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A Situational Analysis of Municipal Early Childhood Education Policy Documents

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Education degree in Education

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Abstract

Studies have been conducted at the provincial and federal levels that expose dominant discourses in child care policy documents and reports. However, there has not been a similar examination of documents at the municipal level. This study uses a qualitative situational analysis to investigate discourses that are present in municipal documents of a mid-size Ontario city as they pertain to the child care sector. Drawing on Foucault's concept of discourse, this study interrogates the discursive functions that dominant ideas might have on policies that inform funding, programming, and subsidies. Through a cartographic exercise of map making, this study reveals and interrogates discourses present in these policies. Three major themes emerge and act to maintain power relations and the self-governance of subjects through compliance. Relatedly, the study also shows how children's and educators' voices are missing from policy in any meaningful way and highlights whose voices are heard.

Keywords: Foucault, dominant discourse, situational analysis, discourse analysis.

Summary for Lay Audience

Studies have been conducted at the provincial and federal levels that expose dominant discourses in child care policy documents and reports. However, there has not been a similar examination of documents at the municipal level. This study uses a qualitative situational analysis to investigate discourses that are present in municipal documents of a mid-size Ontario city as they pertain to the child care sector. Drawing on Foucault's concept of discourse, this study interrogates particular functions that dominant ideas might have on policies that inform funding, programming, and subsidies. Three major themes emerge and act to maintain power relations and the self-governance of children, families and educators through compliance. Relatedly, the study also shows how children's and educators' voices are missing from policy in any meaningful way and highlights whose voices are heard.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Children's voices as today's citizens (rather than tomorrow's adults) are often not represented in conversations regarding policy changes that affect their own care and education. In this thesis I make visible, through a situational analysis, the discourses that are and are not present in current municipal conversations around child care in London, Ontario. I use the work of Glenda MacNaughton (2005), Peter Moss (2011, 2014), and other scholars who have been inspired by the writings of philosopher Michel Foucault to challenge what is often thought in the world of early childhood education: that a set of knowledges and truths exists that are known and are free from politics and biases because positivistic views of science accept them as true. These knowledges and regimes of truth, which have foundations in the discourses of developmental psychology, have become powerful over time in the way we approach education for young children (MacNaughton, 2005).

Early childhood education scholars thinking with poststructuralist theory have questioned regimes of truth and the scientific knowledges embedded in developmental psychology, which are often carried into the early years classroom. These scholars push the child care sector to contest notions of "taken-for-granted" powers, to trouble the ways in which these relations of power are naturalized by accepting that this is "the nature of things" or simply "the way things are" (MacNaughton, 2005). In this time of advanced capitalism (McKenna, 2015), taken-for-granted truths and knowledges have become even more deeply connected to the science of developmental psychology in terms of child development and institutionalized responses to early childhood development. This is evident, for instance, in the acceptance of assessment tools and national child care policy

endeavours as a means to create good future citizens, workers, and consumers (Burman, 2008).

Many discourse analysis studies have been completed over the years on provincial, federal, and global policy documents, reports, and other relevant materials that guide early childhood education and early years programs, policies, and practices (e.g., Bundy, 2012; Burman, 2008; Cannella, 1997; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Langford, 2007; Langford et al., 2013; McKenna, 2015; Moss, 2011, 2014; Pacini-Ketchabaw, White, & Armstrong de Almeida, 2006; Pence & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2008; Polakow, 2008; Richardson, Langford, Friendly, & Rauhala, 2013). These studies suggest that child care is not immune to dominant discourses but can be steeped in taken-for-granted assumptions. As MacNaughton (2005) reminds us, there are major bodies of writing in early childhood education in textbooks, university lectures, parent handbooks, newsletters, and policies that offer a shared understanding of early childhood education. This represents the formation of a discourse of childhood. If, for example, these shared texts all have a foundation in developmental language and concepts, then it could be stated that one of the dominant discourses of childhood is a developmental discourse. These discourses form a particular framework through which educators, practitioners, policymakers, and parents think, feel, and practice in early childhood education. Therefore, it is important to interrogate these discourses that are found in the policy documents in early childhood education and to contest, resist, and disrupt some of them. Yet, there is a gap in the current research regarding the discourses that are present at the municipal level. My study focuses on how municipal documents related to early childhood education also embed dominant discourses.

Purpose

In this thesis I explore, through a situational analysis (Clarke, Friese, & Washburn, 2015), the discourses present in documents and reports at the municipal level in London, a mid-size southwestern Ontario city, as they pertain to early childhood education. This analysis adds to the literature around hegemonic discourses in early childhood education by adding a specific municipal lens to the existing literature. This is an important distinction because in Ontario it is the discretion of the local municipal governments in most urban centres to determine the appropriate funding structures and allocation of subsidies for child care and early years programming. It is important to interrogate the ideological functions that certain discourses might have on policies that inform how funding, programming, and allocation of subsidies are decided. A number of studies over the years have examined the discourses that are present, currently and historically, at the provincial and national levels, but there is a dearth of research that interrogates discourses at the local or municipal level for cities in Ontario.

Drawing on poststructural thinking, in this thesis I use an inherently feminist and intersectional situational analysis (Clarke, 2005) to analyze local service plan documents and reports. First, I analyze the London-Middlesex Child Care and Early Years Service Plan (2017), which outlines the roles and responsibilities of the municipality in terms of delivering child care to the community. Second, I review the *Needs Assessment Report* (Howard, 2017) that was mandated by the Consolidated Municipal Services Manager (CMSM) to uncover the current local needs for early years services in the city and surrounding townships. Third, I analyze the section titled “Early Learning & Education” in the *London For All: A Plan to End Poverty* (Mayor’s Advisory Panel on Poverty,

2016), which lays out a bold plan to end poverty in one generation. This document was created through consultation with citizens in the community over a period of six months; it proposes child care as a viable solution to end poverty. I chose these documents because they pertain specifically to the local municipality. I did not interrogate provincial policy documents, such as *How Does Learning Happen?* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014), because they are outside the scope of this study of municipal documents.

Research Questions

The research questions that are the foundation of this situational analysis are as follows:

1. How are children and families viewed in municipal child care policy documents in London, Ontario?
2. What are the major discourses present in these documents?
3. How do these documents maintain power relations and serve to regulate subjects?

Canadian Context

In 2008, more than 80% of preschool-aged children in Canada whose mothers work or study were in some form of nonparental care (Friendly, 2008). Many of these children were in unregulated home care or in the care of a relative for at least part of the working day (Friendly, 2008). Recent data show that there are licensed child care spaces for only 25% of Canadian children (Friendly, 2008). There is no federal universal program for child care; therefore, it is up to individual provinces and municipalities to deliver these services to families. Currently, a mixed market approach is taken to child care in Canada, with both for-profit and not-for-profit care available. In this complicated situation there is also a division in the administration of services between education and care. Often education is privileged over care in conversations around services for young children

(Ortlipp, Arthur, & Woodrow, 2011); however, Moss (2016) argues that the ethical nature of care should be assumed and the word *care* removed entirely from the term (i.e., early childhood education [ECE] rather than early childhood education and care [ECEC]). Until recently, in many provinces in Canada, multiple ministries were responsible for either education or care of young children. Often the provincial ministries of education were responsible for children in kindergarten, with an obvious focus on school readiness. The care aspect of children's services (i.e., child care centres) was usually relegated to ministries that were responsible for the delivery of social welfare benefits. For example, in Ontario the Ministry of Education was responsible for kindergarten, and child care formerly fell under the auspices of the Ministry for Community and Social Services. Many provinces, including Ontario, are currently moving child care under the auspices of their respective ministries of education, with the intention of creating a more seamless and coherent program for young children (Friendly & Prentice, 2012). In Ontario, child care has now joined with kindergarten under the administration of the Ministry of Education (Friendly & Prentice, 2012).

