhood sites that were investigated. A number of situations that were analyzed by the researcher demonstrated that early childhood educators in formal leadership positions elected not to act when the situation involved sensitive issues, such as race, gender, identity, and family make-up. Woodrow (2002, in Woodrow & Busch, 2008) suggested that “the study illustrated hesitant pedagogical leadership”

(p. 88), which highlighted the need for robust resources to support strong leadership in the field. Rodd (1994), Kagan, (1994), Hard and O’Gorman (2007), as well as Woodrow and Busch (2008) maintain that the field of early childhood needs its own conceptualization of leadership; as Woodrow and Busch (2008) poignantly stated: “leadership in early childhood education lacks its own identity” (p. 86).

ECE leadership and the desire for affinity

Nivala (2002), an ECE leadership researcher from Finland, claims that the one element that gives a special character to ECE leadership is the belief in the need for developing a sense of community. The proposition made by Nivala is that the closer people come to each other’s educational thinking, the better they work together. However, Woodrow’s (2002, as cited in Woodrow & Busch, 2008) and Hard’s (2004) studies illuminate that early childhood education discourse and practice, which are deeply rooted in the ethics of care for the individual, a desire for affinity, and a sense of a unified community, challenge leadership enactment and may contribute to ‘paralysis’ and inaction. Hard’s (2004) research study explored how 26 early childhood professionals in Australia interpreted the notion of ECE leadership. After analyzing responses from semi-structured interviews and focus group meetings with preschool educators, ECE centre directors, college ECE instructors, and ECE students, she established that the early childhood professionals who participated in her study tended to view leadership in early childhood contexts as requiring a team-based approach and an adherence to a shared process. Hard claimed that her study revealed that understandings of leadership were “couched within a *discourse of niceness*” (p. 56, original emphasis) which demanded a certain degree of compliance or not stepping outside of the group’s consensus, and, as Hard (2006) stated: “for participants this was a leadership inhibitor” (p. 43). Nupponen (2006) studied, using interviews,

how childcare centre directors in Australia understood their leadership role. She reported similar findings to that of Hard's (2004) study. For the participants in Nupponen's (2006) study, who were already in formal leadership positions, leadership was related to developing a nurturing and caring environment and shared engagement in the early childhood centres.

Hard (2006) uses strong terminology, such as "horizontal violence" (p. 44) and "crab bucket mentality"⁹ (p. 45) to emphasize that her data reflected the notion that early childhood educators who try to lead by acting differently within their centre are subject to enormous pressure to conform, making leadership initiatives undesirable. Hard (2004, 2006) connected the "crab bucket mentality" to the low social standing of the ECE field, which, according to Hard (2006), contributed to a limited view of professional identity and a desire for affinity. Woodrow and Busch (2008) and Hard (2004, 2006) trouble the desire for affinity and the need to affirm the individual that are prevalent in the ECE field. They position these issues as constraining ECE leadership conceptualization and enactment. To point out the problematics of the desire for uniformity and conformity, Woodrow and Busch (2008) quote Jonathan Silin (1995), who argues that:

When we suppress differences, we also suppress dialogue and personhood...In contrast, communities of otherness celebrate divergent points of view. They invite the stranger to tell her story...And which of us has not denied differences in our classroom in the misguided attempt to create a community of affinity. (p. 3)

ECE leadership troubled by gender

In an attempt to explain the reluctance of early childhood practitioners to uphold leadership identities, Rodd (1994), Kagan (1994), and Scrivens (2002a) indicate that leadership

⁹ Hard (2006), borrowing this metaphor from Duke (1994), explains that once crabs are caught and placed in a bucket there is no need to cap the bucket because of the crabs' known behavior that if one crab tries to scuttle out the others drag it back down. She makes an analogy to the normalizing and conforming ways in which early childhood educators respond to efforts of a member to think and act differently.

research has focused mainly on men (typically a man as a single leader), and that as such, this research may not be applicable to the arena of ECE, which is characterized by a high proportion of women in teaching and management positions.

In the introduction to her research project of women as administrative leaders in schools, Jill Blackmore (1999) states that “[w]omen have long been troubled by the notion of ‘leader’ and the images it conveys” (p. 1). She adds that women have been excluded by dominant images of masculine leadership. In Blackmore’s (1999) words:

Educational restructuring, with its emphasis on efficiency, accountability and outcomes, privileged ‘hard’ management and entrepreneurial discourses of leadership over less instrumental, more holistic and ‘softer,’ ‘feminized’ leadership discourses. The former discourses decontextualized, distorted and depoliticized the issue of gender...and indeed constrain the possibility for feminist leadership practice. (p. 4).

Blackmore’s (1999) study depicts women’s leadership as relational and situated, embedded in daily practices, and emotionally laden. Blackmore’s (1999) feminist construction of leadership, offers a framework of leadership that challenges the dominant construction of leadership by putting forward the idea that leadership can be practiced in the daily lives of the school by teachers, children, parents, and administrators. Blackmore asserts that:

Failure to recognize the multiple dimensions of leadership within the various leadership paradigms means leadership is still viewed as something exceptional rather than every day practice. This treatment of educational leadership as something different from what teachers do on a daily basis, I suggest, has deterred many women from assuming more formal leadership roles as they do not imagine their work as leadership. (p. 6)

In 1994 Rodd has already hinted that it was important “...to identify the roles and responsibilities within the early childhood profession which permit leadership to be exercised at a more grassroots level so that practitioners are able to grasp the complexities of the work that they perform and the opportunity for leadership which exists in their daily working environment” (Rodd, 1994, p. 3).

In relation to the dominant reliance of the early childhood field on the ethics of care, as mentioned above, is Blackmore's (1999) warning that uncritical subscription to an ethics of care has the potential to essentialize women as nurturers and to reinforce representation of women as having 'feminine' characteristics. In an attempt to develop an argument for why gender makes a difference in studying and conceptualizing ECE leadership, Scrivens (2002a) studied a number of scholars who conducted research on women's culture in educational administration in the U.S. and the U.K. (i.e., Carol Shakeshaft, 1989 and Valerie Hall, 1996). Scrivens concluded that women's leadership style was found to be democratic, participatory and inclusive, and that women supported a broad view of the curriculum and the whole child. She also suggested that women leaders favor "power *for* rather than power *over*" and that "they saw power as the ability to make things happen" (Scrivens, 2002a, p. 31, original emphasis). Yet, in her own research project that looked into the leadership perceptions and action of Managers of Professional Practice¹⁰ in New Zealand's kindergartens, Scrivens (2002b) identified that the desired 'feminized' leadership style was incongruent with the emerging neoliberal policy agenda in New Zealand educational arena. While women leaders in her study identified with a leadership style that emphasized consultation, communication, sharing power, and empowerment, the data analysis showed that this participatory leadership style did not coincide with neoliberalist ideas of competition and accountability. As a result of the tensions between the desired leadership conceptions of the Managers of Professional Practice and the reality of their work, the Managers developed a variety of coping strategies such as manipulating their reports and unofficially siding with classroom teachers on a variety of issues. Drawing on her study, Scrivens (2002b)

¹⁰ Managers of Professional Practice in New Zealand hold non-teaching positions. They are senior teachers who are based at the Kindergarten Association headquarters and travel to kindergartens within their region in a consultative and evaluative role.

indicated the potential dangers of reifying an image of the woman-leader in a way that may leave the field of ECE in a disadvantaged position in neoliberal times. Reay and Ball (2000) also seek to problematize the typical ways that feminist accounts of women leadership style have been depicted. They take the view that identities should be thought of as fluid and shifting. They call for recognition of the diverse possibilities of femininities in leadership, claiming that gender identities depend on the context within which they are performed and the amount of power the leaders have access to.

Moss (2006) highlights another issue that complicates women-leader relations. He explains that the maternalist image of childcare workers as substitute mothers acts as a factor in sustaining a highly gendered workforce. According to Moss, "...the gendering of the workforce cannot be explained in terms of low pay. More likely is a combination of how the work is understood in society – as essentially 'women's work'...and of how education and employment are structured in ways that reproduce gendered workforces" (p. 34). Moss links this issue to "gender regime" – 'a set of power relations between men and women, which is itself the precipitate of its earlier gender history' (Randall, 2000, p. 183, as cited in Moss, 2006, p. 37). He adds that the maternalist gender regime remains dominant in many countries. Reports from Dalli's (2001) study corroborate Moss's (2006) claims. Dalli examined through interviews, teacher journaling, and observations, how early childhood educators constructed their image of professional identity in five childcare settings in New Zealand. She reported that, "teachers constructed their identity with reference to societal and psychological discourses about motherhood and early childhood teaching. These discourses posit the mother's role as primary and that of early childhood teacher/worker as secondary/second best" (p. 1). The findings from Dalli's (2001) and others' studies (i.e., Hard, 2004; Rodd, 1997) add to our understanding of the

difficulties that early childhood educators have had in positioning or imagining themselves as leaders. Dalli (2001) pointed to the possibility that the perceived affinity of early childhood work with mothering (and therefore with woman's work) "may be a primary reason why early childhood work has retained the status of a poor relation within the educational professions" (p. 2). Inspired by reconceptualist early childhood scholars (see Chapter One), Dalli concluded that early childhood educators would benefit from more critical reflections about how dominant discourses position them in relation to the rest of the educational community and society at large. Such reflections may reveal how social, historical, and political forces shape and influence educators' personal assumptions about their professional identity and may potentially lead toward change in the status quo.

Tenuous relations between early childhood educators' professional identity and ECE leadership

One of the salient points that emerged from the literature was the complex relationship between the constructions of early childhood educators' professional identity and leadership enactment. Woodrow and Busch (2008) suggest that "[a]t the heart of how [ECE] leadership is performed are ideas about professionalism" (p. 89). Generally speaking, the relationships between the societal and personal constructions of the ECE professional identity have been negatively associated with leadership (Dunlop, 2008). Indeed, a number of studies have explored this issue conceptually and empirically (see for example, Dahlberg et al., 1999; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Grieshaber & Cannella, 2001; Hard & O'Gorman, 2007; MacNaughton, 2005; Moss, 2006; Oberhuemer, 2005; Woodrow, 2008). In addition to the aforementioned traditional images of early childhood educators and childcare workers as substitute mothers who valorize caring to the point of self-sacrifice, there is a historically perceived dichotomy between the fields

of care and education, giving education a privileged position in society (Dahlberg et al., 1999; Moss, 2006). Due to this dichotomized way of thinking, early childhood has been excluded from the professional arena of formal education (Moss, 2006; Woodrow, 2008). This dichotomy has often left the early childhood field ‘hanging’ between various jurisdictions and governing bodies, such as health, welfare, and education. Moreover, as mentioned above, Hard (2004, 2006) found that early childhood educators’ professional identity and their capacity for taking on leadership identities were influenced negatively by the inferior social positioning of the ECE field. Participants in Hard’s (2004) study disclosed that low social status and inequitable remuneration (in comparison to the social status and remuneration of primary teachers) affected their sense of professionalism, and this, in turn, was related to how the participants interpreted their ability, or lack of ability, to enact leadership. Additionally, as Moss (2006) points out, the field of early childhood education has traditionally relied on professionals with relatively low levels of qualifications. Nivala (2002) notes that the relationship of the ECE field with leadership is ambivalent because educators consider themselves as social service, on the one hand, and pedagogical ‘experts,’ on the other, and these two seem to exist in tension with each other.

In the Canadian context, Rachel Langford’s (2006) study about early childhood educators’ identity construction is noteworthy. She explored the relationships between the ways in which early childhood educators’ identity is discursively formed within a professional training institution in Ontario to the marginality of the ECE workforce. Langford employed critical discourse analysis of ECE textbooks, students’ assignments about their view of the “good” early childhood educator, and six in-depth interviews with ECE college instructors. Langford’s aim was to examine her underlying premise that both historical and current pedagogical discourses of the “good” early childhood educator contribute to the formation of a particular kind of

professional who was prepared to work in a stratified gendered, educational labour market. Langford was particularly interested in determining whether early childhood educators would be able to constitute and assert themselves socially, politically, and economically differently from a marginalized position in relation to the state. Yet, the data analysis indicated that pedagogical discourses of the “good” early childhood educator were primarily concerned with personal qualities, such as inner strength, caring, and alertness to individual child’s needs and interests, whereas the two undesirable qualities were authority and neediness. In line with other studies that have been reviewed so far, Langford saw the preoccupation with individual qualities and individual teacher-child relationship as problematic, because ECE graduates did not conceptualize their identities in relation to broader social and political issues, and this, in turn, contributed to their marginalization and the marginalization of the field in general. Langford concluded that the discourses in the ECE training program prepare graduates for marginalized participation in the state and for assuming social and moral responsibilities within the private sphere. Drawing on Dillabough and Acker (2002), Langford argued that the reconciliation to existence in the private sphere is historically consistent with women’s roles as caretakers or midwives of public welfare within our present neoliberal economy. What is needed, Langford (2006) suggests, are frameworks of thought and practice that will bring ECE graduates into the public sphere, where early childhood educators may emerge from the margins and gain visibility while attending and responding to a range of social situations through political engagement within and outside of ECE institutions, foregrounding the practice of “worldliness” (p. 122).

Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2005) also noted the importance of connecting ECE leadership to broader social-political issues as well as working toward changing the dominant image of the early childhood educator. The researchers conducted a set of phenomenological

interviews to better understand the lived experiences and dynamic processes through which an early childhood educator, named Anna, became a teacher-leader in a childcare setting in the U.S. Through analysis of the interview transcriptions, the authors were able to claim that Anna's life experiences, in particular her own experience of marginalization, played a significant role in her belief that she could not actualize childcare leadership in isolation from the social and political forces that continued to shape it. Anna's enactment of leadership was manifested through practicing and teaching about anti-bias ECE curriculum and practice. Based on their encounter with Anna's story, Dana and Yendol-Hoppey reiterated that, "in order to provide visionary leadership in the area of early childhood education, child care cannot be viewed in isolation from society. For Anna, leadership in early childhood is an avenue to societal change" (p. 202).

Thomas (2009) investigated the construction of ECE professional identities in Australia. She became troubled by the fact that while early childhood educators responded to challenges with children with openness and creativity, issues with adults (i.e., parents) and authorities that evoked uncertainty in the educators were less tolerable. In her review of the literature pertaining to the ECE professional identity, Thomas identified a universal construction of an ECE professional that emphasized certainty in decisions and relationships. Experiences of confusion, doubt and discomfort had to be resolved to avoid a sense of failure. This prevailing assumption propelled educators to assume the position of the 'expert' and to maintain a position of power, especially with regards to parents. In regard to relations with authorities, Thomas became concerned by how the literature presented early childhood educators as largely non-agentic in their responses to the professionalization of the sector in Australia. Employing a methodology of life history narratives and genealogy, she analyzed extensive interviews with four early childhood educators. Thomas problematized the fixed and universal notion of what it means to

be an early childhood educator by showing how the educators moved between certainties and uncertainties when they recounted their relationships with parents, colleagues, and authorities. Thomas (2009) positioned professionalism and ethics “as processes of becoming – not things to be discovered or owned, and as never fixed or essential, but social and contextual constructions. This raises the necessity of spaces for continual constructions, deconstructions and reconstructions at work in these processes” (p. 212). She concluded with a call for early childhood educators to resist normative processes and expectations of professional identity construction. Thomas (2009) argued for thinking and speaking about ECE professional identities in ways that included certainty and uncertainty, comfort and discomfort, so that these seemingly oppositional terms can be held together in tension, insisting that both are necessary and true.

Taking another perspective on early childhood professional identity and leadership, Grieshaber and Cannella (2001) postulated that the identity of the field of early childhood is hierarchically tied to developmental psychology. In this respect, the early childhood professional identity has been constructed as a medium for the delivery of theories that were conceived by experts (i.e., developmental psychologists) outside of the realm of the daily classroom experiences and practice of the early childhood educator. In addition, Grieshaber (2001) reported that the tension between the gendered expectations of the behaviour of early childhood educators as nurturing, caring, and responsive to children’s needs was in contrast to the perception of what leadership may entail, namely, assertiveness, advocacy, and challenging the taken-for-granted. Grieshaber suggested that early childhood educators could address this tension by expanding their professional identities and by opening up to the possibility of negotiating multiple, and sometimes even ambiguous, identities in their work, being caring, assertive, and opinionated at the same time.

In sum, the traditional images that constitute the early childhood profession do not readily lend themselves to notions of traditional leadership thinking (Grieshaber & Cannella, 2001; Moss, 2006; MacNaughton, 2005; Woodrow, 2008; Woodrow & Busch, 2008). Moreover, Rodd (1994, 1997), Kagan (1994), Kagan & Hallmark (2001); Hard and O’Gorman (2007), Fasoli and colleagues (2007), as well as Woodrow and Busch (2008) maintain that rather than rejecting the very idea of leadership, which may render early childhood educators outside of political debates about childhood and education, the field of ECE needs to begin to develop more nuanced and relevant concepts of leadership. Based on her study, Hard (2005) proposed that, “if leadership were to be considered in terms of more democratic and collaborative models, then ECEC (early childhood education and care) personnel will be more positive about adopting leadership activities” (p. 127).

Emerging frameworks for theorizing leadership in ECE

Over the last decade, a number of researchers have begun to propose ECE leadership theories (some scholars, as I suggest below, do so in an indirect way through portraying early childhood educators as activists) that are more attentive to the social (interactive) aspects of leadership and that are more responsive to the unique contexts of ECE. In what follows, I provide a brief review of emerging paradigms that support my inclination to reframe leadership in ECE more closely with political action. Generally speaking, what the researchers promote is an understanding of ECE leadership that is contextual, reflective, and relational. It is also important to note the contribution that these emerging theories of leadership make for casting the early childhood educator as a community activist.

Contextual or ecological framing of ECE leadership

Nivala and Hujala (2002) led a cross-cultural study project of leadership in early childhood settings,¹¹ and proclaimed that leadership in ECE should be understood and researched as a phenomenon in context. Based on their understanding of the ECE field, they argued that a study of leadership must draw attention to and include the environment of leadership, the related actors and the communication that takes place among them. One of the researchers in their project, Karila (2002, p. 66), explains:

...from the contextual viewpoint leadership is not seen as localized in the leader but the social interaction and the day care centre community. Therefore the actions of the leader must be examined in relation to the day care centre community and a wider social and cultural context. Furthermore, leadership is considered a cultural phenomenon connected with the basic function of the educational organization. (p. 66)

Since ECE leadership was seen as situational and interpretive, the studies in Nivala's and Hujala's (2002) project utilized primarily qualitative methods through which leadership was explored as a dynamic phenomenon involving social processes among different stakeholders.

Political framing of ECE leadership

Two internationally known early childhood scholars, Gunilla Dahlberg and Peter Moss (2005), concur with the view that there is a need to develop leadership and activism amongst early childhood practitioners in light of recent political and policy changes that affect early childhood construction and practice. Dahlberg and Moss (2005) propose to reconceptualize early childhood education as a site for "minor politics." They refer to minor politics as a polity that happens locally, and which is concerned with the here-and-now and with the everyday lives of

¹¹ The International Leadership Project (ILP) was established between 1998-2000 together with researchers from five countries and seven universities in Australia, Finland, England, Russia and the USA. The project was coordinated by Nivala Veijo and Hujala Eeva from the University of Oulu, Finland. One aim of the project was to try to understand and describe ECE leadership phenomenon in context.

children, teachers, and parents. In their view, the early childhood setting can become a place for communities' ethical and political engagement, a site for the practice of democratic politics. They further assert that by developing the early childhood profession as a reflexive practice that takes into account the broad social, political, and economic forces, early childhood teachers/leaders (as well as parents and children) can begin to problematize and resist dominant discourses that view the child as an object (e.g., passive receiver of knowledge) and the early childhood educator as a technician (e.g., transmitter of knowledge and evaluator of pre-determined outcomes).

Pamela Oberhuemer (2005) suggests that early childhood educators embrace the idea of “democratic professionalism.” She maintains that for early childhood educators to reconceptualize their profession they need to be able to reflect openly on their personal and professional beliefs and to see themselves as interpreters and not as mere implementers of curricular frameworks. According to Oberhuemer, democratic professionalism is a concept based on participatory relationships that foregrounds collaborative action between professional ECE colleagues and other stakeholders.

Fasoli and colleagues (2007) build on the work of leadership researcher Judyth Sachs (2000) and her notion of “activist professional,” to develop an ECE leadership model as sustainable professionalism. They construct their leadership concept on four related aspects: ethical entrepreneurship, enabling a future oriented perspective, activism, and caring. For Fasoli and colleagues, ethics is connected with a belief in social justice and taking actions that contribute to the wellbeing of children, families, and communities. Taking a future oriented perspective entails taking a critical view of the past (of common issues) and taking collective action towards the future. Activism is seen as a shared experience, as the professional-leader

allows common issues to come into focus within the community. Finally, they propose an expanded notion of care as developed by Tronto (1993). Beyond the notion of caring *about* and caring *for* (children, families, and colleagues), Tronto (1993, as cited in Fasoli et al., 2007, p. 264) defines care broadly as everything that we do to maintain our world and to live as well as possible.

Emerging frameworks for leadership enactment in ECE contexts

A number of initiatives in the international early childhood arena offer new ways to expand and broaden the early childhood professional identity in ways that expand the possibilities for what might be conceived as leadership enactment in early childhood contexts. In what follows, I briefly summaries these projects to illuminate what leadership enactments may look like in ECE practice.

Early childhood leadership as facilitated teacher leadership

In New Zealand the implementation of a national early childhood curriculum, *Te Whariki*, has become the impetus for creating a national early childhood leadership project known as the Educational Leadership Project (ELP)¹² (Lee, 2008). Building on theories of teacher leadership (York-Barr & Duke, 2004) and distributed or shared leadership (Lambert, 2002), the project's spirit can be inferred from the following quote:

Within every school (Early Childhood Education setting) there is a sleeping giant of teacher leadership, which can be a strong catalyst for making change. By using the energy of teacher leaders as agents of school change, the reform of public education will stand a better chance of gaining momentum. (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 1996, p.2, as cited in Lee, 2008, p. 98)

¹² See – Educational Leadership Project <http://www.elp.co.nz/>

The ELP was set up with project facilitators and centre facilitators using the “training the trainers” model of community development and leadership. Project facilitators work for ELP, whereas the centre facilitators are the teacher-leaders who work in early childhood settings across New Zealand. Project facilitators visit the centres to provide in-centre support and are engaged in facilitating workshops and networking (Lee, 2008). The project leans on long-held early childhood values, such as building a caring community, putting relationships as the top priority, collegiality, and networking. Importantly, the ELP relies on “critical triadic relationship” (Lee, 2008, p. 99) between an academic representative, ELP project facilitators, and the teachers/leaders themselves.

Another significant aspect of this project was developing the practice of using narratives to document children’s learning. The narratives, which are called Learning Stories (see Chapter One), make visible and public the early childhood community’s interpretations of the principles of *Te Whariki*. Learning Stories are shared with community members and are seen as having a major role in shifting the early childhood culture with respect to how children view themselves as learners, in how the local community regards early childhood education, and in how educators’ see themselves as early childhood professionals (Hatherly & Lee, 2003; W. Lee, personal communication, 2009).

Early childhood educator as researcher

In the municipal early childhood programs in the Italian city of Reggio Emilia educators are thought of as researchers who are constantly seeking deeper understanding of children’s learning processes and ways of being, as well as the meanings that are embedded in the pedagogical relations (Edwards et al., 1998; Moss, 2006; Rinaldi, 2006). Research is seen as part of everyday practice (Moss, 2006) and the educators’ main research tool is pedagogical

documentation (Dahlberg et al., 1999). Pedagogical documentation, now practiced internationally (albeit it may be given a different name¹³), has been theorized as a significant pedagogical tool for teacher research and for creating a democratic space in ECE contexts (see Dahlberg et al., 1999; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Rinaldi, 2006). Dahlberg and Moss (2005), for example, theorize pedagogical documentation as making ECE experiences visible and open for multiple interpretations and dialogue between children and adults. They see it as an approach to education that is open and democratic.

Two Swedish ECE scholars, Olsson (2009) and Lenz Taguchi (2010), have recently engaged in research projects that centred on the possibilities of pedagogical documentation for initiating change in ECE thinking and practice. While their studies did not focus on ECE leadership *per se*, the insights that these scholars infer from their research have implications for the present study. Using Deleuze's and Guattari's philosophical concepts, Olsson and Lenz Taguchi¹⁴ theorize pedagogical documentation as processes that support a practice of (unpredictable) experimentation and creation. Both scholars illustrate with examples of pedagogical documentations from ECE preschools in Sweden, how pedagogical events that were documented and narrated became sites for struggle with questions about subjectivity and learning, opening possibilities for new ways of understanding learning, young children, and educators. Lenz Taguchi describes pedagogical documentation as an active process of transformation that entangles theory and practices in a way that living (practice) transforms thinking (theory) and thinking transforms living. Similarly to Dahlberg's and Moss's (2005) assertions about thinking ECE settings as contexts for minor politics (see above), Olsson and

¹³ As I explained in Chapter One, the practice of pedagogical documentation is the main source of inspiration for the practice of pedagogical narration that was recently included in the B.C. Ministry of Education policy document, *The B.C. Early Learning Framework: From Theory to Practice* (2009).

¹⁴ Lenz Taguchi (2010) also draws extensively on the work of feminist physicist Karen Barad.

Lenz Taguchi view changes in ECE practice/theory that occur at the micro-political level (within the preschool and among children and adults) as having potential to ‘stretch out’ and influence other fields especially with the practice of pedagogical documentation.

Early childhood educator as an activist

In a number of projects in Australia, leadership in ECE took on a form of professional activism (MacNaughton, 2005; Woodrow, 2008; Woodrow & Busch, 2008). Feminist and poststructuralist paradigms were used in a number of projects to deconstruct traditional ideas of the early childhood profession and leadership (MacNaughton, 2005; Woodrow, 2008). Leadership in these projects was seen as situated locally, enacted in smaller acts, and working across traditional professional boundaries. Both MacNaughton (2005) and Woodrow (2008) focused their work/research with early childhood educators on developing critical reflection and analysis, and building (mainly through journal writing) a clear(er) sense of purpose in their work. Early childhood centres were reconceived as “sites for community building” (Woodrow, 2008, p. 275). These smaller scale actions that build leadership capacity were also reported by Gunilla Dahlberg in the Stockholm Project (Dahlberg et al., 1999, pp. 121-143) and by Peter Moss (as cited in Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, pp. 158-164) in the Mosaic Approach (a project that focused on listening to children’s views and experiences in order to influence child-related policy in the U.K.).

Woodrow’s and Busch’s (2008) study of positioning early childhood students as community activists yielded interesting findings. Woodrow and Busch (2008) experimented with introducing pre-service early childhood educators to alternative notions of leadership. At a later stage in this project, students were asked to assume leadership roles for a week-long community function celebrating young children. The pre-service students were placed in community settings

where they were confronted with conflicting and competing discourses of childhood by community members. Woodrow and Busch (2008) reported that the fact that students were able to articulate a strong and convincing argumentation for images of children as capable social actors, helped them negotiate and challenge dominant discourses of children in their conversations with community members. Furthermore, being acquainted with alternative leadership conceptions helped the pre-service students realize that leadership can be enacted in small, but significant, acts, situated within a community.

The studies described above provide reference for the current research, particularly because this study also aimed at exploring alternative forms of leadership within the contexts of communities. These projects contribute to a new conceptualization of leadership that affords new ways of enacting leadership in ECE contexts. While enactments of leadership are related to the daily lives of children, educators, and parents, they were, nonetheless, concerned with broad social and political issues, such as gender inequality (see MacNaughton, 2005) and the role that children can play in participating and affecting the public sphere (see Clark & Moss, 2001). In addition, rather than locating leadership in particular individuals, these projects highlight the importance of opening spaces for leadership to emerge in diverse places and in multiple ways.

New paradigm for the study of educational leadership

In their book, *Leadership in Early Care and Education* (1997), Kagan and Bowman encourage educators in the field of ECE to explore leadership paradigms from the wider educational community. While they acknowledge that traditional educational leadership theory have not been appropriate to early childhood because of its hierarchical, top-down orientation, they maintained that contemporary leadership approaches that support collaborative leadership and are more sensitive to gender issues in leadership are in concert with early childhood

philosophy and practices.

Indeed, recent leadership literature from outside the early childhood sector has promoted views of leadership as a collaborative, contextual phenomenon (Blackmore, 1999; Lambert, 2003; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004). New approaches to educational leadership have moved beyond questions of organization and effectiveness to link leadership with questions about identity, differences, and the role of democracy in leadership and education (Bates, 2006; Blackmore, 1999; Fielding, 2009; Lambert 2003; Samier & Stanley, 2008; Woods, 2004). The concept of leadership as control and the notion of leadership as management have been challenged. This is reflected by Helen Gunter's (2005) impassioned contention that:

Leadership must always be suspect in a radical tradition, not because it is unnecessary or unimportant, but because it too readily re-enforces the status quo, even when it tries hard not to...Educational leadership is not just the must of delivering efficient and effective organizations, but is also about challenging the power structures and cultures that are inherited and can act as barriers to democratic development. It is about the central importance of re-engaging with the specifically 'public' nature of what education and schooling should be in a democratic society. (p. 181)

Heck and Hallinger (2005) conducted a review of studies in educational leadership from 1990-2005. They note the rise in the studies of educational leadership where leadership is conceptualized as an ethical and political endeavor. The authors distinguished the latter from leadership research that has been focused on "administrative processes and improvement while accepting the premises of an unjust educational system" (p. 234). More recent leadership research tends to employ a variety of qualitative methods (i.e., case studies, ethnography, and naturalistic inquiry) and a range of critical methodologies (i.e., critical ethnography, feminist critique). Heck and Hallinger (2005) quote Furman who proposed that the emerging frame for the study of leadership is engaged in the 'big picture' question of 'what leadership is for?' (Furman, 2002, as cited in Heck & Hallinger, 2005, p. 234). In line with emerging ECE

leadership theories, contemporary studies of educational leadership outside of ECE contexts are more focused on understanding leadership as an enacted phenomenon within a community. Alvesson and Deetz (2000) explain that problems arise when we treat leadership as an objective, stable, abstract concept. They argue that we should abandon the desire to discover the truth of leadership and to focus instead on the ways in which leadership is locally constructed and enacted and that “the question ‘what is leadership?’ is misleading. A better question would be ‘what can we see, think, or talk about if we think of leadership as this or that?’” (p. 52).

Biesta and Miron (2002) explain that a common thread in the new discourses on educational leadership is the attempt to move away from “a linear, technological approach in which leadership is conceived as a means to bring about pre-determined ends” (p. 101). Leadership is no longer seen only as a position in an organization, or “leadership-as-control” (Biesta & Miron, 2002, p. 102), rather, leadership is depicted as enacted through participation in processes of learning that occur as part of everyday practice in the context of communities (see also, Bates, 2006; Blackmore, 1999; Harris, 2004; Lambert, 2003; Spillane et al., 2004). Leadership is related to initiating processes of meaning-making, trying to understand diverse and unpredictable situations, and then finding “new directions, new frameworks, new sources of inspiration and motivation” toward future actions (Biesta & Miron, 2002, p. 104).

For example, Gronn (2000) developed a conception of distributed leadership theory. According to Gronn, distributed leadership reflects the view that every person can enact leadership, while this does not mean that everyone is a leader, it opens up the possibility for a more democratic and collective forms of leadership. Lambert (2003) proposes that educational leadership can be understood as a reciprocal process that enables participants in an educational community to construct meaning that leads toward a shared purpose of schooling. Fielding

(2009) links educational leadership with the creation of public spaces where “we can collectively make meaning of our work and lives together and take shared responsibility for past actions and future intentions” (p. 497).

Teacher leadership

The rise of new theories of leadership as a collaborative and distributed phenomenon occasioned the study of teachers as leaders by a growing number of researchers (Muijs & Harris, 2003). In an overview of the literature about teacher leadership, Muijs and Harris (2003) assert that, “teacher leadership is centrally concerned with forms of empowerment and agency which are also at the core of distributed leadership theory” (p. 439). In teacher leadership studies attention is focused on developing social, intellectual, and other forms of human capital, rather than concentrating only on achievement of instrumental ends. Teacher leadership has been connected with students’, teachers’, and parents’ engagement with school processes, participation in dialogue, and contributing to the democratization of the schools. In their book, *Teacher leadership* (2004), Lieberman and Miller postulate that teacher leadership is needed within current neoliberal contexts when rapid changes in political, social, technological and economic realities, such as globalization, adoption of private market ethos in the public domain, shift in family structure, increased pressure on schools resulting in rise in accountability measures, standardization, and “management by result” (p. 4). Lieberman and Miller (2004) discuss Fullan’s (1995) and Lambert’s (2003) assertion that as a response to the dominance of neoliberal rationality, the notion of teacher leadership needs to be broadened from a view of a single individual in a classroom to that of collaborative action aiming at transforming the entire school culture.

Teacher as leaders in ECE settings

A few studies have explored teacher leadership enactment in ECE contexts. Thornton (2006) study of leadership enactment in three diverse early childhood settings in New Zealand (state kindergarten, a play centre, and child care), is particularly relevant to the current study since the practice of pedagogical narration entails that early childhood educators take a more public stance in relation to how they interpret and understand children's learning experiences, as they engage their communities in dialogue about the narratives. Thornton's multiple case study focused on three out of six centres that were identified by the New Zealand government as Centres of Innovation (COI). These centres were chosen to showcase excellence in ECE practice to the wider community because they met the government criteria for using innovative approaches and providing high quality programs. Each centre was to work with a research associate to document their innovative practices and to share with others (outside the centre) information about their practices over the course of three years. Similarly to other studies, Thornton found that educators were uncomfortable with the label 'leaders,' yet they accepted that leadership was a "team thing." Leadership was understood as "horizontal" (p. 158) and characterized as a collaborative effort. Thornton (2006) described the enactments of leadership across the three cases as actions of courage, commitment, and collaboration. All three elements of leadership enactment were related to leadership opportunities arising from educators articulating and sharing their unique and innovative programs with others through public speaking, writing articles, as well as opening their centres up to the scrutiny of others through visits and presentations. Thornton (2006) concluded that, "the COI programme has certainly encouraged advocacy through the expectation that centres share information about their innovations with others" (p. 158). In relation to the present study, Thornton emphasized in her

implications the importance of naming the actions of the educators at the centres she studied as leadership, because, as she argued: “Although leadership is definitely being shown within and by these quality centres, *this needs to be acknowledged and articulated*” (p. 163, emphasis added). Notably, what Thornton is suggesting is that early childhood educators and researchers begin to make visible new possibilities for leadership conceptualization and enactment (in Thornton’s case it is a collaborative conception of leadership; enacted through courage, commitment and collaboration) as a starting point for broadening the definition of ECE leadership in the public sphere.

Discussion for Chapter Two

Inferences drawn from the literature review, especially in terms of the lack of empirical studies into the possibilities of a reconceptualized view of leadership in ECE, as well as the complex, tenuous relations between early childhood educators’ conception of their professional identity and their hesitance to enact leadership provide a strong impetus for the present research. The gendered, social, and political contexts in which early childhood pedagogical work is carried out point to a need for a new construction of leadership within the field (Woodrow & Busch, 2008). Additionally, leadership in ECE can be strengthened through an expansion of early childhood educators’ professional identities, especially towards more political and public identities (Grieshaber, 2001). Within the context of this study, the practice of pedagogical narration provides the potential space and occasion for early childhood educators’ professional identity expansion. At the same time, the practice of pedagogical narration affords a study of leadership that is focused on leadership enactments, particularly, when leadership actions are associated with reflective thinking and initiation of public discussion.

The aforementioned emerging theoretical frameworks for the study of educational leadership provided conceptual and methodological contexts for the present study, as they changed the ways in which leadership has been understood and studied. Instead of focusing leadership research on discovering the leaders' skills and characteristics, researchers in the "new tradition" focus on studying leadership in/as action (Harris, 2004; Lambert, 2003; Spillane et al., 2004). As discussed above, leadership enactments in the new educational leadership studies are often situated within a community and are associated with dialogue and critique (Lambert, 2003).

Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2005) point out that most of the empirical research in ECE leadership focused on the study of directors or coordinators of ECE services. Therefore, the emphasis has been placed on how leadership relates to management roles. The authors claim that there is a need for studies that explore how early childhood educators engage in leadership in their daily work regardless of the educator's administrative role. Moreover, a constraint of Hard's (2005) and a number of other studies (for example, see Nupponen, 2006 and Rodd, 1997) was that researchers attempted to tap into how early childhood educators see themselves as leaders by eliciting the educators' beliefs about an abstracted concept of leadership. While these studies shed light on the inadequacy of traditional concepts of leadership in the ECE field, they did not contribute to creating new possibilities for leadership enactment by reconceptualizing the concept of leadership itself or by describing enactments of leadership outside of traditional ways of 'doing' leadership (i.e., management). In contrast, the research questions (and the interview questions) in the present study have been formulated in relation to the practice of pedagogical narration as a potential site for the experience of leadership with the purpose of broadening the possibilities for leadership identities to emerge and to be taken up by early childhood educators.

Finally, Muijs and colleagues (2004) and Dunlop (2008) conducted international reviews of leadership studies in ECE and argued that alternative leadership theories in ECE have not been sufficiently grounded in empirical data. In the next chapter, I outline the theoretical framework that inspired this study and I begin to sketch the relation between the theoretical and empirical aspects of this research project.

Chapter Three

Theoretical Grounding: Thinking Leadership with Hannah Arendt's Theory of Action as Narration in the Public Sphere

In this chapter, I outline the theoretical framework and conceptual tools employed throughout this thesis. I introduce aspects of Hannah Arendt's political thought that are relevant to the present research project. In order to substantiate the investigation of the practice of pedagogical narration as a site for leadership enactment in the field of ECE, I explain the relevance of Arendt's idiosyncratic methodology of storytelling to the practice of pedagogical narration. In particular, I highlight how Arendt's conception of narration (or storytelling, as she called it) as political *action* provides a theoretical grounding to the notion that pedagogical narrations have potential for ECE leadership.

I begin the discussion with Arendt's reformulation of the meaning of politics, and I present her understanding of a public sphere, as the space for sharing stories from multiple perspectives, to show that for Arendt, the public realm was a condition for the possibility of political action and plural existence. After explicating her unique approach to narratology, I discuss the Arendtian notion of the leader-as-beginner, and I tie the practice of pedagogical narrations to a possibility for enactment of leadership in ECE contexts.

Hannah Arendt's (1906-1975) theoretical propositions and distinctive concept of political action are beginning to permeate contemporary educational leadership theories (see, for example, Coulter & Wiens, 2008; Fielding, 2009; Gunter, 2005; and Mackler, 2008). In particular, these emerging theories link Arendt's political thought to educational leadership by elaborating on her conceptualization of political action, reflective judgment (understood as linking thinking with acting), and the importance of creating a public sphere where people can come together to exchange opinions and contest meanings and values.

Situating Arendt's thought

Arendt's work eludes categorization into established philosophical paradigms. Even though she was a student of phenomenology (with Martin Heidegger) and existentialism (with Karl Jaspers), she worked within and against these frameworks to distinguish herself as an original, creative thinker (Bernstein, 1983; Kristeva, 2001; Villa, 2000, 2008). In fact, while a significant amount of scholarly work has been dedicated to situating Arendt in a particular tradition (Benhabib, 2003; Disch, 1996; Kateb, 2000; Moran, 2000; Villa, 2000, 2008), debates about her appropriate theoretical 'location' seem to continue rather than subside. What scholars seem to agree on, however, is that Arendt was a master of distinctions and a creator of concepts. This, ironically, and against her will, distinguishes Arendt, according to Deleuze's and Guattari's (1994) criteria, as a philosopher *par excellence*, because they contend that "[t]he object of philosophy is to create concepts that are always new" (p. 5). Arendt quite deliberately described herself as a political theorist, not a philosopher (I elaborate on this point shortly), and indeed the majority of her writing focused on understanding the meaning of politics as the possibility for experiencing agency and freedom in the public realm. It is her mediation on politics that provides substance to the theoretical framework of the present study.

The political thought of Hannah Arendt

A reorientation of the meaning of politics

Arendt's biographer, Young-Bruehl (2001), asserts that one of Arendt's greatest contributions to political thought is the fact that she reoriented the notion of politics towards "the speaking and acting of citizens in a public space" (p. 243). This assertion cannot be taken lightly, since as Villa (2000) contends, Arendt realized that "Western political philosophers have missed the existential significance of political action itself, the stunning capacity of debate and

deliberation among equals to generate meaning and endow human life with a significance it otherwise lacks” (p. 12). The impetus to expand the notion of politics beyond its institutional aspects and to focus it on the political experience of acting citizens emerged from three entangled strands in Arendt’s life and work, namely, her personal encounter with the Nazi regime, her relentless investigation into the political phenomenon of totalitarianism, and her critical foray into the Western tradition of political philosophy (Canovan, 1992).