The privatized approach to child care funding and provision in Canada is consistent with a liberal welfare state. However, Canada is unique among other liberal welfare states in that, until recently, as noted above, child care has been separate from education in most jurisdictions. The market-based approach to child care has created many barriers for families in need. Often child care is not available to lower-income families because facilities are not found in their neighbourhoods. There are also cultural barriers for access to child care. In Edmonton, for example, child care is not accessible

for many in the Indigenous population and often is not culturally appropriate or sensitive (EndPovertyEdmonton, 2015). This is a common narrative across Canada.

In the literature review in Chapter 2, I look further at the Canadian context and how neoliberal thinking and a market-based approach have affected child care policies, what the tensions are in early childhood education, how child care and women's rights intersect, and some of the dominant discourses found in early childhood education. First, in the rest of this chapter, I outline my theoretical framework, define key terms, situate myself as researcher, and provide an overview of the thesis.

Theoretical Framework

In this section I describe the theoretical lens that informs this situational analysis (Clarke, 2005) and my situatedness within it. The theoretical framework for this study is based on poststructural perspectives of childhood (Iannacci & Whitty, 2009; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Pence, 2005; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Prochner, 2013; Pacini-Ketchabaw, Nxumalo, Kocher, Elliot, & Sanchez, 2015), which I use to explore the discourses present in municipal early years documents in London, Ontario. Moreover, I explore the discourses that are potentially silenced in this community relating to child care, as well as naturalized as “just the way it is.” I use a poststructuralist lens to examine this situational analysis, which is inherently feminist, antiracist, and critical in that it “elucidates complexities and diversities of the elements and positions in the situation” (Clarke et al., 2015, p. 20). I use this lens to make visible the dominant discourses and ways in which these discourses function in the policy documents as they relate to the child care situation in London, Ontario. This situational analysis will showcase the discursive nature of the human and

nonhuman actants that are present as they relate to child care and to children and families in this city.

Clarke, Friese, and Washburn (2015) define situational analysis as “grounded theory after the postmodern turn” (p. 13), and explain that it draws on, among other work, Foucault’s concepts of discourse, Deleuze and Guattari’s (1988) work with rhizomes and assemblages, and Haraway’s (1991) “Situated Knowledges.” I will draw on some of these concepts as the foundation of my interrogation of the documents to reveal how children and families are represented in the neoliberal context of London, Ontario. Though this study uses situational analysis as a tool to the interrogate discourses present in documents, I must make clear that while this study is not grounded theory, Adele Clarke (2005) articulates that situational analysis has many of the same elements as grounded theory but also includes poststructural and postmodern lenses in the analysis.

Poststructuralists such as Foucault would argue that humans are not simply actors in a play of life following a particular script; rather, humans are contradictory individuals with multiple intersections and tensions (e.g., race, gender, class, sexual identity) who are unpredictable (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) describe how poststructuralists, as researchers, attempt to uncover these contradictions and multiple perspectives in their subjects, in themselves as researchers, and in the audience. Moreover, they aim to deconstruct these perspectives and find the meanings related to the particular phenomena of the research.

Situating Myself as Researcher

Clarke (2005) argues that the researcher is an important factor in situational analysis. She states that the researcher brings personal experiences and connections to the situation that might allow for immersion or add richness and detail to the research.

This study is important to me because I am deeply embedded within the community of London. I am currently a working registered early childhood educator employed in the early years sector. I work in both child care and kindergarten settings in this community, and in the recent past I have worked in an Ontario Early Years Centre with parents and families. I have also worked in the local professional learning office to collaborate on and assist in the development of professional learning opportunities for educators in the city and surrounding counties. I am situated as a settler woman of Irish, Welsh, and British descent living as an uninvited but grateful guest on the territory of the Attawandaran (Neutral) peoples who once settled this region alongside the Algonquin and Haudenosaunee peoples. I was educated in a four-year early childhood bachelor's degree program that was based heavily on the notions of developmentalism and developmental psychology.

Key Terms

Throughout this study I return to a few particular terms whose meanings might be contested; therefore, it is important to understand these concepts within the context of this study. In this section I review some of the common terms, such as *neoliberalism*, and what they look like in child care. I also identify some of Foucault's notions of discourse, including power and knowledge, regimes of truth, governance, and biopolitics.

Neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is a word and concept that many educators in the field of early childhood education struggle with. When Cristina Vintimilla (2014) is teaching students of early childhood education she asks, “Why bother with neoliberalism?” (p. 79). This is a good question and one that should be unpacked in the context of early childhood education. Dahlberg and Moss (2005) argue that neoliberalism plays a role in early childhood education and it is important to understand how that role produces (and reproduces) certain discourses and policies. They outline that “preschools assume a role of social regulation, intended to bring a technical fix to bear on the wider societal consequences of the economic deregulation demanded by neoliberalism” (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p. 41). Understanding neoliberalism is important to situate the arguments of this thesis. Neoliberalism is the dominant economic philosophy in Canada; it favours free-market capitalism where the most important aspect is the insatiable need to drive profit margins as high as possible for the ultimate pleasure of shareholders. Free-market capitalism is an economic structure where everything is commodified and open to competition. Neoliberal policies push for open free markets and deregulation, with as little interference from government as possible, in an unfettered effort to increase the bottom line for shareholders. Neoliberalism is more than an economic philosophy. It also turns people, and more importantly children, into commodities. It produces subjects, subjectivities, and ways of being that govern our behaviour (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). Wendy Brown (2003) states, “neo-liberalism normatively constructs and interpellates individuals as entrepreneurial actors in every sphere of life” (p. 1). She explains that under neoliberalism, people are individuals who are rational in every way, including our moral sensibilities as expressed in our self-care. In other words, Brown argues that under

the structures of neoliberalism, “we are the small business owners of our own lives” (p. 1). Humans as independent and capable individuals are responsible to make only rational decisions, and the consequences and outcomes of these decisions are placed squarely on the individual. This relieves the state of any responsibility regarding the constraints that the individual may have faced, such as inequalities relating to race, gender, class, level of education, and so on (Brown, 2003). With this in mind, creating a concept of the child as a deserving individual who needs intervention at an early age in order to become a rational subject makes it necessary to develop applicable institutions, such as the education system and the child care system that will produce current and future consumers in a neoliberal world.

In the 1980s all of Canada’s political parties embraced neoliberal ideologies to varying degrees. Following the lead of the federal parties, most provincial parties also migrated into neoliberal ideology during the 1980s, with Alberta’s Progressive Conservative Party moving dramatically to the right. It was the election of Brian Mulroney in 1984 and his cuts to social programs that started the move towards neoliberal ideology around social policy in Canada. It was at this time that the idea of universal daycare dropped completely off the agenda of the federal government (Finkel, 2006).

Neoliberalism in child care. “Better choice and lower fees for families” becomes the expectation because of the incentives that come with the supply and demand of the free market. When the state relies on a market-based approach or is proposing a market-based approach to child care it treats child care as a resource and a commodity on the free market. Some of these child care services are in the form of for-profit corporations.