Shortly after completing a doctorate in philosophy with prominent German philosophers, Arendt, as a young Jewish woman, had to flee Nazi Germany. She stayed for a short period in France, and then escaped to the United States, where she was granted citizenship in 1951 and where she lived and worked for the rest of her life. As her student and assistant, Jerome Kohn (1994), reflects, Arendt’s experience of statelessness and rightlessness meant that

...the political became a reality for her, not only as the arena of ‘politics’ in which politicians get on with the business of governing, harnessing power, determining goals, and formulating and implementing the means to achieve them, but also as the realm in which novelty, for better or worse, can arise, and in which the conditions of human freedom and unfreedom are cast. (p. xii)

The passivity of the German intellectual milieu (to which Arendt belonged) to the realities of the Nazi regime alerted Arendt to the fact that being a “good thinker” does not necessarily imply “good judgment” (Coulter & Wiens, 2002). The apparent “abyss” between thinking and acting troubled Arendt, and she became suspicious of the role of the professional thinker who is removed from community life in pursuit of abstractions. Arendt decidedly makes a move from philosophy to the horizon of action, choosing to become a political theorist. As a political theorist, she focuses her work on recovering the meaning of *praxis* into *action* to show its relevance to our contemporary political existence (Bernstein, 1983, p. 44).

Her analysis of totalitarianism, as articulated in her earliest political work, *The Origin of Totalitarianism* (1951), led Arendt to a number of insights that inspired her future political thought. In totalitarianism Arendt saw an attack on human plurality through the attempt to create out of plural and unique individuals ‘one Man with gigantic dimension;’ and this, says Villa (2000), made her suspicious of any attempt to inculcate a univocal sense of the public good in citizens. Arendt realized that in order to achieve the aims of totalitarianism, plurality and the human capacity for spontaneous action had to be destroyed through practices of total domination (see also Canovan, 1992).

But it was not only in totalitarian ideology that Arendt detected contempt towards plurality and action. While carrying out a critical study of the history of Western political thought, Arendt found a tradition of distrust towards the “politics of debate” that she traced to Plato (Arendt, 2005). It was Socrates’s tragic execution, Arendt maintains, that made Plato “despair of polis life,” “doubt the validity of persuasion...despise opinions and yearn for absolute standards”¹⁵ (Arendt, 2005, pp. 6-8). In his writings, Plato envisioned a utopian reorganization of the *polis* as directed by and aimed at the philosopher-king’s way of life that included freedom *from* politics. According to Arendt, Plato initiated a tradition of apolitia, marked by hierarchical models of polity (and leadership) and hostility towards unpredictability and contingency that inevitably characterize the politics of opinion and debate (Arendt, 1958/1998, 2005, see also, Villa, 2000).¹⁶ Concerned by the prejudice against politics, and the

¹⁵ Socrates was trialed and executed in Athens in 399 BC. The Athenians accused Socrates of corrupting the youth with his endless questions, which the Athenians saw as “bringing disorder into the cities and confusing the citizens” (Arendt, 1978, p. 178). For more on Socrates, see Arendt 1978, pp. 166-193.

¹⁶ Arendt was closer to Aristotle’s conceptualization of politics, in, for example, the distinctions that he made between the *oikos* (private space) and the *polis* (public space) - as the space for *praxis*. Yet, Arendt departed from Aristotle in her interpretation of *praxis* or *action*. While for Aristotle *praxis* can be interpreted as a means of attaining a higher end (virtuous man in pursuit of the good life), for Arendt *action* remains an end in itself (see Villa, 2008, p. 316).

tendency of citizens to “abdicate their civic freedom and responsibility” (Villa, 2000, p. 8), Arendt sought to revive a theory of politics that is centred on human plurality, speech, and action.

Responding to Arendt’s provocation to expand the notion of politics beyond a view of politics as institutional and hierarchical structures¹⁷, Calhoun and McGowan (1997) ask: “Must politics be merely a matter of power relations, or can it embody the realization of some of the higher and most distinctive potentials of human life?” (p. 1). Arendt challenges us to think about politics in which “*questions of meaning, identity, and value* take centre stage” (Calhoun & McGowan, 1997, p. 1, emphasis added). By giving us a political theory with a broader meaning of politics, Arendt opens up the political/public sphere to questions that otherwise may not have entered into it, such as questions about the public meaning of education, the purposes and values of early childhood education, and the images/identities of young children and their educators (Berger, 2010). Moreover, by broadening the notion of politics to include questions of values, meanings, and identities, Arendt expands the space for *who* might participate in politics (Beacroft, 2007).

The significance of the public realm

In her book, *The Human Condition* (1958),¹⁸ Arendt continues to explore the perils of the depolitization of public life through a critique of modernity. She contends that the advent of the modern age, along with the growth of capitalism, and the incessant emphasis on production and consumption, resulted in civic passivity and lack of “agonal spirit” (p. 40). Essential to the

¹⁷ Arendt was not against political institutions or other political procedures, but she saw them as pre-political, enabling the experience of ‘real’ politics to take place when citizens come together to dispute and contest their positions in a public sphere (Arendt, 1958/1998).

¹⁸ Note that throughout this dissertation I cite from the republished 1998 version of *The Human Condition*.

problematics of modernity are the birth of the science of economics and an understanding of freedom as the liberation from material constraints and political (public) responsibilities. Furthermore, the rise of “mass society” (or as Arendt refers to it as “the social”) is characterized by the “phenomenon of conformism” (p. 40), which is partly fueled by the scientific supposition that new techniques, most notably, statistics, render human nature predictable and controllable. Arendt claims that “mass society” tends to produce “a certain kind of behavior” by “imposing innumerable and various rules, all of which tend to ‘normalize’ its members, to make them behave...so that those who did not keep the rules could be considered to be asocial or abnormal” (pp. 40-41). At the crux of Arendt’s critique of the modern age, is the loss of what she calls a “common world,” or public reality. Life in the modern age entails an isolated, privatized existence, and a retreat from meaningful public encounters.

Arendt does not lament the loss of collective or shared values, but rather, the loss of a political space, where values and meanings can be contested and where responsibility for public matters can be taken.¹⁹ In Arendt’s (1958/1998) words:

...men have become entirely private, that is, they have been deprived of seeing and hearing others, of being seen and being heard by them. They are all imprisoned in the subjectivity of their own singular experience...The end of the common world comes when it is seen only under one aspect and is permitted to present itself in only one perspective. (p. 58)

¹⁹Arendt’s critical account of modernity is echoed in contemporary critique of neoliberalism. Noteworthy are the parallels between Arendt’s concerns for the decline of the public sphere, the political passivity of citizens, and the phenomena of making the political subservient to economics. Brown (2005), for example, posits that neoliberalism, which has been adopted by Western governments since the mid seventies as a *political* rationality, resulted in the colonization of the public space by private interests and the logic of the market. The conditions promoted by neoliberal agenda, namely, a radically free market and maximized competition, erode social policies and social institutions by favoring economic growth and profitability while ignoring social and environmental issues. The neoliberal citizen, according to Brown, is characterized by an “unprecedented degree of passivity and political complacency” (Brown, 2005, p. 43).

The public realm as the space of appearance

Being seen and heard in a public space gained a particular political significance for Arendt. Nearly 30 years after her escape from Germany, Arendt (1994) disclosed how her experience in Nazi Germany triggered her thinking about the political meaning of the public realm and the speed with which it can disappear from one's experience, as well as the speed with which one can be made superfluous (or disappear) within it. She understood that totalitarianism operated by a destruction of that space (Schutz, 1997).²⁰ The Arendtian public signifies, first and foremost, a space of appearance: a forum for visibility and listening. It is a place to be seen and heard through speech and action that often takes the shape of multiperspectival storytelling (Arendt, 1958/1998). Appearance in public entails two related phenomena: a disclosure of a *world* and a disclosure of a *who*.

For Arendt the public realm connotes a space where people come together to constitute a reality and create a common world by means of robust talk and opinion about a worldly issue (or an *inter-est*,²¹ as Arendt called it) endowing it with significance, multiple-meanings, and complexity. Establishing a common world does not assume a common human nature, and the commonality of the world does not imply sameness or conformity. Quite on the contrary, the Arendtian public is an agonal space. Arendt emphasizes again and again that the reality of the public realm 'relies on the simultaneous presence of innumerable perspectives to which no common measurement or denominator can be devised' (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 57). She insists

²⁰ The destruction of public space began, according to Arendt, with the rise of the "social" in the modern age. Therefore, it preceded and contributed to the rise of totalitarian regimes (see also Canovan, 1992; Schutz, 1997; and Villa, 2000).

²¹ Arendt's (1958/1998) hyphenated spelling of "*inter-est*" (p. 182) signified (or emphasized) her contention that what brings people together in a common world depends on the possibility of the presence and *interactivity* among multiple perspectives about a "worldly reality." According to Adams (2002), Arendt wanted to distinguish *inter-est* from "mass interest," the assumption that members of society constitute "one family" with one opinion and one interest.

that everybody sees and hears from a different position (or location), and that this multiplicity of perspectives creates an *in-between* that both relates and separates people. The deliberation about the *inter-est* entails that the same issue or topic will be seen and discussed from a variety of viewpoints to explore its “utter diversity,” building and extending, at the same time, a “web of relations” among diverse viewpoints.

The main purpose of the experience of a public realm, then, is not to achieve agreement or consensus by homogenizing differences, but to sustain the tensions between the plurality of opinions in such a way that the unexpected or newness (new relations, ideas, stories, and opinions) can emerge. Newness ensures the necessity to *think* and to respond *thoughtfully* to new and unpredictable situations. Otherwise, we may assume that “everything had always already been” and retreat to a passive, disengaged existence (Benhabib, 1990, p. 184).

The significance of the Arendtian public space is intensified by Arendt’s proposition that when we insert ourselves into the public realm with speech and action, we not only disclose a world, we also reveal *who* we are (as distinct from *what* we are). The distinction that Arendt makes between *what* we are - the qualities and social positioning that we share with others - to *who* we are - which is our radical and irreplaceable uniqueness - is one of Arendt’s most provocative assertions. Arendt (1958/1998) moors the revelation of a *who* in the dynamic “flux of action and speech” (p. 181) *and* in the plurality (or “publicness”) of the world, rather than in solitary reflection (see also Kristeva, 2001). Arendt, then, challenges the notion of a static, unified, and expressive identity.²² She argues, instead, for a fluid, expositive, and relational identity that is entangled with the presence and responses of others *who* are not like us (see

²² Arendt (1958/1998) uses the terms “identity” as well as “subject” when she discusses the “who” that is revealed in action. Arendt uses both terms to express the idea that when one acts, one becomes both the initiator of action (identified with the act) and the subject of action’s unpredictable consequences (see pp. 175-192).

Cavarero, 2000; Kristeva, 2001; and Villa, 1997).²³

Arendt's *who*-in-action defies preexisting classification of identity as it anchors identity in the agonistic relation of the public realm "broaching in this way the thorny problem of 'essence' or a 'human nature'" (Kristeva, 2001, p.174). In fact, Arendt (1958/1998) says that defining human nature is an impossibility; indeed, "this would be like jumping over our own shadows" (p. 10). Todd (2011a), drawing from Cavarero's (2005) interpretation of Arendt, emphasizes that, "human beings are not simply appearances...they actively disclose themselves in their encounters with others" (p. 105). "To be alive means to be possessed by an urge toward self-display," writes Arendt (1978, p. 21). Human beings, asserts Todd, are not simply distinct, they distinguish themselves; "they put forth their who-ness in the very gesture of their words and deeds" (p. 105).

Despite the desire for self-display, insertion into the world, according to Arendt (1998), does not happen in a straightforward manner and is always accompanied by a question asked of every "newcomer:" "Who are you?" (p. 178). Yet, *Who* someone is, according to Arendt, remains inexplicable in philosophical and psychological terms, because we end up speaking about a *who* as if it were a *what* (Arendt, 1958/1998, pp. 10-11). Biesta (in an interview with Philip Winter, 2011) explains that Arendt shifts the question of identity from a question of substance to a question of existence in a world marked by plurality. This implies, Biesta adds, that in order to engage in questions about *who* we are, we need to reflect on *events* of action, and these events, as I clarify later on this dissertation, can be responded to with narratives that reveal

²³ Arendt does not dismiss the existence of a non-public self but she defends the importance of the political (public) dimension of our identity, because it is this dimension of our identity that holds the possibility to renew the world and to leave traces of our distinctiveness in the world by means of a story.

the protagonist of the story, the *who*.²⁴

Power as acting in concert

What keeps the public realm in existence, Arendt (1958/1998) maintains, is power. But rather than viewing power as imposing one's will on others, Arendt views power as the *potentiality* that is created where people come together through speech and action - bringing forth the possibility to "*act in concert*."²⁵ This leads Gordon (2002) to suggest that "it is precisely the subject's capacity to act in concert in order to create something new that discloses the potentiality of human agency" (p. 134). Agency, thus, according to Arendt, is neither individual nor collective, it is relational (Biesta & Tedder, 2006). Action is initiated by the speech and actions of someone; however, the initiator does not remain the unique master of his or her action, because the possibility of action to have effect in the world depends on how it is taken up by others. Yet, this impossibility to have full control over what we initiate is, according to Arendt (1958/1998), the very condition from which (endless) possibilities to begin and to be a beginner arise.

Schutz (1997) explains that in acting in concert each participant is neither autonomous nor a 'cog in a machine.' Rather, in acting with others one becomes an agent in the sense that one's position on a common *inter-est* was taken into account by others. One can participate meaningfully in a collective project, yet one is unable to control the outcome of the project.

²⁴ Arendt was known for telling stories about such significant events. One of Arendt's stories of action was about the political courage that the king of Denmark exhibited when he declared, during the Nazi occupation of Denmark, that he and all the citizens of Denmark would wear the yellow Star of David that the German occupying army forced the Jewish people in Denmark (mostly refugees from Germany) to wear (Arendt, "Sonning Prize Speech," as cited in Reshaur, 1992, p. 728).

²⁵ Arendt (1958/1998) distinguishes between "power" as "acting in concert" and "force" which entails imposing one's will on others (pp. 200-207).

Relating Arendt's power to freedom, Levinson's (2010) explains that, "freedom [is] not achieved by escaping from the world but by engaging in the shaping of the world" (p. 474) with others.

Action, natality, and plurality

At the centre of Arendt's (1958/1998) political thought is her idiosyncratic conception of *action*. In *The Human Condition* Arendt distinguishes between three modalities of the active life (the *vita activa*): *labour*, *work* and *action*. Labour entails sustaining our basic human needs, whereas work has to do with the creation of objects and artifacts. The rationale for labor and work is biological and instrumental, but action distinctively transcends aims, intentions, and necessity.²⁶ Action, for Arendt, entails the human capacity to initiate, to begin, through speech and deeds, something "which cannot be expected from whatever may have happened before" (p. 178). To act, then, means to set something into motion and to bring something new into the common world (p. 177).

Arendt (1958/1998) constitutes the possibility for action - the beginning something new - on the conditions of *natality* and *plurality*. Natality entails that each one of us is born into the world as a unique "newcomer" with the capacity to respond to the world by "beginning something new on our own initiative" (p. 177). However, it is not only at the time of birth that something new comes into the world. Arendt contends that human beings continuously initiate and start something new by means of inserting themselves into the world "with words and deeds" and this insertion, Arendt suggests, is like "a second birth" (p. 176). As was noted above, through this insertion into the world, we reveal our distinctiveness, and thus, we actualize the condition of plurality, which is *the* condition of "all political life" (p. 7). The human condition of

²⁶ Curtis (1999) defends Arendt against accusation of purposelessness action. Arendt did not claim that action has no purpose; she only contended that action hardly ever achieves its purpose because once it has been inserted into the world it becomes boundless and unpredictable when it encounters others' actions and (hi)stories.

plurality is paradoxical and dynamic. “We are the same, that is human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live” (p. 45). Plurality is realized through ongoing, never completed processes of appearance and response. Arendt clarifies that “human distinctiveness is not the same as otherness” (p. 176). Todd (2011a) posits that Arendt’s plurality is distinctive from pluralism. While the latter arises from the question of communitarian identities; Arendt’s uniqueness-in-plurality is about the specificity of interaction through which one’s being appears to others. Todd (2011a), inspired by Arendt’s conception of the subject and the distinction between “who” and “what” we are, argues that pluralism relies on the logic that there is an abstract individual who embodies recognizable cultural differences that can be communicated. As such, differences, within the context of pluralism, are understood as something that is represented by individuals (their ‘what-ness’). Arendt’s concept of plurality, in contrast, “requires acknowledging a unique ‘who’” (p. 104) that emerges anew in particular contexts and events, and this uniqueness cannot be reduced to cultural and social categories or representation.

Action, thus, cannot occur outside the presence of a plurality of “spectators,” who *respond* to the appearance of the new and who may become co-actors along with the initiator of action. Action is inherently relational; the actor always moves among and in relation to other acting beings. In fact, Arendt (1958/1998) claims that action is not possible in isolation. Action is also “boundless and unpredictable,” because it occurs *in* the world, and thus it sets a motion into the “web-of-human-relations.” As such, every action sets endless reactions, not only because of the multitude of human interrelatedness, but also because even “one deed, and sometimes one word, suffice to change every constellation; forcing open boundaries and limitations and creating new relationships and possibilities” (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 190).

Action is distinguished from behavior. In comparing Arendt's action with behavior, Mackler (2008) makes clear that: "To behave is to adhere to the norms established by society, while to act is to do something that could not have been predicted or foreseen..." (p. 111). Behaviour implies that people are predictable, adaptable units, yet action, unlike behavior, "must disrupt our expectations" (Mackler, 2008, p. 111). Action, as such, is embedded in an event that interrupts habits and 'demands' our responses. We notice something *as* action only if it is unexpected because "anything that could have been predicted falls within the realms of behaviour" (Mackler, 2008, pp. 112-113). From this angle, action can also be viewed as the possibility for dissent. According to Gambetti (2005), Arendt's action "is the name to be given to that which defies conventional limits and establishes new meanings or inspires new stories" (p. 434).

Education and the public space

For Arendt (1961/2006), education constitutes a public concern, but she did not see the realm of education as a public space, because she thought of education (understood here as learning and teaching within formal settings) as a 'protective' sphere where children should not be burdened with the responsibility for the world or exposed to the 'blinding light' of the public. A number of contemporary educational philosophers have debated Arendt's propositions about education, some defending her so-called "conservatisms," while others arguing instead that education not only is, but *must* be, thought of as a public, political realm.²⁷

Two scholars, working within and against Arendt's theory, stand out in providing powerful argumentation to show that despite Arendt's writings about education, it is possible and

²⁷ Most notable are an edited collection by Mordechai Gordon (2001), titled *Hannah Arendt and Education: Renewing our common world*, and a special issue of *Teachers College Record* (2010, vol.112, No.2), titled "Education, crisis, and the human condition: Arendt after 50 years," edited by Chris Higgins.

necessary to view education as a political sphere. For example, Biesta (2010, p. 558), posits that Arendt, in her essay, *The Crisis in Education* (1961), “fell prey to a mistake,” albeit quite a common mistake, that education can only be discussed by using psychological terms such as “preparation,” “development,” and “readiness.” The psychological argument holds only, Biesta argues, when “childhood” and “adulthood” are thought of as natural (and temporal), rather than social and political, categories. When distinctions between child and adult are founded on natural and temporal claims, as Arendt positioned them, questions such as: Where does education end and politics begin? When is the child “ready” for politics? and, Are children not capable of speech and action? become absurd. As Biesta rightly points out, the lives of children are already permeated with questions about togetherness and plurality.

In fact, Biesta (2010) is able to show how Arendt herself, by providing us with the political concept of action in public sphere, subverts the dominant assumption that education is/should be about “preparation.” Briefly, what Biesta convincingly demonstrates is that appearance in the Arendtian public sphere is not contingent upon the existence of individuals who possess certain kinds of moral qualities or skills (for which they were “educated”), but depends on a particular way of being together (p. 558). This way of being together requires a certain quality of interactive engagement by which educators (and I would add educational leaders) actively seek ways for existing together that sustain education as a space *for* action(s). In concluding his essay about Arendt and education, Biesta (2010) asserts that schools are *the* sites where political existence can be experienced, because school settings provide a unique situation of togetherness and plurality where it is possible “to insert processes of reflection into attempts to exist politically” and to collectively learn *from* these processes (pp. 571-572).

Levinson (2001) sees Arendt’s concern about conflating politics with education as

Arendt's way of pointing out the unique role that educators play in our "world." According to Arendt's conception of education, teachers are placed in a unique situation as they are responsible for both presenting the world as is (and as it was) while preserving the condition for children (or "newcomers") to renew the world. Levinson recognizes the inherent tension in education between the desire to share the old (the past) and the desire to create something new. By elaborating on Arendt's assertion that "the essence of education is natality," Levinson is able to show how education becomes an ethical and political endeavor when educators *choose* to be attentive to the conditions that foster natality. Preservation of newness might be enacted when educators draw attention to *moments* when new relations and new realities emerge in classrooms (e.g., an unexpected friendship, a creative thought). On this note, Greene (1995, as cited in Schutz, 1999) adds that teachers must challenge the desire for certainty and make visible the complexity of the world so that children can begin to imagine a world that is different.

Extending from Levinson (2001), Biesta (2010), and others (see for example, Greene, 1993; Higgins, 2011; Schutz 1999; Mackler, 2008, and Masschelein & Simons, 2010), and *counter* Arendt, I propose in this study that educational settings for young children *can/should* be thought of as spaces where action is actualized and where newness can emerge. Specifically, what I argue in the present study is that educational leadership is enacted when early childhood educators share pedagogical narrations that are complex stories about events of natality (unexpected occurrences that require reflection and thinking) with others. Pedagogical narrations, once they are shared and debated, can challenge the banality of sameness and routines that haunt educational settings (Schutz, 1999). Moreover, as the stories about the unique occurrences become foci for public engagement (robust talk and deliberation among educators, children and parents) they constitute a public space where insights and creative acts of rethinking

who children are and what education is for can emerge and re-orient the ECE pedagogical path towards new possibilities.

Arendt's approach to narrativity

Arendt's approach to narrativity, or storytelling, as she referred to it, is complex and multifaceted. Her engagement with storytelling cannot be separated from; indeed it is highly embedded in, her political project. Arendt first introduced storytelling as a critical approach for understanding a phenomenon in her writings on totalitarianism. She argued that the phenomenon of totalitarianism created a 'problem of understanding' or an epistemological breakdown caused by the collapse of categories of thought and moral standards that were traditionally used to find 'explanations' for historical events. Arendt turns to storytelling as a methodology that affords a response to an unprecedented event through an engagement with the 'actuality of the event,' confronting the phenomena directly. She is famously quoted as saying that "...a description of the camps as Hell on earth is more 'objective', that is, more adequate to their essence than statements of a purely sociological or psychological nature" (Arendt, 1994, p. 404). Arendt argues that telling stories is a way to remind ourselves of the reality about which our abstract concepts are no longer adequate, and to bring to light the discrepancies between those categories and our worldly experience (see, Disch, 1996).

In what follows, I engage with Arendt's narratology to illuminate its political, methodological and epistemological implications. I begin with the role that Arendt assigned to storytelling in the public sphere and continue by delineating Arendt's employment of storytelling as an act of resistance to rationalist philosophy and historical determinism.

Action as narration

For Arendt (1958/1998) political action was associated with storytelling. She postulated that action in a public space “produces stories with or without intention as naturally as fabrication produces tangible things” (p. 184). According to Arendt, stories play a significant role in creating our common world, especially when they ‘appear’ and are made ‘visible’ in a public domain. Publics, then, “emerge not around an action itself but around the various stories that make it a public event” (Disch, 1994, p. 85).

More poignant, and highly relevant to this thesis, is Arendt’s claim that actions –which are fleeting occurrences – are in danger of disappearance if not noted by spectators and narrated by storytellers. In other words, ‘events that exist as raw material lie outside debate and opinion, and thus, by themselves are unpolitical’ (Hammer, 1997, p. 329). The narratives’ initial role, then, is to transform (unique and unexpected) events into a tangible appearance to make action visible and endow it with significance and permanence. Arendt explains that since the meaning of action, or an enacted event, is not given, action can only be “completed” in the minds of those who “inherit and question it” and then *tell a story* to elaborate its meaning (Arendt, 1961/2006, p. 6).

Arendt was a storyteller herself. She infused her lectures, writings, and public speeches with powerful stories of action (Young-Bruehl, 1977). Whether her stories were about significant historical events, such as the American and French revolutions, the Hungarian revolt in 1956, and the civil rights movement, or about public personae such as Rosa Luxemburg, or even personal stories about her escape from a Nazi prison, what Arendt hoped her stories would *do* was to reinvigorate thinking and action by reminding her audience about the ‘*permanent* human capacity to begin, to initiate and act together’ (Bernstein, 1983, pp. 210-211, original emphasis).

Narration as action

Thus storytellers, as the Arendtian scholar Lisa Disch (1994) clarifies, “do more than tell stories that accord permanence to fleeting actions”; importantly, they craft them into stories whose meaning can be open to public disputation (p. 43). A narrative response to action is more than a re-action; it is “always a new action that strikes out on its own and affects others” (Arendt, 1998, p. 190). Actions are continual beginnings occurring amidst a plurality of spectators, who perceive and tell the story from a unique standpoint and whose response to action is an action itself. Stories do not define as much as they awaken – those who are attentive to them – to a more political existence (Kohn, 2005, p. xxxiii). What is crucial for narration as action is not a formal distinction between different kinds of narratives, but that the narrative itself will sustain the disclosing *energeia* of the action that initiated it (Kristeva, 2001, p. 74). The story becomes political – it becomes an action in itself –in the way in which “particular narrative instances implicate a political community” (MacPhee, 2011, p. 189).

Narration as action has an ethical dimension that must be emphasized. This aspect is related to action’s revelatory character, its disclosure of a *who*. For Arendt, stories are not only responses to contingent events; they are also a response to the question: “Who are you?” Arendt (1998) wrote that “*who* somebody is or was we can know only by knowing the story of which he is himself the hero...everything else we know of him...tells us only *what* he is or was”²⁸ (p. 186). *Who* is revealed from the unique life story of a person through a narration in which the *who* is a protagonist. Kristeva (2001) goes so far as to say that Arendt conceptualized “human life as political action that is revealed to us through the language of a story and of history” (p. 69).

²⁸ Arendt (1958/1998, p. 186) clarifies that the “hero” does not need heroic qualities. She links the word hero to its use in Greek mythology where it was used as a title for a person who participated in a collective enterprise.

Kristeva (2001) proposes that “Arendt rehabilitates the *praxis* of narrative...in order to show that life is not a ‘value’ in and for itself, as is believed by humanist ideologies...the revelatory character of action as well as the ability to produce stories and become historical...form the very source from which meaningfulness springs into and illuminates human existence” (pp. 8-9). Dunne (2006), inspired by Arendt, eloquently connects action, story, and disclosure of a *who* as follows: “Every action is an *event* of coming-into-being. And it is closely related to story. For through our actions, we enact our histories; stories are not pre-scripted – they narrate what has *emerged* through action” (p. 14, original emphasis).

Ricoeur (1983) posits that the disclosure of a *who* is not by itself a story. It is through linking one’s disclosure with the web of human relations that a unique life story can emerge. On this particular idea, Schutz (1999) notes that “one’s biography is never simply revealed; it is constructed in each attempt to connect with one’s world” (p. 82).

Storytelling as thinking, critical understanding, and reflective judgment

It should be clear by now that Arendt’s notion of storytelling stands in sharp contrast with conventional ways of thinking about narrative as defining meaning, giving an authentic account of events, or providing explanation and information. Disch (1994) takes the interpretation of Arendt’s narrative methodology further, suggesting that Arendt’s concept of storytelling redefines understandings of objectivity and impartiality. Disch argues that Arendt saw storytelling as a “practice of situated critical thinking” in which the storyteller’s task was not to report objectively, but to tell a story that engaged the audience’s critical faculties (p. 27). For Arendt telling a story was not about capturing the “truth”; stories are told “*to stir people to think about what they are doing*” (Disch, 1993, p. 671, my emphasis).

While I return to Arendt's mediation on the concept of objectivity in Chapter Four, I want to emphasize here that storytelling signals Arendt's resistance to the dictate that the philosopher must withdraw to a vantage point beyond the world of opinions and stories in order to understand it by means of abstract principles (see also, Cavarero, 2000 and Disch, 1994). For Arendt the Archimedean model of knowledge is apolitical. Neutral and objective accounts of events are not only impossible, but also dangerous, because they remain unaffected by the political questions at stake (Boland, 2012). Richard Bernstein (1983) argues that what makes Arendt distinctive is that she is neither a subjectivist nor foundationalist; she attempts to move *beyond* objectivism and relativism through her conceptualization of thinking, critical understanding, and judgment. Arendt "escapes the dichotomy of objectivism and relativism" (p. 219), since, as Bernstein maintains, according to Arendt,

Judgment is not the expression of private feelings or idiosyncratic subjective preferences. Neither is it to be identified with the type of universality that she takes to be characteristic of 'cognitive reason.' Judgment is communal and intersubjective; it always implicitly appeals to and requires testing against the opinion of other judging persons. (p. 219)

Thus, judgment is the possibility to respond to particularity while making a claim to communal "public validity" (Bernstein, 1983, p. 217). At the same time, Arendt was keenly aware that the mere existence of a public realm could not guarantee the appearance of uniqueness and plurality.²⁹ Her studies and 'worldly' experiences had taught her that 'words can be empty and deeds can be brutal, destroying, rather than establishing, new relations and new

²⁹ Arendt (1958/1998) recognized that in ancient Greek *polis* the public space of appearance did not exist for everyone and that this is problematic. She mentioned the slave, the foreigner, and the barbarian in antiquity as examples of those who could not have appeared in the public space (p. 199). Yet, the way I understand Arendt's approach to the notion of the public in *The Human Condition* is that she did not think of the public sphere as something that is 'there' and therefore needs to be 'accessed.' Rather, the public space is a *possibility* for everyone and can emerge everywhere. This does not mean that constituting a public space is an 'easy task.' It is indeed a very complicated one (I elaborate on this point in Chapter Seven).

realities' (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 200). While Arendt does not offer any simple solutions to ethical issues, she stresses repeatedly the importance of the activity of thinking and its related faculties of critical understanding and reflective judgment. She was critical of the view that rationality and reason (as well as universal values) can guarantee us protection from evil-doing (Berkowitz, 2010). Mackler (2010), building on Arendt, argues that the problem with the complicity of a 'known' world is that it does not invite thinking and plurality; it "sustains our numb dwelling in the private" (p. 514).

Thinking, for Arendt (1978), is an activity that arises from an encounter with an event that puzzles and amazes us; it presents something that we cannot understand by using habitual and conventional categories and theories, and this encounter necessitates what Arendt (1961/2006, p. xvi) calls to think "without a banister." The capacity to think without a banister is a way of thinking critically where categories are not imposed but are *inspired* by one's engagement with a unique phenomenon or an unexpected event (Disch, 1994).

While thinking for Arendt was a private activity, judgment must remain connected to others and be able to reflect the plurality of actors and their stories, or their understanding of the particular event. Arendt conceptualized reflective judgment as a process of imagined "*visiting*" of others' stories and arriving at a general point of view or a broadened way of thinking (Arendt, 1992).

Arendt (1978) postulated that reflective judgment can act as resistance to forces that threaten to erase plurality and natality because judgment connects thinking with acting. Arendt, much like the educators practicing pedagogical documentation in Reggio Emilia and Learning Stories in New Zealand, endowed stories with the capacity to challenge our habitual and categorical ways of thinking, opening up spaces for plurality and resisting sameness (Disch,

1993; Hammer et al., 1999; Kristeva, 2001). In a sense, the public needs to be interrupted by inserting multiple, new and surprising stories (about actions) that continuously provoke thought and judgment. Since stories highlight the particulars of human experiences, when told, they challenge pre-existing generalized categories of interpretation and preconceived theories. Stories, or multiple examples of human action, orient us toward the contingent, emergent, temporal and unpredicted. By doing so, stories open up the possibility to (re)think and learn something new from the sheer diversity and complexity of human experience (Hammer et al., 1999). Storytellers support the continuous “disorientation” (Biesta, 2010, p. 570) of thought because the understanding of phenomena and events in their uniqueness and contingency requires that we “reinvent what political existence might mean” (p. 571).

Pedagogical narration can provide the ground on which thinking “without a banister” occurs, because educators’ thought is inspired and provoked by the documented event; and educators (as well as parents and children) are challenged to re-conceptualize and re-consider their previous assumptions about their actions, experiences and learning. Moreover, Arendt (1978) maintains that the result of thinking, which she saw as an ongoing search for meaning, always remains “uncertain and unverifiable” (p. 88), and this is why we share our thoughts (often in the shape of stories) with others; this sharing is the beginning of a process of collective judgment.

From this perspective, the practice of pedagogical narration can be seen as a practice by which early childhood educators invite their communities to first *think* and then engage in *collective judgment* about events that invoke questions and puzzlement. Constructing pedagogical narration affords reflective judgment because it entails a kind of interpersonal visiting where diverse viewpoints (of children, teachers, consultants, parents, and community

members) are made visible and become an opportunity to encounter the standpoint of others. While Arendt imagined the process of judgment as visiting others' stories through one's imagination, as an intrapersonal process, pedagogical narration is enacted as both intrapersonal and interpersonal process (Berger, 2010).

Coulter and Wiens (2002) argue that Arendt's theory of judgment is unique, because it allows constructing judgment from the particular towards the general. As opposed to imposing general theories onto young children's actions (i.e., developmental theory), by practicing pedagogical narration, early childhood educators and their communities can begin to challenge the theory-practice divide by co-constructing and sharing their own stories about ECE practice.

Narration as interruption of historical process

In closing the section about Arendt's narratology, I want to bring to focus her approach to history, or rather the relation that Arendt establishes between history and story with an emphasis on the *responsibility* that storytellers have towards narrating "illuminating" past events. Arendt (1994, 1958/1998) was highly critical of deterministic approaches to history, because they presented history as an inevitable progress toward a predictable future. "Modern" conception of history as an evolutionary progress that can be explained by processes of cause and effect, she claims, leads to an interpretation of history as a single story of truth that threatens to erase the contingency of human affairs as well as the conditions of natality and plurality. Generalizations and categorization extinguish the light of history; they destroy a story with its unique distinction. For Arendt (1994) history is the "great storybook," a collection of stories of action. While we can point to the 'heroes' in the stories, we cannot point definitely to the hero as the author of his/story, or to its eventual outcome.

Following her friend, the philosopher of history, Walter Benjamin, Arendt evokes the metaphor of the storyteller as the pearl diver. She posits that it is only when something irrevocable has happened – an event that can illuminate its own past – that history comes into being. It is then that the past emerges as a story and the story reveals a beginning in the past. The storyteller acts “like a pearl diver who descends to the bottom of the sea, not to excavate the bottom and bring it to light but to pry loose the rich and the strange” (Arendt, 1968, p. 50-51).

Unexpected and contingent stories interrupt the “process” of history as a natural movement of cause and effect, recovering our relations with the past. “The subject matter of history is these interruptions – the extraordinary” (Arendt, 1961/2006, p. 42). Kohn (2005) explains that “what is crucial for Arendt is that specific meaning of an event that happened in the past remains potentially alive” (p. xxi), because when the meaning of an event “is reproduced in a story and experienced vicariously, it reclaims the depth of the world” (p. xxii). At the same time, action and its story create the conditions for remembrance.

MacPhee (2011) explains that Arendt’s conception of narrative is not organized around the claim to know historical events absolutely, but around the capacity *to take responsibility* for them (MacPhee, 2011, p. 178). From this perspective, it is important to stress the role that Arendt assigned to spectators and narrators as the witnesses of events and the raconteurs of stories. Arendt (1958/1998) suggests that it is in the act of storytelling that the event gains a political significance and that the storyteller becomes a political actor by initiating the processes of illumination and disputation of its meaning (see also Disch, 1994). History as ‘the practice of pearl diving’ (Boland, 2012) means that “the chief task of the storyteller “is to dig under the rubble of history and to recover those ‘pearls’ of past experience, with their sedimented and hidden layers of meaning, so as to cull from them a story that can orient the mind in the future”

(Benhabib, 1990, p. 171). Events that occurred in the past and carry meanings beyond their happening, gain what Arendt (1992) called an “exemplary validity” (p. 79) and this validity can only be judged by spectators and narrators in a public space.

By assuming the role of narrator of events (even though humans can never be the sole authors of the history within which they find themselves), the responsibility of the narrator is extended to the future, because the pursuit of meaningfulness involves the (re)configuring of the range of possibilities for future action with regard to past events – namely, the provocation to engage in judgment (MacPhee, 2011, p. 185). When we take responsibility for the past deeds of others, we integrate *their* continuing agency into our own scope of action. To create a pedagogical narration, then, is to take responsibility for the historicizing of the event and also for the freedom from a universalistic way of thinking about behavior and experiences.

Through the process of pedagogical narration, early childhood educators are positioned as provocateurs of thought, but this means that the stories that are offered to the community in the form of pedagogical narrations must be engaging. They need to present puzzlement or a dilemma, rather than providing answers and conclusions. Rinaldi (2001) explains that the force of the documented material is in the wealth of questions and doubts that underlie the collection of data with which it is offered to the judgment of others. Unlike conventional understanding of judgment as assessment in the sense of evaluating the effectiveness of learning and teaching against a set of predefined criteria, pedagogical narration as a process of collective judgment is about deciding what to give value, meaning, and significance to, and then to make this process “explicit, visible, and shareable” in order to *illuminate* “the elements of value applied by the documenter” (Rinaldi, 2001, p. 87).

Leaders-as-beginners

In accordance with her theory of action and her conception of politics, Arendt (1958/1998, 2005) proposes an idea of leadership that is linked with natality and plurality through a distinction she makes between rulership and leadership. Arendt shows how Plato's introduction of the concept of rulership of the knowledgeable/moral expert into the political realm, in an attempt to redress the injustice in Socrates's tragic execution, constituted a tradition of hierarchical, patriarchal models of leadership.³⁰ Particularly problematic for Arendt is the fact that Plato claimed rulership for the philosopher, because the philosopher was able to "behold the idea of the good" (Arendt, 2005, p. 10). This reified the separation of theory and practice and camouflaged it in a 'natural' hierarchy of knower/ruler and executor/subject. Rulership deemed that there was no longer a need for an exchange of opinions of thinking, acting, and speaking citizens (Arendt, 2005). Put more sharply, Amy Allen (2002) argues that for Arendt, ruling represents nothing less than an *escape* from politics altogether (p. 136).

Against the traditional view of the ruler as the isolated, strong, and superior man, Arendt (1998) proposes a view of a leader as a beginner.³¹ The leader for Arendt is the actor who initiates something new in the world, but unlike the isolated ruler, the leader seeks out companions to help him or her carry the project out, creating occasions for others to become co-

³⁰ In ancient Athens, rulership belonged in the private sphere, when ruling over slaves enabled the master to enter the public sphere, the agora, where the master could move and speak among others. Clearly, Arendt is not nostalgic for a rulership in the private sphere, but she is critical of the tradition that has been initiated by Plato, according to which rulership has been introduced into the public realm threatening the conditions of plurality and equality (see Arendt, 1958/1998 and 2005). Arendt explains that the idea of one-man rule can have many forms ranging from tyranny to democracy. In democracy it can appear in the form of a collective body of many-in-one, or in the bureaucratic state where it is exhibited in the "rule of nobody" (see Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 221).

³¹ Arendt (2005, p. 126) refers to the Greek word *archein* which means both to begin and to lead. This twofold meaning indicates, according to Arendt, that the term "leader" was originally used for the person who initiated something and sought out companions to help him carry it out.

actors. This relational concept of leadership is a sharp move from an idea of leadership as control and from an understanding of sovereignty that suggests that man remains the master of his doing from beginning to end (Biesta & Miron, 2002). Arendt's idea of leadership is concerned with acts of initiation and opening possibilities for renewal.

The leadership 'quality' that Arendt (1998) applauds is *courage*. This courage, Kristeva (2001) says, requires the actor "to act and speak, to leave one's safe shelter and expose one's self to others, and with them, be ready to risk disclosure" (p. 16). The ethicality of this leadership, therefore, is not only that the leader gains the possibility to reveal *who* she is, but that the leader creates possibilities for others to disclose *who* they are.

Discussion for Chapter Three

In this chapter, I argued that Arendt's proposal to think political action, actualized by the insertion of stories that disrupt processes and reveal new possibilities of *being* and *acting* in the world in the company of others (Tchir, 2011), creates a possibility for re-imagining an idea of educational leadership. An Arendtian theoretical frame affords an understanding of leadership enactments in ECE contexts that are entangled with sharing pedagogical narrations that precipitate processes of thinking and judgment regarding children's experiences as a form of public (and thus political) engagement. Pedagogical narrations create a public space when differences of perspectives about the documented event can be articulated and listened to with the purpose of broadening the public thought regarding the meanings of ECE practice and theory. The early childhood educator, who initiates the process of pedagogical narrations, inhibits the role of the leader-as-beginner as she invites others to join her in narrative processes which have the potential to renew our common world with new insights regarding children and teaching, as well as infusing new questioning about educational values and purposes. It is on this

theoretical grounding that the current research sought to inquire into the potential of pedagogical narrations for a renewed concept of ECE leadership.

In the following chapter, I connect the theoretical framework with the methodology of the study by elaborating on Arendt's concepts of illumination and visiting that were foreshadowed in Chapter Three. I explain my choice for the research method and I introduce the study's participants.

Chapter Four

A Methodology of Illumination and Visiting, Multiple Case Method, Sites and Participants

In the previous chapters, I stated my interest in studying the potential of the practice of pedagogical narrations for reconceptualizing leadership in ECE. I also explained how Hannah Arendt's political thought, especially her unique understanding of storytelling or narration as political action, framed the theoretical scaffolds of this study. Additionally, I emphasized the importance of attending to historical and contemporary movements that are shaping the ECE field because they affect the possibility for leadership reconceptualization and enactment. In this chapter, I delineate the methodological approaches that were taken up in the study and I embed them within the theoretical, historical, and political contexts in which this study is situated.

Generally speaking, the methodological approaches I employ are informed by the RECE movement stance towards research. RECE scholars adhere to "research that seeks to appreciate and support diversity in people, ideas and ways of being" (Swadener & Cannella, 2007, p. 25). More specifically, I draw on two Arendtian concepts, *illumination* and *visiting*, to develop a methodology that grounds this research in illuminating events where leadership emerged in *moments of natality*, while positioning the researcher as an engaged *visitor* who produces interpretations that are situated within the worldly space of human plurality.

I begin the chapter by presenting my approach to methodology and continue by providing details about the research method and design. I explain my choice of multiple-case study method (Stake, 2006). I then describe the processes of site selection, data generation, and data analysis and include a detailed description of the cases and the key participants. I elucidate my stance towards generalization and validity, and I end the chapter with a discussion about ethical considerations taken in the process of carrying out the present study.

Approach to methodology³²

The choice of methodology is entangled with the unique purpose(s) of the study and the researcher's approaches to reality, truth, and knowledge. My methodological approach to this research project is qualitative and interpretative; by which I intend to make a contribution to educational theory and practice through what Biesta (2007a) called the *cultural role* of educational research. The cultural role of research, in contrast with educational research's *technical role* that aims at finding the most effective ways to achieve predefined ends, informs educational theory and practice by expanding the available understandings of educational reality, and by providing "different ways of imagining a possible future" (Biesta, 2007b, p. 21). From this perspective, "research can also play a valuable role in helping educational practitioners to acquire a different understanding of their practice, in helping them to see and imagine their practice differently" (p. 19). As a result, educators may be able to imagine opportunities for action where they did not envisage them before.

Denzin and Lincoln (2008) suggest that as a basic definition "qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible" (p. 4). They add that since "there is not value-free science" (p. 8), the choice of interpretive practices taken by the researcher to make the world visible is significant because "each practice makes the world visible in a different way" (p. 5). In the present study, I follow from these claims. What I aim to make visible are new dimensions of leadership (not an abstract or a single truth about leadership) that can meaningfully add to an

³² I distinguish methodology from method along the lines proposed by Lather (2004), as follows: "method—techniques for gathering empirical evidence—and methodology—the theory of knowledge and the interpretive framework that guide a particular research project" (p. 208).

ongoing scholarly debate about possible meanings, responsibilities, and enactments of educational leadership in ECE contexts.

As a researcher, I am situated in the world which entails a vantage point “from within the plurality of contesting standpoints” (Disch, 1993, p. 666). With Arendt (1958/1998), I hold the position that, as a researcher, I cannot form an Archimedean viewpoint outside the world from which to claim an understanding of human action as “objective.” At the same time, as I indicated in Chapter Three, Arendt proposed a form of impartiality that can transcend subjectivity and objectivity (Bernstein, 1983). Below, I explain how *visiting*, as a critical engagement with others’ perspectives (or stories), produces a broadened understanding that goes ‘beyond subject-object dualism’ (Hammer et al., 1999, p. 152).

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) further define qualitative research as “the study of things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomenon in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 1). Qualitative research is suitable for the present study because this study is concerned with illuminating the diverse ways in which the phenomenon of leadership comes into existence *in between* speaking and acting people through the practice of pedagogical narrations. At the same time, this research seeks to explore the conditions of leadership enactment with pedagogical narrations and to trace its implications for educational theory and practice. To further clarify my interpretative methodological stance, I engage and think with two Arendtian concepts: illumination and visiting.

A methodology of illumination and visiting

Illumination

Arendt used the notion (or metaphor) of illumination in an essay, titled *Understanding and politics (the difficulty of understanding)* (1994), in which she explicated her approach toward

understanding and knowledge, as well as her critique of science as an activity that is constrained by explanations based primarily on the logic of cause and effect relations.³³ Although Arendt discussed illumination in the context of historical judgment, I argue that the metaphor of illumination is relevant and useful for the present study because research can be thought of as an activity that involves analyzing or judging events that the researcher has encountered in the process of investigating a phenomenon.³⁴ Qualitative research, in particular, is an attempt to understand and interpret (to give an evaluative account to) ‘what happened’ during the study in relation to the research’s questions and purpose. In his discussion of the position of the researcher in case studies methods, Yin (2009, p. 90) also likened the researcher to a historian.

It is Arendt’s unique understanding of the task of the researcher as historian that I want to emphasize here. Arendt (1994) challenged the commonly held scientific belief that an objective pattern can be found in the past and that such a pattern can be used to produce stable knowledge from which we could generalize about and predict the future (see also Canovan, 1992). She argued that ‘events occur only once’ (Arendt, 1994, p. 318), and thus, they are not repeatable or predictable and always require processes of understanding that go beyond explanation of causes. She further claimed that the “meanings of every event always transcends any number of past ‘causes’ which we may assign to it” (p. 319). Arendt rejected logical reasoning because she saw it as sterile and divorced “of the world and the existence of other people” (p. 318).

For Arendt (1994), understanding is not about accumulating knowledge nor is it based on application of the logic of cause and effect. In fact, she claimed that knowledge, which has to do

³³ For a discussion of Arendt’s method within a hermeneutic and phenomenological tradition, see Jakub Novak (2010), *Understanding and judging history: Hannah Arendt and philosophical hermeneutics*.

³⁴ Arendt (1992) also points out that the oldest meaning of the word “history” derives from the Greek *historein*, which means, “to inquire in order to know how it was” (p. 5). Homer used *histor* or “historian” as the “judge” (p. 5), suggesting the historian is an inquirer who exercises judgment.

with familiar and stable categories, remains meaningless unless it becomes complicated by the activity of understanding. Arendt saw understanding as an unending process by which we ‘reconcile ourselves with an ever changing reality’ (p. 308) through making our relations with the world more complex. From this premise, understanding is not about producing final results, it involves a critical enterprise, the purpose of which is to identify and engage with illuminating events that create conditions for originating meanings and revealing, at the same time, a new landscape, a new possibility for human action, or, as Arendt would say, “a new beginning.” In Arendt’s (1994) words:

Whenever an event occurs that is great enough to illuminate its own past, history comes into being. Only then does the chaotic maze of past happenings emerge as a story that can be told...what the illuminating event reveals is a beginning in the past which hitherto been hidden. (p. 319)

Arendt (1960) contends that the event of newness is not to be thought of as a rare occurrence, she proclaimed that, “the common and the ordinary must remain our primary concern, the daily food of our thought – if only because it is from them that the uncommon and the extra ordinary emerge” (p. 2). A methodology of illumination requires that the researcher cultivates openness for the contingent and unpredictable nature of events and phenomenon, while her task is to detect the ‘unexpected *new* with all its implications and to bring out the full power of its significance’ (Arendt 1994, p. 320, original emphasis). The researcher holds open the possibility to be surprised, interrupted, and challenged; creating a space for complicating and pluralizing thought about the events and perceptions encountered in the empirical aspects of study.

In their discussion of *temporal* epistemology (or what I might call an epistemology of emergence), Osberg and Biesta (2003) describe a similar approach to knowledge. They assert that,

the quest for knowledge is not in order that we may develop more accurate understandings of the finished universe, *as it is*. Rather, the quest for knowledge is about finding more and more complex and creative ways of interacting with our environment and through doing this...we find out how to create new and more complex environmental conditions with which we can interact in yet more complex and creative ways. (pp. 85-86, original emphasis)

Relatedly, Denzin and Lincoln (2008, pp. 503-504), inspired by Bauman (2008), argue that research is an endless process of human creation to expand the “inventory of possibilities already discovered and made real.” Taking these methodological approaches into consideration, I strived within the context of this study to understand and make visible the multi-faceted aspects of educational leadership as it was enacted by early childhood educators through the practice of pedagogical narrations in four early childhood settings by bringing to light events that open up new conceptual and practical possibilities for thinking and enacting leadership in ECE contexts.

Visiting

As I began discussing in Chapter Three, Arendt (1992) had given the notion of “visiting” a unique meaning in relation to understanding and judgment. Vasterling (2007) claims that for Arendt understanding was not a subjective enterprise; it required that the researcher widened her subjectivity by a critical encounter with the stories of others. Arendt (1992) called this encounter “visiting.” She postulated that a multiperspectival understanding involves a process of ‘training one’s imagination to go visiting’ (p. 43), by which she meant that in order to arrive at a broadened understanding, or an “enlarged mentality” (p. 43), one needs to represent in one’s imagination the multiple viewpoints that others hold on a particular phenomenon. The reflective

aspect of Arendtian judgment is not only about evaluating a past event (giving it value and meaning), although this aspect of reflective judgment is also important; reflection in this context is also about reflecting upon others' positions (Arendt, 1978), forming a kind of public judgment. Judgment requires a form of generality or publicity that allows for "the testing that arises from contact with other people's thinking" (Arendt, 1992, p. 42).

Arendt (1978) clarifies that imagining these multiple narratives is not like seeing through the eyes of someone else; rather, it means seeing with your eyes from a position (a story) that is not yours. Disch (1994) explains that Arendt was careful to distinguish visiting from abstract generality, "which preserve[s] a spectatorial distance," and from empathy, "which is a kind of assimilationism" (p.158). The issue with abstracting and empathy is that they may erase plurality (Biesta, 2010; Disch, 1994). The former does so by subsuming others' unique views under a general rule, and the latter by a passive acceptance of others' standpoints, which may create a false sense of familiarity (Zerilli, 2009). In both cases, the "uneasy confrontation with the opinions of others" (Zerilli, 2009, p. 313) is reduced. In contrast with abstraction and empathy, Arendt (1992) described visiting as "being and thinking in my own identity where actually I am not" (Arendt, 1961/2006, p. 237). To visit, Disch (1994) instructs, "you must travel to a new location, leave behind what is familiar, and resist the temptation to make yourself at home where you are not" (p. 159). Arendtian visiting, thus, entails that the researcher is both engaged and distant (Borren, 2010). Visiting contains a critical distance that permits a disorientation and reexamination of one's habitual thought (Vollrath, 1977). What is altered in the visiting of others' standpoints, explains Disch (1994, 1997), is our own perspective as we become more critically aware of the assumptions and contingencies that guide our own thinking.

While for Arendt visiting was carried out through the faculty of imagination,³⁵ I actualized visiting in this study by entering the spaces of speaking and acting persons - observing, participating and conversing with them in order “to consider events from unfamiliar standpoints” (Gallagher, 2011, p. 58). As Disch (1994) explains, for the researcher visiting becomes a possibility to confront her own subjectivity and to enact what Disch’s (1994) calls “situated impartiality” (see Chapter Three). The researcher can take a stance by telling a story “in full recognition of the complexity and ambiguity of the real situation in which judgments are made” (Disch, 1993, p. 688). From this angle, impartiality does not act as a condition for making abstract truth claims. Rather, it acts as a criterion for judging research that is committed to human plurality. The researcher is able to give a broader account of a phenomenon while drawing on particular experiences and illuminating critical events.

Arendt’s criticality involves a move from thinking ‘from a private perspective to a *public* vantage point’ (Disch, 1993, p. 682, original emphasis), and her criteria for validity are based on considered attention to particularities; enlarged thought is, thus, situated rather than abstract (not arriving at the general but attending to plurality of perspectives) (see Disch, 1993, 1994). This means not simply acknowledging the inevitable partiality of any individual perspective but insisting that perspectival differences be raised, contested, and situated in reference to each other (Disch, 1993, p. 688).

In sum, a methodology that explores illumination and visiting remains entangled with the politics of worldly experiences, and is premised on the notion that the world is not given. The world appears, or comes into existence, when different viewpoints or multiple stories about the

³⁵ Arendt (1992) postulated that critical thinking when done in isolation is possible through imagining the standpoints of others albeit not by conflating them into one’s own standpoint, but by expanding one’s view of reality (or the world). Imagination helps in creating distance necessary for understanding (Arendt, 1994).

same phenomenon are articulated and made visible, and as the world appears it becomes a location for action (Curtis, 1999, p. 35).

What has transpired from this discussion is that the researcher must accept that “data is partial, incomplete and always in a process of re-telling and re-membering” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. xi). A methodology of illumination and visiting highlights the responsibility of the researcher to choose between diverse ways of storying the past. The capacity to call into existence new possibilities that have not been imagined before (Canovan, 1992), however, does not mean that the researcher is able to shape the course of history as they please (Novak, 2010). At this junction I want to make it clear that a view of research as a process of opening up, diversifying, enriching debate, and making moments of natality visible, does not mean that the landscape of educational research can be taken up as ‘a free for all,’ where all inquiry is considered credible and valid. This approach to research entails a questioning of the researcher as the one who makes choices about what to tell, what is asked of data, and why one story is told and not another (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). While I engage with these questions throughout this chapter, I will take up these issues more directly in the section titled the question of validity and generalizability (see below).

Research design

As mentioned above, I chose to carry out the present study within a qualitative research paradigm because I wanted to examine how leadership, as a complex social and relational phenomenon, is understood and enacted in ‘real life’ situations when early childhood educators use the practice of pedagogical narration to engage others in thinking and conversing about ECE matters. In this study, the key participants’ enactments of social, political and discursive practices that were associated with the practice of pedagogical narration within the participants’

unique contexts were the focus of the investigation and analysis. At the same time, I viewed the participants' ways of responding to the world as contingent and changeable (open to the possibility of the emergence of newness) *and* historically and politically situated. In other words, rather than understanding the participants' words and actions as static representations of inner, stable identities, my conceptualization of the participants' ongoing construction of identity in this study is entangled with speaking and acting in the world and the possibility to begin something new.

Multiple case study method

In order to study the practice of pedagogical narration and its leadership potential I chose a multiple case method (Creswell, 2007). Using a multiple case study method supported the investigation of the research questions at the conceptual, practical, and methodological levels. Klenke (2008) suggests that using a multiple case method for the study of leadership is suitable for research projects that attempt to investigate leadership from a particular theoretical framework, as this research project does. Multiple cases afford a wider resource for evaluating the relevance of the theory under investigation (Klenke, 2008). Yin (2012, p. 9) claims that theoretical propositions developed prior to data generation are important in case study design and are useful in guiding the process of data generation and analysis. In addition, a multiple case study is useful for diversifying data and adding complexity to the theory, rather than for strengthening generalization (see discussion below).

According to Stake (2006), the cases in a multiple case study design are bound together around a "quintain" (p. 6). Unlike *intrinsic* case study research (often single case study) in which the case itself is of interest, in an *instrumental* multiple case study, taken up in this study, it is the quintain and its manifestation across cases that the researcher tries to understand. Multiple case

study design is particularly useful for illuminating a phenomenon by examining its situational complexity when the quintain acts as the focus of the research across the case collective (Stake, 2006).

In the present study, the quintain was the practice of pedagogical narration as a site for enacting leadership. Examining the complexity of the quintain was afforded by studying it across four diverse ECE settings. The four early childhood settings included in the present study were: a Childcare centre, a Preschool, a StrongStart centre, and a Parent Co-op Preschool. These four sites were chosen because each one of the four cases has a unique organizational structure that poses diverse possibilities and demands on the practice of pedagogical narration, especially in terms of the opportunities that are available for educators to share the pedagogical narratives with others and to engage their community in a dialogue about the documented material. I acknowledge that while I chose to study diverse ECE settings, I cannot claim that these four sites represent the complexity of the entire field of ECE in B.C.

The differences between the four types of ECE settings are described in Table 4-1 below:

Table 4-1: Structural differences between the four types of ECE settings

Preschool	Childcare	Parent Cooperative	StrongStart Centres
Preschools operate on a part time basis (typically for two or two and a half hours per day). They are geared for children between the ages of three and five and have a teaching team of two early childhood educators.	Childcare centres are full day programs. They may be geared for children as young as three month old, but most childcare centres serve children between the ages of one to five years of age. Childcare centres have a bigger team of educators than that of a preschool, and the team, which can be composed of three to five educators, often works on a rotating shift schedule.	Parent cooperative (or co-op) preschools, sometimes referred to as parent participation preschools, are usually part time programs for children between the ages of three to five. In most parent co-ops a single early childhood educator works closely with the parents. The parents work with the educator in the classroom on a rotation basis sharing some of the educator's duties. Since the parents work in the classroom they are mandated to attend monthly meetings to discuss aspects of the educational program.	StrongStart centres are located in classrooms in public schools in B.C. and are offered to families with children between birth to age four, five days a week, for a minimum of three hours a day, at no cost. StrongStart centres operate as drop-in centres, therefore, a parent or a caregiver must accompany the child in the StrongStart program at all times. Attendance in StrongStart centres is not mandatory and families can choose to attend the program as many times as they like without any commitment. StrongStart centres are operated by a single, qualified early childhood educator.

Klenke (2008) maintains that case studies are suited to a research project that examines a new phenomenon, especially when a fresh perspective on the topic is needed. In the case of this study, it is the relative newness of the practice of pedagogical narration in B.C. that makes it

suitable and worthy of this kind of investigation. In addition, a view of leadership associated with collaboration and dialogue entails examining acts of leadership in relation to, and within, the context of communities. Multiple case study method gave me a context from which to engage in “visiting” that is attentive to the multi-perspectival understandings of participants. Situating the research in multiple early childhood sites provided a framework in which the exploration of the relationships between elements of the study, such as dialogue among educators, children, and parents about the narratives, could be ‘captured’ and documented within a plurality of conditions and contexts.

Case selection

Case selection was based on purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002). In the case of the present study, this sampling method involved finding cases that can act as illustrative examples for the phenomenon under study, namely, the practice of pedagogical narration. The choice of the four sites was built on the assumption that the sites were “information-rich” cases that would afford a deeper understanding of the particular topic that is being investigated. At the same time, each of the four early childhood settings that were selected offered something unique to the study because each site had a different organizational structure. The cases were selected based on the following criteria: a) pedagogical narration has been practiced for at least one year prior to the study by at least one of the early childhood educators working at the site; b) the educator who acted as the key participant has been working in the field of ECE for at least five years; and c) each site had a different designation as an early childhood centre (e.g., a preschool, a parent co-op, a full day childcare, and a StrongStart centre). The sites that were selected were located in urban areas in B.C.’s lower mainland.

Initially I asked colleagues in the field about ECE centres that were engaged in the practice of pedagogical narrations. Following up on their suggestions, I approached the sites and asked about their interest in taking part in this study. At the Childcare site, the director asked me to present about the purpose of the study to the entire staff and two early childhood educators from this site approached me with an interest in taking part in the study.

I provided the four sites with a succinct written description of the purpose of the study, estimated duration of the study, the time it might require from participating persons, and a brief explanation about the methods of data collection (i.e., I explained that I would be the only observer and that only the key early childhood educators would be interviewed).³⁶

While each of the four cases was thought of as encompassing the entire early childhood community associated with the site, including the educators, the children and their parents, the key participants in this study were the early childhood educators in each setting who took on the main responsibility to initiate, create, and maintain the process of pedagogical narration. Therefore, in the sites that had more than one educator (at the childcare and preschool sites) the interviews were conducted with early childhood educators who identified themselves as the most engaged with the practice of pedagogical narration.

Strategies for data generation

To ensure holistic and meaningful responses to the study questions, and to be able to better corroborate research assertions, I used multiple data-gathering strategies, ranging from observations and interviews to assembling relevant documents, such as samples of pedagogical

³⁶ In the case of the StrongStart centre, which operates in public school settings, I approached the school board to seek their approval to approach the StrongStart site. In the other three sites, I asked the educators who agreed to take part in the study to seek the parent board approval for the study.

narrations that were collected from each of the four sites (for an overview of the study refer to the Appendix: The Study at a Glance).

Observations

Observation was a significant strategy for data generation, because it allowed me to be present when pedagogical narrations were shared with others (children, colleagues, and parents) and this, in turn, allowed me to see the practice of pedagogical narrations enacted in public. The focus of the observations, thus, was on observing the processes of interpretation and negotiation of meanings that occurred during the sharing of the pedagogical narratives with others.

Since there was no way to know in advance when the educators might begin the process of pedagogical narration, I asked the participating educators in the various sites to indicate to me (by means of email or a phone call) when they had documented an event from which they were planning to begin the process of pedagogical narration. I also initiated informal visits to the sites. During these visits I strengthened my relationships with the participants, and I was also able to get a better sense of the relationship between the members of the community in each site (e.g., relations between the team of educators, between the educators and the children, and between the educators and the parents).

Observations took place between October 2010 and May 2011. The duration of the observation varied depending on the occasion for sharing the pedagogical narration, but generally observations lasted from one to one and a half hours. Over the course of the study, I observed pedagogical narrations being shared sixteen times (see figure #1). Nine of the observations were of occasions when the narratives were shared with colleagues, five

observations involved sharing pedagogical narrations with children, and two with parents. I videotaped all observations, except one.³⁷ I later transcribed the conversations that were captured in the video, making notes of additional facts that seemed relevant to the study (i.e., when I noticed a strong emotional response to a comment).

Observations were guided by a series of questions that aimed at keeping the observations focused on the aims of the study. For example, I was curious to see how the documented material was brought to the attention of colleagues, children, or parents, and how discussions about the documented material were initiated. Other questions were focused on who was present when the pedagogical narrations were shared and who participated with the educator in the process of interpreting and constructing the pedagogical narrations. I wanted to know what meanings were negotiated during the interactions about the documented material, as well as if/how the pedagogical narrations encouraged thinking and critical reflection about children's experiences that were the focus of the narratives. Finally, I observed and listened to see if/how new viewpoints and actions emerged during the process of sharing pedagogical narrations.

My role as an observer shifted between a non-participant observer to participant observer depending on the particular context of the observation. For example, when the educator shared a pedagogical narration with a group of children during "circle time," I assumed the role of a non-participant observer; in less formal occasions I asked clarification questions or initiated informal discussions with the educators, and occasionally with parents, to gain a better understanding of

³⁷ The staff meeting at the Toddler Childcare site, on April 28, 2011, was videotaped by the director of the children centre. Since I had to go out of town when this important meeting took place, the director volunteered to videotape the meeting for the study. The director at the childcare site was involved in the study since it began (I discuss this further in the analysis chapters). I collected the videotape from the director shortly after the meeting took place and the transcription of the meeting, which was done by me, was analyzed as data in this study.

the observation. I recorded field notes as soon as possible after observations and informal conversations.

Interviews

Interviewing was an invaluable process for engaging with the educators in discussions about their understandings and views about the experience of using pedagogical narrations within their communities. I carried out two rounds of semi-structured interviews (Silverman, 2001) with each of the six early childhood educators who emerged as the key participants, for a total of ten interviews (at the Preschool site the interviews involved two of the educators). The first round of interviews was designed as a reflective interview and was focused on the educators' past experiences with the practice of pedagogical narration. Since this study was aimed at exploring elements of leadership enactments, the reflective interview questions were aimed at exploring moments of initiation and/or change that the educators experienced in their pedagogical practice, in their relationships with their community, and/or in their thinking about their identity as an early childhood educator, since they began using the practice of pedagogical narration. The first round of interviews took place between December, 2010 and February, 2011.

The second round of interviews involved a form of interview called a probe interview (Stake, 2006). These interviews were focused on an example of pedagogical narration that was constructed at each of the ECE sites. A sample pedagogical narration was used as a probe to explore through questions the process of its construction. In this second set of interviews, I attempted to learn how and why an event was selected for pedagogical narration, who participated in the construction of the narration, and what thinking and actions transpired from creating and sharing the narrative. The second round of interviews took place between May 2011 and July 2011, after I collected samples of pedagogical narrations from each site. I audiotaped

and transcribed all interviews. I then shared the transcriptions of interviews with the participating early childhood educators to ensure accuracy. Semi-structured interview design allowed for more flexibility during interviews, as both prepared questions and questions that arose from participants' responses could be asked. I did my best to schedule the interviews at times and locations convenient for the educators.

Kvale (2006) and others have recently questioned uncritical perspectives of interviewing in qualitative research. Against a prevailing assumption among researchers that interviews can be cast as a warm personal dialogue, Kvale (2006) advises researchers to pay attention to the inherent 'ambiguity between the personal and the instrumental relation of the interview relationship' (p. 497). He adds that, "the power play of this interaction could be made transparent by the presentation of the method of an investigation, so that readers may ascertain the potential effects of the power play on the knowledge reported" (p. 497).

In light of the above, I recognize that the interviewees were aware of my position in an ECE unit in an academic institution. Although I may never be able to know for certain what might have been the effects of this fact on the responses of the educators during the interview in terms of power imbalance, I would like to highlight that the educators indicated a number of times that they saw this research project as a reciprocal, rather than a unidirectional, process. The educators expressed their desire to be listened to and to be able to "appear," through this study, in a broader public forum. For example, Karen, the key participant from the Parent Co-op site, remarked that she participated in this study because she was in support of "anything that will shine light on the work done in early childhood settings" (Field Notes, PCO, May 10, 2011).

As a former early childhood educator who has had experience with pedagogical narrations, I also acknowledge that I brought certain preconceived understandings about the

topics discussed during the interviews. At the same time, it is important to remember that interviews are about persons *speaking* to each other. In the interview the educators could make visible their *doxa* or opinion about pedagogical narrations. Inspired by an Arendtian interpretation of the word “opinion,” what this meant for me was that the educators could reveal through speech how they saw pedagogical narrations from the particular location in which they were situated.³⁸ As I was concluding the probe interview (that focused on a pedagogical narration), knowing that the study was drawing to an end, I thanked Erin, the key participant from the Toddlers’ Childcare site, for her participation in the study. In response, Erin made the following comment: “I feel that someone is finally listening to me. I am not used to people being interested in what I have to say” (TCC, PI).

To think of the participants’ responses as opinions also meant that I was careful not to position interview data as the voice of the “under privileged”, because the notion of voice may foreclose possibilities for debates and contestation. In contrast, in thinking about interview responses as *doxa*, my hope is that the early childhood educators who participated in the study will be viewed as “interpreters and analysts who contribute to the appropriation of theoretical concepts” (Klenke, 2008, p. 62) relevant to the leadership theory that is being explored.

Artefacts

I collected samples of pedagogical narration from each site from October 2010 to July 2011. At the two classrooms in the childcare site, pedagogical narrations were shared through

³⁸ According to Arendt (1990), “doxa was the formulation in speech of what *dokei moi*, that is, of what appears to me. This *doxa*...was not, therefore, subjective fantasy and arbitrariness, but also not something absolute and valid for all. The assumption was that the world opens up differently to every man, according to his position in it; and that the ‘sameness’ of the world, its commonness...or ‘objectivity’ (as we would say from the subjective viewpoint of modern philosophy) resides in the fact that the same world opens up to everyone and that despite all differences between men and their positions in the world--and consequently their *doxai* (opinions)— ‘both you and I are human’” (p. 433).

emails regularly. I asked for, and was granted, permission to be added to the email list at the beginning of the study. Most of the sample pedagogical narrations that I collected were shared with me via email (the samples included text and images). At the StrongStart site, two samples of original pedagogical narrations were shared with me in a poster form, which I later photocopied and returned the originals to the educator. Interestingly, while the sample of pedagogical narrations was an important element in the data collection phase and the probe interview, especially since they were vivid reminders of the event that was documented and discussed with the educators, what I realized during this study was that pedagogical narrations are a lot more than their final representation as a poster or a PowerPoint presentation. One of the important findings emerging from this study is that the potential of pedagogical narrations for leadership enactment lies in initiating processes through which the narratives actively and critically engage people in thinking, talking, and debating. Pedagogical narration as a product (i.e., a poster on a wall) did not necessarily do much to initiate these processes.

Field diary

I kept a field diary in which I recorded notes, insights, emerging themes, reflections, comments, and contextual information about the research process. For example, I recorded informal conversations with educators and parents from the different sites during informal visits. Some of these recorded conversations became important data and helped me in interpreting the study. An example of a significant informal conversation that was recorded in the field diary is from a visit that I made to the Preschool site on May 4, 2011. Jenna, one of the two key participants from this site, invited me for a visit to share with me a response she received from a parent about a pedagogical narration that she had created. During the visit, Jenna and I engaged in a deep discussion about pedagogical narrations. Jenna's insightful comments were helpful in

challenging my own thinking about what pedagogical narration is, especially because of her reiteration that pedagogical narrations are beyond simply “writing it and putting it on the wall” and that it is “the discussions and reflections that make it worthwhile” (I elaborate on these ideas in Chapter Seven).

Cases, participants, and information about pedagogical narrations

The Parent Co-op site

The Parent Co-op preschool³⁹ is located in a quiet, residential neighborhood on Vancouver Island. It has been in operation for nearly 50 years. The preschool classroom is set in a church basement and is composed of two large rooms. The preschool program is offered on a part-time basis, three days per week for 2 hours and 45 minutes a day. In the year that the study took place, the preschool community was composed of 18 four-year-old children and their families. Some of the participating families have been involved with the Parent Co-op for a number of years. The majority of the Parent Co-op community is made up of English speaking, middle class professionals, with a few second-generation immigrant families. The Parent Co-op is administered and maintained by a parent board on a not-for-profit basis.

The unique characteristic of parent co-op preschools is that they afford a greater degree of direct parental involvement in the life of the classroom. The participating Parent Co-op is no exception. While Karen⁴⁰ was the single qualified early childhood educator working at the Parent Co-op preschool, she was joined, on a regular basis, by two “duty” parents who work with her in the classroom. The parents rotate their ‘duty’ days in such a way that each parent works

³⁹ Rather than giving pseudonyms to each site, throughout the study I refer to each site by its structural arrangement. For example, the Parent Co-op, when capitalized, refers to the parent cooperative case. Preschool, when capitalized, refers to the preschool case.

⁴⁰ Since this study involved entire communities, including educators, parents, and children, I gave all the participants pseudonyms to protect their identity, and to keep my commitment to confidentiality.

alongside Karen as the teacher's assistant once every three or four weeks. In addition, the parents are expected to attend monthly meetings in which the early childhood educator, who is responsible for the program, introduces the parents to the pedagogical theories and principles of the ECE program. Participation in classroom activities and attendance at the monthly parent meetings enable the parents to gain an understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of the preschool program as well as an appreciation for the daily activities that their children participate in while in preschool. In the case of the participating Parent Co-op, and unlike the other sites in the study, when Karen began to use pedagogical narrations, she introduced this practice to the parents in one of the monthly parent meetings. In subsequent meetings, Karen shared pedagogical narrations with the parents as a departure point for discussions about the unique experiences that their children have had in the classroom.

Karen, early childhood educator, key participant at the Parent Co-op site

Karen has been an early childhood educator since 1982. She has been teaching at the Parent Co-op for the past 16 years. When this study began, Karen has been using pedagogical narrations for four years, and she had already been involved in a number of initiatives related to early childhood at the local and provincial levels. In 2006 she joined the Investigating Quality research project (see Chapter Five), and in 2008 she became involved in the ECEBC Leadership Initiative. Karen has designed and carried out a number of workshops for practitioners; she has participated as a speaker in a number of conferences and has published a number of articles about her practice in local journals. In addition, she is a co-creator and an active contributor to an ECE blog. What stood out for me about Karen were her passion for intellectual engagement and risk-taking; these were most vividly visible when I observed Karen presenting pedagogical narrations in various public events.

Pedagogical narration at the Parent Co-op site

The context of the Parent Co-op Preschool and the close relationships that Karen has formed with the families affected the practice of pedagogical narration in a number of ways. On a practical level, the parents were often asked by Karen to be co-documenters. For example, Karen would enlist the parents' help in video recording or transcribing children's conversations during play episodes or group discussions. Some of the parents took the initiative to create and share pedagogical narrations through the Parent Co-op's listserv and the blog. On a pedagogical level, the parents became Karen's partners in the process of collective reflections about the narratives. Pedagogical narrations were typically shared in a poster display in the classroom and also through the online preschool's listserve.

During the time period of this study, Karen created two pedagogical narrations. The first narration was created in the fall of 2010 and was about a small project that included a construction of a giant dragon. This narration was short lived and did not elicit much discussion and elaboration within the Co-op Preschool community. However, a second narration that was created in the spring, which depicted children's unexpected perspectives on the relation between love and death, triggered complicated and sustained conversation among the community members educator.

Karen challenged my conception of the boundaries of the case as it was originally conceived in this study. While I originally considered each case as bounded by the particular early childhood setting and its community, over the course of the study Karen invited me to observe her when she was presenting pedagogical narrations in two ECE conferences. This was an important methodological development, because one of the leadership aspects of the practice of pedagogical narration lies in its potential to reach and engage the public in critical dialogue

about ECE matters. Through these observations I gained the possibility to see how pedagogical narrations engaged the broader community of ECE in B.C. (beyond the boundaries of the Parent Co-op preschool), and I was also introduced to additional pedagogical narrations that Karen created at the Parent Co-op prior to the study.

The Childcare site

The childcare is located within a large community centre in relatively stable, middle class area in Vancouver. The community centre has a number of community services and the children's centre, which is composed of a number of full-day and half-day childcare programs, is one of these services. The various programs at the children's centre are connected through a central administrative office and are overseen by a program director. The full-day and half-day classrooms are located in the same area of the building. What distinguished the childcare site from other sites in the study was the important role that the administrative director played in supporting the practice of pedagogical narration in the participating site. Other sites in this study did not have this kind of support available to them. Sonya, the administrative director at the children's centre, introduced the practice of pedagogical narration to the educators in the Childcare site and provided ongoing support in developing, writing, sharing and displaying the narrations. Two classrooms elected to participate in the study: The Toddlers' Childcare and 3-5 Childcare.

The Toddlers' Childcare classroom

Each time I visited the toddler's room, what captured my attention first was the size of the chairs that surrounded a low round table at the centre of the room. These little chairs always produced a vivid reminder of the uniqueness of the pedagogical work that takes place in spaces where educators work with very young children. Other than the round table, which was a

gathering place for the children during lunch and snack time, the toddler's room included typical play areas, such as a block corner, a library centre, and a space for dramatic play.

The Toddler's Childcare had 13 children between the ages of one and a half to two and a half year olds registered during the year that the study took place. There were four educators working at the Toddler's Childcare in shifts: Erin, Elana, Sonam, and Uyen. Three of the educators (Erin was the exception) started working at the childcare in the same year that the study was carried out. Amongst the four educators, Erin was the only one who had experience with the practice of pedagogical narration before the study began, and hence she emerged as the key participant at the Toddler Childcare site. All four educators at the toddlers' room spoke English as an additional language, and this occasionally affected the conversations among the educators about the documented materials. During the observations, I witnessed the educators struggling to better understand each other's perspectives when they were discussing the documented events.

Erin, educator, key participant at Toddlers' Childcare

Erin is the supervisor of the Toddlers' Childcare. She has been working at this Childcare for 15 years. Erin is a soft-spoken, thoughtful educator who reflects deeply about the meanings and purposes of her pedagogical practice in relation to the children in her care, but also in relation to the role that an early childhood program should play within the context of a community centre and our society. The director of the children's centre introduced Erin to the practice of pedagogical narration one year prior to the study. The practice of pedagogical narrations is fairly new at the centre.

Pedagogical narrations at Toddlers' Childcare

Over the course of the school year in which the study took place, the educators from the Toddler's Childcare created two extended pedagogical narrations; both narrations were initiated by Erin and were later discussed in depth by the team of four educators. In the first pedagogical narration, titled: *We are Covering the Windows* (fall 2010), the educators in the toddlers' room explored how a small group of very young boys was able to work collaboratively in the block construction area.

The second pedagogical narration, titled: *The Music of Childhood* (spring 2011) was focused on children's relationships with sounds. The culmination of *The Music of Childhood* narration was in a large display on a bulletin board in the hallway near the entrance to the Toddlers' Childcare classroom. This pedagogical narration will be discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

In both instances of creating pedagogical narrations, parts of the narration were shared with the parents of the children via electronic newsletters, but the parents were not active participants in the creation of the narrations. Being a part of a community centre also afforded the display of pedagogical narration to a wider audience (i.e., visitors to the community centre). In comparison, pedagogical narrations that were displayed on the bulletin boards in an isolated children's centre (such as the preschool site, see below) did not receive that kind of exposure. On two occasions during the study, pedagogical narrations from the children's centre were displayed on large bulletin boards in the central lobby of the community centre. On two occasions I witnessed persons reading the narrations and making comments about their appreciation of the philosophy of the children's centre as depicted through the narratives and images in the display.

The 3-5 Childcare classroom

The additional room that joined the study at the Childcare site was designated for children ages 3 to 5. The 3-5 Childcare classroom was always beaming with colors and bursting with exciting activities. Children were often engaged in diverse and interesting activities in various sections of the room. The walls depicted children's work and a few pedagogical narrations that included images of children and short segments of text. There was a strong sense that a lot of thought has been given to each detail in the environment. Like the other classrooms at the children's centre, the 3-5 Childcare had one wall with large glass windows and doors that were facing the outdoor space from which light poured generously into the room.

The 3-5 Childcare had 18 children during the year that the study took place. There were four educators working at the 3-5 Childcare in shifts: Camille, Rona, Amina, and Shirley. Three of the educators (Camille was the exception) started working at the 3-5 Childcare a year before the study was carried out. Amongst the four educators, Camille was the only one who had experience with the practice of pedagogical narration, and she emerged as the key participant at the 3-5 Childcare site.

Camille, educator, key participant at 3-5 Childcare

Camille was the supervisor at the 3-5 Childcare room. She has been an early childhood educator at the community centre for over 15 years. Camille is an energetic and creative educator who is highly dedicated to her work at the childcare and to the field of ECE. She described her pedagogical work with children as something that brings meaning to her professional and personal life. Camille saw her pedagogical relations with the children as opportunities for intellectual engagement, discovery, and joy. As an educator, her efforts were focused on creating challenging and rewarding educational environment for the children in her care.

Pedagogical narrations at 3-5 Childcare

Camille's motivation to create pedagogical narrations increased when the programs at the children's centre changed from preschool to childcare designation. Camille became concerned about, and wanted to challenge, parents' negative perceptions about childcare. Since the director of the children's centre introduced Camille to the practice of pedagogical narration one year prior to the study, Camille became interested in using pedagogical narrations to show the parents that a childcare program *is* an educational setting for young children, as much as a preschool would be. To this end, Camille meticulously created elaborate weekly digital newsletters that were delivered to parents via email each week. These newsletters included details about the activities that the children were engaged with during the week alongside images of the children while they were involved in these activities. A hard copy of the newsletters was collected in binders that were kept at a designated location outside the classroom door.

Towards the end of the study, Camille created a pedagogical narration that was displayed on posters on the wall outside of the 3-5 Childcare classroom. This narration told the story of how a group of the children in the program created original poetry in rhymes after they were inspired by a play (based on a story) about a mouse who was a poet. The narration included images of the children working on their poems, as well as samples of the children's poems and text about how young children learn languages and literacies from the *B.C. Early Learning Framework*. Camille created all the pedagogical narrations by herself, mostly on her own time at home. Camille explained to me on a number of occasions, that because the other educators in her team were fairly new the field of ECE and to the practice of pedagogical narrations, they felt, at least from Camille's perspective, that they were not yet ready to take an active part in creating pedagogical narrations with her.