Market-based corporations are in the business of getting the best financial return for their shareholders. With market-based private child care, there are fewer government controls, so the costs and availability of child care is left to the ebbs and flows of the free market. Children and families become the consumers of child care as though it were a market resource (Moss, 2011). Beach and Ferns (2015) argue that market thinking has become so ingrained in every aspect of life that the citizens within society may not even realize its insidious creep into social policies. Society, even when it goes against its own interests, often gets caught up in market economy thinking. This rhetoric is frequently seen in child care debates that position potential future economic benefits from enrolling children in child care or other human capital interventions in childhood as central to the argument to invest today. Community nonprofit child care is then marginalized and often even left for the “othered” or marginalized clients. This was the case when the Australian nonprofit child care sector broke down and became open to the free market and private-sector child care crept onto the scene and became the norm (Brennan & Oloman, 2009). Moss (2016) declares that neoliberal thinking about child care has clouded our ability to question, criticize, and explore alternatives, especially when discussing quality in child care.

Often in a market society, all aspects of life are thought of in a cost-benefit, resource-based way. When this happens, certain aspects of our social world are commodified and become present in our thinking and our language. Joy Goodfellow (2005), who looked at grandparents’ experiences of caring for their grandchildren as nonparental child care, found that many grandparents were critical of the language that their children used to describe their grandchildren. She found that the grandparents’ grown children (parents of their grandchildren) viewed their own children as property;

they were having children for status and to keep up with friends and societal expectations. The grandparents described their children as commodifying their grandchildren, and said they felt their children possessed them as accessories (Goodfellow, 2005). This discourse has an important ideological function in that it helps to shape the ways in which parents and society discern what is quality in terms of child care. For example, if a child is viewed as a possession rather than a child, parents' expectations for "high-quality" child care may be vastly different than a parent who views their child as a human with rights.

According to Beach and Ferns (2105), a market-based approach to child care is the reason that Canada still has a patchwork of services, with no coherent, universal federal plan. In their paper they discuss many reasons why free-market thinking is keeping early childhood education in Canada from becoming the social good that it needs to be. Arguing that the market approach is shaping the child care landscape in all aspects, they address ten major components of child care that are almost fully shaped by private-market thinking, such as programming, which, when market driven, becomes about individual achievement and school readiness, and pedagogy becomes part of the marketing scheme at some centres. Usually there is minimal staffing in for-profit centres in order to keep costs down; staffing is the highest cost associated with child care services. Service development and management are focused on providing services determined by the market rather than by family or community needs. Public planning for child care is limited and weak (Beach & Ferns, 2015).

A report by The Muttart Foundation (2010) found that in Ontario, in the absence of a coherent child care system, there has been a move toward privatized, for-profit early

childhood education. Licensed not-for-profit child care spaces for preschool-aged children are limited in Ontario. Problems arise when child care centres are found primarily in affluent neighbourhoods where families can afford the ever-increasing fees. Often this pushes families in lower economic status neighbourhoods scrambling to piece together care for their children. This adds to the cycle of poverty because parents simply cannot become financially secure when they cannot find adequate, affordable child care near where they live or work. It is a barrier for parents, especially mothers, to reenter the workforce to improve their economic situation. The report by The Muttart Foundation (2010) considers (1) whether this approach to early childhood education will improve the lives of children and the economic stability of their family if we continue to endorse and provide public dollars to this free market approach; and (2) whether early childhood education should only be about education and care or whether it should go further and include strong connections to children's rights and the common good.

Foucauldian discourse. Some of the concepts that are used to unpack and interrogate the dominant discourses found in the study of local child care and early years documents are based on Foucauldian discourse. It is important to note that Foucault did not lay out a map to “do” discourse in a Foucauldian way, but he did write prolifically about dominant discourses and the importance of interrogating some of the taken-for-granted “truths” that hide in dominant discourses (Hook, 2001). Foucault (1972) argued in his work that discourses are shared bodies of thinking and writing about a particular topic, and therefore there is a shared understanding and shared way to examine the topic. These shared concepts and practices of creating discourse are found in everyday activities and institutional policy making. As MacNaughton (2005) explains, citing Foucault,

discourses “systematize” and “frame how we think, feel, understand and practise in specific areas of our lives” (p. 16). Below, I discuss some of the common themes of Foucault’s thinking that I employ in this study, such as power and knowledge, regimes of truth, governance, and biopolitics.

Power and knowledge. As Danaher, Schirato, and Webb (2000) explain, Foucault argued that no knowledge is true knowledge free from ideology; rather, all knowledge is situated and local. Therefore, early childhood knowledge cannot be applied to all children all the time. Knowledge, according to Foucault, is tied up with power in the way it can be expressed. Foucault (1977) argued that “disciplinary power” has become an insidious force that is an everyday part of institutional life. He argued that not only are these structures of power evident in our social institutions, such as hospitals, schools, prisons and factories, they also exist outside of the institution as well. Foucault’s notions of disciplinary power see power moving from the macro to the micro level as a way to influence individual bodies to perform in particular ways. He states,

In thinking of the mechanisms of power, I am thinking rather of its capillary form of existence, the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives. (Foucault, 1980, p. 39)

I use these notions of power and knowledge to understand how bodies that move in society tend to fall into these disciplinary uses of power. Foucault (1980) did not argue that these uses were necessarily repressive, but that humans move along, exist, and function through “technologies of the self” (as cited in Gore, 1995). Foucault outlines

some techniques of power that are used to produce particular ways of being, which I will outline in Chapter 3 to guide my analysis of the data in this study.

Regimes of truth. Regimes of truth are stories we tell ourselves or stories we are told that we come to accept as the way things are, they become the dominant discourse. Foucault (1980) stated that power is constituted by taking commonly accepted forms of knowledge that are subjective and turning them into objective truths. These truths are reinforced through science, (such as developmental psychology) and constantly redefined by education. A regime of truth is when there is an officially sanctioned truth about the world that becomes a regime, or the dominant discourse “which govern what we think and do” (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). For example, if we have a predetermined idea of how a child should grow and develop into a normal adult, and a necessary characteristic of adults in our society is to be independent. Then educators should work to produce curriculum that will help the child become more independent (MacNaughton, 2005). Policies and policy documents are considered regimes of truth because they use governmental powers to disseminate sanctioned truths. Peter Moss and Pat Petrie (2002) argue that policy tends to “emphasize control, regulation and surveillance” (p. 15).

Governance. Governance, in thinking with Foucault, is not necessarily about top-down hierarchical governance by the state, but is a decentred form of governance where the population actually participates in flexible and interactive technologies such as self-governance, self-regulation, and technologies of the self to adhere to social norms and expectations (O’Farrell, 2005). For example, to be globally competitive in our neoliberal, capitalist society, there is a need to develop a child who is autonomous, flexible, self-sufficient, and self-regulated. No part of this child should be left uneducated (Fendler,

2001, as cited in Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). Dahlberg and Moss (2005) clarify that this whole-child approach to learning does further the governance of the self. They state:

While such flexible and interactive technologies [e.g., governance and self-regulation] are often spoken of as freeing the child, in practice they serve to produce developmentally defined outcomes constituting a flexible self where flexible “has come to mean response-ready and response-able; and the definition of ‘freedom’ has come to mean the capacity and responsibility for self-discipline” (ibid.: 137). Rather than emancipatory, they are extremely instrumental and regulatory. (p. 39)

Biopolitics. According to Jessica Bundy (2012), Foucault’s (1994) notion of biopolitics can be taken up in education in some of the same ways as his work on medicine. To understand biopolitics, it is necessary to understand that it is desirable for the state to create and maintain certain populations; therefore, biopolitics is primarily concerned with power and governance. Biopolitics is a technique used by the state to govern and control bodies in a way that creates subjects who self-govern and regulate their own behaviour to comply with the state’s expectations. For example, sickness was once seen as a problem of the lower classes that put the upper classes at risk; therefore, governments would control the life and death of the entire population by distributing health care ensuring the entire population was cared for. Furthermore, during the rise of capitalism and industry, it became important to have a strong and healthy labour force to increase production. Thus it was important for governments to implement good health policies and teach self-regulation of health to reduce state involvement but maintain a healthy workforce. During the industrial economy, the state required healthy bodies, but

now the state requires healthy minds for the emerging global knowledge economy (Bundy, 2012).