The Preschool site

The Preschool is housed in a specially built structure in a wooded area adjacent to a park near a university in Vancouver. The classroom is composed of a large single room that is softly divided into separate spaces by means of low shelving units and a number of tables with different shapes and sizes. Adjacent to the classroom is a small office space with clear glass sliding doors facing the classroom. Over the course of the study, the office, equipped with a desk, a computer and a 'comfy' couch became the space for our meetings and conversations.

The Preschool has been in operation for approximately 20 years as a not-for-profit society. It offers two extended hours programs: a morning program from 9:00 to 12:30 and an afternoon program from 1:00 to 4:30. Both programs are licensed to accommodate up to sixteen three and four year old children. Because of its proximity to a university, many of the children are of families from international background, where either one or both of the parents are students. In the year that the study took place, a large percentage of the children in the preschool were learners of English as an additional language.

Four early childhood educators worked at the Preschool during the year of the study: Maya, Jenna, Young-Lee and Bosun. While two educators are formally responsible for the morning class and two for the afternoon, at least once a week, one educator from each class switched her shift from morning to afternoon or vice-versa with the purpose that all four educators will get to know all children and families that attend the preschool. The educators explained to me that they intentionally created this arrangement to allow for better communication and collaboration among themselves, the children, and the families.

After my initial visit to the Preschool, I made a note to myself about how the educators spoke passionately about the collaborative nature of their work. The educators have daily

meetings to discuss how the children are doing and how the program is going. The sentence that I heard from the educators the most during my visits was: “We do a lot of talking about what is happening with the kids.”

However, in the year that the study took place the Preschool experienced unique challenges. One of the staff members had to leave early in the spring due to medical reasons. In addition, the Preschool struggled financially due to low enrolment. According to Maya and Jenna, these issues had a negative impact on their capacity to engage with pedagogical narrations and this particular area of their practice was neglected.

Maya and Jenna, early childhood educators, key participants at the Preschool site

Over the course of the study, Maya and Jenna emerged as the key participants from the Preschool site. Maya has been working at the Preschool for 19 years. She acts as the Preschool’s administrator and the main liaison with the parent board. Maya, similarly to other educators in this study, is highly committed to the field of early childhood education. She is always eager to learn about new ideas and practices and is well versed in contemporary early childhood approaches. Maya had had extensive experience with creating and sharing pedagogical narrations in the years prior to the study.

Jenna began working at the Preschool about five years before this study began, shortly after she completed her early childhood training. Jenna is a soft-spoken, thoughtful educator, who, like Maya, is eager to learn about new approaches and theories in the ECE field. Jenna was familiar with the practice of pedagogical narration as she studied about it and also practiced pedagogical narrations when she was training to be an early childhood educator.

Pedagogical narrations at the Preschool site

Of all the sites in this study, the educators at the Preschool site have had the most experience with creating and experimenting with various forms of pedagogical narrations. Since the educators began practicing pedagogical narrations, about five years before the present study begun, they have shared the narratives with families by displaying them in the form of posters on the bulletin boards in the classroom, assembling individual portfolios in a single binder for each child in the preschool, as well as creating Learning Stories inspired by New Zealand approach to documentation (see Chapter One). Maya also shared pedagogical narrations at ECE conferences.

Two pedagogical narrations were created at the preschool site during the year of the study. The first narration was a response to children's sustained interest in nurturance. The educators documented children's spontaneous and sustained play that was focused on caring for babies during play. A collection of children's black and white drawing of themselves and their siblings as babies was mounted on a poster and displayed in the classroom with text depicting the study of care for babies (winter 2010-2011). During a visit to the preschool, shortly after this narration was displayed, Jenna told me how disappointed she was with the lack of response and respect from the parents to the display (Field Notes, February 19, 2011). The lack of response from parents exacerbated the educators' feelings that there was no keen 'audience' for the narrations and the question of 'who are we doing the pedagogical narration for?' came up and signaled a crisis in the educators' 'faith' in the purpose of this practice.

The second pedagogical narration was focused on a unique encounter between two children. It was narrated by Jenna and shared as a PowerPoint presentation, first with the team of educators and later with the group of children who attended the afternoon class. This pedagogical narration was also shared via email with the families of the two children who were the two

‘protagonists’ in the narration. The second pedagogical narration elicited a very powerful response from educators, children, and the parents of the two boys; this will be discussed in detail in Chapter Seven.

The StrongStart site

The StrongStart centres that were involved in this study operated in two different elementary school buildings located in a school district in B.C.’s lower mainland (outside of Vancouver). Laura, the early childhood educator, divided her day between the two centres, working at one school in the morning between 8:30am – 12:00pm and at the other school in the afternoons between 12:30pm – 4:00pm. The StrongStart program itself runs for three hours and Laura had 15 minutes for set up before the program begins and 15 minutes for clean up after the program ends for a total of three and a half paid hour per day, per centre.

The StrongStart classroom environment in both schools can be characterized as traditional early childhood settings with a variety of learning centres, including an art area, library corner, water and sand tables, and a large carpeted area for construction play. In both settings, the half-day program is structured around a typical early childhood schedule that includes: an extended period of free play, a communal snack, ‘circle time’ that includes book reading and singing, and outdoor play.⁴¹ The families who attended both StrongStart centres were from diverse cultural backgrounds. Children attending the centres ranged in age from infancy to four year olds and were accompanied by a caregiver, such as the child’s mother, father, grandparent, or a nanny.

⁴¹ The program, including the daily schedule and the classroom set up, is somewhat directed by the B.C. Ministry of Education (see Policy Document: StrongStart BC Early Learning Centre Revised Policy. Effective May 1, 2009) http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy/policies/strong_start.htm accessed on April 28, 2012.

In both locations attendance in the StrongStart program was high. As a result, one of the greatest challenges that Laura faced in both StrongStart centres in terms of pursuing the practice of pedagogical narration was the sheer number of families who attended the programs. On average, attendance at the StrongStart centres was between 25-35 children. This meant that there were between 40-50 persons (children and adults) in each classroom during the program. Laura felt that having to constantly greet new families as they came in through the door, as well as having to do, what she called, “the crowd control,” were two significant limitations to engaging more often and more deeply in creating pedagogical narrations. In addition, Laura (as well as the other educators in this study) did all the work that is involved in creating pedagogical narrations at her home, since the program hours did not leave enough time to develop the narrations during work hours.

Laura, early childhood educator, key participant at the StrongStart site

Laura, the key participant in the StrongStart site, was the single early childhood educator at the two StrongStart centres included in this study.⁴² Laura has been an early childhood educator for nearly 30 years. At the time that this study began she has been working as a StrongStart facilitator at the two schools mentioned above for two years. Laura is a vivacious, animated and energetic educator. She speaks passionately about her profession as an early childhood educator. At the StrongStart centre, Laura maintained a welcoming and hospitable environment for the children and their families. She was often rewarded with affectionate hugs from the young children who attend the program. In 2010, following the publication of the *B.C. Early Learning*

⁴² All B.C. StrongStart centres are led by a single, qualified early childhood facilitator (see Policy Document: StrongStart BC Early Learning Centre Revised Policy. Effective May 1, 2009 http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy/policies/strong_start.htm accessed on April 28, 2012).

Framework and her initial experimentation with the practice of pedagogical narration, as well as feeling encouraged by the myriad early learning initiatives that took place in B.C. between 2005 and 2009, Laura decided to pursue a Bachelor degree in ECE, and has been doing so while working full time.

Pedagogical narrations at the StrongStart site

Laura began using the tool of pedagogical narration in the year before this study began. She learned about the practice of pedagogical narration through a public presentation about the *B.C. Early Learning Framework*. As indicated above, Laura encountered challenges in pursuing the practice of pedagogical narration in a consistent and elaborate manner due to the sheer numbers of families attending the StrongStart programs. Despite this, during the year that the study took place, Laura created three pedagogical narrations. Two pedagogical narrations were fairly small; they included a short text and a couple of photographs. One narration was about two children collaboratively cleaning up at a play centre in the StrongStart classroom and the other described a child's spontaneous act of sorting animals on a felt board. These narrations were mounted on posters and were displayed inside (or just outside) the StrongStart classroom. A third, more elaborate, pedagogical narration was created toward the end of the school year. The third narration was formatted as a PowerPoint presentation and was shared with a group of kindergarten teachers in a meeting that Laura had organized.

Apart from having to deal with technical issues, such as the numbers of families that attended the program and finding the time to document and write the narratives, Laura felt that she was facing pedagogical and ethical issues. The practice of pedagogical narration depends on the possibility to engage with others (children, parents, colleagues) in meaningful conversations about the documented material. The context of the StrongStart centre, where a single educator is

working with a transient population of families, raised questions about the possibilities to sustain these conversations.

Data analysis

Data analysis strategies employed in this study are consistent with qualitative research data analysis approaches that involve a process of interpreting data (Dey, 1993; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The multiple case study method has implications for data analysis because it affords analyzing and comparing data across cases to generate a more complex and nuanced understanding of the studied phenomenon (or the quintain) (Stake, 2006). Stake cautions the multiple-case study researcher to refrain from simplistic comparison that may lead to stereotyping and simplistic evaluation of the quintain.

To this end, I engaged in a multilayered process of data analysis with the goal of presenting an inventive and complex interpretation of the study. The process consisted of three analytical movements that did not always proceed in a linear or a straightforward fashion. In the end, the three analytical moves became entangled with each other to produce a comprehensive response to the research questions. In what follows, I describe how the data analysis unfolded through a preliminary comparative analysis, thematic analysis, and analysis through thinking with Arendt's theory and concepts.

Preliminary data analysis

The process of data analysis, as commonly practiced in qualitative research projects, began during the data collection phase (Grbich, 2007). At this early stage, my analysis was guided by trying to understand what stories were made possible through the data, especially with regards to variations of the practice of pedagogical narrations in each site. As I was transcribing

the interviews and observations, I made general analytical notes about what I saw as important elements in the practice of pedagogical narrations in relation to leadership within and across sites. At this point, I stayed “close” to the data and the analysis was mostly descriptive in nature (Wolcott, 1994). For example, I noted that the *B.C. Early Learning Framework* played a significant role in constructing and understanding pedagogical narrations at the StrongStart and the Childcare sites. Yet, this policy document did not significantly affect the practice of pedagogical narrations at the Preschool and Parent Co-op sites, where pedagogical narration has been practiced for a longer time, and has been influenced by the Reggio Emilia approach to pedagogical documentation. This initial analysis gave me a sense of the differences and similarities among the multiple cases. As well, I was beginning to note some recurrent themes and connections with the theoretical framework. For instance, in all sites (but to various degrees) the educators discussed the lack of response to the pedagogical narrations from parents. This made me wonder about what is, who is, or what can be, considered as the public in ECE settings. Should it be composed only of educators, children and parents? Can a small team of educators discussing a narration be recognized as a public? Should educators reach out to a wider public?

Thematic analysis

I engaged with a more rigorous and systematic process of data analysis after the data collection period ended. After I transcribed all interviews and observations, I organized the data into clearly labeled files. I read and studied the content of the files in different order. I read the transcriptions and pedagogical narration samples that were obtained from each case, then I read through the transcriptions of the reflective and probe interviews, observations, and narrations across sites. I began studying the data, searching for significant themes and key issues in relationship to enactment of leadership. Thematic analysis involved identification of recurring

topics that emerged as important and relevant to the study of the phenomenon of pedagogical narration and its relation to leadership. I identified themes in the interviews, observations, samples of pedagogical narrations, and field notes. While I realize that thematic analysis of data in qualitative inquiry “is not a theoretically ‘innocent’ move” (Alasuutari, 1996, p. 373), and while I acknowledge that this study and its questions were framed within a particular theoretical framework, I felt that thematic analysis was an important element in the process of data analysis. As the researcher, I gained an opportunity to expand my “visiting” by attending to how data-based explorations of the phenomenon interacted with the theoretical framework, occasionally through generative tensions.

In the process of thematic analysis I paid attention to occurrences that could not have been known or imagined before fieldwork took place, and therefore, took me by surprise. For example, I noticed that occasionally there were discrepancies between data obtained from interviews and data obtained from observations. In all four sites the key participants spoke during the interview about a sense of isolation in their professional lives. However, during the observations I saw and interpreted the relations among the educators and the members of their communities as interactive and collaborative. These points of tension in the data prompted me to delve into a deeper level of inquiry and interpretation (I will discuss this shortly).

Since the questions I asked in this study focused on three dimensions of leadership (as it is associated with the practice of pedagogical narration); namely, leadership theory, enactment, and identity, I classified the data (Dey, 1993) into sets of themes and sub themes in response to these questions. The themes included constructs such as: valuing surprise and the unexpected (theory), striving for complexity (issues related to enactment and theory), initiation of dialogue (enactment), contesting the dominant images of children (enactment and theory), educators’

desire for public recognition (identity), professional isolation (issues related to enactment and identity), lack of response from parents (issues related to enactment and identity).

Thinking with theory: Analyzing data with Arendt's concepts

At this point of data analysis, I began to think the data and the themes more closely with the theoretical framework and Arendt's concepts. In the process of carrying out this study, I read a number of publications that illustrated quite powerfully the role that theory can play in the analysis phase of educational research (Anyon, 2009; Biesta, Allan, & Edwards, 2011; Jackson & Mazzei, 2012; Yin, 2012). What these researchers argue is that when theory is brought into dialogue with empirical material it pushes the interpretive framework to its limits as the data analysis becomes a generative process that provokes the researcher to produce something new (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). Kaufmann (2011) adds that one way of working toward creating new meanings in qualitative research is by "experiment[ing] with applying diverse concepts to organize meaning in empirical matter" (p. 148). Additionally, Dey (1993) contends that,

To interpret is to make action meaningful to others, not just or even necessarily within the terms used by the actors themselves. To explain is to account for action, not just or necessarily through reference to the actors' intentions. It requires the development of conceptual tools through which to apprehend the significance of social action and how actions interrelate. (p. 41)

Working through themes with theory became particularly productive when the themes that I identified could not fully account for a number of significant moments (or events) that occurred during the data generation phase. Fitting (contingent and unpredictable) events into a thematic structure could have compromised their significance and their potential for a reconceptualization of the idea of leadership through telling stories of the unexpected, or *stories of natality* (see discussion below).

As I was re-working the data with Arendt's concepts in mind, the themes that were identified through thematic analysis did not disappear. Rather, I was able to consider these themes within a broader framework of interpretation that infused the themes with renewed meanings. I also felt that I was able to respond to the data (and therefore to the participants) in ways that were politically and ethically mindful. For instance, when the thematic unit labeled "professional isolation" was put into dialogue with the Arendtian concept of the public sphere, thinking with Arendt's concerns about the disappearance of our common/public world under the conditions of modernity, gave a new meaning to the educators' isolation, because I could see it beyond a physical or social condition. Seen as a *political* condition, the educators' isolation has less to do with the actual number of persons with whom the educator works. Rather, it has to do with lacking a particular kind of quality of being together with others. I explore this issue further in Chapter Five.

The theoretical concepts helped me enact a methodology of an engaged, yet distant, "visiting." With Arendt's concepts in mind, I was able to ask new questions about the data, such as in what ways the participants' speech and actions were situated historically and politically. Additionally, I could probe how the participants' words and actions contribute to and/or interrupt habitual constructions of leadership in the ECE realm. Moreover, the interplay of philosophical concepts and the empirical data produced new interpretive possibilities for Arendt's theory of action, especially in the ways it can be taken up in understanding leadership enactment that is entangled with pedagogical narrations in ECE contexts. I discuss this further in the three analysis chapters.

Data selection through “fishing for pearls”⁴³

In Chapter Three, I alluded to Arendt’s (1968) method of “pearl diving.” Inspired by her friend, Walter Benjamin, Arendt saw the role of the historian/scholar as a pearl diver that descends to the bottom of the sea, not to “excavate” the sea floor, but to bring to light “the rich and the strange,” “the pearls and the corals” (pp. 51-52). In thinking the data with Arendt’s theory of action and the methodologies of illumination and visiting, my focus in the analysis process shifted from looking for themes to fishing for pearls.

Taking up the notion of *action* as a productive concept for re-thinking leadership in ECE, it became paramount to search for moments in which sharing pedagogical narrations opened a space where newness-as-beginning disrupted habitual existence and created opportunities for new ways of thinking, acting, and being with others in ECE contexts.

Applying the method of the researcher as a pearl diver, I began looking for moments that illuminated how ‘leadership emerged in the very performance of an action at the scene’ (Disch, 1994, p. 31). Keeping in mind Kristeva’s interpretation of the Arendtian challenge, ‘to condense action into an exemplary moment, to extract it from the continuous flow of time, and reveal a *who*’ (2001, p. 16), I identified three events that I considered “exemplary moments” (Lather, 2007, p. 34) of leadership enactment. I named these events “moments of natality” to indicate their potential for the emergence of newness, or new beginning (see p. 85 in this dissertation for a discussion about the meaning of newness for Arendt).

Three Arendtian concepts became highly relevant for the analysis of the current study: the *public sphere* (or ‘*common world*’), *thinking*, and *plurality* (in Chapter Seven I connect

⁴³ In her highly acclaimed biography of Hannah Arendt, Young-Bruehl (1992) called this Arendtian method “pearl fishing” (p. 95).

plurality and natality with Arendt's conception of identity as the disclosure of the *who-in-action* through narration). The relevancy of these concepts for the analysis was determined by their relation to the three exemplary moments that I identified. As well, these concepts were chosen because of their generative relation to specific themes that, I felt, required a complex *response*. The three events, or "moments of natality," took place in three of the sites that participated in the study: the Parent Co-op site, the Toddlers' Childcare site, and the Preschool site. Therefore, these sites became the focal cases in the analysis chapters. I now turn to discuss the structure of the analysis chapters.

Presentation of data analysis

I organized the presentation of the interpretation of the data in three chapters that expand from the three Arendtian concepts that were employed in the final data analysis stage: *public sphere* (or 'common world'), *thinking*, and *plurality*. These three concepts became the connective tissue around which the elements of the study, including the political context of neoliberalism, standardization of ECE, the scholarly work of the RECE movement, the historical shaping of the ECE field and of the early childhood educator's identity, as well as the themes that were identified in the thematic analysis, could be intertwined in meaningful and productive ways. These concepts also aided me in constructing a comprehensive response to the three research questions.

Each analysis chapter begins with a "theoretical visiting" (Tamboukou, 2011). I first explore the significance of the Arendtian concept to ECE leadership by showing its relevance to contemporary issues and debates in the field of ECE. I then provide "situated theorizing" (Lather, 2007, p. 158), or a more nuanced meaning of the Arendtian concept as it is contextualized within the particular aims of the current study. Next, I thread around the concept a

number of thematic strands that were identified in the analysis, to show how the concepts and the themes operated within and across the sites. I conclude each chapter by contextualizing the concept in stories about “moments of natality” within the site in which the event took place.

My purpose in presenting the analysis chapters in this format was to give an account of how leadership as associated with pedagogical narration can be conceptualized and enacted through three significant elements: 1) pedagogical narrations for renewing the public sphere by complicating conversations about ECE in public arena; 2) pedagogical narrations for engaging in thinking what we are doing to resist habituation, automation, and thoughtlessness in ECE practice; and 3) pedagogical narrations for actively pluralizing the identities of children, educators, and parents.

The question of validity and generalizability

The notions of validity and generalizability remain contested in qualitative inquiry paradigms where researchers attest to their value position (Klenke, 2008; MacNaughton et al., 2001). In qualitative research validity of the findings does not necessarily translate to an argument for the probable generalization of the findings to other settings. Since one of the main purposes of multiple case study method is to illuminate the uniqueness of the examined phenomenon in each case, for the most part, generalization is not considered the objective in case studies (Hays, 2004). Therefore, case study research is more about making distinctions than generalizations. The purpose of making distinctions in this study was to be able to identify what was new, and therefore, can contribute to enlarging our thought and understanding about how contemporary leadership might show itself in ECE contexts. Relatedly, some case study researchers argue for the potential of establishing an *analytic generalization* (Klenke, 2008; Yin, 2009). Through analytic generalization the researcher aims at establishing the validity of the

theory that was evaluated in the study, by lifting the theory to a higher conceptual level, as well as through drawing implications and contributing new insights to theory and practice.

Guba and Lincoln (1985) devised the notion of *trustworthiness* as an alternative to the concepts of validity and reliability. More recently, Tracy (2010) added the notion of “rich rigor.” In the present study rich rigor was maintained by the following strategies and procedures. I devised theoretical and methodological approaches that are compatible and mutually supportive. I kept the research questions at the centre of the investigation to make sure that they were the driving force behind the research. Drawing on multiple sources of data such as interviews, documents, reflective research journal, and observations, multiple layered analyses, and multiple cases worked towards an analysis that is comprehensive; that is, an analysis through which the research questions have been addressed with rigor and depth. Multiple visits and observations in the multiple sites over the course of nearly ten months as well as establishing reciprocal relations with participants also strengthened the credibility of the data (see also Creswell, 2007).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that consideration of participants’ responses may increase research credibility. While I shared my initial analysis of the data with the key participants from each site, I was aware, as Silverman (2001) cautions, that participants’ responses cannot be assumed to act as research validation or refutation. Rather, Silverman asserts that these responses should act as “another source of data and insight” (p. 236). Therefore, I engaged with the responses as an additional source of data that can potentially affect the analysis.

Tracy (2010) adds that other measures for the quality of qualitative study are that the topic of the research is worthy and timely and that the contributions of the study are significant. In Chapter One, I elaborated on the significance and timeliness of this research project in light of major political changes that have occurred in the field of ECE over the last decade. As well, I

demonstrated with relevant literature, the need for research on the often-neglected topic of leadership in ECE contexts, especially research that attempts to examine both the theoretical and empirical possibilities for ECE leadership.

As mentioned above, Arendt (1992) saw validity as closely related to publicity. Disch (1993, p. 685) explains that publicity for Arendt had a political value as it meant a broadening of perspectives and “an openness to contestation.” From this premise, the validity of this study will be actualized when this dissertation comes into contact with other people’s thinking and perspectives. This does not mean that the text must appeal to general assent as much as it may appeal to generating a public conversation. By explicating the research purposes and analytical procedures, as well as presenting my interpretative responses, my hope is that this study will renew public interest and discussions about possibilities to think and enact ECE leadership differently.

Ethical considerations

Since this research involved human participants, I obtained approval from the University of British Columbia’s Behavioural Research Ethics Board. I also obtained approval from the school board for conducting research at the StrongStart centres. As well, approval was obtained from the parent boards at the preschool, childcare centre, and the parent co-op preschool. Participants were informed in writing of the purposes and procedures of the research. Participation was voluntary and based on informed consent. I prepared four consent forms: for educators as key participants, for educators as participants, for parents as participants, and for parents as guardians of participating children. Contents of interviews, observations, and pedagogical narrations were kept confidential. Using pseudonyms was important due to the

relatively small size of the ECE field in B.C., which increases the possibility that participants could be identifiable if names and specific locations are noted.

Smith and Deemer (2000) explain that the rise in interpretivist research methodologies does not imply that researchers relinquish their responsibility to the credibility of their research claims. In fact, they claim that interpretivist research places *more* responsibility on the researcher, because in interpretive inquiry the researcher cannot take a passive role towards the reality that is portrayed, and thus, the researcher is inevitably implicated in the study. In Smith and Deemer's words: "one must be morally responsible for what one constructs or makes" (p. 442).

Beyond the fact that ethical considerations were an external requirement, I considered it my personal responsibility as a researcher to conduct the study in an ethical manner. This study operated on the assumption that the researcher can no longer assume to be able to fully represent or know others (Lincoln & Cannella, 2009). This meant that attention has been given to the "problem of representation." Participants' opinions were viewed as a position within larger political and societal movements and not as an occasion for individual evaluation based on a pre-defined set of criteria. Hence, analysis of the data did not focus on evaluating individual early childhood educators or their communities on how well they practice pedagogical narration or on how well they enact leadership; rather, the research was focused on examining how leadership emerged with the practice of pedagogical narrations in multiple and sometimes unpredictable ways.

In the next chapter, the first of three analysis chapters, I begin to sketch out the dimensions of leadership that was enacted through the practice of pedagogical narration.

Chapter Five

Pedagogical Narrations and Leadership Enactment as Renewing our Public/Common World

Arendt's...linking of human freedom to action in a public space have opened (and continue to open) for me a great range of perspectives on the "common world" and on the education that might bring it into existence and keep it alive.

~ Maxine Greene (2001)

As discussed in Chapter One, at the heart of the practice of pedagogical narrations lies the commitment to making children's experiences, as well as the pedagogical thought and practices in early childhood settings, visible and open for discussion by sharing narratives about significant events in early childhood settings with others (i.e., children, colleagues, parents). The fact that the practice of pedagogical narration invites processes of collective reflection already holds a unique *potentiality* for leadership enactment, because the early childhood educator (as the creator of pedagogical narrations) is positioned as an initiator of public dialogue on matters pertaining to ECE.

In this chapter, I engage with the data to explore this potentiality. To analyze the data I draw on Arendt's concept of the *public/common world*, as well as two related themes that I identified during data analysis, *isolation* and *recognition*. The key participants across all sites brought up the issue of professional isolation and the desire for professional recognition in relation to the practice of pedagogical narration. Arendt's paradoxical conception of the common world – as a space where we can act together *and* emerge as a distinctive uniqueness - offers a new interpretive landscape for responding to the issues of isolation and recognition in ways that enrich a reconceptualized notion of leadership in ECE.

My main argument is that although creation of a public sphere is paramount for enacting leadership with pedagogical narrations, creating such spaces in ECE contexts was challenging

due to historical, material and political conditions, such as holding on to a view of teaching as an individualist pursuit and a view of ECE as a service to parents. I then present the focal case for this chapter, the Parent Co-op Preschool, to elucidate how Karen, the key participants from this site, worked through some of these challenges to enact leadership by inserting provocative pedagogical narrations into multiple public arenas.

The public realm and ECE leadership

The creation of a vibrant, viable public space within educational contexts, where conversation and debate about educational values (what is worthwhile and meaningful) and pedagogical practices can flourish in relation to the daily lives of schools, has been recognized as a core responsibility for educational leadership by a number of educational leadership researchers (Blackmore, 1999; Coulter & Wiens, 2008; Fielding, 2009; Mackler, 2008; Sachs, 2000). Inspired by Arendt, Maxine Greene (2001) has written extensively about the importance of creating public spaces in educational landscapes. She imagined this space as a realm where multiple perspectives encounter each other with the possibility of making our common existence richer and more complex. As Greene reminds us in the quotation that opened this chapter, a public space, or a common world, as she refers to it, is not a given; it needs to be brought into existence and kept alive. To this end, Greene (1978, as cited in Wilson, 2003) proposes that the teacher becomes a “challenger” (a term she borrows from Arendt) by opening spaces where the taken-for-granted and normalized ways of being are interrogated and where new ones are born.

Within the realm of ECE, enactments of leadership as generating a public common world, where ECE issues are made visible and debatable, gain an increased significance for a number of reasons. I have alluded in previous chapters (especially in Chapter Two) to the unique problematics of leadership in ECE that stem from the historical shaping of ECE as an invisible

field of practice relegated to the private realm (Hard, 2005; Grieshaber, 2001; Woodrow, 2007). Cavarero (2000) adds that women lack the experience of a public, especially when they are defined as mothers, wives, and caregivers. In addition, the professional identity of the early childhood educator has been traditionally constructed as an *apolitical* carer whose ‘world’ encompasses the isolated (and isolating) enclosure of the early childhood classroom, typically conceived as a protective space disconnected from the public realm and not inclined for public visibility (Langford, 2006; Ryan & Ochsner, 1999; Sumsion, 2003). Thus, the historical construction of the ECE field intensifies the challenge for early childhood educators to embrace the responsibility for revitalizing early childhood spaces as sites for leadership that entails invigorating public discussions about ECE, its values and purposes.

Despite these difficulties, revitalization of ECE contexts as vibrant public spaces has become pertinent in the contemporary neoliberal political climate, which is characterized by a reduction of public spaces and a decrease in collective engagement in matters of public concern (Fielding & Moss, 2011). Furthermore, as I emphasized in Chapter One, another phenomenon related to neoliberal politics is the increase in standardization of the field through production of ECE national and provincial policy documents alongside the rise in ECE discourses dominated by the language of “learning goals” and “school preparedness.” In response to these homogenizing processes, a number of ECE scholars (see, for example, Dahlberg et al, 1999; Moss & Petrie, 2002; Moss, 2007) have urged early childhood educators, citizens, and policymakers to move beyond traditional thinking about ECE as a service for working parents and/or sites for inculcating children with a set of predefined outcomes *only*. In contrast, they propose a view of ECE institutions as public forums; places where children and adults participate in innovative projects of common interest, cultural production, and exchange of multiple

perspectives about pedagogical and ethical questions. This chapter joins these contemporary conversations by arguing that pedagogical narration has the potential to create and revitalize ECE as a public space, but in order to realize this potential, I argue, certain political and material conditions are necessary.

Thinking with Arendt's public/common world as a space for renewal

Arendt's (1958/1998) conceptualization of the public realm, and more specifically her notion of a public realm as a "common world," provide a relevant analytical framing for thinking leadership anew in ECE in relation to the potential of pedagogical narrations to bring such spaces into existence. It is not only that the Arendtian public realm enables a new way of thinking about publicity and visibility as *the* field for action, narration, and initiation - a space where possibilities for renewal and agency emerge when we act *among* and *with* others. This public space also, according to Arendt, is not restricted to a particular location and/or institution; it can emerge 'wherever human beings come together to make their appearance explicitly' (Arendt, 1958/1998, pp. 198-199).

As discussed in Chapter Three, Arendt (1958/1998) emphasized the importance of creating a public sphere where people can "appear" to each other through acting and speaking – revealing *who* they are and co-creating a common world through continuous exchange of stories from multiple perspectives about common issues. Arendt became concerned that under the conditions of modernity the public realm has been conflated with the private realm to create the social realm. She saw the social realm as a phenomenon of human beings bound together in "a pseudo-public realm" around private, individualized concerns to do with consumption and production in a 'common economy' (Canovan, 1992, p. 117). Arendt was concerned about two "modern" phenomena that were particularly susceptible to an 'imposition of rules that seek to

normalize members and to exclude spontaneous action:’ *isolation* and *conformity* (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 42). Thus, she thoughtfully conceptualized the public space as a common world in a paradoxical way. The common world, the *in-between* space created among plural beings, she claimed, both *relates* (works against isolation) and *separates* (works against conformity) them.

In Arendt’s (1958/1998) words:

The public realm, as the common world, gathers us together and yet prevents our falling over each other, so to speak. What makes [modern] society so difficult to bear is not the number of people involved, or at least not primarily, but the fact that the world between them has lost its power to gather them together, to relate them, and to separate them. (pp. 52–53)

Kimberley Curtis (1999)⁴⁴ elucidates the paradoxical nature of the Arendtian public eloquently and explains how it relates to renewal. On one hand, she says, we need a “meeting place” to share stories publically with others, yet, our capacity to *experience* a world in common depends on an ongoing provocation of difference (or distinct appearances) that elicit moments of eruption (p. 36). These moments save perspectives from degenerating into repetitious sameness; they *renew* the world as something “vivid and vibrant” (Curtis, 1999, p. 16). Without these provocations our sense of the world is reified; it automatically reproduces itself and we remain unresponsive to the ever-changing complexities of human plurality (Curtis, 1999). Curtis concludes that: “If, therefore, we can locate the common world at all, it is paradoxically to be found only where this eruptive eliciting provocation flourishes” (Curtis, 1999, p. 36). Arendt’s “project,” thus, does not entail replacing the social realm with the political/public realm, but rather, it points to the necessity to open spaces in which the tension between the social and the political could be engaged with and illuminated, ‘so that the devouring process of social forces

⁴⁴ Stephanie Mackler (2010) makes a similar point when she claims that the Arendtian common world must be disrupted in order to be (re)created by stories that provoke a response (p. 515).

are somewhat constrained' (Curtis, 1999, p. 85). Importantly, the Arendtian public realm is not necessarily actualized when people simply get together. Rather, a public sphere is an *achievement* made possible by a particular way of being, speaking, and acting together that breaks away from processes of thoughtlessness, conformism, and habitual ways of speaking (Biesta, 2012; Cavarero, 2004; Curtis, 1999; Mackler, 2008).

Thinking with Arendt's public/common world within the context of the present study helps me illuminate how and why leadership was enacted when Karen, the key participant from the Parent Co-op Preschool, "inserted" *provocative* pedagogical narrations about events from her classroom into diverse public arenas. Karen's leadership identities emerged as she *politicized* public spaces by challenging others with pedagogical narrations that interrupted conventional thought about ECE, children, and the relations between (the supposedly) enclosed space of the ECE classroom and the world.

In the rest of this chapter, I use Arendt's concept of the public/common world as an inspiration to critically engage with the data through two thematic strands that were identified as significant during the data analysis process: isolation and recognition. What the analysis of these themes reveals is how the key participants in the study struggled to create and maintain public spaces where the meanings of pedagogical narrations could be critically negotiated, nuanced and enlarged.

Pedagogical narration, isolation, and recognition

Given the fact that the practice of pedagogical narration needs for its survival an ongoing possibility of coming together with others to debate and think deeply about what has been documented, I identified isolation as an important theme. Relatedly, the practice of pedagogical narration is inevitably entwined with the educator making an "appearance" in public, and as

such, the practice of pedagogical narrations is bound to notions of recognition and professional identity. Indeed, within the context of this study, the key participants across all sites saw pedagogical narrations as having an important role to play in achieving a public recognition for the value of the ECE field, and through this, obtaining a better status for the ECE professional in the eye of the public. However, as I was analyzing the data, I began to see tensions between the key participants' sense of isolated professional practice and their desire for recognition for a notion of leadership that seeks to open up spaces for disputation of values, meanings, and identities. In what follows, I attend to these tensions and I bring in Arendt's as well as a number of Arendtian scholars' insights regarding isolation, recognition, and the public/common world to help me elucidate the relations between these constructs and a reconceptualized notion of ECE leadership.

Isolation

One of the profound encounters that I experienced in the process of carrying out this study was the consistency in which the key participants discussed the experience of isolation in their professional practice in relation to pedagogical narration, regardless of whether they worked within a team or as a single educator at their site. Generally speaking, the sense of isolation was linked with the key participants' desire to belong to a larger form of 'togetherness,' or a more cohesive ECE community with a stronger sense of shared purpose and public recognition. Indeed, the issue of professional isolation has been an ongoing challenge in the field of ECE and has been described as problematic in relation to ECE leadership. For example, based on her study, Hard (2005) claimed that a sense of professional isolation works to maintain the status quo in the field of ECE, because isolation is a condition that is antithetical to leadership.

The impact of the historical shaping of ECE as a gendered field of practice belonging to the a private, invisible realm, where teaching is understood as an individualistic pursuit, was articulated quite vividly by Erin, the key participant from the Toddler Childcare site, when she described the challenges she felt in sharing pedagogical narrations with others as follows: “We were more used to doing it [our practice] being in our own world, comfortable with our own space; we are not used to putting ourselves out there and it wasn’t easy to shift that” (TCC, PI). Erin, as well as other educators in this study, was beginning to shift her understanding of teaching from an individualist undertaking enacted in isolation to a “growing recognition of teaching as communal endeavor” (Sumsion, 2003, p. 78). This was evident in how Erin brought up the sense of professional isolation in relation to the publication of the *B.C. Early Learning Framework* and the practice of pedagogical narration as embedded in it. She explained that she has been looking for ways to work “more cohesively” with her colleagues and that the publication of the Framework, with its rich description of ECE practices and languages, allowed her to think about ECE practice in ways that were “not just about me.” The sense of professional isolation, but also the possibility to emerge from this state and the desire to move towards a more common world, came through very powerfully in a response Erin made during the reflective interview. When I asked her how the practice of pedagogical narrations changed her thinking about her practice, Erin responded:

The Early Learning Framework, which is bigger than the pedagogical narration, I think it made me feel that I am not alone, that we are a community of early childhood educators so I don’t feel so isolated and I think this feels good and I am pleased with it. (TCC, RI)

Professional isolation has been related to the absence of a sense of a professional presence for the ECE field within the public realm (in comparison, for example, with the professional identity that teachers in the public school system have) (Dunne, 2006; Hard & O’Gomoran,

2007; Rodd, 1997; Stonehouse, 1994; Sumsion, 2003), as well as to the capacity of early childhood educators to form a collective sense of professional belonging (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2005; Goodfellow, 2003; Osgood, 2006). From this point of view, Erin's comments, especially in connection with the publication of a publicly recognized document about ECE practice, are not surprising, but they do raise questions about early childhood educators' reliance on policy to 'lift' them from a state of isolation through an assumed cohesiveness, or presumed unity of an ECE community of practice. For example, we can ask, Is unity the antidote to isolation? Would a sense of cohesiveness restrict the possibilities for educators' creative and unexpected action? And finally, with Arendt's (1990) contention that commonness is not achieved with structure (i.e., laws, boundaries, or in this case, policy⁴⁵) but rather it needs to be *experienced* through an ongoing encounter with a multiplicity of perspectives on a common issue, I am prompted to ask whether the policy could become a fertile context from which commonness can be experienced?

Despite Erin's desire to emerge from the isolated existence that she felt in her practice, opportunities to get together with her colleagues at the Toddlers' Childcare site (and with parents, or colleagues from the other programs at the children's centre) and to engage deeply with pedagogical narrations were sparse and irregular (albeit, as I describe in Chapter Six these meetings were highly valuable and rich in content). Difficulty in finding opportunities to meet was blamed on the intense childcare work schedule and the complication of finding a convenient meeting time for the team of four educators (most of the meetings that I observed over the course of this study took place during, and in lieu of, the educators' midday break while the toddlers

⁴⁵ Here I refer to a more conventional approach to policy as prescribed text, yet, I recognize that contemporary policy scholars have argued for a more critical, fluid, and contingent view of policy. For example, Ball (1993) argues for a view of policy-as-discourse and Sutton and Levinson (2001) argue for a view of policy-as-practice.

were having their nap). This moved me to wonder what (new) demands the practice of pedagogical narration makes on how ECE spaces are conceived, and how this reflects on the identity of the educator. In light of the above, and in relation to a reconceptualized notion of leadership as action, it may be productive to think with Arendt's (1998) distinctions between "work" and "action," and the "social" and "political." Coulter and Wiens (2002), for example, maintain that teachers are often "trapped in Arendt's social," because they understand the school primarily as the space for work – a place for productive activities towards a predefined end, but not a space for action (in the Arendtian sense of the word). Given the fact that the practice of pedagogical narrations was relatively new at the Toddlers' Childcare site, it seems reasonable to suggest that Erin and her colleagues were encountering and working within the tensions between work and action, the social and the political. While Coulter and Wiens do not explicitly link teachers' entrapped-ness in Arendt's "social" or "work" with gender issues, within the context of this study, given the gendered nature of the field of ECE, it may be necessary to do so, especially in light of the troubled relation between gender and leadership that was discussed in Chapter Two. Skattebol (2010), for example, maintains that, "[a] danger in feminized professions is the potential of reflective teaching practices to operate as technologies of regulation and governance which reinforce the subservient position of teachers and teacher knowledge..." (p. 76). Seen from this angle, pedagogical narration, at least initially, can be taken up as additional "work" that has to be done.

At the StrongStart site, a number of factors corroborated the experience of isolation, at least when we think of isolation as a social phenomenon. For one, Laura, the key participant, was the only early childhood educator on site; for another, the StrongStart centres were located within elementary schools that generally adhere to a different educational philosophy than the

one practiced in ECE settings, such as StrongStart, and this gave Laura a sense that she was somewhat of a “newcomer” within that context.⁴⁶ In addition, as I described in Chapter Four, the material conditions that Laura faced in terms of the numbers of families that attended the program and the tight schedule of the program, left very little opportunities for dialogue about narrations. Within the context of the StrongStart centre, where a single educator is working with a transient population of families, questions arise about the possibilities to sustain these conversations as long as pedagogical narrations are conceived and practiced with the assumption that parents and families are the main ‘audience’ with whom the narratives should be shared. For example, two of the pedagogical narrations that were created by Laura during the year in which the study took place involved children who, unbeknownst to Laura at the time she documented them, made very rare visits to the StrongStart centre after the narrations had been created. As a result, Laura hardly had opportunities to share these narratives with the children or their parents; nor did she get a chance to elicit their perspectives about alternative interpretations of the narratives.

During the year that the study was carried out, Laura did make a number of attempts to organize public events where she could share pedagogical narrations with others. At the heart of making these efforts to connect with others was her yearning for conversations through which the meaning of the pedagogical narrations she created could be enlarged and deepened. For example, she organized a meeting with the kindergarten teachers at her school. Yet, Laura felt that she had missed opportunities to analyze narrations with others in a sustained, critical, and expanded ways. During the probe interview, when I asked Laura what she might have changed in her practice of pedagogical narrations if she had been given an opportunity to do so. Laura’s

⁴⁶ Note that Laura did not necessarily see being a “newcomer” to the public school arena a negative thing. She thought that it gave her, as an ECE person, something new and valuable to introduce to this environment.

response demonstrated the challenges of creating public spaces within the context of her StrongStart centres. In Laura's words:

I would like the opportunity to go deeper into it, to be able to take this and have the dialogue with other colleagues, the parents, and re-visit the pictures with the children themselves. This piece has been missing, the re-visiting. It's like it's done and it stops...Because I know that even if it hasn't come to an end, it feels like it, because we haven't had this continuation of the conversation...I think with the StrongStart program I may find that inevitably that's how it is. (SS, PI)

The challenges that Laura encountered at the StrongStart programs cannot be taken lightly, because practicing pedagogical narration, as a component of the *B.C. Early Learning Framework* implementation guide, is an expectation that is stated in the guiding policy document for StrongStart centres. However, rather than giving up the possibility of creating a public space (and with it the possibility for leadership through pedagogical narrations), it seems that there is a need to rethink not only the conditions in which the StrongStart currently operates, but also how the idea of the "public" for the pedagogical narrations could be expanded beyond the children and parents who attend the program (especially since StrongStart centres are already a part of the *public* education system in B.C.).

The educators at the Preschool site experienced their isolation differently than those described at the two previously discussed sites. Despite the fact that the educators at the Preschool site described their professional relations as highly collaborative, they perceived the fact that the preschool operated in a relative isolation (in a specially built structure with a single children's program) as a major challenge to the practice of pedagogical narration. The sense of professional isolation and the lack of opportunities to dialogue with others from *outside* the Preschool about pedagogical narrations had a strong impact on the motivation to practice pedagogical narration at the Preschool site. Jenna, one of the key participants at the Preschool

site, felt that although the educators worked collaboratively, “they needed someone to come from the outside to inject energy into the conversation” (Field Notes, P, May 4, 2011). The notion of needing a broader audience with which to open dialogue, especially radical dialogue, about the pedagogical narratives was emphatically articulated with Jenna’s contention that in her view,

...documentation* is not about text and paper, but rather...It’s the conversations that precede it and follow it and what happens after. You can write it by yourself and you can reflect on it by yourself, but that’s not the point of documentation. I think that documentation cannot grow if there is no one else to share it with, and by share it I don’t mean ‘here take a look at this,’ ‘oh did you like it?’ ‘oh great thanks for reading it.’ It’s the conversation; *I need someone to challenge me.* (Jenna, P, PI, *emphasis added*).

* Note that Jenna is using the term “documentation” in lieu of pedagogical narrations.

What Jenna’s quote is crucially pointing to is that for the practice of pedagogical narration to be meaningfully enacted, it is not enough to share the narratives with others. In other words, the social conditions of collaboration are not sufficient as a condition for deepening the dialogue about the narratives. Based on Jenna’s comments, for pedagogical narrations to become *action* (in the Arendtian sense of the word, as a narration that brings something new into the world), we need an agonal space, where multiple perspectives about the narrated event are debated and contested.

Hard’s (2005) findings from her ECE leadership study in Australia (mentioned in Chapter Two) also indicated that assumptions about what constitutes collaborative relations in ECE settings (i.e., not wanting to rock the boat) promoted conformity and often worked against leadership. Thinking with Arendt’s (1958/1998) contention that isolation is a political, rather than a social, issue, and with Arendt’s insight that “action...is never possible in isolation” (p. 188), it is possible interpret the experience of isolation at the Preschool, but perhaps also at the StrongStart and Childcare sites, as the absence of a political space where the educators could

come together and “appear” to each other by revealing their unique stance toward pedagogical (and political) issues. Such spaces may allow educators to experience themselves politically (not only socially) in the sense that their position on a common *inter-est* (as storied in the pedagogical narration) can be taken into account and responded to by others. What the stories from the different sites reveal is difficulties in creating agonal spaces. An insight comes from Arendt’s (1990) thought about the notion of community. According to Arendt, a community is not a given, it is constituted through processes of differentiation as people share diverse opinions in order to create a common world. Through this process people are “getting into a community.” This way of thinking about a community may explain the educators’ frustration with the parents’ lack of responses to the pedagogical narration. It is possible that the way we commonly refer to the notion of community in ECE is misleading, because we assume that there is a community without the processes of “getting into a community.”

Recognition

The relationship between pedagogical narrations and professional recognition, alongside the topics of professional identity, professional language, and (lack of) response from parents, has come up repeatedly during the interviews, as well as in less formal conversations between the educators and me during site visits. Similarly to the issue of professional isolation, this thematic thread surprised me and challenged me to think about how a desire for professional recognition interacts with an idea of leadership as action.

The struggle for recognition for the professional status and public importance of the ECE field is not new; it has been ongoing in B.C. (see, for example, *The Early Childhood Educators of B.C. Leadership Initiative*, September 2008) and internationally (Ackerman, 2006; Hard, 2005; Moss 2006; Ortlipp, Arthur, & Woodrow, 2011). The relatively low level training required

for ECE licensure in B.C. and elsewhere in Canada,⁴⁷ low remuneration, and poor working conditions inevitably influence public perceptions about ECE, and the field has suffered from low social status. As well, studies have shown that societal perceptions about the field of ECE affect the perceptions that early childhood educators have of themselves in terms of their professional identity and their position within social and political contexts (Hard, 2005; Langford, 2006). Isolation has also been linked with the lack of recognition for the work that early childhood educators do. For example, Stonehouse (1994), states in her book *Not just nice ladies*, that describes a study of early childhood educators in Australia, that “our isolation has denied us visibility and to some extent credibility, as misconceptions persist about what we are and what we do” (p. 28).

Within the context of the present study, the discourse of recognition needs to be thought about within a reconceptualized notion of leadership. My aim is not to argue against the desire for professional recognition, but rather to point out how it may limit the potential of pedagogical narration for leadership enactment when it is understood as affirmation of an existing, stable identity. When pedagogical narration is conceived as action, the educator who shares the narrative inevitably exposes herself to the “light of the public” (Arendt, 1994, p. 23), and therefore, risks recognition and/or invites misrecognition (see discussion below). As Arendt (1958/1998) points out, “nobody knows whom he reveals when he discloses himself in deed or word, he must be willing to *risk* disclosure” (p. 180, my emphasis). Acting and speaking in public means that we become vulnerable to unpredictable responses from others.

⁴⁷ Currently in B.C. ECE license can be obtained at a college level basic certificate program. One or two ECE foundation course are sufficient for obtaining an assistant license.

Inspired by Arendt and by Patchen Markell's (2003) Arendtian interpretation of recognition, Phelan (2010) explains that when the recognition of teachers' professional status becomes the anchor for legitimatization "of the intellectual and ethical location from which teachers act," teachers' possibilities for identity expansion are limited. Following Arendt, Villa (1998) and Honig (1995) also claim that a desire for recognition of pre-defined identity does little to promote an agonistic, plural space. Issues related to the professional identities of the early childhood educator and their problematic relationship with leadership enactment have been foreshadowed in the literature review chapter. In agreement with what was reported in the literature, the key participants' desire for professional recognition was in response to the ECE field's low social status and not in response to the possibilities that the practice of pedagogical narrations holds for contesting public conceptions about what ECE might be about.

In both the Toddlers' Childcare and StrongStart sites, the key participants, Erin and Laura, saw the *B.C. Early Learning Framework* and the practice of pedagogical narrations as affirming the early childhood educators' practice and legitimizing the field of ECE. Erin claimed that the *B.C. Early Learning Framework* and the pedagogical narration gave the "early childhood educators the legitimacy to say, 'you are doing great work' and 'don't underestimate yourself'" (TCC, RI). In a similar vein, Laura explained that the language provided by the *B.C. Early Learning Framework* (that she could now use in her pedagogical narrations) helped "to justify what we are doing" (SS, Observation #3). Laura thought that the Framework provided her, and the field of early childhood in B.C., with a professional language that could elevate the status of the field and endow it with the recognition it deserves. In Laura's words:

I consider the Early Learning Framework and pedagogical narration...I really consider them as a gift to the early childhood field, as a way of helping others recognize the importance and professionalism of our work. So I feel that by using that and by using the right wording [in pedagogical narrations], rather than just

writing it sort of...‘oh, look isn’t it cute’ and leave it at that, it [pedagogical narration] can be a very powerful tool at recognizing the professionalism. (SS, RI)

The expectation that an external, formally authorized document would give value to the field of ECE was problematized recently by Ortlipp, Arthur, and Woodrow (2011). In their study that was carried out shortly after a new ECE national curriculum document was released in Australia in 2009, connections among ECE professional identity, professional language, professional recognition, and the introduction of a new early years framework, were explored. Ortlipp and her colleagues found that early childhood educators who worked with the newly released ECE curriculum, much like Erin and Laura, believed that framing ECE more closely with more contemporary ECE discourses (i.e., highlighting early learning through relationships, collaboration, and reflection) would improve their professional status and confirm the significance of their practice to others (for example, to parents). Yet, Ortlipp and her colleagues (2011) further argued that, “in order to have an effect, curriculum documents and the discourses they produce and circulate need to be taken up and enacted by professionals” (p. 59). This assertion implies that an introduction of a new ECE Framework to the field is not sufficient for gaining professional recognition, or alternatively it may present a rather passive relationship with recognition “in which we hope to see our identities mirrored in our political institutions” (Markell, 2000, p. 504).

In relation to the present study, the issue associated with a desire for recognition that is linked with legitimation, rather than action, is that pedagogical narrations may become a tool for maintaining the status quo. As Markell (2000) elegantly argues,

An act of affirmative recognition might also unwittingly strengthen the underlying relations of power and domination that have helped to *make* people who they are, binding people ever more tightly to the identities that have historically been the instruments of their subjection, even while (at least superficially) according those identities newfound respect. (p. 498, original emphasis)

Since the focus of this study is on ECE leadership potential, my interest lay in exploring instances where new or different ECE discourses and practices emerged and where alternative (new) professional identities have surfaced in relation, or in response, to the *B.C. Early Learning Framework* with the practice of pedagogical narrations. Change in educators' professional identities and experimenting with leadership identities depends on how the new discourses and practices that are offered in the policy document are interpreted and taken up within particular contexts through educators' actions. In other words, I was looking for instances of agency where educators' positioned themselves actively *within or against* the Framework with pedagogical narrations. In Chapter Six, I describe how Erin, the key participant from the Toddler's Childcare site, was able to argue why a particular pedagogical narration should be interpreted without connecting it to the *B.C. Early Learning Framework*. It is important to note that this option may not be available for Laura, because the *B.C. Early Learning Framework*, as a curriculum document, is mandated at StrongStart centres. A recent policy document produced by B.C. Ministry of Education describes how the implementation of the *B.C. Early Learning Framework* is to be regulated at StrongStart sites.⁴⁸

At the 3-5 Childcare and Preschool sites, the desire for recognition was discussed primarily through the ongoing disappointment of the educators with the lack of responses from parents to the pedagogical narrations that were shared either on a bulletin board or via email. In both sites, parents were thought of as the main 'clients' of pedagogical narrations, and the educators hoped that through pedagogical narrations parents would learn to appreciate the work that was being done at the centre. Camille, the key participant from the 3-5 Childcare site,

⁴⁸ The document, *Reflecting on Quality: Program reflection tool for StrongStart BC*, outlines quality indicators for StrongStart programs. These indicators are measured on a three level scale from "Needs to Be Improved" to "Adequate" to "Exemplary." (http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early_learning/pdfs/roq.pdf).

described her motivation to use pedagogical narrations as follows, “of course the parents don’t know what we are doing all day, that’s the best way to show them” (3-5 CC, RI). Maya, one of the key participant from the Preschool site, saw the contribution of this practice similarly: “it makes it visible [to parents] how our day is spent...So I think that when you document you are really showing the value of our work and what we are doing with the children on a daily basis...I think it’s one of the biggest contributions of it. And the capabilities of children at this age too...” (Maya, P, RI).

Notably, at the Preschool site the lack of response from parents was related to an uncertainty about the purpose of pedagogical narration. As I mentioned earlier, the question that was raised over and over in my conversations with the educators at the Preschool site was: “Who is the documentation for?” In other words, the educators were wondering what the purpose of pedagogical narration (or documentation as they referred to it) was if the ‘audience’ to which the educators appealed was not responsive.

The fact that in both sites the educators saw one of the main purposes of pedagogical narration as making their practice visible to parents can be linked to an understanding of ECE as service for families. Hard (2005) also found that the educators in her leadership study interpreted their professional identity through the “eyes of others,” especially through parents’ responses. According to Hard, an approach to professional identity that is based on external recognition limited the scope for the early childhood educators’ sense of professional identity. For example, some of the educators in Hard’s study viewed their professional role on a client satisfaction model; and this challenged, in turn, the educators’ view of themselves as potential leaders.

Phelan (2010) raises an important question with regards to recognition, she asks: Can recognition be thought of as a critical and transformative conception of political praxis, rather

than seeing recognition as something which can simply be comfortably accommodated within the existing frameworks? An understanding of recognition as potentially critical and transformative is more closely associated with an idea of educational leadership that is investigated in this study.

In the following section, I present and analyze data from the Parent Co-op site to illuminate how Karen, the key participant from this site, transgressed (with others) the experience of isolation by actively creating public spaces to critically engage with pedagogical narrations. Moreover, in sharing pedagogical narratives about provocative topics, Karen challenged the notion of recognition as affirmation. In fact, by sharing politically-rich narrations she disrupted the image of the “good” early childhood educator (Langford, 2006), and she took the risk of being misrecognized. Yet, by doing so, Karen’s invigorated conversations about what ECE might be about and who the early childhood educator might be.

The Parent Co-op site: Leadership enactment through inserting provocative pedagogical narrations into diverse public arena

When a ‘world’ opens up

I made the analogy before that I was on a path, my own little path in the forest, and it was a really little path all by myself and all of a sudden I started finding out that there was a whole world that I did not even know existed and that I wasn’t the only person doing it; it was all over the place and all of a sudden this world opened up.

- Karen, early childhood educator, key participant, Parent Co-op

Karen’s experience with pedagogical narrations, like the experience of the other key participants in this study, began with a sense of emerging from a state of isolation. Karen was introduced to the practice of pedagogical narrations when she joined the Investigating Quality

research project from 2006 until 2010 (hereafter IQ project). The IQ project brought groups of early childhood educators from different early childhood settings in B.C. together once a month to discuss and examine their practice through processes of self and collective reflective analysis of pedagogical narrations that were constructed and shared by the educators participating in the IQ project. Working with a research team of facilitators, the early childhood educators were provoked to engage with the pedagogical narrations in order to critically consider the pedagogical assumptions and values underlying their practice and to challenge each other to think differently about 'how we do' ECE (Pence & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2010, p. 132; see also Pacini-Ketchabaw, Nxumalo, & Kocher, under review).

Pedagogical narrations played a significant role in the IQ project, yet, it was also the introduction to and the engagement with contemporary early childhood scholarly work, especially the RECE literature, *in relation* to pedagogical narrations that had altered Karen's thinking and conceptions about how early childhood might be envisioned. Karen gained a new sense of the position she could take, as an educator, in expanding visions for what early childhood might be. Karen described her involvement in the IQ project as having a profound impact on her understanding of herself as an early childhood educator. This is how Karen described her experience with the IQ project:

...we talked about pedagogical narration, we talked about postmodern thinking, there was a lot of discussion, a lot of dialogue about a lot of big concepts, big ideas around early childhood care and education and it completely fascinated me because I have never even thought that people talked about early childhood education in my world. It was so exciting to know and so validating to know that this area of my work that I have been doing for 25 years is the subject of so much intellectual discussion and thought and new ideas, new to me, so it was exciting - REALLY exciting. But I also felt it was very challenging in a good way, but it was also very challenging in that a lot of the precepts that I have come to think of as truth were pulled from under me, the whole developmentally appropriate practice, developmental stages...it was part of what and how we all thought and how we spoke, the language we used, that's what framed our conversations among ECE's [early childhood

educators]. So how all that got pulled out was challenging but exciting at the same time. (PCO, RI)

A number of points in Karen's reflection about her participation in the IQ project are relevant to the current study. In what follows, I will elaborate on these points and connect them with an enactment of ECE leadership that is associated with sharing provocative pedagogical narrations in diverse public forums.

Emerging from isolation and “venturing into the public”⁴⁹

The quotation that opened Karen's story about discovering that she was not 'alone in the world' as well as Karen's remarks in the second quote that she 'never even thought that people talked about early childhood education in [our] world,' corroborate the intensity of the issue of isolation in ECE contexts. Yet, for Karen, participation in the IQ project with other early childhood educators as well as becoming familiar with international ECE theoretical frameworks (such the RECE literature) that she could meaningfully relate to her own pedagogical work, provided a context for professional connectedness and a sense of belonging to a common world.

Related to the issue of professional isolation and absence of a common world that were discussed earlier in this chapter, is Karen's surprise in discovering “the intellectual discussion, thought and new ideas” of contemporary scholarly work in the field of ECE. Karen's surprise is indicative of the lack of exposure of local ECE practitioners to current theories in early childhood (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., under review). Given the fact that the requirements for early childhood training as well as the requirement for professional development for early childhood

⁴⁹ I am borrowing this phrase from Arendt (1994, pp. 22-23), who invokes the notion of “venturing into the public” in discussing her teacher and friend, Karl Jaspers, to emphasize the courage that is needed to “expose” oneself to the “light of the public.” Arendt often discussed Jaspers as a courageous person because of the way that he spoke up against the Nazi party in Germany during and after WWII.

educators in B.C. are minimal,⁵⁰ most ECE practitioners have little, if any, opportunity to be exposed to and be challenged by contemporary (often critical) scholarly work in ECE. Exposure to and engagement with contemporary ECE theory and research is significant because of the way the new theories broadened the thinking in early childhood beyond the traditional focus on developmental theories, which, as Karen said: “were part of what and how we all thought and how we spoke, the language we used, that’s what framed our conversations among ECEs.”

When discussing the conditions necessary for a creation of a public space in educational settings, Fielding (2009) suggests that without engagement with a rich tradition of thought and radical narratives of past and present, we have no intellectual resources on which to draw, or narrative with which to converse and/or challenge with our own stories (p. 517). This becomes a relevant observation particularly in the age of neoliberalism, where educational conversations about “schooling” are often reduced to instrumentality that produces “existential poverty” (Fielding, 2009, p. 517).

For Karen, the encounter with new ways of thinking about ECE was also about finding a new language and ways to articulate her unique position in public spaces. According to Karen, encountering this new language enabled her to talk about ECE “in a more articulate way and having the language to articulate it throughout the community” (PCO, RI). Finding a space where who she was as an educator was challenged, as well as her excitement about being provoked to think anew about ECE, were for Karen a kind of “awakening” (Greene, 1977) in the sense that it opened up possibilities for thinking, speaking, and acting with others in ways that were unseen before.

What the experience of the IQ project and the exposure to contemporary scholarly work in

⁵⁰ Training for licensure in ECE is typically composed of three semesters at a college level. The MCFD currently requires forty hours of professional development over the period of five years. Not too long ago the requirement was merely five hours of professional development over the period of five years.

ECE made apparent for Karen is, as Moss (2007b) puts it, that the purposes of early childhood institutions are not self-evident, and that “early childhood education offers the prospect of infinite possibilities informed by local knowledge and provisional truths” (p. 233). Dahlberg and colleagues (1999) also contend that rather than predefining what early childhood institutions are for (accepting that they are spaces for children to live their childhood), the question, ““what are early childhood institutions for?”” (p. 75) can become a political question that early childhood communities themselves need to continuously engage through dialogue among children, adults, and the wider social network. It was this realization of contestability of what ECE *might be* that ignited Karen’s desire to “go public” with her thoughts and pedagogical narrations. This provided the impetus for Karen to actively emerge from isolation and “venture into the public,” where she created spaces for others to encounter pedagogical narrations that challenged them to re-imagine ECE.

Moss (2007b) urges early childhood educators to enter into an agonistic political field to speak in public and to *argue for* their perspectives by making pedagogical practice visible and open for valuation. He further suggests that early childhood educators find arenas where such argumentation can take place. Moss maintains that arenas can take many forms: seminars, conferences, journals, and other media (Moss, 2007b, pp. 236-237). Moss and Petrie (2002) posit that early childhood spaces, are places where ‘things happen,’ where children and adults come together to explore and realize unknown terrain. They argue further that children’s spaces are ‘places for provocation and confrontation, dissensus and incivility, complexity and diversity, uncertainty and ambivalence’ (p. 110). Key to Karen’s venturing into the public was her understanding that stories that are produced within her ECE community - or pedagogical narrations of “local knowledge,” as Moss (2007a) called them - are valid, political material for

public engagement. In her stories about her practice, ECE spaces become places where significant “things happen.”

Arendt (2005) contends that, “politics arises in what lies between men and is established as relationships” (p. 95). Crucial for this politics is creating arenas where people come together in speech and action - co-producing a common interest - to which they respond in multiple ways. This political space is important because it is the place where you can make a beginning – set something new into motion. Drawing on Arendt, Cavarero (2004) asserts that public spaces are not bounded by territory; rather, they are a possibility that ‘is always capable of being enacted’ (p. 73). It was by making pedagogical narrations public in multiple arenas, within and beyond the context of her classroom community, that Karen’s leadership enactments emerged.

Karen was creative in finding and forming public arenas in which she engaged others in ECE-related issues through the presentation of powerful pedagogical narrations. This was apparent by the work that she did through designing and providing workshops to early childhood educators, publishing articles in local journals, and in the creation of the a blog. Karen, clearly aware of the political importance of establishing networks of engagement and their relevance to initiating change, made the following suggestion to her audience of early childhood practitioners in one of her conference presentations: “create a discussion group, because otherwise you think you are a lone voice in the wilderness...Feeling that your ideas are valued by some colleagues gives you confidence to bring new ideas to others” (Karen, PCO, Observation #1).

Politicizing pedagogical narrations

Politicizing pedagogical narrations entails more than sharing the narratives with others in public arenas. Here I wish to argue that Karen politicized pedagogical narrations in two significant, related ways. She shaped them as provocative stories (in the way that they unsettled

conventional thought), and she also centered the narratives from her classroom on worldly issues that challenged the assumed separation between the common world and the ECE classroom. In other words, Karen transformed narrations into action, by creating stories that do not seek consensus and affirmation, but rather create possibilities for complicating conversations and renewal.

Provocative narratives

I often think, ok I have seen this [special moment], but unless I say something about it, it's really not that interesting. Like I have to make something of it.

~ Karen, key participant, PCO, PI.

As the quote above indicates, Karen was aware that creation of pedagogical narration requires both intellectual and aesthetic attention. This means that creating a provocative story that would entice public engagement requires judgment in terms of considering *what* to tell and *how* to shape the story. In order to construct provocative narratives, Karen had to make choices and decisions about what kinds of events in her preschool require thinking, articulation, publicity and reflection: what stories are or can be shaped so that they would *matter* to others.

The topics that Karen chose for her narrations were not naturally provocative (although they occasionally were topics that are not typically explored in ECE settings, such as the pedagogical narration about the topic of death that I discuss below). It was Karen's ability to make the stories political even when the narrations engaged with 'typical' ECE topics, such as safety on the playground, that I want to emphasize. For example, in a pedagogical narration, titled *The Beam that Rocked*, Karen documented in photos and text how two three-year-old boys tried to climb on a wooden beam that they leaned against a tire. As the young boys experiment with this newly created challenge to climb an unsteady beam they repeatedly fell off and tried to

climb it again while devising new strategies. Karen focused her written reflections on children's agency. She challenged adults' conventional thinking about what playground for young children should be like (i.e., risk-free) and she highlighted the significance of the possibility for children to enact their creativity and agency by creating a risk-rich environment for themselves.

Arendt realized that in order to politicize stories the storyteller needed "to transcend the limitations of facts and information" and to tell a provocative and principled story (Disch, 1994, p. 140). Provocative stories, are about exposing uncertainty, because public debate can only transpire around things that we cannot figure out with certainty (Arendt, 1979, cited in Schutz 1999, p. 84). As such, these stories refuse closure; they conserve their continual capacity to engender responses while 'keeping questions of meaning open as a locus for debate' (Readings, 1997, cited in Moss & Petrie, 2002, p. 13). In an interview by Turner & Wilson (2010), Tiziana Filippini, one of the leading pedagogues from Reggio Emilia, where pedagogical narration has always been thought of as a political tool, explains that narration is more than constructing a chronological story of what the children had done or said. Instead, the educators in Reggio Emilia "look for provocative concepts and questions" to include in the narratives. Provocations, Filippini adds, necessitate *response* (pp. 8-9, my emphasis).

Schutz (1999), musing on the Arendtian idea of newness, adds the notion of an "aesthetic ability" (p. 90). He explains that seeing events as "new" (and therefore fit for narration) involves an ability not to subsume the event under previous categories. This aesthetic ability to encounter events and then offer them back to her community as something new, was reflected in Karen's assertion about how she viewed pedagogical narration: "And that's what I think pedagogical narration can do, it can take what is an ordinary moment, as we call them, and elevate it to

something that is worthy of people's attention...so it is a very powerful tool in the way that you make it" (PCO, RI).

ECE as part of our common world

Karen also created pedagogical narrations that distorted conventional thought about the ECE classroom as a private, isolated, protected, apolitical space, separate from the world and its worldly issues. She took up the challenge to engage deeply with common world issues as they surfaced in her pedagogical work through writing and sharing pedagogical narrations that made visible how children, educators and parents encounter dilemmas surrounding gender, exclusion, freedom, power, ethics, and identity. For example, in a conference presentation Karen told a pedagogical narration, titled *The Gray Chair*, to invoke issues concerning teacher authority and power. Issues of power and authority came up when Karen was moved by the children to question what messages about authority and power she was sending when she was the only person allowed to seat in the gray chair (PCO, Observation #1).

Contemporary ECE scholarly work has illustrated that ECE contexts are inevitably connected with common world ethical and political issues, such as inequality (on the basis of age, gender, rights, ability, and race), social policy, and economic ideologies (see for example, Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; and MacNaughton, 2005). An understanding of ECE as an integral part of our common world and its challenges is important in order to rethink how contemporary ECE leadership might be enacted, because, as Filippini (2001) asserts, "the issues of children and childhood cannot be treated separately from the issues of women, men, families, and society" (p. 54).

What I learned from my observations of Karen over the course of this study was that her construction and sharing of pedagogical narrations that explored volatile, dangerous topics

brought into being a public space, because of their potential to invite a variety of viewpoints and opinions. In her pedagogical narrations she purposefully exposed difficult topics in order to defamiliarize and disrupt the normal ECE classroom agenda, while inviting others to ponder and negotiate with her about the possible meanings that engagement with such topics opens up.

Bringing the common world into existence and risking (mis)recognition

Two stories about moments of natality

In what follows, I recount events that unfolded when two pedagogical narrations that Karen created were shared in public arenas. What I want to illustrate is how leadership was enacted when public space as the common world emerged *with* the sharing of provocative narratives with others. In light of the discussion above, there are two main points that I want to highlight: one, the opportunities that were created for others to “appear” by making public their stance about the issues that was discussed in the narration; and two, the opportunities that were created for connecting the (seemingly) separate (private) world of ECE with broader political struggles of our common world. Finally, I wish to emphasize how these two movements made *new* demands of early childhood educators to view themselves as responsible for our common world.

The Death Narration: Creating a common world⁵¹

The pedagogical narration, initially titled: *What is Love?* originated on Valentine’s Day 2011, when Karen asked the children the question: “What is love?” Karen was intrigued by how a conversation about love was unexpectedly changed by the four-year-old children to a

⁵¹ Data source: PCO Observation #3, Field Diary, Sample of pedagogical narration from PCO, PI PCO, email exchange with a parent from the PCO site.

conversation about death, or more accurately, to a conversation about the relations between love and death. For example, Ron said: “When someone dies you love them. It means you miss them. You have to find a new family if they die.” To which Alice responded by saying: “Every single person will die.” Captivated by the children’s engagement with these existential questions, Karen documented the children’s conversation and sent the content of the conversation with a brief reflection to the parents via email, with a subtle provocation that read: “These are not topics we generally discuss with children. Maybe we should start.”

To her surprise the parent’s responses were quick to come, including stories about how their children have been exploring the topic of death at home. Karen, the children and the parents continued to explore the topic of death for a few weeks. When Karen presented this narration in the monthly parent meeting (May 10, 2011), the narrative initiated a rich conversation, as many parents contributed their perspectives about how death is understood and discussed in their home. For example, one parent shared the following:

We have conversation about heaven in our house. My husband is from a religious background so a lot to do with his mom’s death had to do with religious stuff, and I come from the opposite side, so we are clear that this is what daddy believes and this is what mommy believes. But it’s hard cause Connor says ‘so is grandma in heaven like in the stars,’ and I go ‘well...that’s what some people believe.’ So that’s how it comes up in our house, more spiritually I guess.

According to Phelan (2010), the Arendtian public space requires the provision of opportunities for the articulation of multiple perspectives out of which something common can be brought into being. “It is a space wherein the opportunity to enlarge one’s perspective or change one’s mind or change another’s is possible” (Phelan, 2010, p. 326). Soon after the meeting one of the parents from the Parent Co-op site sent me an email describing what she thought pedagogical narrations meant for the Parent Co-op Preschool. Her words echo

beautifully the possibilities that the public space as a common world open up:

Karen's commitment to sharing the documentation with parents allowed me a medium in which I could discuss my impression and opinions. Through this process I was exposed to a larger perspective in which my own beliefs could be challenged as well I could draw meaning from the input of others. (Email exchange, Alexandra, PCO)

When Karen created the possibility for the *Death Narration* to become the common *interest* at the Parent Co-op preschool, a common world emerged through the multiple stories that children and adult shared about their relations and interpretations of the concept of death (as well as abandonment and loneliness). The encounter with multiple perspectives meant that the children, the parents, and Karen enlarged their understanding about the challenges that an awareness of death presents in our lives, as well, they reflected on the necessity for a complex pedagogical response when this awareness arises in educational context such as a preschool. This *enlarged thought* is significant for two main reasons. It expands the common world – generating new insights, realities, and relations - while it simultaneously creates a kind of resourcefulness from which new and previously unthought-of responses to the world's challenges are made possible (Arendt, 1994).

What made this narration provocative, and therefore as site for renewal, was not only the topic of death, which is definitely not a common curricular topic for the ECE classroom, but also the notion that in the realm of early childhood, a topic, such as death, is often relegated to the realm of the private. Hence, one of the ways in which Karen challenged her community with this narration was to bring into the public domain discussions about a topic that is typically considered suitable for the familial, private domain. Karen was fully aware of this as she explained:

I think that they value what those kinds of discussions open up, these are not the kinds of discussions that they would necessarily have with one another at any length, occasionally if something came up with their child, but to be able to share that their children are thinking deep thoughts about death was probably valuable to them. (PCO, PI)

*Risking recognition with The Bad Guys Beavers narration*⁵²

The Bad Guys Beavers is a pedagogical narration that tells the story of a series of events in which a group of boys, claiming to be the “bad guys beavers,” engaged in continuous pretend-play that was abundant with violent undertones and gender tensions. The boys’ play involved preparing “pretend” weapons, incessant talk about fighting, and verbal threats about shooting girls. Although the verbal threats did not necessarily materialize to actual physical fights, the girls in the classroom became increasingly hesitant to play near the “bad guys,” and some parents began stating their concerns about the “bad guys” play that dominated the classroom. At first, Karen tried various strategies to mediate the play. She suggested softening the language and she encouraged acts of kindness in the classroom. Then, she pondered shutting the play down completely by using her authority and reinstating a “no gun” rule that she had used in the past. But she decided not to.

Inspired and challenged by the conversations she has been having within the IQ research group, Karen decided that rather than stopping the play, she would document the events that were unfolding in her classroom with the purpose of making them material for research and reflection. She also realized that by simply putting an end to the game she might close off any possibility to engage with this topic in a deeper manner. This did not mean, however, that Karen stopped taking action in the classroom to mediate the play. Karen made every effort to empower the children who did not like the “bad guys” play to voice their opinions. She also made up and shared stories in which girls were portrayed in leadership roles, courageously facing hardship

⁵² Data source: PCO Observation #1, November 2010 and Observation #2, January 2011, Field Diary.

and scary creatures. Yet, as Karen admitted, it took months before the girls voiced their opinions and until the “bad guys” game came to a pause.

Based on her initial documentation of the play events, Karen decided to take a more active role in investigating the children’s thinking and perspectives about who bad guys were. To this end, she asked the children during a class group meeting: “What is a bad guy?” From the children’s responses (both boys and girls) Karen discovered that the children’s thinking about bad guys was more nuanced than what she had initially anticipated, and this became part of the narration about this topic. For example, Karen found out that some girls liked to play “bad guys” sometimes, and that the “bad guys” *can* be good. Especially reassuring was the fact that both boys and girls agreed that this game was “just pretend.”

In January 2011,⁵³ Karen presented this pedagogical narration (using Power Point Presentation) in front of a large group of early childhood educators. To illustrate the intensity of the bad guys beavers’ play, Karen intercepted the narration with common quotes from the play scenarios, such as, “We only shoot the girls.” As Karen moved beyond the descriptive account of what happened, she began to elucidate the changes that occurred in her thinking since she embarked on the process of involving others - the children, the parents, and her colleagues in reflections and discussions about this narration. Karen explained how this narration has become a provocation for her (and this is the provocation she offered to others) to ask new questions and to rethink the meanings of “bad guys” play in relation to children’s formation of ethical identities.

By sharing her narration, Karen made her ethical and pedagogical stance visible and open for disputation. Inspired by Brian Edmiston’s book, *Forming Ethical Identities in Early Childhood Play*, Karen explained that she thought that the educator’s role was to create dialogue

⁵³ I observed Karen presenting this pedagogical narration twice: at an ECE conference in November 2010, and in an ECE conference in January 2011. Both times this story initiated a discussion. I chose to focus on the second observation because of the intensity of the discussion that it initiated.

about the issues of good and evil, caring, empathy and power, because children explore their ethical identity through experimentation with mythic play of good guys and bad guys.

After the *Bad Guys Beavers* narration was shared the educators in the room felt compelled to respond, in particular to the fact that Karen chose not to stop the game as soon as it began. Below I include Karen's reflection on the experience of sharing her provocative narration at the January 2011 conference. Note how Karen's words are indicative of her commitment to provoke ("So I brought out all the bad bits"). Karen's storying of the events is aimed at eliciting a response from her audience. But perhaps more profound is the risk that Karen took in not being recognized as the "good" early childhood educator (Langford, 2006), who can 'manage' children's behavior and control her classroom. I explore these themes shortly.

Karen's Reflection (January, 2011)

Yesterday I presented my narration at a conference. It was an emotional and intense time. I purposefully included the most challenging and difficult moments I had experienced with the children to illustrate the theme our group had chosen: ethical identities of children and educators. We wanted to highlight the silences, the places where we are frozen. So I brought out all the bad bits.

As I progressed through the presentation, I could feel the tension in the room elevate. There was no dialogue yet, but I sensed the emotional temperature rising. I felt it within me as well, my voice cracking or shaking. I felt I was being judged as an educator.

The dialogue that took place after my presentation was emotional. It included the influence of media and games, violence in our world, our relative safety in Canada and how that informs how we react to the play, what I was trying to achieve by not shutting down the play, ethical choices educators make, the good and evil within us all, and wondering whether these boys had something wrong with them—among many other topics.

One educator talked of our responsibility to engage children in these issues, to not remain silent in the face of difficult topics. She used the example of a child whose father was in prison for murder, and how they chose to openly acknowledge it by encouraging her and other children to draw pictures to send him. Another educator was brought to tears by the thought of children facing the reality of guns in her home country of Mexico.

I feel that some educators believe I was misguided and irresponsible. But others saw the value of opening this "crack" (referring to a line from Leonard Cohen's song Anthem,

“There is a crack in everything that's how the light gets in.”)

As this reflection illuminates, the difficult, yet worldly, topic of the narration that Karen shared invited a particular kind of “civic participation” (Curtis, 1999, p. 76). The early childhood educators who responded *spoke* and disclosed their unique points of view towards the issues that were exposed in this narration: issues of gender, violence, and teacher uncertainty in ‘dangerous’ pedagogical situations.

Greene (1973, as cited in Schutz, 1999, p. 80) laments that teachers are immersed in their daily lives and much of the time are not conscious of their standpoint towards ethical and political issues. Karen created an invitation for others to act – to make their appearance explicit by inserting their opinions into a complex political fabric. The point is, as Arendt (1958/1998) postulated, not that everyone has a chance to express herself as she is, but rather to create an opportunity to experience the world in its “utter diversity.”

Through engaging with this narration new connections emerged between ECE and the common world, and possibilities for widening the relation between the classroom and the common world emerged. A question that was raised by one educator illuminates this connection powerfully; she asked: What is our common responsibility as educators for creating a hopeful future for children?

This story also illustrates the role that the words and actions of young children can play in rejuvenating debates about common world issues. Indeed, Arendt (1961/2006) gave children a critical role in renewing the world and saving it from its “ruin.” She suggested that, “we are always educating for a world that is or is becoming out of joint” (p. 189), and that except for the coming of the new and the young (forever) challenging us with their beginnings, the ruin of the

world would be inevitable (p. 193).

From a desire for recognition to the passion for renewal

Karen's reflection on the experience of sharing the pedagogical narration about the *Bad Guys Beavers* is, I believe, illustrative of the enactment of a leader-as-beginner. Karen provoked others to think with her by sharing her unique ideas with others, while creating a space where others could speak and encounter their ideas, fostering conditions for natality by speaking of what is typically silenced. Action is always an exposure to others and holds the risk of being misrecognized because how action will be taken up is out of our control. Honig (1995, as cited in Phelan, 2010, p. 326) muses that in acting, "the self risks the dangers of an unpredictable public realm, where the consequences of action are boundless." In taking the risk of public self-display, Karen opened herself to "vulnerability and the unpredictable reactions and responses of others" (Phelan, 2010, p. 326). But, according to Kelz (2010), for Arendt the desire for human freedom is precisely located in the wish not to be recognized as something, not to have to establish a single identity or story of oneself... (p. 13). Within the public space that was brought into being, Karen, her identities - as an early childhood educator, a citizen, a woman⁵⁴ - were suspended temporally in a question: "Who are you" (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 178). Paradoxically, by taking the risk of being misrecognized, Karen 'revealed the unique and distinct identity of the teacher/agent herself' (Phelan, 2010, p. 319).

Discussion for Chapter Five

In this chapter, I argued that the conception of leadership in ECE contexts could be broadened when the act of sharing pedagogical narrations brings into existence a public/common

⁵⁴ I include the constructs, *woman* and *citizen* to build on arguments previously stated in this dissertation with regards, for example, to the absence of women from the public realm, as well as the decrease in participatory citizenship that characterizes the neoliberal condition.

world, where children, educators, and parents gain the possibility to meaningfully participate in discussions about a common and significant *inter-est*. The importance of creating such spaces in ECE contexts was illuminated by the participants' experience of professional isolation and the difficulty in creating an agonal space where multiple and different viewpoints concerning the pedagogical narrations can be shared and debated. The possibility for leaders to initiate public spaces in ECE contexts with provocative narrations that expose the complex nature of the pedagogical work with young children is also important for renewing conversations about what ECE might be about.

Karen, the key participant from the Parent Co-op site, enacted leadership by venturing into the public and sharing powerful narrative about 'tough,' ethically complex topics in multiple public arenas. In the narratives that Karen shared she attempted not so much to define the phenomena she had spoken and written about, but to search, and engage others in searching, for 'responses to the phenomena's ethical and epistemological challenges' (Disch, 1994, p. 140).

Pedagogical narrations also provided a context within which new thinking about the issue of professional recognition emerged. To think pedagogical narrations as venue by which an already known identity of early childhood educator (and education) is affirmed may confine early childhood educators to a certain kind of idea about who an ECE professional is, with little room to challenge the dominant and perceived identities of early childhood educators, or to provoke the public to think differently about who ECE professionals might be or become. Karen's courage to appear in public as a *provocateur* by making her stance public and contestable meant that new identities for the early childhood educator might emerge in unpredictable ways.

In the following chapter, I explore another dimension of ECE leadership by focusing on how the practice of pedagogical narrations sensitized the educators to notice moments of unexpected, surprising events that occurred in their ECE settings. I explain how this encounter with the un-known, triggered creative and complex pedagogical responses, which, I believe, are significant for educational leadership.

Chapter Six

Pedagogical Narration and Leadership as Thinking in Moments of Not Knowing

What begins as wonder ends in perplexity and thence leads back to wonder. How marvelous that men can perform courageous or just deeds even though they do not know, can give no account of, what courage and justice are.