Foucault's Connections to Situational Analysis

Clarke (2005) states that Foucault's notions of discourse were foundational in her development of the situational analysis research methodology. Therefore, in this thesis, I used the Foucauldian concepts of discourse to analyze the situation in London, Ontario. Once the discourses were revealed through an iterative process of map-making exercises using messy maps, relational maps, and organized situational maps, I drew on some of Foucault's notions of discourse to analyze particularities such as subjectivity, power/knowledge, regimes of truth, biopolitics, and governmentality to try to make sense of the discourses that have been produced and reproduced in the situation.

Glenda MacNaughton (2005) lays out some of Foucault's overarching themes in her book *Doing Foucault in Early Childhood Studies*. She explains that Foucault and other poststructural thinkers were working to disrupt the notion that politics could be separated from knowledge. Foucault believed that language was intimately connected to power and knowledge, and that there is no rational way for human subjects to maintain a neutral distance from these politics. Moreover, he argued that it was necessary to disrupt the notion that there is only one rational story to be told about a particular subject; there are often many competing stories about the self and society. Due to the politics of our time, sometimes these stories, depending on who is telling them, can become the stories that are told more often, to tell a single truth, and they become dominant and marginalize other stories. Foucault argued that seeking out and identifying all of those stories is in itself is a political act. MacNaughton (2005) goes on to connect the ideas of power

relationships and politics of early childhood by stating, “the recognition that knowledge is inseparable from politics is what “Doing Foucault’ in early childhood studies seeks to achieve” (p. 2). It is this understanding of “doing Foucault” that underpins my attempts to discover the discourses and silenced voices in this study.

Looking at early childhood municipal documents in London, Ontario, with a Foucauldian gaze, I attempt to clarify how the discourses within them govern how this community thinks, feels, and acts towards the systems of early childhood education and early years programming, as well as how they shape the images that are held of children and families who access child care (or who would like to) in London. I also make clear how some of these discourses govern societal views and actions towards children, child care, and education in ways that are not even seen or understood.

Rhizomes’ and Assemblages’ Connections to Situational Analysis

Clarke (2005) also explains that in her development of situational analysis she drew on Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s (1988) notions of assemblages and rhizomes. Clarke argues that situational analysis activates Deleuze and Guattari’s (1988) assertion that there is no singular linear path to understand a particular problem; rather, there are often many varied ways to address a situation. The concepts of rhizomes and assemblages create images in the mind’s eye that mirror the situational/messy maps that are produced when attempting to draw attention to all the actants present in any particular research problem or situation. The specific steps of creating a situational relational map in the beginning of the data collection and analysis process showcases how Deleuze and Guattari’s (1988) work with assemblages and rhizomes helps the researcher to understand

relations that may not have been clear or obvious on the surface, but are all interconnected in some way (Clarke, 2005; Clarke et al., 2015).

Situated Knowledges' Connections to Situational Analysis

Donna Haraway's (1991) "Situated Knowledges" is an important piece of literature through which to examine situational analysis. As Clarke (2005) points out, Haraway's concepts are well placed in situational analysis, not only because they bring a feminist lens to the situation, but also because the analysis of the situation is local and situated, and cannot be viewed just anywhere. In her experience using situational analysis, Jennifer Ruth Fosket (2015) writes,

There is no longer a view from nowhere, but always a view from somewhere specific, marked, interested and inherently partial. This partial, situated objectivity-vision is politically advantageous because it insists that all positions are located within realms of political maneuvering and social change and reveals how they are so. It also allows particular embodied actors to be held accountable for what it is that they see and do with their vision. (as cited in Clarke et al., 2015, p. 195)

This passage is consistent with Clarke, Friese, and Washburn's (2015) assertion that the researcher is an important tool in the situational analysis, because she or he brings important positions, knowledges, and subjectivities to the work.

Organization of the Thesis

In this first chapter of this thesis I have outlined the context of the study, some key phrases, the statement of the problem, my theoretical framework, and my research questions. I explained why it is important to interrogate how discourses can have

ideological impacts on policies, and I identified municipal-level early childhood education documents as a notable gap in the literature since it is the municipal authority in which policy is developed, funding is allocated, and subsidies are distributed. I then outlined the study's theoretical framework, in which I use a poststructuralist approach to contest the assumed nature of the structures of power and knowledge as truth and attempt to disrupt those taken-for-granted notions (Iannacci & Whitty, 2009; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Pence, 2005; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Prochner, 2013; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015). I explained that the study uses situational analysis (Clarke 2005), which has foundations in Foucault's notions of discourse, Deleuze and Guattari's (1988) work with rhizomes and assemblages, and Haraway's (1991) *Situated Knowledges*. I explained that I draw on some of these concepts to interrogate the discourses in the documents.

In Chapter 2 I provide a review of the literature in order to provide empirical context for the study. The literature review reveals that there is much in the way of previous research regarding dominant discourses in early childhood education from provincial, federal, and global lenses. However, it appears that there is a research gap in that municipal policy documents remain largely understudied.

In Chapter 3, I outline my research methodology, explaining how I used Clarke's (2005) situational analysis as a cartographic tool to reveal the discourses in the documents. Pérez and Cannella (2013) argue that situational analysis is an excellent tool to deeply interrogate a particular situation with multiple components and both human and nonhuman actors. I explain how map making using situational messy maps and situational ordered maps is a particularly useful way to expose the discourses present in

documents and as a way for the researcher to include her own situatedness in the research.

In Chapter 4, I use situational analysis and a Foucauldian lens to interrogate the discourses within the local municipal documents and reports. I recount the histories of the documents and situate the local community of London-Middlesex in this study. In particular, I discuss the production of a framework to end poverty in this community in one generation. I examine and analyze the discourses and discuss those I found in the municipal documents.

Chapter 5 concludes the thesis with a summary of the findings, a return to the research questions, and suggestions for possible future research. Finally, I present a set of questions to think with in terms of understanding children, childhood, and early years programming.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I review the available literature as it pertains to dominant discourses in early childhood education in Canada and globally. The literature currently suggests there are many and varied dominant discourses in written texts, policies, reports, and popular media. Many of the discourses are imbedded in developmental psychology that pertains to the “normal” child. These discourses systematize the way we think, act, and feel about children, child care, and early years programs (MacNaughton, 2005). The discourses I outline include choice (parental, children’s, and free choice), the universal child, the future child, rationale discourses for child care, women in early childhood education, and quality.