~ Hannah Arendt (1978)

Asking questions of meaning, dwelling with complexities, and thinking with others in pedagogical contexts is not commonly discussed as an aspect of leadership in the ECE leadership literature. Yet, pedagogical practices and relations can easily become sedimented in routinized ways of acting and responding, sinking into what Arendt (1963/1977) calls “habits of thoughtlessness.” In this chapter, I present a dimension of the potential of pedagogical narrations for enactments of ECE leadership by focusing on the demands that this practice makes on educators to think beyond generalizations and clichés.

I analyze the data by drawing on Arendt’s metaphor of *the wind of thought*, alongside two related themes that I identified in the data: *striving for complexity* and *valuing surprise*, to establish how the practice of pedagogical narrations worked toward mitigating habits of thoughtlessness when the key participants initiated the process of pedagogical narrations as a response to an encounter with unexpected events that disrupted thinking-as-usual.

The focal case for this chapter is the Toddler’s Childcare site, where Erin, the key participant, challenged her colleagues to think by engaging with difficult, unanswerable questions of meaning that arose in moments of not knowing and were elaborated in processes of pedagogical narration.

Thinking and ECE leadership

In the realm of ECE, a new image of the early childhood educator as a researcher and reflective thinker has emerged in the scholarly literature (Grieshaber & Cannella, 2001; Moss, 2006; MacNaughton, 2003a; Nimmo & Park, 2009), ECE research projects (MacNaughton, 2005; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Pence, 2010), and more recently in ECE policy documents (see, for example, *The B.C. Early Learning Framework*, 2008). As I noted in Chapter One, with the introduction of critical theories into ECE pedagogical thought, a shift in the image of the early childhood educator has been advanced with the purpose of contesting traditional, dominant and gendered images of early childhood educators. These traditional images (which still haunt the field) portrayed early childhood educators as substitute mothers, who rely for their practice on “innate” and “natural,” “motherly intuitions” (Moss, 2006). Viewed from this perspective, little attention, expectation, or recognition has been given to the intellectual engagement required on the part of educators who work with very young children (Dalli, 2001; Grieshaber, 2001; Moss, 2006; Nimmo & Park, 2009).

Relatedly, early childhood educators have been positioned as consumers and implementers of external theories, especially theories of child development that have been cemented into ECE training programs and are required knowledge for ECE licensure (Langford, 2006, 2008). Recently, MacNaughton (2003b) and others (e.g., Cannella, 1997) have challenged the idea that there is an objective body of early childhood knowledge that educators can use to guide their practice. This critical position opened new paths for thinking how early childhood educators can make meaningful contributions to understanding ECE by raising and responding to questions about their practice, while creating new, more complex meanings for themselves and others. In discussing the teacher as a researcher, Rinaldi (2006) urges early childhood educators

to become searchers of the meanings of teaching and of being a teacher. She defines research in practice as a generative force that mitigates a routinized way of existence, through bringing newness and uniqueness to the daily pedagogical work.

Newly emerging images of early childhood educators as researchers and critical thinkers broaden and extend possibilities for educators to see themselves beyond those who apply theories and policies developed somewhere else. However, Lenz Taguchi (2010) posits that currently education is paradoxically characterized by two competing movements, one that urges the field to move toward complexity and diversity, and the other that works to reduce complexity by imposing strategies such as standardization of curricula and imposition of new regulatory and universal values.

Early childhood educators are situated (not comfortably) in the middle of such debates. A number of ECE scholars (especially from the U.K., U.S., New Zealand, and Australia) have recently explored the impact of the introduction of national ECE curricula on early childhood educators' thinking, identity, and classroom practice. These studies revealed that while educators responded with various degrees of mediation and/or resistance, the encounter with new policy caused an increased tension for educators as they negotiated between their existing knowledge and new expectations imposed by the curricular framework (Arthur, Barnes, & Ortlipp, 2011; Brown, 2007; Duncan, 2007; Soler & Miller, 2003; Wood, 2004). Moreover, as Kagan and Scott-Little (2004) highlight, the emergence of new policies has not necessarily been accompanied with opportunities for professional growth. Hence, in our precarious and uncertain times, as Yelland and Kilderry (2005) remind us, the images of the early childhood educator, as discussed above, "require further nourishment and consideration" (p. 7).

As I analyze and discuss data from the present study, I seek to contribute and extend these emerging images for early childhood educators by arguing that the notion of early childhood educator as a thinker can and should be linked with a reconceptualized notion of leadership in ECE. I wish to demonstrate that educators can stir in others “the wind of thought” with pedagogical narrations that engage with moments of not knowing. Such encounters inaugurate what Arendt (1961/2006) called, thinking “without a banister.” In educational contexts to think without a banister means that educational judgment is inspired by events and not by following known rules and standards.

Thinking with Arendt’s wind of thought

In Chapter Three, I alluded to the importance that the notions of thinking and reflective judgment played in Arendt’s work. I explained the distinctions and connections that Arendt makes between critical understanding, thinking, knowing, and reflective judgment. I also elaborated on the threads she weaves between these concepts to storytelling and acting ethically. There are two particular aspects of her reflections about thinking that are central to this chapter. The first is Arendt’s insight about the danger of *thoughtlessness* and the other is her insistence on the significance of the experience of *thinking* - as a critical and inventive activity - in moments of crisis in understanding, or in what I call, following Arendt (1990), moments of not-knowing.

Arendt (1978) felt compelled to write about the activities of thinking as a response to her (controversial, yet insightful) interpretation of the trial of Adolf Eichmann. As a reporter for *The New York Times* in 1963, Arendt covered the trial of Eichmann, one of the leading officers responsible for the extermination of Jewish communities during the holocaust in the early to mid 1940s. She characterized Eichmann’s actions as a manifestation of “the banality of evil” (Arendt, 1963/1977). In contrast with the line of argumentation that the Israeli persecutor put forth in the

trial; namely, that Eichmann was a monstrous, evil man, Arendt, who found Eichmann to be a shallow, 'ordinary' man, posited that it was Eichmann's inability to think, or his thoughtlessness, that enabled him to participate in atrocities of such magnitude. Arendt argued that Eichmann's line of defense that he was simply following orders and routine procedures, as well as his consistent use of cliché ridden language, pointed to a phenomenon that is even more alarming than the crimes of a disturbed, cruel murderer. She postulated that the human capacity to act thoughtlessly (when one acts as a cog in a machine) is a phenomenon that is not only "normal" or "banal," but can also become prevalent under certain social and political conditions. Her shocking realization about the potential consequences of the habit of thoughtlessness propelled Arendt (1978) to wonder and write about the relation between the activity of thinking (the habit of examining whatever happens to pass or attract attention) and judgment (an ethical responsibility to whatever happens).

Relatedly, the concept of "understanding" accompanied Arendt's work since the rise of totalitarianism regimes. In Chapter Four, I pointed out that Arendt saw understanding as a complicated, yet necessary, unending process, that is "distinctive from correct information and scientific knowledge"⁵⁵ (Arendt, 1994, p. 307). Most significantly, Arendt's own commitment to try to understand the phenomenon of totalitarianism, and more broadly, her commitment to the project of understanding "whatever happened" implied a particular relation with the world; a relation of *responsibility* for the world through a process of *reconciliation* with a reality that is always 'coming out of order' (Arendt, 1994, p. 308). Therefore, we may say that Arendt insisted on our responsibility to understand an unknowable world, and while understanding produces

⁵⁵ While Arendt (1994) claimed that understanding and knowledge are not the same, she recognized that they are interrelated. At the same time, she argued that understanding "precedes and succeeds knowledge" (p.311) and that it is understanding that makes knowledge meaningful because understanding involves judgment.

“unequivocal results,” it creates a kind of resourcefulness as it prepares us for judgment and action in moments of uncertainty.

The responsibility to try to understand as a process of reconciliation *with* and responsibility *for* the world depends on the activity of thinking. In Chapter Three, I explained that for Arendt thinking, or the “wind of thought,” emerges as a response to an encounter with an unexpected event or the *new*. Thinking is an activity that is demanded when we experience a *crisis in understanding* – ‘when the event we try to understand deprived us of our traditional ways of understanding’ (Arendt, 1994, p. 310) and our ‘categories and standards of judgment collapse’ (p. 313). This necessitates what Arendt called “to think without a banister” (see Chapter Three) or “to think *beyond* what we know,” as Bernstein (2000, p. 283, original emphasis) put it. In other words, when we give our thinking attention to events that disrupt our understanding, we are confronted with not knowing and we are propelled to seek the meaning of the phenomena and events in their uniqueness and contingency, and it is in these moments that thinking gains its ethical and political significance (Bernstein, 2000, p. 289), because we do not subsume the particular event under a general rule, and thus, we create a possibility for a new understanding. Moreover, Arendt (1978) argues that thinking is self-destructive, once we think that we *grasped* something, it dissolves again into perplexities and, and as Arendt suggests, the best we can do with these perplexities “is share them with each other” (Arendt, 1978, p. 175). Thinking, thus, is a kind of an *awakening* that orients us back to the world towards others, and thus, it highlights our *interdependency*. Thinking with Arendt’s thinking, I now continue to theorize how and why pedagogical narration becomes a practice that has potential for reconceptualizing ECE leadership. More specifically, I argue that leadership emerged when educators’ experience of not knowing was not conceived as a failure but as an opportunity to be

stirred by the “wind of thought” and for sharing “perplexities” with others. When moments of perplexity are offered to the community in the process of pedagogical narrations, the community is ‘forced’ to *think* about the unpredictable and contingent nature of our lives, finding together new meanings, new realities, and new relationships in a world that for the most part desires predictability and knowing.

Pedagogical narrations, surprise, and complexity

Rather than using pedagogical narrations for assessment or representation of children’s development based on predefined outcomes, most of the pedagogical narrations samples collected in this study were narratives that were initiated as a response to events that the educators chose to document because of their capacity to evoke wonder and questions of meaning. Two such narrations were already introduced in Chapter Five (the *Death Narration* and the *Bad Guys Beavers*), and two more will be presented in this chapter, to show that for the most part events were chosen as material for pedagogical narrations because of their quality of surprise or unexpectedness. Within the context of this research, this has significance at a number of levels.

As discussed in Chapter One, pedagogical narrations are distinguished from traditional observation and representation methods that sought to produce an objective account of children’s behavior, development, and learning. In contrast, pedagogical narrations, as an alternative approach to child’s observation, do not pretend to describe reality or the child objectively. The practice of pedagogical narration involves complex interpretive work on the part of the educator and her community (Dahlberg, et al., 1999).

While the practice of pedagogical narrations creates fertile conditions for thinking and complexity, it also burdens educators with the responsibility to make choices about both the

content (what to document) and process (how to interpret) of the pedagogical narration (Dahlberg, et al., 1999). By choosing to document unexpected events, the educators participating in this study opened up possibilities to think about education through what Osberg and Biesta (2008) call, the “‘logic’ of emergence” (p. 313). From an “emergentist” (p. 313) conception of education, knowledge does not exist prior to our participatory actions, and every meaning that emerges in these actions *can* be understood as “uniquely new, something which has not been in the world before” (p. 313). More significantly, Osberg and Biesta, drawing from Nancy and Arendt, argue that the logic of emergence also applies to human subjectivity. In other words, when the educational space is open to the emergence of unknown meanings, it also opens up possibilities for the unknown uniqueness of the child to emerge.

From this premise, leadership is enacted when educators complicate the pedagogical scene in ways that keep open the possibility for the event of the emergence of meanings *and* identities (Osberg & Biesta, 2008). Leadership is also enacted when moments of crisis in understanding (that are abundant in educational contexts due to the unpredictability of learning and the messiness of classroom practice, as Osberg and Biesta (2008) emphasize) are made visible and foci for thought. Leadership, from this angle, is about making visible the unpredictability, creativity, and messiness of the lived experience in the classroom, as a vibrant context for experimentation, rather than an attempt to mask or conceal them.

Striving for complexity

Being aware of the demands that the pedagogical narrations make as a practice situated within interpretative and emergentist framework, the participating educators talked about the challenges they encountered in deepening and broadening their interpretive repertoire about the documented events.

At the Parent Co-op and Preschool sites, opportunities for educators to deepen and make complex their understanding of the pedagogical practice through the practice of pedagogical narration were related to participation in the IQ research project. This fact corroborates what was stated in the previous chapter; namely, that for pedagogical narrations to be interpreted in more depth, educators need networks of engagements where the meanings of narrations can be complicated. In the previous chapter I also discussed in length, how through participation in the IQ project, Karen, the key participant from the Parent Co-op, discovered theoretical, conceptual, and discursive tools, which she used creatively to infuse her pedagogical narrations with ethical and political meanings. In the reflective interview, Karen discussed how her practice of pedagogical narrations had changed from the first attempt, which included placing photos of children with little sticky notes under them on the classroom walls, to engaging in processes of narrations with children, parents and colleagues for a number of months through conversations, readings, and writing. Her understanding of the possibilities of the practice of pedagogical narration widened when she began to see that pedagogical narrations are part of a bigger political project that sought to shift traditional conceptions of childhood and education. In a presentation at a conference for early childhood educators, Karen talked about pedagogical narrations as a tool for enriching ECE practice. She challenged the audience to move beyond the mundane ECE talk about “things like [the ECE centre’s] policy and what to have for snack” and to begin to *think* their practice through questions such as, “What does it mean to educate? What is our idea of knowledge?” (PCO, Observation #1, November 20, 2010).

Maya, one of the key participants in the Preschool site, also discussed how the practice of pedagogical narration (at the Preschool site this practice was often referred to as documentation) has evolved and changed over the five years since the educators at the Preschool began to use it.

What Maya emphasized was how over the years the pedagogical narratives reflected a higher level of complexity, as the educators moved from a descriptive account of what happened (“just stating general facts”) to a more interpretative framework. Four years ago, Maya and one other educator joined the IQ research project for one year. By participating in the IQ research project, Maya felt that the educators at the Preschool were supported in looking at their practice more critically. According to Maya, participation in the IQ project yielded the most powerful pedagogical narration because, as she said: “we were looking at deeper issues that the children were experiencing” (Maya, P, RI). One example of pedagogical narrations that stood out for Maya, in particular, dealt with children’s understanding of right and wrong. Maya explained how, with the help of the IQ group, she was able to see that a Preschool project, which she thought was ‘only’ about dinosaurs, was actually about children exercising power by monitoring how some drawing of dinosaurs were considered “right” (the more realistic or accurate ones) and others were labeled “wrong” by the children. This revelation led Maya and her colleagues into a deeper investigation of how children (and adults) make judgments about what is right or wrong, as well as to the consequences of such judgment on issues of exclusion and domination. What the IQ project afforded in terms of complexity was clearly felt in Maya’s comment: “with the support of the IQ group, they really pushed me...to look at the different layers of this” (Maya, P, RI).

Camille, the key participant from 3-5 Childcare, and Laura, the key participant from the StrongStart site, did not have contexts such as the IQ project to support their interpretive work with pedagogical narrations. Yet, when Camille commented on the way that working with pedagogical narrations affected her, she said: “I am thinking about what I am doing and why I am doing that. Whereas before it was like this is what we are doing, you get caught in the wheel

and you are just going through the motion” (3-5 CC, RI). These new possibilities for thinking about her practice filled Camille with excitement as she could move beyond a mechanized way of practice to an emergent approach. The implications that Camille’s new way of thinking had on her practice were through creating highly inventive, rich and responsive curriculum in her classroom.

Practicing pedagogical narration for Laura, the key participant at the StrongStart site, became the main impetus to going back to university (SS, RI). It was the excitement of finding depth in her practice and being able to talk about her practice in what she called: “a philosophical level” (SS, RI). Initially, Laura viewed the *B.C. Early Learning Framework* as a resource for supporting a more complex engagement with the documented material in the process of narration. During a meeting with a group of kindergarten teachers, Laura shared an example of a short narration that depicted two children cleaning up at the StrongStart classroom. By connecting the children’s action to the Framework’s learning areas of *social responsibility* and *well-being and belonging*, Laura felt that she was able to give deeper meaning and value to the children’s actions. She further explained that before having the Framework and pedagogical narrations such classroom experiences could not have been recognized for their educational value. Yet, despite her passion for complexity, by the end of the year in which the study took place, Laura felt burdened by the demands that the practice presented her, as she stated:

If you asked me a year ago about pedagogical narration I felt much more sure of myself, whereas now I have more questions and thoughts about the words I am using in my narration. ‘What *am* I trying to say?’ ‘Who is the audience?’ ‘Am I reflecting on my own practice?’ (Laura, SS, Observation #3)

Rather than taking Laura’s comment negatively, I would like to suggest that this quote strengthens the argument that the practice of pedagogical narration opens possibilities for complicating ECE practice by demanding thought and complexity. Yet, clearly this invitation for

encountering complexity is not accommodated by an isolated existence, as it needs to be supported by ongoing opportunities for sharing perplexities with others.

Valuing Surprise

What makes us think? Notions such as “surprise,” “wonder,” and “expecting the unexpected,” are not typically discussed in relationship to educational leadership; however, within the context of this study, being intrigued and surprised by what children had done or said, or ‘being surprised by difference’ (Johnson, 1987), played a significant role in the practice of pedagogical narration and leadership enactment. As stated earlier, the key participants in this study described their initial moment of decision to document an event as a response to something that took them by surprise.

Moss (2006) argues that a view of the early childhood educator as researcher means that the educator “is open to, indeed welcomes, the unexpected, that which takes her by surprise and by so doing provokes new thought. That requires valuing doubt and uncertainty” (p. 36). Connections between initiating pedagogical narrations and being surprised by children’s actions and words were mentioned during the interviews across all sites. For example, this is how Karen, the key participant at the Parent Co-op, responded when I asked why she chose to document the *Death Narration*: “It surprised me, it was so unexpected for me, I did not anticipate that it would go so quickly to death. And that of course made me think” (PCO, PI). More profound was Karen’s comment that pedagogical narration “keeps me thinking all the time when I am observing children, what do these ordinary moments mean?” (PCO, PI).

At the StrongStart site, Laura, inspired by the current study, decided to dedicate time and effort to studying the very moment when she makes the decision to document an event. She became fascinated with the moment when something ‘tells’ her that she is in the presence of an

event that needed to be saved from the ruins of time by being documented and becoming a pedagogical narration. Laura and I discussed this topic during the interviews, in informal meetings, and through a number of email exchanges. In one of the emails Laura sent me a reflection titled: *Thoughts on Documentation and an 'Open Space.'* In the final lines of the reflection Laura wrote:

An awareness of an 'open space' makes me wonder if this is where documentation begins. When a child does something or says something that sparks me to take note, to listen, and 'be with' that child, is that what it means to be in an 'open space'?" (SS, Email correspondence, #2, April 12, 2011)

During the probe interview Laura clarified further the notion of an 'open space,' as follows:

I think in all of them [all the pedagogical narrations she had written] it's been...the child had said something and that is what put me into that space cause it made me pause and think something that is different, something that is intriguing for them to say that I wouldn't normally anticipate...as well as where is this going to go? So that's where it seems to have been. I have found when children say something or I see them do something different, it puts me in the space of curiosity. (SS, PI)

It is the connections that Laura, and the other participants in the study, made between being surprised and thinking that I want to emphasize here. Mackler (2010), inspired by Arendt, reminds us that "without unpredictability, there is no need to think" (p. 519). Barbara Johnson (1987) takes this further; similarly to Arendt's contention about the necessity to respond (especially with the activity of thinking) without knowledge, Johnson claims that a sense of being surprised by difference causes an intellectual upheaval, because the surprise lays bare "some hint of ignorance one never knew one had" (p. 16). Johnson clarifies that this ignorance is not a gap in knowledge. Rather, the moment of surprise is a moment when "a new kind of ignorance is suddenly activated as an imperative" (p. 16) that changes the very nature of how I think I know.

Rinaldi (2006), a pedagogical leader from Reggio Emilia, brings an additional dimension into the conversation about the “gap” that the unexpectedness opens; she conceptualizes this gap as *freedom*. Rinaldi discusses the moment of initiation of pedagogical documentation (a similar practice to pedagogical narration) as noticing a gap between our expectations and the actual event, or between the inherent (known) meaning and the emerging (unknown) meaning. Rinaldi refers to these moments as “moments of freedom,” and she claims that this freedom “lies in this space between the predictable and the unexpected...” (p. 70).

I am intrigued by Rinaldi’s provocative proposition that it is the experience of freedom that lies in the ‘gap between the expected and the unpredictable,’ because in the current neoliberal political climate, where more regulations are put in place for education and teachers (Davies & Bansel, 2007), we need educational leadership for creating experiences of pedagogical freedom and I wonder if engagement with pedagogical narrations may occasion this kind of thinking/freedom relation. But what kind of freedom?

Vansieleghem (2005) explains that, according to Arendt, thinking and freedom are inherently connected. Freedom “resides in natality, and the responsibility of responding to the appearance of something or someone new,” this response is the activity of thinking (p. 26). As discussed earlier, for Arendt, thinking is something that happens to us – it is stirred by the “wind of thinking” that arises when we encounter the unexpected (Arendt, 1978, pp. 174-175). Thinking and freedom are encapsulated in the gap, or the “open space” as Laura called it, in the moment when something new gains the possibility to come into the world and surprise us. Seen from this angle, thinking cannot be anticipated; it needs a space where the unexpected, the surprise, is welcomed. It is here that a new possibility for leadership with pedagogical narrations

emerges when the educators gain the possibility to engage her community in narratives about moments of surprise that awaken the “wind of thought.”

Johnson (1997) raises an important question: “how can this surprise be put to work?” (p. 13). And Arendt (1990), similarly, yet with a more explicit political tone, wants to link together wonder (the inception of thinking and philosophy) and politics (acting in the world) by keeping thinking bound to the world. Arendt challenges Plato’s contention that wonder is forever locked in a speechless state that only the philosopher can endure.⁵⁶ In its stead, Arendt wants to return thinking to the plural, worldly space. Jerome Kohn (1990) explains this as follow:

What Arendt demands of everyone is, of course, nonspecialized, noncognitive thinking, stopping whatever we are doing to tell a story, for instance, in order to shed a circle of light on an incident, giving it a point of meaning, and remaining bound to it ‘as a circle remains bound to its focus.’ Such an incident is ‘often ordinary and common and...the common and the ordinary must remain our primary concern, the daily food of our thought – if only because it is from them that the uncommon and extraordinary emerge. (p. 118)

Markell (2010) adds that Arendt’s concern is not that thinking will remain immaterial, but that it will remain bound to the incident that incited it, not with the purpose of “prescribing a course of action,” but as a possibility for us to see “features of [our] own experience that might otherwise have eluded [us]” (p. 102).

In the following section, I describe how leadership was enacted at the Toddlers’ Childcare site, when Erin, the key participant, “put wonder to work,” as she initiated thinking-bound-to-an-event in the process of creating pedagogical narrations. I also explain how the experience of wonder became political when the educators encountered the impossibility to know the child.

⁵⁶ Arendt (1990) laments the flight of philosophy from the sphere of human affairs. She recounts how Aristotle fled from Athens fearing for his life after Socrates’s execution. Arendt has been troubled by the parting of thought from action and was looking for ways to restore the connection between them.

The Toddlers' Childcare site: Leadership enactment as the courage to ask difficult questions and to encounter not knowing

At the Toddler's Childcare site, Erin took most of the responsibility for initiating and sharing pedagogical narrations. However, because she saw this practice as a collective endeavor she brought documented materials that she gathered for collective reflections with her team. Erin's thinking about the practice of pedagogical narrations was rich and complex. Since the practice of pedagogical narration was relatively new for her, Erin was 'learning on the go,' and as she became more experienced with this practice, her understanding of it was shifting, changing and expanding.

At the time that the data generation phase of the study ended, Erin was still expanding her understanding of the practice of pedagogical narration as a tool for initiating change. This was evident in her responses during the probe interview that took place toward the end of the school year. In response to my question about how she saw her role as an instigator of change by initiating and sharing pedagogical narration, Erin explained:

I am still not sure what my role is and how I am supposed to do it and it is a new experience for me to put myself out there in a way that I feel exposed, vulnerable and that I am supposed to take it to a place when I am not even sure where this place is. There is not quite a beginning and no end to what I am doing and to articulate it and explain it to somebody else I find it very challenging. (TCC, PI)

While Erin was not sure about how the practice of pedagogical narration positioned her in terms of taking a leadership role, in her comment she proposed a highly sophisticated understanding of pedagogical narrations as an ongoing "provocation." Her contention that pedagogical narration is an open process with no beginning and no end, or something that is never complete was echoed in the ECE scholar Bronwyn Davies's (2010) writing about

pedagogical documentation⁵⁷ as a “practice of open listening” (p. 124) and a “creative engagement with the not-yet-known” (p. 120). According to Davies, the most challenging aspect of the practice of documentation and narration is to sustain it as a force that “facilitates the emergence of the not-yet-known” (p. 124), because all too often pedagogical narration can become simply the “shaping” of something that the documenter/narrator had set out to document in advance. Thinking about pedagogical narration as open process also released Erin from the need for immediate results. Rather than expecting the narration to yield immediate consequences, Erin began to see it as a possibility for thinking and interpreting with others; thinking that can help us “gain new knowledge and understanding of our humanity” (Erin, TCC, Field Notes, Observation #4).

Pedagogical narration and asking big questions

Similarly to other educators in this study, Erin saw the process of creating a pedagogical narration as an opportunity to engage more deeply with her practice. This desire for engaging with complexity in one’s practice involved a demanding and yet exhilarating intellectual work, or as Erin put it, it is “...a process of *real* thinking about what it is that you are seeing [in the documented material]” (TCC, RI). Deep engagement with her practice was important to Erin because, not unlike Arendt’s concerns about the dangers of thoughtlessness and shallowness, Erin was concerned that, “We are on automatic pilot all the time, we just move from A to B and you multi-task” (Erin, TCC, PI). And because of this mechanistic way of being, as Erin continued to reflect:

We forget to ask those questions: Why are we doing what we are doing? Where is it coming from? What drives us? And what drives us to do it *is* the most important educational question! And from there...How do we set an environment in a way that

⁵⁷ See my comments in Chapter One about how Reggio Emilia’s practice of pedagogical documentation inspired the creation of pedagogical narration in B.C. These practices are closely aligned.

children can find those places where they can be motivated to explore, where they can be spirited and expressive in a way that is fantastic. (Erin, TCC, PI)

Of all the educators that were interviewed for this study, Erin was the only one who brought up the potential issues surrounding the practice of pedagogical narration in terms of it becoming a product to be consumed by parents. Erin explained that her concerns for the practice of pedagogical narration to be taken as a product are embedded in the perception of the ECE field as (a private) service, which is often being evaluated on the basis of customer's satisfaction. During the second interview, Erin made an analogy between the practice of pedagogical narration and the CBC radio program, *The Age of Persuasion*.⁵⁸ The Radio program, which explores the sociological and cultural impact of advertising in Western societies, alerted Erin to the danger that pedagogical narrations can easily be reduced to an advertising device in a highly consumerist society. To mitigate the possibility of pedagogical narration becoming an advertisement tool, Erin oriented the process of the narration toward responding to big, difficult questions of meaning that pushed the discussion among her colleagues beyond the surface of the documented occurrence and into reflections about who is a human being and what is the meaning of our lives together as a community (Field Notes, April 12, 2011).

As I discussed in Chapters Four and Five, the *B.C. Early Learning Framework* played a significant part in the way that the educators at the Children's Centre, where the Toddler's Childcare was located, understood and practiced pedagogical narration. The educators and the director at the Childcare site considered the Framework as a powerful resource for interpreting their ECE practice through the narrations. Yet, as Erin's understanding of this practice deepened, she became more articulate about what she wanted the pedagogical narration to *be* and what she

⁵⁸ For more about the CBC Radio show see <http://www.cbc.ca/ageofpersuasion/> Ironically, Arendt (1990) laments the loss of the political meaning of the term *persuasion*. She argues that in the modern age persuasion has been related to psychology and the assumption that people act in predictable ways. In contrast, Aristotle spoke about the *Art of Persuasion* as the political power of language.

wanted it to *do*. This became apparent in her decision not to interpret *The Music of Childhood* narration (to be discussed shortly) according to the *B.C. Early Learning Framework* areas of learning. As Erin said: “*The Music of Childhood* took me to a different place, I can try and explain it as a spiritual place, and a textbook language would have not expressed it. It didn’t belong there [with the Framework]” (TCC, Response to Initial Analysis, April 1, 2012). Erin’s decision to create a pedagogical narration that did not accord with the learning areas from the Framework makes explicit her complex relations with the practice of pedagogical narrations. Because of her appreciation of the uniqueness and particularity of the situation that was narrated in the *The Music of Childhood*, Erin resisted subsuming it under external set of pre-defined meanings. It is in these moments that the educator’s agency is enacted through pedagogical judgment. When educators activate their judgment in response to a particular, unique event, then judgment, as the “usable version of thinking,” becomes a mode through which “automatism is broken” (Arendt, in Kateb, 1977, p. 172).

Thinking beyond the known and taking responsibility for the unknown

Two stories about moments of natality

In what follows, I illustrate through the presentation of two pedagogical narrations from the Toddlers’ Childcare site, how Erin enacted leadership when she initiated processes of pedagogical narrations from an encounter with not knowing. The pedagogical narrations stirred the “wind of thought” within her community in ways that inspired a reimagined pedagogical responsibility.

*We are Covering the Windows: Thinking beyond theory*⁵⁹

In the pedagogical narration, titled: *We are Covering the Windows* (October-November 2010), the educators at the Toddlers' Childcare explored how a small group of young boys was able to work collaboratively in the block construction area. The three boys worked diligently together stacking blocks one on top of the other with the purpose of building a wall of blocks in order to cover one of the windows in the wall that faces the childcare's outdoor area. Erin, who was taken by surprise by the boys' level of collaboration and by the surprising goal that they posed to themselves to cover the windows so that "no one will see us," initiated the process of creating this pedagogical narration. Erin took photographs of the children's play and transcribed the children's conversation as they were building with blocks and exchanging comments about why they were making the 'block wall.'

Shortly after this play event took place, I was invited to observe a meeting in which the four educators in the toddlers' room were reflecting collectively on the documented material that Erin has collected. During the meeting, the educators were discussing the photographs of the children constructing with blocks and the transcriptions of the conversation between the children (the photos and the transcriptions were laid out on the table around which the educators were sitting). The images and text acted as provocations for a lengthy discussion about the possible intentions of the boys in creating this unique play scenario. As each educator contributed her perspectives on the meaning of the 'covering the windows' play event, the educators gained a renewed appreciation for the complexities of the toddlers' thinking and inventiveness. By engaging with the content of the children's play, especially through the notion being invisible

⁵⁹ Data source: Sample of pedagogical narration (PN, TCC), TCC observation #1, TCC Probe Interview.

(‘so that no one will see us’), the educators were inspired to think anew about what experiences of visibility and invisibility meant in their lives as well as in the lives of young children.

The educators were particularly surprised by the young children’s capacity to think of themselves as a cohesive unit that can work collaboratively on a common goal (e.g., to cover the windows). Moreover, the educators were moved by the fact that even though the children had relatively little time to be together as a group (since it was still the beginning of the school year), they were nonetheless able to communicate with each other with little verbal language and were successful in setting out a common purpose for their play with only a few words. What was it in this play scenario, the educators wondered, that afforded the children’s creation of a group identity?

Through these discussions and questions the educators were able to move beyond thinking about young children through the dominant lens of developmental theory. The educators noted in their discussion that developmental theories tend to view toddlers’ social behavior as ‘egocentric.’ In the developmental literature, toddlers are typically depicted as unable (or not yet ready) to engage in sophisticated collaborative play scenarios. In resisting the lens of developmental psychology, the educators experienced a disruption of expectations of what children ‘should’ be doing and saying, and they made space for engaging with the particularity of the event without subsuming it under the ‘general rule’ of developmental theory.

In the weeks following this observation, the photographs and transcripts from *Covering the Windows* play scenario were displayed in the toddlers’ classroom with the purpose of continuing the exploration of the children’s intentions and exploring in more depth the meaning of their play. While the educators continued to explore notions of visibility/invisibility with the children, I was surprised to see that in the written part of the pedagogical narration that was

displayed in the classroom, there was no mention of the critical discussions that the educators had in their meeting. The educators' complex thinking and renewed understandings about what it means to be a toddler within a group remained invisible.

As I discussed in Chapter Two, the traditional emphasis in the field of ECE on child-centred pedagogy resulted in de-valuation the educator's role in the pedagogical relations (see for example, Ryan & Ochsner, 1999), and this, in turn, has had a damaging influence on the relations of early childhood educator with the notion of leadership. The reluctance of teachers to include their own perspectives when practicing documentation (a practice similar to pedagogical narration) was noted in a research project (Project Zero, 2003) that examined the potential of documentation for teachers' professional development. The researchers noted that the teachers assumed that including their analysis might take away from the centrality of children's work. With encouragement from the research team the teachers began to see the value in adding their reflections into the documentation.

It is possible to suggest here that the educators at the Toddler's Childcare did not consider their discussions (and by extension, their thinking) as a valuable component to include in the written form of the pedagogical narration when it was publicly displayed at the Childcare site. Unlike Karen, whose leadership enactment I discussed in Chapter Five, the educators at the Childcare did not see their thinking as an element that might politicize this narration by disclosing their stance towards the event.

*The Music of Childhood: The impossibility to know a child*⁶⁰

The pedagogical narration, *The Music of Childhood* (March-April, 2011), was focused on young children's unique relationships with sounds. This narration was also initiated by Erin, who

⁶⁰ Data sources: TCC Observation #4, Sample PN from TCC.

was puzzled by one child's spontaneous creation of musical rhythm. Erin was deeply moved by the fact that Neal, a two-year-old boy, created music through rhythmic movement on the childcare playground. To invent his melody, Neal used a shovel to create the sound of gravel patter on a plastic slide, which he followed by a patterned stomping with his rubber boots. Counter to Erin's expectations that children respond to music or sound when it comes from the outside, Neal seemed to have created music from within, in complete silence. Because of this encounter with Neal, Erin began a long process of research about how the toddlers at the childcare interact with sounds. Rather than using a camera to record their experiences, Erin and her colleagues used a tape recorder to capture sounds that the children encountered during the day, which they later listened to with the children in order to re-visit the sound experience. This led to numerous new understandings of the role that sounds play in young children's lives. But for Erin the research was not only about sounds or music.

Erin became fascinated with bigger questions. In her reflection about Neal's music experience that was at the centre of the narration, and later during discussions with her colleagues, Erin brought up questions such as, "What is musicality?" "Where does it come from?" "What drives us as human beings?" "What are we doing and for what purpose?" And "What is our future going to look like?" (TCC, Observation #4). Erin talked about this narration as "an invitation to pause and look for meanings about everything." By posing these big questions, Erin opened up a space for herself and her colleagues to *think*, and indeed profound insights about children and about *themselves* as educators emerged, especially during the team meeting that Erin organized with the other teachers and Sonya (the Director) about the *Music of Childhood* narration.

During the educators' meeting about the narration *The Music of Childhood*, Erin shared with her colleagues that what she realized from her reflection about Neal's response to sound was what she did *not* (and probably *can not*) know him. In Erin's words:

What do I know about Neal? What do I know about him? You never know what the child's potential is. And we think that we are doing one thing and they may be doing something completely different. (Erin, TCC, Observation #4)

When Erin brought up this complex idea of the impossibility of knowing a child during the meeting with her team, Elana, an educator from the Toddlers Childcare site, was deeply moved by it, and she had a profound insight about our inability to fully know '*who*' the child is:

I wanted to say one more thing about the responsibility that Erin you mentioned. When we observe kids and we learn about them and we want to know when they are doing something, what does it actually mean?! And I feel that we will never know, because at some point it is also so private. I mean we are responsible for them, we have to take care of them, but they also have their inner world that we have to...of course it is important that we speak with them, and we ask them, we teach them how to communicate, but sometimes it just things we will never know; it's mysterious, like all of us (laughs). It will always be a mystery. That's why in education we always change...because we always try to get to this mystery point.

Within this space of "ignorance" that the surprise had created, Erin, and the other educators at the Toddlers' Childcare, were granted an opportunity to experience a kind of not knowing; a break with established formulations about how educational responses should be enacted.

Biesta (2006) maintains that we are trapped in a way of thinking about education as a process through which we pre-define what kind of human we want to "produce." He further argues that for education to be an ethical pursuit, we need to leave the question of what it means to be human "as a radically *open* question, a question that can only be answered – and has to be answered again and again" (p. 151, original emphasis); this means that we need to recognize that we cannot assume that we can fully grasp/know the child. Seeing education from this perspective

entails that the “responsibility of the educator is a responsibility for what is to come, without knowledge of what is to come” (Biesta, 2006, p. 148). Biesta, inspired by Arendt, contends that moments of not knowing are crucial if we are to experience education as a political practice, because the experience of not knowing is what gives rise to “seeing” something – children, parents, educators, phenomena – in different and unique ways, inaugurating plurality and multiplicity. Dahlberg and Moss (2005) similarly note that while pedagogy is constituted in relationships, within this relationship there is a paradox. On one hand, the welcoming and being together with the child, and on the other, holding a space for distinction “to enable the possibility of difference” (p. 93). The child becomes a “stranger,” or “a newcomer,” to use Arendt’s term, and “not a known quantity through classifying systems and normative practices” (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p. 93).

With her provocative questions, Erin challenged herself and her colleagues to meaningfully engage with *open* questions; such as *What does it mean to be human?* and *What does it mean to live with others?* In doing so Erin enacted leadership by inviting her colleagues to “stay alert” (Biesta, 2006, p. 151) and to see and listen to children, to each other, and to their practice in a new way. This “newness” was evident in the way that Sonam, Uyen, and Elana talked about how they all-of-a-sudden thought about children and sound in a completely different way. Elana went as far as saying that now she understood sound “as a new language.” But, more profoundly was the educators’ encounter with not knowing.

Arendt (1990), referring to Socrates, explains that when the statement, “I know that I do not know” (p. 437), comes from a state of wonder (not expressed in terms of lack of scientific answers), it loses its dry negativity, because

It is from the actual experience of not-knowing, in which one of the basic aspects of

the human condition on earth reveals itself, that the ultimate questions arise - not from the rationalized, demonstrable fact that there are things man does not know, which believers in progress hope to see fully amended one day, or which positivists may discard as irrelevant. In asking the ultimate, unanswerable questions, man establishes himself as a question-asking being. (p. 437)

Thus, awareness of the impossibility of knowing the child is not a failure. Erin took this realization seriously and articulated it beautifully. Rather than thinking about not knowing a child as a flaw in her ECE practice, she saw it as a motivation to come together and dialogue *more* about how we see children from our *different* points of view, as Erin suggested:

What do we know? Are we just doing something exploratory, repeating it again and again? What do we really know? So the observation is a big part of it and the open-mindedness is a big part and the discussion among us because we may see things in totally different eyes and this sharing of what you see and what I see is important; it's essential. And we might see it the next day all of us differently because something came up. So sometimes just talking about an issue creates a shift for something. I noticed that the shift sometimes happens after discussion and awareness. And you don't even know how to explain it. (Erin, TCC, Observation #4)

I cannot imagine a more profound connection between the practice of pedagogical narration and leadership than the process that is articulated so eloquently in the quote above. It is precisely in the moment that we encounter not knowing that responsibility as understanding an unknowable world and an unknowable other, is widened by inviting others to think with us in moments of crisis in understanding. In this way, understanding becomes “the other side of action” (Arendt, 1994, p. 321), because thinking holds the possibility to make a new beginning, to experience freedom, and to bring out the *significance* of the new (p. 320).

Discussion for Chapter Six

In this chapter, I proposed that to think about ECE leadership in relation to the practice of pedagogical narration means to think about leaders not as those who already know and impart knowledge to everyone else, but rather, as those who alert others to the necessity to think in

moments of not knowing. The practice of pedagogical narration triggered in educators an attunement to unexpected events that punctured a hole in ordinary understanding, and thus, required complex, interpretive response. While pedagogical narrations have a unique potential to mitigate thoughtlessness, the complexity of the response to the event hinges on the capacity to see its significance, to make it a material to stir thinking, and to take a courageous step into the unknown.

Erin, the key participant from the Toddlers' Childcare cite, enacted leadership when her encounter with moments in which she experienced not knowing (such as the encounter with Neal's musicality or toddlers engaging in sophisticated collaborative play) became a site for stirring the wind of thinking in others as a search for meaning and 'a creative disruptive understanding' (Duarte, 2010).

Moreover, by sharing her perplexities with others and by asking questions of meaning that were inspired by her engagement with pedagogical narrations, Erin, a leader-as-beginner, invited others to reflect with her on the ethical significance of the unexpected events. In doing so, Erin awakened others to their responsibility for a world that we cannot know but nonetheless are moved to preserve by thoughtfully responding to the appearance of something new and surprising. Her understanding that each one of her colleagues has something valuable to contribute to our collective, albeit temporary, understanding, meant that leadership became a process of widening and deepening, not of finding a single answer.

This chapter already hinted towards the ethics of ECE leadership that is associated with pedagogical narration in the ways in which the educators were moved to rethink and renegotiated their theories about who the child is in the process of creating a narration. In the next chapter, I

connect leadership that is enacted through pedagogical narrations more directly with what I call *an ethics of plurality and natality*.

Chapter Seven

Pedagogical Narrations and Enacting Leadership with an Ethics of Plurality and Natality

That human beings are born for freedom means that their actions are fit subjects for stories, which alone give full measure to their contingency, their spontaneity, and their unpredictability.

~ Jerome Kohn (2000)

This final analysis chapter relates *to* and extends *from* the previous analysis chapters, as it threads together main ideas from the preceding chapters. I connect the role of pedagogical narrations in renewing our common world (Chapter Five), and the significance of engaging with complexity and thought in/through an encounter with newness (Chapter Six), to bring to light how the practice of pedagogical narration holds potential for educational leadership with an ethics of *plurality* and *natality*.

The focal case for this chapter is the Preschool site and the emphasis is on the possibility that a pedagogical narration opened up for an enactment of leadership when Jenna, one of the two key participants from the Preschool site, created and shared a narration as a response to issues of difference, inclusion, and belonging. The leadership enactment at the Preschool site illuminates how pedagogical narration can address a challenge that, I believe, should be central for contemporary educational leadership in ECE, namely, what it means to “exist-together-in-plurality” (Biesta, 2010).

I analyze the data by drawing on Arendt’s concepts of *plurality* and *natality* alongside the theme of *contesting dominant images of children*. I wish to demonstrate that by creating and sharing pedagogical narrations that invite educators, parents and children to engage with the question: “Who are you?” (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 178) as an ethical endeavor, we can create

possibilities for sustaining an ongoing emergence of difference, and we can begin, at the same time, to imagine ECE leadership with an ethics of plurality and natality.

Images of children and ECE leadership

Over the last two decades, the pluralization of the identities of childhood, as well as advancing images of children as agentic social actors, have become a central enterprise within the field of ECE and has been documented in the RECE literature (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Iannacci & Whitty, 2009, MacNaughton, Hughes & Smith, 2008; Rinaldi, 2006). As emphasized in the introductory chapter, one of the contextual elements, as well as an impetus for this study, has been the shift that has occurred with the introduction of the idea that childhood is socially constructed (James & Prout, 1990). An understanding of the concept of childhood as an “interpretive frame” (James & Prout, 1997, p. 8), rather than a natural, biological fact, gave rise to the notion that childhoods are inherently plural, and always contextualized in place and time. Concurrently, the dominant and homogenizing thinking that childhood is a universal construct that can be defined by scientific knowledge, such as developmental psychology, has been widely contested (Burman, 1994; Cannella, 1997; Dahlberg et al., 1999; Edwards, 2008). The implications of this theoretical shift for ECE pedagogical practice and policy, as well as for a reconceptualized notion of ECE leadership, as I argued in Chapter One, are numerous.

Broadly speaking, the idea that the concept of childhood necessitates active, collective interpretation and response challenged early childhood educators to critically examine how constructs and images of childhood affect their pedagogical practices (Sorin, 2005). But more importantly, questions can now be raised about the potentiality of ECE spaces to become forums from which new and more complex understandings of children and childhood can be generated, especially when the field of ECE is experiencing an increase in standardization of early

childhood programs. One example of a place that took on the contestation of the dominant images of children as a political enterprise is the preprimary schools of Reggio Emilia, where questions such as: *Who is the child?* and *What is your image of the child?*⁶¹ have been placed at the heart of the pedagogical project as an ongoing provocation for the community to actively expand and complicate the meanings of childhood as it is enacted and lived in educational contexts and beyond. As stated earlier in this dissertation, in Reggio Emilia, educators and citizens also made the ethical choice to resist and reject a deficit approach to childhood by stating their commitment to a view of the child as intelligent, capable, and full of potential from birth (Edwards, et al., 1998). In addition, the practice of documentation (or pedagogical narration) has been recognized in Reggio Emilia preprimary schools as significant (and political) tool for responding to the questions stated above with the purpose of elaborating and complicating the concept of childhood (Rinaldi, 2006).

While contemporary ECE policy documents,⁶² including *The B.C. Early Learning Framework* (2008), have been influenced by theories that promote a view of the competent child, and while these policy documents have incorporated the discourse of the child who actively participates in shaping his or her learning and identity, a number of scholars have recently cautioned that the inclusion of the discourse of the competent child in new ECE policy texts may result in mere semantic maneuver with little change in pedagogical practice (see for example, Ho

⁶¹ This question has been raised by the educational leader of the Reggio Emilia approach, Loris Malaguzzi (1993) and has been documented in an article titled: *Your Image of the Child is Where Teaching Begins*.

⁶² See for example, New Zealand's national ECE curriculum, *Te Whariki*, Australia's national ECE curriculum, *Belonging, Being, and Becoming*, and the *New Brunswick Curriculum Framework for Early Learning and Child Care*.

Chan, 2010).⁶³

Ho Chan (2010) argues that engaging critically with the images of young children is particularly challenging, because dominant images of them are often portrayed in dichotomized ways, stretching between an image of the child as autonomous and capable to that of a child as vulnerable and in need of protection. Moreover, Olsson (2009) warns that the propagation of the notion of the competent child as the “best” way of viewing children may erroneously release early childhood educators from a necessary struggle with the inevitable ambiguities and contradictions (see Ho Chan above) that are inherent to the concept of childhood.

It is also important to keep in mind that the relatively new ECE policy documents are couched within political contexts that pertain to an instrumental way of thinking about education; namely, a belief that education entails the production of the individualized, rational person (Prentice, 2009). Therefore, as a number of scholars have argued, as long as we continue to uphold rationalist and individualist values, the discourse of the competent child used in ECE curricula frameworks may mask an educational view that supports the production of children with a common and normalized identity; children who possess particular knowledge, skills, and dispositions (see for example, Duhn, 2008).

In this chapter, I am exploring the potential that pedagogical narrations have to provide a context for early childhood educators to enact leadership by remaining provoked and provoking others with the *difficulty* of the concept of childhood, and by questions such as *who is the child* and *what does it mean to be a child*. I argue that while the participants in the study viewed

⁶³ Some of the potential issues emanating from the prevalence of the discourse of the competent child, as expressed by Olsson, 2009 and Duhn, 2008, were raised at a conference presentation titled, *Complexifying the notions of the competent child* (October, 2012), by myself and my colleague Cristina Delgado. The presentation did not include data from this study.

pedagogical narrations as a site for contesting dominant images of the deficient child, there is a tension between using pedagogical narrations to ‘prove’ that children are capable, to keeping the question of who is the child open. I further argue that when educators are less concerned with the child being defined within preconceived images, such as the child as a learner, they can make room for an emergent singularity or a *who* to come into the world with pedagogical narrations, activating and sustaining the ethical and political dimensions of pedagogical relations and pedagogical leadership.

Thinking with Arendt’s plurality and natality: who and what we are

...what went wrong is politics, our plural existence, and not what we can do and create.

~ Hannah Arendt (2005)

Arendt’s politics, as previously articulated in this dissertation, begin from the *fact* that human beings live together in plurality, constantly revealing themselves to one another *anew* through speech and deeds in the world of appearance. Arendt’s political (and I would add ethical⁶⁴) concerns lie in her diagnosis of a political tradition that has been hostile towards plurality and unpredictability; a tradition that resulted in political theorizing that rationalized political order along the lines of hierarchy, universality, and a disdain towards difference. Arendt’s political project, thus, can be understood as ‘recovering the political experience of plurality’ (Canovan, 1992, p. 4). It is Arendt’s insight that plurality should not be seen as something that we need to overcome but rather ‘the condition of possibility for newness to come into the world’ (Biesta, 2006, p. 92), that inspires this last analysis chapter.

Moving to the realm of education, if we accept, as Todd (2010) recently proposed, that we

⁶⁴ For an extended discussion about the ethical concerns that animate Arendt’s political thought, see Kimberley Curtis’s (1999) work.

need “to render the ways each of us exists in the world with others as being *eminently of educational concern*” (p. 1, my emphasis), then Arendt’s conception of plurality becomes pertinent to educational theory, practice, and leadership. Educational theorists working with Arendt’s concepts have highlighted how educational contexts, especially when they are constituted in terms of instrumentalization and normalization endanger the condition of human plurality, by making particularity superfluous (Biesta, 2006, 2010; Higgins, 2010, 2011; Levinson, 2001; Schutz, 1999; Todd, 2010).

Although Arendt did not write explicitly about the condition of plurality in terms of its ethics, I concur with Curtis (1999) that “if plurality is ‘the law of the earth’, it is from this law alone that we might begin to adequately conceive ethical responsibility” (p. 39). My purpose in this section is to reinstate the link between Arendt’s political thought and her reconceptualization of difference (plurality and natality) and identity (who—ness). I will do so by attending to Arendt’s approach to the question of identity through the distinction she makes between “who” and “what” we are. As well, I want to flesh out the relevance of Arendt’s reconceptualization of difference to educational leadership that is enacted through the practice of pedagogical narration, especially in the way it was enacted in the Preschool site.

For Arendt, our plurality - our infinite distinctiveness, and natality - our capacity to begin something new, are encapsulated in the notion of *action*, and action is rendered meaningful through the disclosure of *who* the actor uniquely is through the performance of acts and speech before public spectators. This led a number of scholars to argue that Arendt’s political thought invites “a revisiting of the question of the subject” (Kottman, p. xi, 2000; see also Cavarero, 2000; Kristeva, 2001). Arendt (1958/1998) distinguishes between two ways of thinking about identities. She claims that we tend to think of identities in terms of “qualities.” These qualities

are often linked with behavior patterns and identifying social categories (such as gender, age, profession). This way of thinking about identity may be limited and limiting. According to Arendt, to think of human beings in terms of their qualities is to construct them in terms of *what* they are but not of *who* they are. Thinking about others in terms of *what* they are narrows the possibilities to see others beyond generalities; it stymies our ability to see *who* others are in their uniqueness; a uniqueness that emerges in particular situations and contexts (Todd, 2010).

Arendt (1958/1998) realized that when we try to define someone by describing *who* he or she is, we end up saying *what* he or she is (e.g., we describe qualities that he or she shares with others) because *who* someone is appears not through descriptions, but rather it unfolds through *participation* in events or actions. What is important to note here is that the disclosure of a *who* in action is not *only* about revealing a uniqueness. Because action takes place in the world, it reveals meaningful dimensions of the world *and* of the actor's unique situation in history (Tchir, 2011). In other words, action discloses actors in ways that reveal new or unexpected aspects of the world, 'generating a new space for further action' (Tchir, 2011).

But how does a *who* come into the world? Arendt proposed that *who* someone is revealed through a unique narrative in which the actor is the protagonist (Arendt, 1998, p. 186). Stories, Arendt wrote, can tell us about the subject, the "hero" at the centre of each story, more than any other human product (p. 184). Additionally, because every story that is told enters the "web of human relations," the story that revealed a *who* always has felt consequences as it "affects uniquely all the life stories of all those with whom he [the "hero"] comes into contact" (p. 184). At the essence of the conditions of natality and plurality, then, is the 'fact' that the actor (speaker/doer) and the spectator/narrator (storyteller/judge) are entangled in a relation of interdependence. This narrative relation is ethically laden because of Arendt's contention that the

actor cannot know in advance the meaning of his or her actions. In other words, we depend upon the narrative responsiveness of others for our possibility to “come into the world” (Biesta, in an interview with Philip Winter, 2011). This relation is both the source of power, since it is the possibility to act together with others, and it is a source of frustration, because we never know in advance how others may respond to our actions (Arendt, 1958/1998).

What I want to elucidate in the story about the Preschool site, as the focal case of this chapter, is how a pedagogical narration about two children became a space for enacting this narrative relation. The pedagogical narration, *The Belly Button Story*, illuminates how a pedagogical narration about a unique event revealed the *who*—ness of the two protagonists, Teagan and Joel, through the re-telling of an unexpected interaction that occurred between them. Furthermore, the consequences of sharing this pedagogical narration with others within the Preschool community, significantly affected the “life stories” of the persons who are related to the protagonists of the story (e.g., their parents, the educators, and the other children).

By creating and sharing this pedagogical narration, Jenna, the storyteller/educator, enacted leadership as she restored the condition of natality (as “second birth” or a revelation of distinctiveness), and therefore of plurality, and a new possibility for the protagonist/child to come into the world in an unprecedented and unique way emerged. Cavarero (2000) maintains that a narration in this context offers a new sense of ethics and politics because it becomes a response to a *who*.

Pedagogical narrations and contesting dominant images of children

Despite the increased attention at the theory, practice, and policy levels to upholding a richer and more plural view of children and of childhood (as discussed above), not much has been written about the unique possibility (or challenge) that this perspective has presented for

ECE leadership. Within the context of contemporary ECE thought, it has become pertinent to raise questions about the ethical and political responsibilities of ECE leadership to contribute to the pluralization of the identities of children. Since pedagogical narrations tell interpretative stories about young children and their experiences in ECE settings, this research project provided a context for exploring the potential of pedagogical narrations to make visible the multiple ways of being a child in relation to enactment of leadership in ECE contexts.

In this section, I present and analyze data related to the theme, *contesting dominant images of children*, along with Arendt's provocative proposition to think identity as an emergence of a *who* that requires a narrative response as a condition for difference to come into the world.

The image of the competent child

The idea of upholding a view of the child as competent and capable at the crux of the ECE pedagogical project in resistance to a deficit, or needs-based view of children, has been advanced in the early childhood scene of B.C. since the late 1990s, mostly through local publications (both in the U.S. and Canada) about the Reggio Emilia approach (see for example, Edwards et al., 1998; Fraser & Gestwicki, 2002, Kocher, 1999; Wien, 1997). More recently, as I mentioned earlier, the phrase, "the image of the child," has been embedded in the *B.C. Early Learning Framework* (2008)⁶⁵ in order to ground local ECE practice in the notion that childhood is socially constructed, but also as a provocation for B.C.'s citizens to create a "shared image of the child" that "views children as capable and full of potential; as persons with complex identities" (p. 4). The discourse of the competent child, then, has been taken up quite broadly in the B.C. context and this has been reflected in the data generated for this study.

⁶⁵ As mentioned earlier in this dissertation, the *B.C. Early Learning Framework* acknowledges the Reggio Emilia approach as a source of inspiration for some of the concepts that are introduced in the Framework.

The key participants in the study clearly related the practice of pedagogical narration with the possibility of making visible the image of the competent child. In fact, a common response to the interview questions about the contributions of the practice of pedagogical narrations was that they were a venue through which deficit images of children (e.g., ignorant or helpless) could be contested when early childhood educators create and display narratives that depict children as competent. However, the ways in which the notion of the competent child was taken up in relation to pedagogical narrations at the various sites was different, and this, I wish to argue, has relevance to enacting leadership that is concerned with pluralization of the images of children.

What the data analysis helped me illuminate are the intricacies of the notion of competency itself. In other words, how the idea of competence (or the competent child) was engaged through pedagogical narrations was related to how competency was interpreted at the various sites. Olsson (2009), for example, points out the problematics of the term “competency” when she claims that with the rise of the discourse of the competent child, “it seems self evident that it is good for a child to be judged no longer from its lack but from its competencies” (p. 86). Yet, as Olsson further argues, the child is still judged; and this raises questions such as: “What is this definition of competency? Who are the children considered not so competent today?” (p. 86).

At the StrongStart and the 3-5 Childcare sites, the purpose of putting forth an image of the competent child in the pedagogical narrations was often linked with contesting the prevalent discourse of the “cute child.” The educators implied that viewing children through their “cuteness” meant that children’s thoughts, words, and actions were typically not taken seriously or valued by society. For example, Laura, the key participant from the StrongStart centre, said

that with the pedagogical narrations she could “really move away from the idea of children being seen as cute to seeing them as competent and capable” (SS, RI).

At the StrongStart and the 3-5 Childcare sites, the pedagogical narrations became a context for “showing” the capabilities of children, especially by connecting children’s classroom experiences with processes of learning. Laura explained that the *B.C. Early Learning Framework* and the practice of pedagogical narration, as it was described in the Framework, helped her articulate an image of the capable child. In Laura’s words:

[The Early Learning Framework and pedagogical narrations] help me to articulate it more, I have got the examples, the photographs, the narratives, and having the links to the framework, even just having that discussion gives a sort of a starting point in the hopes of shifting the attention from ‘oh children they come and they play and they are so cute,’ and shift that away to important things that are going on...I’d like to shift away from that cute being the only thing that they see when they look at the pictures of them and that’s where I find that this helps. (SS, PI)

In the sample pedagogical narrations collected from the StrongStart sites, the children were portrayed as responding in creative and inventive ways to the activities that were offered at the StrongStart classroom. The children’s experiences were interpreted within the context of, and in relation to, the areas of learning outlined in the *B.C. Early Learning Framework*. In a separate section of the pedagogical narration, Laura added her own reflections and questions about the documented event in order to invite others (mainly the parents) into the conversation about additional and alternate meanings and interpretations for the children’s actions. Yet, as I pointed out in Chapter Five, Laura had few opportunities to engage with others in conversations about the pedagogical narrations, and in turn, about the images of children that were being portrayed in the narratives. And thus, for this and other reasons, which I will explore shortly, images of children as they were depicted in the narratives at the StrongStart site, including the image of the child as competent, remained fairly static.

At the 3-5 Childcare site, Camille, the key participant, also showed great appreciation for children's creativity and wisdom in her practice and in the pedagogical narrations that she wrote. For most of the time in which this study was carried out, the pedagogical narrations at the 3-5 Childcare site were shaped as a weekly newsletter that was sent to the families via email. Similarly to Laura's narrations, the text and the photos in the newsletter depicted children responding in imaginative and resourceful ways to classroom activities. During the probe interview, Camille explained that over the school year the newsletter has changed from being a medium for reporting what the children had done, to a more direct effort on her part to make explicit the connections between what the activities that the children had been engaged with to their value as an educational endeavor (3-5 CC, PI). To that end, Camille's use of the vocabulary and language from the *B.C. Early Learning Framework* increased over the year. The Framework, and the areas of learning that are described in it, became a medium through which Camille interpreted children's experiences at the Childcare to make children's learning more explicit. Below I include an excerpt from a newsletter that described how children learned about using their senses at the 3-5 Childcare.

*Newsletter May 2011.*⁶⁶

This week, the children were challenged to use their senses. After playing a hearing game where they listened to sounds and guessed what the sounds might be, they were presented with a series of objects: a large wooden bead, a peg from a familiar game, a ribbon, a piece of pipe cleaner, a piece of puzzle, a piece of wood, a leaf, a smooth rock and a prickly shell.

The children were thrilled to discover that they could recognize the objects in their hands without looking at them.

"It's like my fingers have eyes too!"- Susan.

"My fingers told me it was a piece of wood before you told me to open my eyes."- Sean.

⁶⁶ Children's photos were removed to protect their privacy. Children were given pseudonyms.

“Children’s learning experiences in the early years have long term implications for their whole lives, and also for the future of their local, provincial, national and international communities, and the planet as a whole.” British Columbia Early Learning Framework.

In this excerpt, Camille includes a description of an activity, the children’s creative responses to it, and a quote from the *B.C. Early Learning Framework* to strengthen the message regarding the value of children’s early learning experiences at the 3-5 Childcare. As I explained in Chapter Four, one of the main reasons for Camille to create pedagogical narrations was to contest the widely held assumption that childcare, in contrast with preschool, was focused primarily on custodial care and was not a place where early learning is supported. As a result, it became important for Camille to show through the pedagogical narrations that the 3-5 Childcare was a place for learning and that children within this space were becoming capable and competent learners. Nevertheless, during the reflective and probe interview, Camille expressed her disappointment with the lack of depth in the discussions with parents about pedagogical narrations. It was not that the parents were not appreciative of the narratives in the weekly newsletter, they were generally grateful, and some of the parents, according to Camille, began asking questions about how the children learned particular skills (3-5 CC, PI). However, typical responses from parents were: “‘Oh that’s so cute.’ And, ‘They are so smart anyway’” (3-5 CC, PI). Camille, then, similarly to Laura, had little opportunities to enter into a dialogue through which questions about the image of the child could be opened up in multiple and unpredictable ways.

I do not wish to dispute, in fact I am highly appreciative of, the significance of the pedagogical work that Camille and Laura have been doing in employing the practice of pedagogical narrations to advocate for a public recognition of children as competent learners. Yet, in reflecting on the data within the context of the present study, especially in relation to an

idea of leadership as *action* (in the Arendtian sense of the word, namely, as the possibility of something new to come into the world), I was moved to ask in what ways pedagogical narrations that affirm the child as a competent learner based on particular understandings of learning and competency continue to represent children through their *what-ness* (as children with particular qualities and traits), rather than their *who--ness* (an appearance of a child as an actor, a distinctive uniqueness who surprises us by acting on the world in unexpected ways and beginning unpredictable processes)?

B.C. ECE scholar, Enid Elliot (2010), has voiced a similar concern. She contends that, a framework “fails to engage educators in a dialogue where thinking can shift and new ideas can be formulated” (p. 5). Elliot adds that, “The ELF [B.C. Early Learning Framework] defines children as learners rather than seeing them more broadly as actors” (p. 8). Furthermore, Duhn (2008) cautions that within neoliberal contexts, there is an increased danger of using the term the “competent child” as a new way for the corporatization of childhood. She asks if the notion of the competent child might not be a production of a new form of regulating the “good child,” especially when the word “competent” may be easily associated with other educational discourses of “competencies,” such as measurement and accountability.

Therefore, within the current political context, the challenge for ECE leadership that is enacted with pedagogical narrations is the possibility to continue to provoke others with the difficulties of the concept of the competent child so that this concept would maintain its political dimension. Olsson (2009) urges early childhood educators “to find more and unknown ways of being a child than being defined through one’s competencies” (p. 14). Rather than defining children *through* their competencies, leadership can be enacted when pedagogical narrations that

are attentive to the emergence of the child as a *who-in-action* move educators to ask: What does it mean to be or exist as a child? What counts as learning? and What is competency?

Sustaining the possibility for a who—ness to emerge is a complicated ‘task.’ Indeed, Arendt (1958/1998) acknowledged the difficulty of welcoming a *who* into the world, because,

The moment we want to say *who* somebody is, our very vocabulary leads us astray into saying *what* he is; we get entangled in a description of qualities he necessarily shares with others like him; we begin to describe a type or a “character” in the old meaning of the word, with the result that his specific uniqueness escapes us. (p. 181).

And while Arendt (1958/1998) proposed that a narrative response to action would reveal an agent, it is not clear what kind of narrative responses may suspend the creation of what—ness and make room for a who to emerge. In what follows, I begin to sketch out some possibilities for thinking about pedagogical narrations as a response to emergence of a who.

The image of the child as entangled with the world and the image of the teacher

For Erin, the key participant from the Toddler Childcare site, the notion of the competent child was relational or embedded in relationships with our world. In the previous chapter, I elaborated on the pedagogical narration *The Music of Childhood*. This narration, which was initiated when Erin was moved by an event in which a child made a unique connection to sound and rhythm, is illustrative of Erin’s use of pedagogical narrations to put forth a view of the child in relation with the world along with her view of children as actors in the world. When I asked Erin about her motivation to create her first pedagogical narration, which centred on the Toddlers’ Childcare field trip to the Fire Hall, this is how she responded:

Whenever I am discovering something that the children are doing and they are involved in something, I always think that it is important to connect it to our world and to their world around them and to our community, because it is the context in which we are raising our

kids. (TCC, RI)

As Erin clarified during the reflective interview, she did not want pedagogical narrations to be “just about the kids.” Rather, Erin wanted the narratives to be a space where she could connect children’s actions to something bigger; to a question, or an event that concerns us all. Moreover, through her engagement with the image of the child in her pedagogical narrations, Erin experienced how the image of herself as an educator was entangled with, and even shifted in response to, her emerging views about the child. When Erin discussed with her colleagues the impact that creating the pedagogical narration *The Music of Childhood* had on her understanding, she reflected:

I think I have changed since then (smile). I am looking at sounds differently, I am looking at what my image of the child is differently, and I thought I had a pretty good image before. And here I am, I am changing my attitudes now after all these years, it is through Neal [the child at the centre of the narration] and listening to John Cage and Murray Schafer [two musicians that Erin studied as a result of her research about sound] and my life after this is different. (TCC, Observation #4)

Erin’s reflection echoes Tchir’s (2011) interpretation of Arendt’s action. That is, the possibility of pedagogical narrations to become sites where we might disclose not only the uniqueness of someone, but also reveal new and unexpected dimensions of the world. Perhaps the most provocative insight that Erin shared was that through the processes initiated with pedagogical narrations she felt that she was becoming a participant *with* children in their quest to explore the world and that this brought her and the children together “like equal partners” (TCC, Observation #4).

Engaging with the difficulty of the concept of childhood

At the Parent Co-op site, as I have discussed in length in Chapter Five, pedagogical narrations often explored topics that would be considered atypical in conventional ECE contexts.

Although Karen, the key participant from the Parent Co-op site, much like the other key participants in this study, thought that one of the main purposes of pedagogical narration was to make visible the competency and complexity of children's thinking, the narrations she shared exposed the difficulty of holding a single and stable image of children. Through creating and sharing stories about complex and ethically charged topics such as the *Bad Beaver Guys* and children's complex engagement with a topic such as death (see Chapter Five), Karen was able to keep the concept of childhood and the images of children exposed and open to nuances; and children, therefore, continued to emerge with new, unpredictable dimensions. The notion of the continuous emergence of new identities for children was described powerfully by one of the parents from the Parent Co-op site, who shared her thoughts about the practice of pedagogical narrations with me as follows:

It was truly a pleasure to be able to view my child through the eyes of a documentation* medium. It is hard to imagine aspects of my child that I am not aware of and yet seeing him through documentation was at times like seeing him for the first time. What a gift it is to see my child in a way that is new, fresh and always changing. (Alexandra, parent, PCO, Email exchange, June 28, 2011)

*Note that Alexandra is using the term documentation for pedagogical narration.

This quote is poignant as it makes visible the potential of pedagogical narrations for enacting a particular kind of a leadership responsibility: a responsibility to continually introduce “newcomers” into the world. Olsson (2009), who writes about the practice of pedagogical narration in Swedish preschools, states about the educators in her study that: “They do not only contest what we know of young learning children, but they also create new ways of understanding this, for which they continuously need to *take responsibility*” (Olsson, 2009, p.84, my emphasis). In the next section, I engage more directly with what it means to take such responsibility with a pedagogical narration. Jenna, the key participant from the Preschool site, enacted leadership by creating a pedagogical narration that interrupted and suspended

representation of children through their what-ness. The narrative, that portrayed an event in which two children who would not fit neatly into an image of the “competent child” participated, opened up a space for the children to appear as a *who* – an actor and a beginner that initiates unique and unpredictable processes in the world.

The Preschool site: Leadership enactment as revealing a “who” in a pedagogical narration

Despite the fact that the educators in the Preschool site had the most experience with creating pedagogical narrations in relation to the other sites in the study, I could feel their increased sense of doubt in the practice of pedagogical narration during the school year that this study was carried out. The educators at the Preschool encountered numerous challenges to pursuing this practice in an active and consistent way for the first six months of this research project.

While Maya and Jenna, the two key participants from this site, could speak eloquently about the practice of pedagogical narrations and its potential for enriching their practice and making young children’s learning visible to the community, there seemed to be a deeper struggle to understand the purpose of pedagogical narrations. The question that was raised over and over in our conversation was: “Who is the pedagogical narration for?” As I discussed in Chapter Five, the educators at the Preschool site were disappointed with the lack of response from the parents to the pedagogical narrations that were displayed in the classroom. The lack of response from parents has been an ongoing issue that persisted from previous years and this exacerbated the educators’ doubt in pursuing the practice of pedagogical narrations.

In Chapter Five I also mentioned that the educators at the Preschool site viewed the fact that the preschool was housed in a separate building as major disadvantage for entering meaningful dialogue with others about the pedagogical narration. In addition, and beyond the

philosophical and technical challenges that practicing pedagogical narrations presented, Jenna and Maria explained that the afternoon class was extremely “challenging.” Many of the children did not speak English, and a few of the children, in particular, two boys, Teagan and Joel, required constant teacher attention because they exhibited ‘challenging behavior.’ These conditions posed continuous barriers to the practice of pedagogical narration, and after months of ongoing ‘survival’ struggles, in the spring of 2011 Jenna created a powerful pedagogical narration that initiated processes of transformations for children, educators, and parents. I now turn to discuss this narration.

Pedagogical narration and the disclosure of who--ness

A story about a moment of natality⁶⁷

The Belly Button Story is a pedagogical narration that inspired a new way of thinking about preschool as a common world - a place where inclusion and belonging gained a new meaning. In what follows, I will elucidate how creating and sharing this pedagogical narration interacts with Arendt’s notions of plurality and natality in a way that enriches possibilities for theorizing and enacting ethical and political leadership in ECE contexts.

The boys with ‘challenging behavior’

The protagonists of *The Belly Button Story* are two three-year-old boys, Teagan and Joel. Both children experienced challenges in finding their place within the group of children at the preschool. Teagan was often reluctant to come to preschool and when he was there, transition between activities and other changes during the day triggered a strong response such as crying and screaming. Joel, who recently joined the preschool with relatively little knowledge of the

⁶⁷ Data sources: Sample PN, P, Field Notes, P Observation #2, visits to Preschool.

English language (albeit he was learning the language very rapidly), became over-sensitive to Teagan's somewhat eccentric behavior and tension was building between the two boys. The afternoon program that both boys attended had abundant moments of intense dispute and stress for the two children. This negative social dynamic had a strong impact on the rest of the children in the class, as well as on the educators and the parents of the two boys. As the days went by and the challenging behavior continued, Teagan and Joel became identified more and more by their behavioral patterns. For example, Teagan became 'the boy who cries inconsolably' and Joel became 'the boy who fights with Teagan.' In other words, Teagan and Joel were identified with their *what*-ness.

The disclosure of a "who" in action-as-narration

In the pedagogical narration titled, *The Belly Button Story*, Jenna's narrative portrayed a series of magical, unexpected moments in which Teagan and Joel each gained the possibility to appear as a *who* rather than a *what*. The event took place in the classroom near a table that was set up with large mirrors. Jenna invited Teagan to look at the mirrors with her, but she had no inclination or a plan that could have predicted what might happen next. The narrated event was marked by a significant moment in which Teagan discovered his belly button as he lifted his shirt while looking at his reflection in the mirror. Teagan responded excitedly: "I can see my belly button." Joel, who overheard Teagan's excited response, was intrigued by the discovery. He came over to have a closer look at what Teagan was doing. Joel commented: "Yes, that is your belly button. It is like a treasure box."

We do not know why Joel chose to respond to Teagan by using the metaphor of a treasure box for a belly button. But Jenna has a 'suspicion' that Joel was keenly aware of

Teagan's interest in pirates and treasures, and thus, he saw this moment as an opportunity to connect with Teagan through a shared interest.

As the event continued to unfold, the two boys took their encounter to another level when they decided to draw treasure maps together. Standing side-by-side, Teagan and Joel created a graphic representation to their ideas of a treasure maps. What was remarkable in the drawing episode was that Joel drew treasure maps that represented his and Teagan's bodies, with their belly buttons marking the place where the treasure is to be found. By doing so, Joel added another dimension to the creative space of this transformative encounter, where conventional thought (for example how we tend to think about belly buttons, treasure maps, and friendships) was disrupted and where new and unthought-of meanings and actions transpired. Towards the end of the day, Teagan approached Joel with a whisper and presented him with a treasured gift, a little rock decorated with blue felt pen. The gift was accepted and this quiet exchange is where *The Belly Button Story* both ends and begins, because while the rock exchange marked the end of the narration, sharing this pedagogical narration with children, parents, and colleagues, precipitated numerous other beginnings.

Equipped with photographs and transcriptions of the children's exchange, Jenna narrated the event into a story in a form of a PowerPoint presentation. She shared the story with her colleagues first and with their encouragement and support she decided to share the story with the entire group of children. Once *The Belly Button Story* was made public, it transformed the identities of the two boys as well as the entire classroom experience. As the *who--ness* of Teagan and Joel was reconstituted through sharing the narrative within the preschool community, they became *someone*, rather than *somebody*, to each other, and their friendship was born. The narrative created a new common interest for the entire group of children and within this newly

configured space Teagan and Joel became protagonists – experts on pirates and treasure maps – and a foci for a flurry of classroom activities in which Teagan and Joel took centre stage.

When *The Belly Button Story* was shared with the parents of the two boys, another chain of events transpired. Apart from the fact that the families of the two boys became closer to each other, and perhaps more significantly for this study, Jenna felt that her identity as an educator shifted and gained new meanings. In the probed interview Jenna described the response of the parents and the affect it had on her:

...for the parents it was amazing...what they said to me was: ‘Well we always thought of you like this or we always appreciated that you took the time...to understand my child beyond, more than their behavior.’ But I think having it written down, they were able to see more and to see so much of what *I* was thinking. Like they saw so much of *me*. (Jenna, P, PI)

It seems appropriate to say that it was also the *who*—ness of Jenna, not only of Teagan and Joel, that emerged through sharing of this story. In particular, it was an email sent by Teagan’s parents that constituted a new narrative response through which Jenna’s *who*--ness emerged. Below I include an excerpt of the email that was sent by Teagan’s parents to indicate how Jenna became a *protagonist* in a story through which she was recognized as a unique *who*.

Dear Jenna,

It’s actually difficult to know where to begin. How do you thank someone adequately for a gift like no other?

As a young parent, you’re often gently warned by grandparents to hold on and savor this chapter of your children’s lives, because it is all over much too soon. And indeed, as you look through photos from just a year ago, you do become aware how quickly time is passing. How evanescent childhood is. So to have this one encounter, documented, no - immortalized, expanded and elucidated is such a gift.

As we read through your account of what happened, I can’t help but think, even if I had been there personally watching, I still could not have seen what you saw. Based on your beautifully written account, it’s as if you perceived those moments unfolding with a kind of

metaphysical x-ray vision. Seeing far beneath the surface of things to divine all that is happening below.

By creating this document, you have magically removed the element of real time from this equation, allowing us to linger, on the cause and effect of Teagan's actions. To play and rewind, so to speak, with your 'director's commentary' pointing out all the nuances and complexity we could never fully see or appreciate.

Todd (2011b), inspired by Arendt, argues that the complex relation between *what* I am - a teacher - and *who* I am as a teacher “can only unfold in an encounter with another” and that “these encounters are eminently ‘social’, dynamic, and unpredictable. They are what make each of us unique and singular, like no other” (p. 510). This email can be seen as a moment in which Jenna is becoming a unique and unprecedented teacher that emerges as a *who* in relation to the parents, the children, and the narration that she shared. Through this email response, Teagan's parents become the spectators/narrators who not only take a position in response to the narration, but also recognize how Jenna's different position made it possible for them to see what they could not have seen in the event. This implies that in this email, and in this situation and context, Jenna is singled out in a way that her singularity as a teacher mattered (see Biesta in an interview by Philip Winter, 2011).

The responsibility of the narrator and the aesthetics of belonging

If we take seriously Arendt's contention that the existence of plurality (or the appearance of difference) *depends* on the actions of others (spectators and narrators) in revealing *who* someone is through telling stories in a public space, Jenna's position as the spectator/narrator cannot be minimized or taken for granted. Arendt (1958/1998) posits that “the meaningfulness of everyday relationships is disclosed *not* in everyday life but in rare deeds...in the few events that illuminate it” (p. 42, my emphasis). Jenna's responsibility was enacted in giving *significance* to

this particular event - rescuing it from oblivion and forgetfulness, as the parents' expressed so eloquently in their email response. Kohn (2000) explains that for Arendt storytellers, and not actors, are the "guardians" of unique events, or actions that are fit subjects for stories (p. 117). But, as Markell (2006) points out, the uniqueness of the event cannot be measured objectively by some universal standards. In reflecting on Arendt's notion of natality, Markell (2006) explains that "the novelty of the new beginning, its eruptiveness, arises not out of the degree of qualitative difference it manifests with respect to what has come before," but rather, "out of an agent attunement to its character as an irrevocable event, and therefore also as a new point of departure" (p. 7).

Relatedly, Kimberly Curtis (1999) understands Arendt's ethics as a constant attentiveness to the wonder of human particularity, and Curtis views this attentiveness as the aesthetics of belonging. Stories have the capacity to intensify our pleasure in encountering particularity (as opposed to rejecting what is different and unique). Therefore, another dimension of enacting leadership through *The Belly Button Story* was in the aesthetic interpretation of what happened for which Jenna, the spectator/narrator, took responsibility in the act of narration.

The Belly Button Story touches its audience deeply with its sheer idiosyncrasy and inimitability. Jenna's narrative response stayed away from explanations and assessment. The story remained close to the situation/event through which the children's uniqueness appeared. *The Belly Button Story* is a story that does not give us solutions about how to 'educate' the boys. Rather, it keeps the wonder of the event alive and gives the 'audience' a sense of pleasure in witnessing the "infinite improbability" of human creativity and spontaneity (Arendt, 1961/2006). The story is not aimed at uncovering a deeper truth about what is going on; instead it urges the audience "to pluralise and complicate" understandings and interpretations. The story was "not

about bringing what is strange into the domain of understanding;” conversely, it generated “*more* and *different* understandings” (Biesta et al., 2011, pp. 232-233, original emphasis) of *who* children might be. Jenna did not aim at replacing Teagan’s and Joel’s identities with another identity; she created “an appreciation of subjectivity that is not yet defined, not yet filled with content or substance” (Todd, 2011b, p. 511).

An act of resistance and a new way to think about inclusion and belonging

Creating and sharing *The Belly Button Story* was also an act of resistance. During the time that this narration was created, Teagan was undergoing a diagnostic process by a psycho-medical professional team. Professionals who came to support the educators in responding to Teagan’s ‘needs’ required the educators to create attainable, short-term, individualized goals for him and to keep a detailed records of his behavior. Jenna explained: “I mean we spent so much time lining up their goals, individualized goal plans, and we spent so much time talking about them...we need to write down a running record of all their behaviors” (Jenna, P, PI). Jenna saw this practice as problematic because “...with challenging children, all we are doing is looking at what they are doing wrong and write it all down” (Jenna, P, PI). Within this context, Jenna saw the practice of pedagogical narration as a valued alternative. She believed that telling a story about the boys in the form of pedagogical narration had the power to change the preschool experience for *everyone*. Jenna’s intention was focused on making the preschool an inclusive space – a common world - by providing the boys with a context where they gain the possibility to feel that they are “a part of something” (Jenna, P, PI), and not through changing who they are.

Arendt claims that ‘Man’s dignity demands that he be seen (every single one of us) in his particularity and as such, be seen – but without any comparison and independent of time – as reflecting mankind in general’ (as cited in Curtis, 1999, p. 1). In a similar vein, Lenz Taguchi

(2010, p. 19) problematizes conventional thinking about inclusion as a process that entails a movement that forces whoever is on the outside (i.e., the two boys) into the centre. Instead, Lenz Taguchi, extending from Biesta (2007), argues that, “inclusion can only be achieved when the opposition of ‘inside/centre’ versus ‘outside/margin’ is overcome by a *mutual transformation of subjectivities*” (p. 19, original emphasis). Inclusion, therefore, is not a process by which we ‘allow’ more accepted identities to an existing order, but rather is a process in which the “order” itself is transformed (Biesta, 2007, as cited in Lenz Taguchi, 2010, p. 19). Mutual transformation, says Lenz Taguchi, entails processes that “make use of difference, diversities, and complexities” (p. 19). These processes do not begin with a predefined set of goals for individual children; rather they begin “in the middle of things;” in the middle of the process that takes place *in-between* human beings (such as the relations between Teagan and Joel and the relations between Teagan and Joel and Jenna), and *in-between* human beings and the world (such as the boys’ interactions with the mirrors, the belly buttons, and the rock).

An ethics of natality and plurality

The *Belly Button Story* can also be thought of as story of resistance from another angle, because it can aid in “turning educational traditional thinking on its head...by not starting from what the child is to become, but by articulating an interest in that which announces itself as a new beginning, as newness, as natality” (Biesta in an interview by Philip Winter, 2011, p. 538). Biesta proposes that rather than asking, “who is the child,” which for Arendt, as we have seen, will be answered by telling *what* the child is, we could inquire how the child *exists*. Since existence is always in a process of entanglement with others *and* the world, it requires a narrative response.