Choice

One of the dominant discourses found in the early childhood education literature is around choice. The discourse of choice is present both in pedagogies of child-centredness (Cannella, 1997) and in the political rhetoric that tends to surround conservative notions of parental choice in a neoliberal society (Richardson et al., 2013). Richardson et al. (2013) argue that the discourse of choice has “strong appeal” for families (p. 158). It gives parents the illusion of control over how their children will be cared for in the early years, which is especially important to those who hold strongly the ideology of “traditional family values.” In a neoliberal society, individual choice and seemingly little to no government interference in these choices is valued and of utmost importance. While the notion that parents are making choices is theoretically true, parents may face plenty of barriers that actually limit their potential child care choices. Richardson and colleagues argue that although the notion of choice can be liberating, it is “inherently misleading”

(Richardson et al., 2013, p. 158). They found that discourses of choice played a dominant role in their study of popular media, policy platforms, and candidate speeches around the 2006 federal election. Ultimately, it was the rhetoric of choice that won that election. The Conservatives argued that traditional family values were a very important part of their party platform and that offering families \$100 per child per month would give families the choice to stay home with their child. If they really wanted to use institutionalized child care for their children, they could put that cash toward child care fees. This election promise was obviously appealing to many Canadians, because they felt overwhelmed by the cost of child care. However, \$1200 per year per child does not even come close to covering the cost of child care fees (Richardson et al., 2013).

Gaile Cannella (1997) argues that the concept of choice for children in the child-centred early years classroom, used to promote the ideas of agency, democracy, and liberty, is a discourse that requires problematization. Free choice for children to play and learn is promoted as a self-directed journey of discovery and agency. The discourse appears to be sound and grounded in a genuine belief that this is providing good child care. This discourse is grounded in developmental theories where children are seen to have fundamental needs and meeting those needs through play is of utmost importance. This type of choice discourse adheres to the notion of “all children” as if children are one large, monolithic, homogenous group, with direct and predictable ways of development and being, rather than a diverse group with multiple histories and many different development trajectories.

Cannella (1997) argues that, for young children, free choice and agency in the classroom and in the family structure is illusionary. The choices that children make are

still very much controlled by the adults around them, albeit covertly. Children construct their choices based on materials and experiences that adults are providing. Burman (2008) explains that in child-centred learning environments, social control still plays an important role, but under the guise of self-regulation. In this way, the illusion of freedom and choice is provided, rather than coercing children in the effort for social control and regulation.

The Universal Child

Another dominant discourse in the literature in early childhood is the concept of the universal child, or “all children” as one large, homogenous group with the same or similar paths to adulthood. Pacini-Ketchabaw, White, and Armstrong de Almeida (2006) discuss this discourse as part of “the population health model” (p. 104). This dominant discourse in early childhood education is strongly associated with the notion of the “ideal child” found in childhood development theories. These discourses are produced and upheld as ultimate truths because of their strong association with the “knowledge” that exists about how healthy childhood development should proceed. Children who do not follow these predictable trajectories or are outside the Western context may be considered “at risk” or “lacking” and in need of intervention (Burman, 2008).

Pacini-Ketchabaw and colleagues (2006) also discuss, in the context of multiculturalism in Canada, “culture as a coherent unit of analysis” (p. 106). This discourse once again tends to hold all children as a homogeneous group void of differences. Within this discourse, the “racialized” child is seen as incomplete and in the early stages of assimilation. This view can lead to notions of risk or the belief that these children are part of a vulnerable population. Pacini-Ketchabaw and colleagues argue that

policy needs to be critically examined to problematize taken-for-granted, normalizing discourses, and that educators should look instead to other ways of thinking about “racialized” children.

Another discourse that emerges in the literature, as discussed by Pacini-Ketchabaw and Armstrong de Almeida (2006), is in regard to newcomer families and the ways they are discussed in the media. These discourses put forward the idea that even educated newcomers might be “lacking” in that their grasp of the English language could make it difficult to achieve full employment. Thus, the children of newcomer families are potentially “needy,” “lacking,” and in need of intervention because of English or French language deficits. The authors discuss how developmental theories of children in child care centres tend to view children as a single homogeneous group, resulting in perpetuation of a model of integration and erasure of home culture and language. This erasure is seen as necessary to immerse newcomer children into Canadian culture and assist them to achieve school readiness. The authors argue that these discourses place the children of newcomer families as deficient in some way; they are seen as incomplete human beings at the start of their assimilation process rather than full citizens.

The Future Child

In the globalized world of knowledge economies, early childhood education is becoming a fashionable topic that many governments are pushing to the forefront of their political agendas. They seem to be doing so in an effort to be globally competitive. In what Peter Moss (2014) calls “the story of quality and high returns” (p. 3), simple mathematical equations are presented to taxpayers, who are effectively asked to invest in early childhood in hopes it will reap high human capital returns. This dominant discourse in

early childhood education of investing in the “future child” begins to read like a universal truth. It tends to oversimplify the cost-benefit analysis of investing in early childhood education to (1) reduce future crime; (2) increase employability; and (3) keep a country’s economy competitive in global markets. These taken-for-granted assumptions are accepted as truth that has become common in the political conversation around early childhood education globally. Moss (2014) asks us to consider some political questions when envisioning early childhood education. He asks, what is the purpose of early childhood education? What are its values, ethics? What is our vision of the child, of the educator, of education and of care? What do we want for our children? (Moss, 2014).

Rationale Discourses for Child Care

Lloyd and Penn (2014) argue that many varied and often competing rationales are used when developing social programs and policies, and these rationales tend to stand through time. One of the rationales for the provision of child care is a social justice one. Early childhood education is often thought of as a tool for increasing accessibility, promoting inclusion, and eliminating social and cultural inequalities. However, Beach and Fern (2015) caution that free-market approaches to early childhood education could create problems, as there is no way to guarantee that children will have equal and universal access to early childhood education. For example, a competitive child care market could potentially drive child care businesses into more affluent areas to maintain economic viability.

Child poverty rates in Canada remain stubbornly high in spite of some relatively good economic conditions over the last two decades. Many factors play a role in keeping children and families in poor economic situations, such as low wages even in full-time

employment, inequalities faced by Indigenous people, the instabilities faced by newcomers, and the barriers affecting people with disabilities (Rothman, 2009). As such, Lloyd and Penn (2014) argue that another major rationale for the provision of child care is social mobility and the facilitation of parental access to the labour market. This rationale positions child care as a tool to avoid poverty or to aid a family in the escape from poverty. This rationale leads to a discourse that largely supports mothers' return to the workforce as a means of increasing the family's wealth and their socioeconomic position in society. However, Rothman (2009) argues that unfortunately a striking factor in the Canadian child care context is the inaccessibility of regulated child care for many low- and modest-income Canadians.

Children are often regarded as vulnerable and as having certain fundamental needs, which, if they are not met, could lead to pathology (Cannella, 1997). Therefore, another rationale for child care to provide families with the tools to keep children healthy and developing normally. Bundy (2012) discusses Foucault's work around biopolitics as a discourse of control when examining the change to full-day kindergarten and the take-over of child care by Ontario's Ministry of Education. She explains the connection to education by understanding Foucault's work interrogating biopolitics in medicine as a way for governments to control life and death historically and how we tend to use prescriptive language and ideology around child care policies and practices today. Foucault's notions of biopolitics can be used as a rationale for child care in the way young children are taught both in the family setting, and also our child care environments to maintain good health among the populations. Bundy (2012) also argues that in a knowledge economy we have a need for a new type of citizen; therefore, new importance

is placed on the future child as a bolster to the economy in a globalized world. New emphasis is placed on developing engaged, and creative thinkers in the early learning of children. The authority of science is strongly present in the policy documents and papers that were presented to the province to consider the switch to universal child care. This connection to biopolitics again places the child and family in a deficit discourse where the state needs to intervene, to advise what is wrong and how to fix it. This rationale places child care and education as a means to ensure that children will become healthy, normally developing subjects.