From this premise, initiating the pedagogical narration of the *Belly Button Story* is an enactment of educational leadership that is entwined with the educator-as-storyteller initiating processes for expanding the possibilities of being-in-the-world for children, educators, and parents. In a recent publication, Sharon Todd (2011b) raised the following question: How can we accommodate encounters that make room for the embodied “who” to come forth in order to disrupt the hegemonic assumption that education has always to be about developing a “what”? (p. 510). Jenna’s enactment of leadership embraces an ethical and political responsibility for making space for *who*—ness to emerge in a way that, I believe, can begin to respond to Todd’s question.

Leadership with an ethics of plurality and natality, thus, ‘is not simply about letting plurality exist,’ but about making the plurality *matter* in a worldly space (Biesta, 2010, p. 569). What I have argued in this chapter is that pedagogical narrations have the potential for making plurality matter because they give plurality a form of publicity through narrating and sharing a moment of natality in which a child gained the possibility to come into the world as a newcomer, as a beginner and as a beginning.

Of course, there is a risk here; the risk of instrumentalizing pedagogical narration for projects of “producing” new identities for children, such as producing the new image of the competent child. While there is no easy resolution to this risk, Natasha Levinson’s (2001) suggestion to view Arendt’s notion of natality as paradoxical might help. Levinson makes a compelling case for thinking about acting as (always) occurring in the midst of belatedness. She explains that our possibility to begin something new through action (and in the case of this study, through action-as-narration) is always mitigated by the fact that our beginnings encounter the beginnings of others. Furthermore, she claims that while there is the possibility to begin

something new in the world, the world not only precedes us, but also conditions us as heirs to particular histories, and as a result “we experience ourselves as ‘belated’” (pp. 13-14). Therefore, pedagogical narrations cannot become a solution to the challenge of bringing a *who* into the world. They can only be recognized as a possibility for doing so, a possibility that *can* be taken up by others. Levinson proposes that one strategy that may move us toward preserving the condition of natality is that teachers actively draw attention to what she calls moments of “disjuncture.” These are moments in which students experience the tension between being recognized through their what-ness (e.g., as part of a particular cultural or social group) to being recognized as a particular kind of person (see Levinson, 2001, pp. 31-32).

In this study, I referred to these moments as “moments of natality” and I connected them with acts of leadership. I have tried to illustrate how these moments bring newness into the world through invigorating a new sense of care for the world (Chapter Five), stirring the wind of thinking (Chapter Six), and making room for the emergence of a *who* (Chapter Seven).

Discussion for Chapter Seven

In this chapter, I explored the potential of pedagogical narrations for expanding and pluralizing the identities of children as a significant dimension of contemporary ECE leadership. I began by exploring how the educators in the various sites employed the practice of pedagogical narrations differently to make visible the notion of the competent child. By drawing on Arendt’s (1958/1998) distinction between *who* and *what* we are, I suggested that pedagogical narrations, even when they are produced with the purpose of elevating the image of the child, may sustain, rather than challenge or resist a dominant understanding of education as developing a *what*, namely, producing persons with particular qualities and talents.

I also argued that there are possibilities for leadership enactment when pedagogical narrations open a space for an emergence of a *who*, by revealing how children's actions illuminate new possibilities for being and enacting childhood. At the Preschool, as the focal case for this chapter, Jenna enacted leadership by creating and sharing a pedagogical narration that initiated processes through which the who—ness (the uniqueness) of the children appeared. By doing so, Jenna welcomed difference into the world in ways that renewed understandings of inclusion and belonging.

Jenna's leadership identity, as the leader-as-a-storyteller, was enacted a) in her attunement to the event of natality, and b) in the aesthetics of storying the event in such a way that the wonder of human particularity was sustained so that others were compelled to respond. I proposed that this leadership was enacted with an ethics of *plurality* and *natality*. Leadership enactment with an ethics of plurality and natality means taking on the responsibility for education to keep in existence a space where singularities can come into the world (Biesta, 2006). This chapter illuminated the potential of pedagogical narrations for the preservation of such a space.

I now move to the final chapter of this dissertation in order to synthesize and bring into focus how the analysis chapters respond to the research questions. I also discuss implications emanating from this study.

Chapter Eight

Discussion of the Study and Proposals for Future Action

We start something. We weave our strand into a network of relations. What comes of it we never know.

~ Hannah Arendt (1994)

This study investigates theoretically and empirically the potential of the practice of pedagogical narration for thinking leadership in ECE *anew* amidst current political realities and within conceptual possibilities opened up by the RECE movement and Hannah Arendt's political theory. I argue for reconceptualizing ECE leadership as an ethical and political action that is actualized when early childhood educators engage their community in conversations about the pedagogical narratives in ways that broaden and complicate existing, dominating meanings and identities in the ECE arena and beyond – opening up the space for new ways of thinking, being and acting in the world. The study also sheds light on the conditions of possibility for such acts of leadership to be taken up in ECE contexts.

In this final chapter, I summarize the responses to the research questions while highlighting the contributions that this study makes to ECE leadership theory and action. I discuss the implications of the study and critically reflect on the research processes and its possibilities.

Responses to research questions

The threefold purposes of this study were reflected in the three research questions. The first question, *How does leadership as ethical and political action afforded by the practice of pedagogical narration broaden and deepen conceptions of leadership in ECE contexts?*, examined the potential of pedagogical narrations for enlarging the notions of leadership in ECE

at the theoretical level. The second question, *How is leadership as ethical and political action enacted in the practice of pedagogical narration?*, investigated the leadership processes that unfolded in/through practicing pedagogical narration. The third question, *What leadership identities emerge when early childhood educators enact leadership as ethical and political action through the practice of pedagogical narration?*, explored the leadership identities that emerged when early childhood educators engaged in this practice. In what follows, I respond to each of the research questions by synthesizing salient findings from the data analysis.

Response to the first research question

The impetus for this study, as discussed at the outset of this dissertation, was grounded in two main concerns: the surge in policy interest and standardization of the ECE field within the context of neoliberal political rationality, on one hand, and the alarming paucity in ECE leadership theory and research, on the other. This, I argued, created an imperative to develop new conceptual frameworks and practical tools for ECE leadership that is attentive and responsive to the contemporary political milieu.

This study has enlarged and deepened the notion of ECE leadership in a number of significant ways. First, as the stories about moments of natality from the various sites illuminated, leadership enacted through the practice of pedagogical narrations grounded the phenomenon of leadership in the act of sharing the narratives with others. Viewing leadership *as action* extends the idea of leadership beyond a formal position in an organization, and thus, it opens up the possibility for early childhood educators who are not necessarily in formal administrative leadership positions to enact leadership within (and beyond) their ECE contexts. This does not simply suggest that everyone can be a leader. Rather, in this study I argued that possibilities emerged for early childhood educators to enact leadership when they shared

pedagogical narrations that drew people into conversations because they brought into view new and unexpected situations, questions, and interpretations. Leadership was enacted through creating spaces in which educators and others could complicate their understandings about what ECE may be about, broadening, at the same time, public thought about the purposes of the field.

By casting leadership as action, this study joins existing educational leadership literature that expands the notion of leadership beyond positions and roles and situates leadership in practice (see for example, Spillane et al., 2004). However, this study extends this body of literature by drawing specifically on Arendt's (1958/1998) idiosyncratic theory of action. With Arendt's provocation to think action as non-teleological, as the capacity to begin something new, the current study departs from leadership-as-action theories that bind action to predefined, goal-oriented change. Moreover, since Arendt contextualized action within an interactive space, this study puts forth a view of leadership that cannot be enacted in isolation (it is especially distinguished from the idea of the leader as the isolated ruler). The stories of leadership that were discussed in the analysis chapters indicated that leadership associated with pedagogical narrations was a complex phenomenon that emerged in particular interactive spaces and in response to particular, provocative narratives that elicited responses. Furthermore, while Arendt theorized a non-teleological conception of action, the Arendtian action is "not a disembodied phenomenon" (Levinson, 2010, p. 479). Thus, I am able to challenge traditional thinking of leadership that is tied to the leader–follower dynamic without giving up the notion of a leader. In this study, I offer a view of the leader-as-beginner; namely, a leader who initiates processes of potential change while appealing to others' opinions, perspectives, and responses that orient movement towards the future. I propose that Karen, Erin, and Jenna embodied the leader-as-beginner metaphor because they shared pedagogical narrations and made their perspectives

public in ways that elicited responses and created possibilities for others to begin by enriching the “web of human relations” with new identities, new relations, and new realities.

Secondly, in thinking leadership with Arendt’s political theory this study joins a small, albeit growing, body of scholarly work that draws on Arendt’s political thought for theorizing educational leadership. A number of scholars have theorized about the implications of Arendt’s conceptualization of the public sphere (Coulter & Wiens, 2008; Fielding, 2009) and her mediation on reflective judgment (Mackler, 2008) for re-thinking educational leadership. The current study expands this literature by making new connections between Arendt’s philosophy and the field of ECE leadership, especially through, and in relation to, the practice of pedagogical narrations.

Drawing on Arendt’s conceptualization of storytelling as political action, and her proposition to revive politics as vigorous public conversations that make visible multiple perspectives about a common worldly concern, I argued for an understanding of the potential of pedagogical narrations to constitute ECE spaces as politically engaged communities. Arendt’s concepts helped me articulate why and how sharing pedagogical narrations in public can be conceptualized as leadership enactment. More specifically, I was able to indicate how acts of leadership were infused with ethical and political dimensions when the pedagogical narrative renewed a collective sense of responsibility for our common world (Chapter Five), when they engaged early childhood educators in complex thinking (Chapter Six), and when they disclosed the child/actor’s uniqueness (Chapter Seven).

Thirdly, the present study shifted from previous ECE leadership studies that focused primarily on what leadership meant for early childhood educators who were often already in administrative positions (Aubrey et al., 2013; Hard, 2005; Nupponen, 2006, Rodd, 1994, 1997).

In contrast, this study sought to explore not so much what leadership means, as much as what it might be (or how it might be enacted) if the concept of leadership itself is being reconceptualized. I attempted to take Alvesson's and Deetz's (2000) proposition that rather than asking what leadership is, we could ask: "what can we see, think, or talk about if we think of leadership as this or that?" (p. 52). An approach to the study of leadership that moves from trying to find the essence of leadership to exploring what new possibilities there are for leadership to exist and show itself in the world is particularly important in the field of ECE where traditional images of leadership hold little value and resonance.

Fourthly, this research widened the theoretical scope for the RECE movement (which is explicitly political in its interest in equality and plurality) by venturing into the relatively unexplored territory of ECE educational leadership. The present study enriched and strengthened the political positions of the RECE scholarly work by offering new ways of thinking and talking about change and by providing a web of related concepts with which ECE leadership can be discussed and enacted. By drawing on Arendt's political thought and relating it to pedagogical narration, this study added new vocabularies that might be taken up by researchers and practitioners immersed in the RECE project. Such vocabularies include the notions of power as acting in concert, political action as narration, and ethics as opening a space for plurality and natality.

Response to the second research question

In Chapters Five, Six and Seven, I presented different dimensions of leadership as it emerged with the practice of pedagogical narrations. In these chapters, I focused on three aspects of leadership enactment, creating a public/common world, stirring the wind of thought, and

revealing a unique *who*. In what follows, I restate the significance of the dimensions of leadership enactment for a reconceptualized notion of ECE leadership.

ECE Leadership as concern for a common/public world

One of the pressing political issues that democracies are facing today, as I alluded to in Chapter One, is the demise of the public sphere and with it civic participation (Brown, 2005). Current processes of depolitization pose new questions about the contribution that education and educational leadership can make in renewing and reviving our common/public world. If we take Arendt's (1958/1998) contention that the common/public world comes into being through the active participation of speaking and acting citizens, then ECE leadership that is enacted with pedagogical narrations can play a role in revitalizing the common/public world when the narratives illuminate issues that necessitate collective attention and response.

In Chapter Five, I described how leadership was enacted when Karen, the key participant from the Parent Co-op site, politicized spaces by sharing provocative pedagogical narrations that made occurrences or events from her preschool politically significant in diverse public forums. What surfaced as crucially important in this study was that the common/public world emerged when the pedagogical narrations exposed contentious (typically silenced), ethical and pedagogical uncertainties of ECE practice. When Karen shared narrations about preschool events that exposed issues regarding gender, exclusion, teacher's authority, rough play, and children's fascination with death, early childhood educators, parents, and children were moved to actively negotiate and debate cultural and political meanings, and therefore, they *experienced* political agency by making visible their unique stances towards a common concern. Moreover, since the narratives disrupted ordinary understandings of ECE, a space was opened up for re-imagining what else ECE might be about.

Biesta (2011) contends that the public disenchantment with public issues is not the cause of the hollowing out of citizenship, but rather it is a response “to the fact that there are less and less opportunities for citizens to be citizens, to have a say in the contestation and deliberation about the common good” (p. 82). What is missing, Biesta claims, is the possibility to enact democracy in the everyday life of communities. I would like to suggest, then, that powerful pedagogical narration, where discussions about worldly issues are inspired by children’s words and actions, could be the context for such civic engagement.

ECE leadership as mitigating thoughtlessness

To suggest that educational leadership enacted with pedagogical narration concern itself with the dangers of thoughtlessness means to delve squarely into the inherent tension between understanding education as planned enculturation (reproduction of habits of thought and meanings towards predefined ends) to understanding education as a field of emergence (keeping open the space and time where unexpected meanings and identities emerge) (see for example, Masschelein, 1998 and Osberg & Biesta, 2008). The issue with thinking education primarily through known universal paradigms and standards is that they exclude the unexpected and they contribute to a universal outlook on the common world. Coulter and Wiens (2002) argue that within the paradigm of education as planned enculturation, “teachers are often encouraged to be compliant laborers” (p. 23) and this, in turn, discourages action and makes teaching susceptible to a banality of thought.

One of the interesting findings from this study, as I discussed in Chapter Six, is that through the practice of pedagogical narration educators across all sites became attuned to encounters with unexpected events that precipitated a crisis in (conventional) understanding and thus became material for stirring the wind of thought. I offered that thinking that is inspired by

unexpected moments meant that educational responses could not be easily streamlined, or subsumed under external theories or standards, but rather needed to be re-thought again and again in relation to the unpredictable. Nixon (2001) explains that the significance of attending to unexpected events in educational contexts is that they are both a consequence *and* a possibility for an emergence of human agency.

I employed Arendt's view of thinking as an activity through which we find new relations *with* (not an escape from) the world and others. I suggested that Erin, the key participant from the Toddler's Childcare site, enacted leadership when she raised difficult questions that were inspired by pedagogical narrations about unexpected events. Erin's questions of meaning and her insistence to think as a response to an event illuminated the teacher's agency to think "without a banister." When Erin invited her colleagues to engage with her in processes of collective reflection as the creative capacity to think in moments of not knowing, new insights about ECE practice emerged. Biesta (2006) maintains that in order to keep the educational field open to emergence the *difficulty* of education must be achieved again and again. To this end, the challenge for ECE leadership that is enacted with pedagogical narrations is to create narrations that interrupt the endless flow of experiences in a way that it seems like something new (a beginning), that requires a creative and unprecedented response, has come into the world. Thinking *from* documented events added complexity and depth to ECE practice that can otherwise be consumed by automation and routine.

ECE leadership with an ethics of plurality and natality

There is an ethical challenge inherent in education, and it is particularly felt within the contexts of early childhood education, where pedagogy has traditionally centred on possibilities

to experience childhood as freedom. Sharon Todd (2011b) described this challenge as the “paradox of education” (p. 509). She posited that in education we simultaneously want our students to be free, while, at the same time, we want them to become what we think they ought to be. Recognizing this paradox, Todd does not offer a solution; rather she asks, “How can we [educators, researchers, citizens] learn to live better in this *aporia* of education?” (p. 509).

The question that arises here, and that I believe should be a central question for educational leadership, is not only about how we conceptualize schooling and education. It is also, and more crucially, a question about who can (or who is welcomed to) appear as the subject (and actor) of education (see also Biesta, 2006). In the introductory chapter, I pointed out how current policy movements in ECE tend to support a view of education that is centred on the production of predefined identities for young children. These identities are commonly guided by the notions of school preparedness and readiness as a process through which the child is supported in attaining stage-bound developmental milestones. I also argued that this form of theorizing education limits possibilities for children’s experiences of being and acting.

In Chapter Seven, I offered that a possible response to the *aporia* of education could be found in thinking identities within the generative tension between *what* and *who* we are (cf. Arendt, 1958/1998). I shared the pedagogical narration entitled *The Belly Button Story* to illustrate how leadership was enacted when Jenna opened the “gap” through which the who-ness of the two children could appear in/through this narrative. This pedagogical narration suspended the inclination to define the children through their what-ness, namely, as the boys with ‘challenging behavior.’ *The Belly Button Story* shed light on the responsibility (as the ability to respond) to the appearance of a singularity, as well as on the possibility to see education as

welcoming the “chaos of difference” (Arendt, 2005, p. 93). Jenna, and also Karen and Erin, enacted leadership with an ethics of natality and plurality when the narratives that they shared created new distinctions between what had been and what was emerging. By making these distinctions visible, they made it possible for newness to come into the world.

Response to the third research question

In Chapter Two, I explained by drawing on the relevant literature, the tenuous relations between ECE professional identity and leadership. Due to the historical shaping and the gendered nature of the ECE profession, early childhood educators have not readily identified with traditional images of a leader. To this end, one of the purposes of this study was to enquire into the leadership identities that arise when educators practice pedagogical narration.

In this study, I anchored the notion of identity, as well as leadership identities, in Arendt’s political thought. As I have articulated throughout this dissertation, Arendt (1958/1998) proposed to think about identity as a possibility that is actualized in moments of disclosure of the actor through speech and action in public spaces. In distinction from political theories that are framed around the sovereign subject whose actions reflect an authentic essence, Arendt argued for a relational identity that is intertwined with the presence and responses, especially narrative responses, of others.

From this premise, leadership identities emerged in public situations when the educator made her stance public in the process of sharing a pedagogical narration. It is tempting at this stage to prescribe labels for the leadership identities that emerged in this study. For example, it is possible to claim that Karen’s leadership identity was that of the “leader as a challenger,” Erin’s enactment can be labeled as the “leader as a thinker,” and Jenna as the “leader as a storyteller.”

But what I would rather emphasize here is that in the act of sharing pedagogical narrations in public, the educators took a risk by endangering the comfort of being recognized through already defined identities. In the act of disclosing their stance in public these educators became subjects of stories that they could not control or anticipate.

The term “the public pedagogue”⁶⁸ (Biesta, 2012) may be useful for the discussion about leadership identity. Biesta claims that the “public pedagogue – is neither an instructor nor a facilitator but rather someone who *interrupts*” (p. 693, original emphasis). Much like the actions that Karen, Erin, and Jenna initiated with their narrations, the public pedagogue introduces an element, an event that brings public attention to the imperative “to think what we are doing” and to the question of “what it means to live together in plurality,” while opening opportunities for new beginnings to emerge. Karen introduced such elements through inserting provocative stories that would not have been considered ‘typical ECE stuff;’ Erin introduced the radical idea that we cannot know a child because the child appears in endless unexpected ways; and Jenna introduced a beautiful story in resistance to the pressure to represent difference by means of labeling and recording ‘negative’ behaviors.

Leadership identities associated with the notion of the public pedagogue as the one who interrupts by introducing unexpected stories, can aid in addressing gender-related issues that were discussed earlier in this dissertation as constraining leadership enactment in ECE contexts. An image of the early childhood educator as the one who disrupts ordinary thought provides an alternative to the dominant image of the consensual, “good” early childhood educator who adheres to the “discourse of niceness” and “crab bucket mentality” (Hard, 2005), and to ECE

⁶⁸ Biesta (2012) draws inspiration for this term from both Ranciere’s and Arendt’s political thought. I am using it here in connection with Arendt’s theory of action and its interruptive force.

spaces as a place where difference (or interruption) is not tolerated. Moreover, linking leadership enactment with the courageous exposure of one's unique stance in public and in "an uneasy confrontation with the opinion of others" (Zerilli, 2009, p.313), disputes stereotypical gender binaries such as masculine-public and feminine-private (Dietz, 1995). According to Todd (2011b, pp. 510-511), taking the Arendtian risk of public disclosure and being opened to the question "who are you?" relate profoundly to the feminist question, because an exposure that seeks to refuse already defined identities invites an ongoing possibility for the what-ness of women to be in a process of emergence. From this premise, ECE leadership, as discussed in this study, can contribute to the contestation of gender identities as fixed, universal characteristics. Disch (1997) adds that Arendt's invitation to think beyond social categories calls for a shift in thinking about gender as a common identity to thinking about gender as the political *inter-est* – as the space for solidarity and renewal.

Implications of the study

Implications for practice

Rethinking space

What transpired as crucially important for enabling and sustaining ECE leadership that is enacted through pedagogical narrations is the possibility to bring public spaces, where early childhood educators, parents, and children can experience themselves *politically* and engage with pedagogical narration with depth and complexity, into existence in ECE contexts. Calls for re-imagining ECE places as public forums have been made previously (see Dahlberg & Moss, 2005), yet, as this study revealed the notion of a public space, especially as an agonal space, is extremely complex and can hardly be looked at as something that can simply be 'implemented.'

Drawing inferences from the current study, I begin to sketch out some conditions that are conducive for the emergence of such as space.

A starting point could be questioning assumptions about what constitutes a community in ECE contexts. A common assumption that a community is based on passive membership may create false expectations about participation of colleagues, children, and especially parents, in the processes of pedagogical narrations. I pointed out earlier that the concern about the lack of responses to pedagogical narrations from parents could be interpreted with the provocative proposition from Arendt (1990) that ‘getting into a community with others’ entails a proactive and elaborate, ongoing process. The question that early childhood educators could ask is: How might pedagogical narrations initiate and sustain the process of ‘getting into a community?’ and responding to this question may involve some experimentation because ECE settings with different structural arrangements (e.g., preschool, childcare, StrongStart, and parent co-op) may require different forums for community engagement, and because every pedagogical event may require a different response. For example, at the Parent Co-op site a required monthly parent meeting became a valuable context for discussing pedagogical narrations, but this forum may not be suitable for the Childcare and StrongStart sites, where parents are not usually available for regular meetings. At the Preschool site, the narration about *The Belly Button Story* was specifically shared with the parents of the two children because of the unique situation that the boys encountered. As a beginning step, early childhood educators could invite families to a meeting at the beginning of the school year and introduce the practice of pedagogical narration and its potential *for* and its reliance *on* community engagement (in the current study this only happened at the Parent Co-op site) and involve the parents in finding ways to become active participants in the processes of pedagogical narrations.

Significantly, and related to the above, is the fact that bringing the public space into existence in ECE contexts requires changing the perception about what ECE spaces are for. As long as ECE settings are understood mainly as services to families, but not as spaces for renewal of thought about what ECE might be about, then families are viewed as an audience or as clients for whom pedagogical narrations are ‘shown’ in order to legitimate ECE practices. Early childhood educators can begin to take responsibility for changing perceptions about what ECE is about/for by considering what is offered as a provocation for discussion in the pedagogical narratives themselves. This means that educators become attuned to events from their ECE settings that are “susceptible to narration” (Arendt, 1968, p. 21, as cited in Young-Bruhel, 2006, p. 89) because of their potential to ignite a collective interest in common public concern related to the education of young children, or emanating from children’s words and actions. Moreover, pedagogical narrations that make visible, and thus contestable, the educator’s perspectives, interpretations, and critical questions about the narrated event, as well as about who children are, are more likely to invite others into a conversation than are narratives that affirm the status quo or provide descriptions of children’s activities.

Two additional implications come from Karen’s and Maya’s perspectives about the effects of the IQ project and Jenna’s comment about the need for a critical response to the pedagogical narration from the “outside.” Their comments highlighted the important contribution that ECE contemporary, critical theories make for revitalizing and complicating collective discussions about pedagogical narration and ECE practice, as well as the need for creating public spaces beyond the ‘walls’ of the ECE classroom. Currently there is no publicly supported initiative that is aimed at creating networks of engagement for early childhood educators. This means that initiatives to create meeting places beyond the ECE classroom may remain the

responsibility of early childhood educators themselves (in the present study, Karen, the key participant from the Parent Co-op site, was active in creating public spaces beyond the classroom through publications, conference speaking, and a Blog). An inspiration for teacher-led creation of public spaces beyond the classroom comes from Sumsion's (2007) report on a project in Sydney, Australia, in which early childhood educators from a number of ECE centres formed "critical communities." These critical communities, organized as "informal, inclusive, organic groups," were established with the impetus to come together and find ways to challenge dominant policy discourses and the status quo in the ECE field by collectively acquiring theoretical and political resources. If similar teacher-led groups are formed locally, then pedagogical narrations alongside theoretical resources can become a valuable 'material' for sustaining such critical communities.

Rethinking time

In educational contexts, time, or lack of it, is often raised as the great barrier for change, especially when collaborative practices that require collective reflection are involved (Leithwood, 2006; Leonard & Leonard, 2003). The majority of the key participants in this study created the pedagogical narrations displays at home beyond their work hours and they struggled to find time to get together with others to collectively reflect on the narratives. The issue of time is particularly thorny in the context of caring professions (such as ECE) that are disproportionately populated by women and are characterized by highly demanding work and relatively low pay. Just like the issue of space, then, the question of time needs to be addressed carefully and thoughtfully.

I am particularly interested in highlighting the possibilities to think about the notion of time differently in light of the findings of the study and the possibilities that the practice of

pedagogical narration opened for ECE leadership. In ECE settings time related priorities are typically thought of from the point of view of necessity and are regulated through schedules and routines (Kummen, 2010). In other words, time is conventionally conceived within the realms of “work” and “labour” (in the Arendtian sense of the words), but not as a condition for action, or as “the qualitative time of opportunity, the moment of radical change...when the new can be initiated” (Duarte, 2010, pp. 500-501). Such moments, which in this study I identified as “moments of natality,” are the occasions in which the educator-as-leader is endowed with the capacity “to disrupt the continuum of history” (Vazquez, 2006, p. 55) and offer an illuminating story that breaks from tradition and brings into existence a new narrative about childhood and its relation with the world. A new conception of temporality as dwelling on moments of natality through pedagogical narrations may move forward more practical discussions about the significance of providing designated time for educators to work on pedagogical narrations and for organizing public occasions to discuss the narratives. Indications of the value of this approach to temporality can be traced to the prolonged process of the narration about the *Bad Guys Beaver* which lasted for over four months and continually renewed the conversations in and beyond the classroom about ethics and identities, and in the narration *The Belly Button Story* as it was told and re-told to the children at the Preschool site (upon their request), while attaining each time new kinds of joyous and creative responses.

Implications for pre-service ECE education

Pre-service ECE programs can take into consideration some of the findings from this study. While the practice of pedagogical narration is being introduced to students in some secondary institutions in B.C. as a tool for generating a creative ECE curriculum, its political potential, especially for expanding the dominant identity of the early childhood educator as a

maternal, apolitical figure, is not often discussed. To support the kind of leadership that has been discussed in this study, pre-service ECE programs can create situations for students to engage in community projects where students experience political agency by creating pedagogical narrations that initiate dialogue with community members about a variety of worldly issues.

In order to challenge the notion that ECE has a single, pre-known identity the historical narrative of ECE as a familial service that belongs in the private domain can be challenged by engaging students in critical readings of ECE textbooks (see for example, Prochner, 1998). Moss (2009), for example, urges early childhood educators not only to inquire into the meanings of their own practice but also to take responsibility for how the purposes and practices of ECE are understood within the public domain. ECE in training institutions can be taken up as a dynamic field that has a role to play in the political struggles of our time. In addition, pre-service programs can re-assess the content of leadership courses that typically conflate leadership with administration. Leadership courses can be enriched by introducing new leadership theories and concepts with which the students can enlarge their thinking about the responsibilities and the ethics that are involved in thinking leadership as enacted in the relational space embedded in the daily lives of the school.

Implications for policy

Policy intersected with this research project at a number of points. In fact, the motivation to embark on this study was partly prompted by major ECE policy initiatives in B.C., and among these initiatives was the publication of the *B.C. Early Learning Framework* (2008) and its guide that included the practice of pedagogical narration. However, ECE policy in B.C. continues to be mired in ambivalence and fragmentation. While propositions made in the *B.C. Early Learning Framework* portray the early childhood educator as a critical reflective, researcher, the B.C.

Ministry of Children and Family Development, which regulates ECE licensure, ECE training, and professional development, continues to assess early childhood educators' professional standing through a framework of vocational competencies and occupational standards. Within the context of this study, an important question to raise is: How might increased public visibility of pedagogical narrations generated from diverse ECE settings contest the narrow image of ECE as a technical vocation that requires minimal training?

In two of the sites participating in this study, the Childcare and the StrongStart centres, the *B.C. Early Learning Framework* was a major impetus for creating pedagogical narrations. In these sites the documented material was often interpreted by using the *BC Early Learning Framework* as a guide. In Chapter Five, Six and Seven, I indicated that while the new policy documents have opened up new possibilities for the ECE field, they may, at the same time, perpetuate a rather passive attitude towards professional recognition and downplay the responsibility to continually renew the meanings and identities of the ECE field. Therefore, I raised a number of questions about how educators can work within/against policy by using pedagogical narrations that create a space for renewal of meanings and identities of ECE that go beyond the policy framework.

These policy – practice tensions raise questions about how a reconceptualized notion of leadership may challenge the traditional, unilateral understanding of the relation between policy and practice and whether pedagogical narrations can become a point of change for initiating more reciprocal relation between policy and practice. There are currently examples where relations between an ECE policy document and an enactment of ECE leadership were thought of in more reciprocal ways. The New Zealand Ministry of Education has been collecting Learning Stories (which are a practice similar to pedagogical narration) from various ECE communities in

New Zealand and these have become exemplars in the Ministry's published materials.⁶⁹ While there is always a danger that presentation of particular examples would reduce criticality and creativity of thought, and despite the fact that Learning Stories have been recently critiqued for being absorbed into New Zealand's education neoliberal discourses (see Duhn, 2008), such projects do have the potential to afford a more interactive process between policymakers and early childhood educators and they can sustain a more lively and dynamic relation between policy-as-text and policy-as-practice (Sutton & Levinson, 2001).

This study also intersected with policy through the participation of a StrongStart centre as one of the research sites. Findings from this study suggest that there are a number of factors that constrain the practice of pedagogical narrations from becoming sustainable and productive for ECE leadership enactment at this site. First, under current employment conditions there is no designated time or space for preparation and sharing of pedagogical narrations (which is mandated in B.C.'s StrongStart centres). Second, since the attendance of children and families in StrongStart centres is not consistent, there are fewer opportunities to share the narratives with the families whose children are at the centre of the narration. This means that there is a need to rethink how the (rather demanding) practice of pedagogical narrations can be accommodated at this site, as well as to expand the thinking about who might constitute a public for sharing pedagogical narrations created at StrongStart centres. The fact that the majority of StrongStart centres operate within elementary public schools in B.C. provides an interesting context for the visibility of the narratives and for an enactment of ECE leadership. Indeed, it would be interesting to think how the entire school community might become engaged in processes of

⁶⁹ Some Learning Stories can be viewed online through the New Zealand Ministry of Education: Early Childhood Education Assessment for Learning
<http://www.educate.ec.govt.nz/learning/curriculumAndLearning/Assessmentforlearning.aspx>

interpreting and responding to stories that depict powerful and perhaps ‘unexpected’ pedagogical events involving young children from the StrongStart centres.

Critical reflections on the process and possibilities of the study

Doing research is a complex endeavor, and as this study draws to an end, I want to offer some critical reflections on the choices and processes that have been taken up in this study. The reflections centre on three main points: unattended dangers of reflective practice, broadening the perspectives on pedagogical narrations, and working with a single theorist.

Unattended dangers of reflective practice

One critical insight on the process of the study comes from my recent encounter with Skattebol’s (2010) study. Skattebol, who studied ECE reflective practice in Australia, warns about the potential unintended negative effects of the recent call for reflective practices in ECE contexts. She raises an important issue regarding the danger that ECE reflective practice may lead to a new form of regulating practice in a field that is already socially and politically weak. In reflection, it is possible that within the context of this study, I was not attentive enough to these “dangers,” because the research purpose and questions focused primarily on the possibilities that pedagogical narrations opened for leadership enactment, consequently, less probing was done with regards to its unintended negative effects. However, Skattebol (2010) further suggests that, “it is useful to consider more deeply whether educators use these [reflective] tools to place themselves powerfully as a knowledge-producing community” (p. 76). The present study has certainly considered reflective practice from this angle.

Broadening perspectives on pedagogical narrations

Since the concept of pedagogical narrations (as introduced in the *B.C. Early Learning Framework*) was relatively new to the B.C. ECE context when this study was designed, and because I wanted the study to focus on how this process is initiated, I made a decision to centre the investigation on early childhood educators who actively engaged with this practice. Over the course of the study, I have had a number of informal discussions with parents from the various sites about their perspectives on the practice of pedagogical narrations and their comments added to my understanding of the potential of pedagogical narration for leadership (some of these informal discussions were analyzed as data and included in this dissertation). In hindsight, since the potential of pedagogical narrations for leadership is related to community engagement, and because the idea of multiple perspectives is key to Arendt's thought, I can see how gaining a broader and more varied perspectives on this practice, by speaking to parents, children, administrators and even policymakers, would have contributed to the study. Thus, I recommend that a future study into this topic would consider including a more varied pool of participants and examine their perspectives on the potential of pedagogical narrations for the ECE field.

The challenges of working with a single theorist

There are challenges involved in working through research intimately with a single theorist, as I have in the present study. My challenge has been to transcend the experience of being boxed by the theory, or to move beyond a sense of theory as a boundary for thought to considering theory as "a realm for thinking" (Vazquez, 2006, p. 44). I tried to find ways for Arendt's theory and the study to be in a mutually generative relation. In the process of writing this dissertation, I have come to new insights about Arendt's theory through thorough and

prolonged “thought exercises” engendered by attending to the inter-actions and tensions between the data *and* Arendt’s theory. For example, Karen’s use of provocative pedagogical narrations in diverse public arenas pushed me to think more deeply about what constitutes the notion of the public in Arendt’s theory. Conversely, studying Arendt’s theory in depth inspired a more nuanced interpretation of some of themes that I identified in the data, especially in relation to a reconceptualized notion of leadership. An example can be found in the theme that I labeled “recognition.” Thinking recognition with Arendt and Arendtian scholars, such as Markell Patchen, sensitized me to the possibility that the desire for recognition as affirmation of already defined identities may delimit, rather than expand, opportunities for leadership enactment. Alternatively, thinking recognition as an active, albeit risky, disclosure of one’s unique stance through speaking and acting in public may generate the appearance of unprecedented identities for early childhood educators.

The intention of working with theory in the case of the present study was to be able to move towards new conceptual terrains. From this premise, Arendt’s contributions to this study are indispensable. Arendt’s unique concepts helped me to enlarge the conversation about educational leadership; they infused the idea of leadership with political and ethical elements; and they impregnated the notion of narration with a potentiality for political action.

Young-Bruehl (2006, p. 61) explains that what characterizes Arendt’s thought exercises was her efforts to make distinctions between the familiar (old) and “what was becoming conceptualizable” (new). Arendt was committed to these thought-efforts because of her contention that what was becoming conceptualized gained the possibility of becoming “discussable, part of political conversation” (p. 61) and the impetus for a new, creative response. In this study, I brought forth a new conception of leadership that is concerned with the

preservation of the conditions for action - as beginning something new - in ECE contexts. My hope is that the stories offered in this thesis will make others attentive to them in a way that will start a new discussion about ECE leadership - a more politically minded discussion.

On the responsibility to begin again

As I bring the narrative response to this research project to an end, I am excited about the possibility that the notion of a leader-as-beginner will be taken up in the ECE field. This may bring a desired shift in a field that has shied away from the notion of leadership for too long. Yet, at this juncture, I take inspiration from Arendt who reminds us in the quote that opened this last chapter, that hope for social and political change is always tinged with the humble realization that action, or in this case, research, is a beginning that may “start something,” but which end we cannot master or control. The profundity of the condition of natality, then, is in the responsibility to (always) begin again.

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Appendix: The Study at a Glance.

Site	StrongStart	Preschool	Child Care		Parent Co-op
Key participants	Laura	Maya and Jenna	Toddlers' Childcare	3-5 Childcare	Karen
Observation #1	January 2011	January 2011	October 2010	October 2010	November 2010
Location	Library, elementary school.	Preschool site office.	Toddlers' Childcare classroom.	3-5 Childcare classroom	ECE conference site.
Content	Laura shared a pedagogical narration with a parent and her daughter.	Staff meeting about a pedagogical narration (evening).	Staff meeting about a pedagogical narration (lunch break).	Camille shared a pedagogical narration with the children.	Karen presented a number of pedagogical narrations as part of a conference session.
Observation #2	January 2011	April 2011	November 2010	February 2011	January 2011
Location	Elementary school hallway.	Preschool classroom.	A classroom in the community centre.	3-5 Childcare classroom.	ECE conference site.
Content	A district organized event in which pedagogical narrations (including Laura's) were shared with a number of StrongStart facilitators and elementary school teachers.	Staff meeting about a pedagogical narration.	Erin organized a staff meeting with educators from all the classrooms at the children's centre to discuss doing a joint pedagogical narration project.	Camille shared a pedagogical narration with the children.	Karen presented a pedagogical narration as part of a conference session.
Observation #3	May 2011	April 2011	March 2011		March 2011
Location	StrongStart centre.	Preschool classroom.	Toddlers' classroom.		Parent Co-op classroom.
Content	Laura organized a meeting to share a pedagogical narration with a group of kindergarten teachers.	Jenna shared a pedagogical narration with the children.	Erin shared a pedagogical narration with the children.		Karen shared parts of pedagogical narration with the children and continued documenting their responses.

Site	StrongStart	Preschool	Child Care		Parent Co-op
Key participants	Laura	Maya and Jenna	Toddlers' Childcare	3-5 Childcare	Karen
Observation #4			April 2011		May 2011
Location			Toddlers' classroom.		Parent Co-op classroom.
Content			Staff meeting to discuss pedagogical narration.		Karen discussed pedagogical narrations with the parents during a parent meeting.
Reflective Interview	December 2010	February 2011	December 2010	December 2010	January 2011
Probe Interview	July 2011	June 2011	May 2011	May 2011	June 2011
Sample Pedagogical narrations	Three pedagogical narrations were collected as samples from this site. Two in the form of posters, and one as a PowerPoint presentation.	The pedagogical narration <i>The Belly Button Story</i> was collected as sample from this site in the form of a PowerPoint presentation.	The pedagogical narration <i>The Music of Childhood</i> was collected as a sample from this site via email that contained text and images. This narration was displayed on the bulletin board of the Toddler's Childcare site.	Pedagogical narrations in the form of weekly newsletters were shared with me via email. The pedagogical narration <i>The Poetry Project</i> was collected as sample from this site in the form of a booklet. This narration was displayed on the 3-5 Childcare bulletin board.	The pedagogical narration <i>What is Love</i> that later became known as <i>The Death Narration</i> , was collected as sample from this site via email that contained text and images. Parts of this narration were displayed in the classroom and shared on a Blog.

Site	StrongStart	Preschool	Child Care		Parent Co-op
Key participants	Laura	Maya and Jenna	Toddlers' Childcare	3-5 Childcare	Karen
Sample of informal meetings and conversations	<p>December 2010: An informal visit to discuss the first pedagogical narration that Laura created.</p> <p>April 2011: Laura initiated a meeting with me to discuss her reflections about pedagogical narrations.</p> <p>April 2011: A telephone conversation about the difficulty to connect with parents about the pedagogical narrations.</p>	<p>November 2010: An informal meeting with the preschool staff to discuss the study.</p> <p>December 2010: The staff discussed difficulties in creating pedagogical narrations because of high numbers of children who do not speak English.</p> <p>April 2011: The Preschool staff talked about the stressful situation in the afternoon class. Some of the children are having difficulties.</p>	<p>February 2011: Telephone conversation with Erin about a new pedagogical narration.</p> <p>March 2011: A visit to Toddlers' Childcare to discuss the beginning of the creation of a pedagogical narration.</p> <p>April 2011: A meeting with Erin and the director of the children's centre to discuss pedagogical narration at the Childcare site.</p>	<p>November 2010: Follow up with Camille to discuss observation #1.</p> <p>November 2010: A visit to discuss pedagogical narrations in the form of weekly newsletters and to borrow the binder where all the newsletters are collected.</p> <p>March 2011: A visit to the classroom to see the children working on the poetry project.</p>	<p>March 2011: A visit to the Parent Co-op site. Informal conversations with parents about pedagogical narrations.</p> <p>June, 2011: An email exchange with a parent from Parent Co-op site.</p>