Polakow (2008) argues another dominant discourse embedded in the rationale for early childhood education is that of the impoverished child as a future criminal, or predator in the making. These children are in desperate need of saving through efforts of intervention using early childhood education. These discourses of the needy poor, and at-risk populations are not new in early childhood education in Canada. Often these intervention discourses are not about the child's well-being or their parents right to access employment but are about future cost-savings to the public coffers. Polakow (2008) argues that we need to remove these harmful discourses and address early childhood education from a rights-based perspective. Thus, children will have the right to accessible, affordable universal care where children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds could have the same experiences as those from wealthier backgrounds.

Women in Early Childhood Education

In this section I discuss ways in which women and early childhood education intersect. I discuss the effects of child care, mothers returning to work, and the gendered work of the early childhood education as complex and interconnected. Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence

(2013) argue that early childhood education systems globally are highly gendered. It is a predominantly female workforce that takes up much of the invisible care work. Care work is typically regarded as women's work; it is often relegated to the private sphere and is generally poorly paid and undervalued. McKenna (2015) agrees that not only is child care work a gendered issue, it is also a class issue based on the low wages and those who are drawn to the early childhood education profession. It has become particularly easy to situate child care as an issue for women because of the assignment of the roles of caregiver and mother to women in our society. McKenna (2015) also argues that child care, or the lack thereof, can be a major barrier to economic equity for women. In neoliberal thinking, through "care" and "choice" discourses women are not only expected to be major family breadwinners, they are still primarily responsible for the care of children. This thinking has had the effect of normalizing the notion that women should both work outside the home and be responsible for childrearing, all of this under the guise of individual choice. When women started entering the workforce in larger numbers, even while they protested being labeled as mothers first and foremost, they still continued to have children. It was then that governments realized they could continue to uphold this notion that having children was a personal choice and therefore child care was a private family matter. When there is an unequal distribution of opportunities for "high-quality" child care, it is women who suffer, because the responsibility of finding child care still resides firmly in the realm of women (McKenna, 2015). McKenna also argues that we need to reframe the issue of child care, moving it out of the realm of women's issues to that of common-good discourses in order to truly bring equality to women.

Bundy (2012) argues in her paper, which examines Ontario's Early Learning Program (ELP), that placing children at the centre of the program renders invisible all other actants except children. She argues that the effects of the discourses of the future child and equality of opportunity for children leave gender equality on the periphery. In her view, there is no room in the discussion for women and women's rights when it focuses on investments in the future child. She states that even though, as a by-product of universal child care, women could be better represented in the workforce, it is not in that context that policymakers are positioning women and their equality when they consider universal child care. They are only positioning universal child care as a means to get women back into the workforce to create more wealth for the state in the form of income tax, and their interest is not necessarily in bringing equity to women in the workforce. This reality is seen in the continuation of low wages, poor benefits, and precarious work of early childhood educators. Finally, Bundy argues that the ELP reproduces gendered prescriptions for regulated and expected behaviour of women and mothers.

Rachel Langford (2007) conducted a critical analysis of the pedagogical discourses found in early childhood educator training programs. She found that the majority of preservice educators tended to subscribe to discourses of the good educator, and that preservice educator candidates had similar preconceptions in their adherence to notions of education that were modernist and rooted in developmentalism. Five major themes emerged in the discourse of the "good educator" in Langford's study: "passion, happiness, inner strength, caring, and alertness to individual child needs and interests" (p. 339). In her review of early childhood education textbooks, Langford found discourses that indicated that a good early childhood workforce should represent the cultural and

ethnic backgrounds of the children in care, but the intersection of race, class, and gender was often ignored. There were arguments in the textbooks to increase the presence of minority populations in educator training spaces and to employ these people as educators rather than as aides because children are quick to pick up on the power structures found in the classroom. Yet presently, child care still adheres to the superficial discourses of multiculturalism rather than providing a true representation of minority voices in child care.

In a content analysis of Canadian child care social movement organizations' discursive resources, Langford and her colleagues (2013) discuss discourses of professionalization, quality, and choice as predominant in the conversation around child care, specifically regarding child care workers, who are predominantly women in Canada. They discuss the changing environment in Canada for early childhood education in 2008, which was the crux of an economic downturn and the general Canadian workforce was struggling. Child care was both needed and expensive, and yet many child care centres were struggling to stay afloat in the volatile economic climate. At the same time, a number of provinces, including Alberta and Ontario, were developing and implementing professional organizations to accredit their early years workforce in an effort to improve professionalism in the field. According to Langford et al., scholars were uncertain whether this increase in professionalism would open the field up to more regulation and make educators, a predominantly female workforce, merely technicians in the neoliberal state. or whether it would allow them to assert their power and become well-compensated and important members of the workforce.

When Langford, Di Santo, Valeo, Underwood, and Lenis (2018) studied teaching partnerships in Ontario's kindergarten classrooms, they found that power imbalances and inequalities were reproduced in the division of labour. In Ontario an early childhood educator is paired with a certified teacher in each kindergarten classroom. The original intention for the partnership was to equally disperse the educational and behavioural management aspects of the program. The researchers found in their study that power imbalances remained intact; care work, which was undervalued and assigned lesser status, was typically the early childhood educator's arena, whereas the education work was in the teacher arena. They noted a number of reasons for this: educators were still paid significantly less than teachers; they were paid for ten months of the year rather than twelve; teachers were responsible for evaluations and assessments; and educators were responsible for play and emotional support. Therefore, it seems to have been assumed that the teacher was the lead educator. Langford et al. also found that educators felt their roles were more about being an assistant rather than an equal partner. This brings into question whether educators entering into a professional college and being welcomed into the kindergarten classroom has had any effect on increasing the perception that educators are professionals with value and worth. Langford et al. state:

This emerging evidence of a public/private split in the teacher and educator roles and responsibilities could signal a characteristic of a broader political economy of care, in which less visible or hidden and private care services are provided by highly feminized, poorly paid, less protected, and less respected care workers. (p. 581)

Since women still make up 98% of the early childhood education workforce in Ontario (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2018), it remains that women who participate in care work, specifically educators, remain marginalized and undervalued.

Discourse of Quality

Accessible, “high-quality” child care is common rhetoric found in the early years sector although as Moss (2014) states, quality seems to be an underconceptualized notion. It appears to be more about assessment and evaluation of children, child care sites, and programming rather than great spaces for children. Moss (2011) states, “The discourse of quality is strongly managerial and understands education as a technology for delivering predetermined outcomes” (p. 1). In Moss’s (2014) view, quality is difficult to define. It is a fluid concept and is highly subjective, “based on values, beliefs and interests” (p. 9). That is not to say that the quality in a child care centre does not matter, but it is a loaded concept that focuses on inputs and outputs in neoliberal ideas of early childhood education. Yet the concept of quality is used so frequently that it has become a common part of marketing tools used in early childhood education (Moss, 2014). The discourse of quality used in this way ignores the subjective basis of the concept. It tends to allow quality to become about adhering to constructed norms that inform proper behaviour or action. Thus, the concept’s ideological function is to shape policy and therefore practice in early childhood education. Quality cannot be neutral or without bias because it includes values, beliefs, and assumptions (Moss, 2014).

Pence and Pacini-Ketchabaw (2008) argue that conversations and research around quality initiatives in the field of early childhood education should be inclusive but at the same time give voice to the diverse perspectives in the field. In their view, it is best to do

this by using theoretical perspectives that are poststructuralist, postmodern, and critical. The authors give an account of the Canadian context in the story about quality in early childhood education. They discuss the positivist and empiricist views that are deeply steeped in child development theories. Many of the historical research and writings in the field of early childhood education have led to marginalization, standardization, and top-down policies in an effort to locate “best practices.” The authors discuss how this type of research and these writings lead to power imbalances, as well as to irrefutable truths based on science that are “reductionist and devalue reality and the importance of diversity” (p. 245). The authors offer alternatives to these dominant discourses of quality in early childhood education, such as the programs of Reggio Emilia, Italy, which were not built on developmental theory because their leaders recognized that no one theory could be seen as truth. There are many influences on the Reggio program that are reconceptualist, postmodern, and revolutionary. Pedagogical documentation is a practice used in the Reggio program. In it, observation is only the starting point to uncover dominant discourses in an attempt to find alternatives. Educators in Reggio use pedagogical documentation as a means to see multiple perspectives instead of adhering to one principle theory as the basis of the program. Finally, Pence and Pacini-Ketchabaw (2008) explain how the bicultural curriculum of Te Whariki from Aotearoa-New Zealand disrupts notions of quality, where language and culture are the basis for pedagogical practice rather than an afterthought or add-in. Educators in this system use a participatory action research approach to interrogate dominant discourses of quality and to move their practice in new ways.

Pence and Pacini-Ketchabaw (2008) also discuss Glenda MacNaughton's 2003 work in constructing and deconstructing pedagogical practices in a poststructural and feminist way towards social justice. MacNaughton asks educators to actively uncover the knowledges that might be present in their own practices rather than adhering to the evaluation and assessment style of quality found in many child care spaces.

Summary

As presented in this background and review of the literature, there is evidence of dominant discourses in policies, policy documents, and other representations of early childhood in the Canadian context. This review of the literature has revealed that discourses are constructed and co-constructed in ways that position children and childhood in particular ways. Often children are situated as less powerful and separate from the rest of society (Cannella, 1997). Many of these discourses are not new to the field, they are simply accepted as taken-for-granted truths regarding "normal" parts of child development; these discourses function as governance in the child care system. They also produce regimes of truth that, Foucault (1972) would argue, govern the way we act, think, feel, and practice in the context of early childhood education. As Peter Moss (2014) discusses, the most prevalent and generally accepted discourses are deeply embedded in developmental theories that have emerged from market-based, technology, and measurement stories. Even those who question these stories fall into the trap of using them in an effort to persuade governments to spend on early childhood education today as a means of reducing costs in the future.

I have reviewed the reconceptualist literature that argues that particular discourses are hegemonic in early childhood education in Canada and globally. I outlined a gap in

the literature in that municipal documents in early childhood education and early years are not well studied, even though the municipality is the authority in which funding and subsidies are decided. My analysis will focus on London, Ontario, and will make evident (1) how children and families are viewed in municipal child care policy documents in London; (2) the major discourses present in these documents; and (3) how the documents maintain power relations and serve to regulate subjects. The municipal documents to be examined articulate how funding and child care subsidies are structured and disseminated, how family centres are planned and funded, as well as child care as a potential cure for poverty.

Next, in Chapter 3, I outline the methodology used in the study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this third chapter, I justify the chosen methodology for this particular study. I argue that the situational analysis developed by Adele Clarke (2005) is an ideal research methodology for the study because it incorporates the poststructuralist, feminist, and postmodern ideologies that will problematize certain taken-for-granted truths that permeate municipal early years and child care texts and documents in London, Ontario. In this chapter I discuss the map-making process in which I used three different types of maps to expose the discourses and reveal particular elements that are silenced in the documents. I also outline the historical context of each of the relevant documents from which I gathered the data and explain how the methodology and discourse work together. I provide examples of the various maps and some analytic questions that I used to explore the discourses, following a process outlined by Clarke (2005).

Situational Analysis

Situational analysis (Clarke, 2005) “is a research methodology that uses the situation broadly conceived as the unit of analysis” (Pérez & Cannella, 2013, p. 2). This methodology incorporates feminist, postmodern, and poststructural approaches to academic research. Situational analysis has foundations in grounded theory (GT) research methodology. Though Clarke (2005) explains that situational analysis has similarities to GT, it pushes beyond the classic boundaries of GT by using a postmodern lens, as it problematizes taken-for-granted notions and regimes of truth (Clarke, 2005; Pérez & Cannella, 2013). Situational analysis has the capacity to explore power, histories, discourses, and both human and nonhuman actants (Clarke, 2005).

As a research method, Clarke (2005) argues that situational analysis allows for the investigation of discourses through (a) social interactions and relationships; (b) “producing identities and subjectivities” (p. 155); and (c) “producing power/knowledge, ideologies and control” (p. 155). Situational analysis is a way of “‘opening up’ the data and interrogating it in fresh ways within a grounded theory framework” (Clarke, 2005, p. 83). It is an extension of Anselm Strauss’s ecological social worlds/arenas/discourse framework that allows researchers to use three different types of maps to prioritize a range of differences as opposed to commonalities. In this research, I employed the following three types of maps:

- (1) situational/messy maps
- (2) social worlds/arenas maps
- (3) positional maps.

Situational/messy maps are tools to explicitly lay out the situation and the relevant relations. Social worlds / arenas maps are maps that show the “collective commitments, relations and sites of action” (Clarke, 2005 p. 86). Positional maps are used to simplify the situation and find positions that are found (or left out) of the discourses (Clarke, 2005). These maps, as laid out by Clarke (2005), are not meant to produce findings or preconceived notions of truth around a particular situation (Pérez & Cannella, 2013). They are simply meant as another means to expose discourses, voices, and interpretations, in this instance, of the current child care situation in London, Ontario, in these neoliberal times.

Clarke, Friese, and Washburn (2015) argue that situational analysis is especially useful in qualitative research designs that are attempting to reveal all of the discourses

that are present in a particular situation, as well as the human and nonhuman actants. It works particularly well in making visible these varied discourses in policy research. Since this research is about revealing the discourses that are present in the documents set out by the municipality, a situational analysis is an excellent way to cartographically represent those discourses. According to Michelle Pérez and Gaile Cannella (2013),

[situational analysis] calls for a researcher who can integrate her or his personal and professional experiences related to the issue as an integral component of critical research design and continued analysis.

Methodological flexibility and conceptualizations for researcher as instrument (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) are necessary and supported within the practice of situational analysis. These characteristics are especially important for inquiry within the complexity of the contemporary neoliberal condition. (p. 2)

The use of situational analysis is relevant to this study of discourse in London because I situate myself as a practicing early childhood educator connected to this place where I live and work. I have local, professional, and personal connections to this place and time in this present research study.

This study requires a flexible research methodology that can be formed and re-formed through the collection of data, which removes some of the restrictions found in other methodologies. Therefore, I used this qualitative methodology to uncover the dominant discourses in already-produced data, specifically the 2017 *London-Middlesex Child Care and Early Years Service Plan* (CCEYSP), the *Needs Assessment Report* (Howard, 2017) and the *London For All* plan (Mayor's Advisory Panel on Poverty,

2016). I explore more than just the dominant discourse around developmental theories and quality child care in these documents. I attempt to understand the impact of neoliberal capitalism and the market-based approach to child care found in Canada. This approach challenges dominant discourses and taken-for-granted ideas in order to reconceptualize truths as they are currently understood in the field of early childhood education. The design of this narrative discourse analysis follows closely Clarke's (2005) design for a narrative discourse analysis. The narrative begins with a very preliminary rough sketch of the discourse materials and an overview situational messy map of the current early childhood education situation in London. This preliminary map includes all the major discourses in the situation as well as any minor discourses that might be present. As Clarke (2005) suggests, I did not engage with all of these discourses, but in the fluid movement of social discourses it is important to name them, and doing so helps to situate me as researcher and improve my ability to defend my choice of discourses to engage with. I gathered discursive materials that were relevant to the situation and I kept to the grounded theory concept of saturation, though recognizing that it may not have been possible to collect *all* relevant materials.

Situational/Messy Maps

The situational/messy maps in this study focus on a narrative discourse. Clarke (2005) explains that a narrative discourse is an important part of a situation and in order for the situation to be analyzed inclusively, it must be included. A narrative discourse tells a story with maps, and it is a relevant tool today because of our reliance on and access to digital media, social media, documents, and news items.

There are two possible iterations of situational maps. There are messy maps that act as a brainstorming tool where all the elements of the situation are mapped in a messy, random fashion. These messy maps include elements found in the data, but they can also include elements that the researcher is familiar with when she or he is connected intimately with the situation, as you might see in participatory action research. The second possible iteration of a situational map is the ordered situational map. This map is created after the messy maps have been thoroughly interrogated and the elements ordered into particular categories. Situational maps are important tools when the data has already been produced, that is, when the researcher has not in any way produced or coproduced the data through interviews or other data collection methods.

Data Collection

In this section, I briefly describe the location of London-Middlesex and the policy documents I chose for this study.

City of London. London is situated in southwestern Ontario between the great lakes of Huron to the north and Erie to the south, the American border one hundred kilometres to the west, and Toronto two hundred kilometres to the east. The city was settled on the forks of the Thames River and sprawls outward in all directions. London is situated on the territory of the Attawandaran (Neutral) peoples, who “once settled this region alongside the Algonquin and Haudenosaunee peoples, and used this land as their traditional beaver hunting grounds” (Western University Indigenous Services, 2019). This territory is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties (Ontario Federation of Labour, 2017, p. 4). London is a medium-large sized city with over 380,000 people. It houses the

University of Western Ontario, Fanshawe College, two major hospitals, and some minor-league sports teams (City of London, 2019).

London-Middlesex Child Care and Early Years Service Plan. The *London-Middlesex Child Care and Early Years Service Plan* (CCEYSP; 2017) was developed to provide an overview of the child care and early years system in the City of London and Middlesex County, and it is due to be updated with a new release in 2019 (Howard, 2017). The CCEYSP is managed locally at the direction of the consolidated municipal service manager (CMSM) on behalf of the province of Ontario. CMSMs “are the service system managers responsible for planning, managing and coordinating child care for their surrounding region” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 1). The CCEYSP was developed as a means to articulate the responsibilities assigned to the municipality in its delivery of child care and early years services as the province underwent a period of transformation. The document is 17 pages in length and contains data collected from City of London and provincial documents. It outlines currently funding structures and funding allocations, both from a historic perspective and with an eye to the future. The data includes the number of children waiting for subsidies and the number who receive them each quarter. The document also outlines the number of licensed child care spaces, child care centres, and licensed home child care centres throughout the region and outlines the percentage of occupied spaces in the region.

Prior to the release of CCEYSP, the province released the *Ontario Early Years Policy Framework* in 2013 and then an updated version in 2017. The province also introduced and continued the implementation of full-day kindergarten, developed the new (and current) pedagogical document *How Does Learning Happen?* (2014), and

introduced new provincial legislation called the Child Care and Early Years Act (2014). During this time, the province announced changes to the funding structures and the allocation of services, which downloaded some financial and service responsibilities to the municipalities. The City of London and Middlesex County became responsible for family support programs that were formerly delivered by the provincial government. In response, in September 2017, the City of London and Middlesex County engaged in a needs assessment, as mandated by the province, to understand the needs of young children and families in this district. Because the *Needs Assessment Report* (Howard, 2017) adds important context to the discourses present in the early years and child care sector, I have included it in the data collection process.

Needs Assessment Report. The *Needs Assessment Report* (2017) was developed as a condition of the CCEYSP mandate. The CMSM was required to conduct a needs assessment to “facilitate meaningful engagement with key community partners, parents and caregivers to integrate OEYCFCs into local service system plans for early years programs and services” (CCEYSP, 2017). The document is 17 pages in length with sections that include background, analysis, vision, key goals and objectives, initial and transition plans, and a financial impact. The document also includes an executive summary at the end of the report. The CMSM engaged with multiple stake holders and community partners in the affected communities to develop an understanding of the various needs for the transition to the OEYCFCs.

The London For All Plan “Education and Early Learning.” During this time of transition and change regarding funding and responsibilities between the provincial and municipal governments, a newly elected mayor of London created the Mayor’s

Advisory Panel on Poverty (2016). This panel was mandated to report back to the mayor and city council to develop strategies to end poverty in the city of London in one generation. I was drawn to this plan as a document for analysis because of the focus on child care as a strategy to end poverty. This ambitious plan was laid out in a report titled *London For All—A Road Map to End Poverty* (Mayor's Advisory Panel on Poverty, 2016). Community consultations included 100 meetings and more than 1,000 people in an attempt to represent all Londoners. The panel found that more than 62,000 Londoners (17%) live in poverty. Child and youth poverty has risen by 2.2% since 2006, and 24% of children in London live in poverty. The panel also found that many people who live in poverty face barriers and inequalities that limit their ability to reach their full potential.

Finally, the report made 112 recommendations to eliminate poverty. These 112 recommendations and actions were organized into eight categories: (1) changing mindsets; (2) income and employment; (3) health; (4) homelessness prevention and housing; (5) transportation; (6) early learning and education; (7) food security; and (8) system change (Mayor's Advisory Panel on Poverty, p. 14, 2016). The report was produced after a six-month consultation period and included both short-term goals (first 12 months) and longer-term goals (beyond 12 months) in each of the eight sections.

The final report suggested that child care could be an important strategy to draw Londoners out of poverty in one generation. The panel found that many children go to school hungry every day because their parents often need to choose between paying rent or buying groceries.

Following are the short- and long-term goals for the sixth section of the report, "Education and Early Learning":

FIRST 12 MONTHS

- 6.1 Increase the number of licensed child care spaces
- 6.2 Reduce the wait time to receive child care subsidy
- 6.3 Demonstrate active use of an equity lens in child care quality strategies

BEYOND 12 MONTHS

- 6.4 Increase capacity of child care sector to address mental health issues
- 6.5 Advocate for increased investment by all levels of government in early years education and literacy programming
- 6.6 Support development of national child care strategy
- 6.7 Advocate for increases to child care fee subsidy for low-income families
- 6.8 Expand elementary school initiatives that increase awareness of all postsecondary options
- 6.9 Advocate for improved quality of parental leave benefits, including exploration of flexible leave times
- 6.10 Expand mentorship and support programs for new parents
- 6.11 Expand matched savings programs to help families save for education
- 6.12 Create flexible child care spaces outside of daytime working hours
- 6.13 Develop a community strategy to eliminate financial barriers for school-based extracurricular activities
- 6.14 Implement coordinated approach to education, building on proven projects in London and other communities, to increase high school graduation rates
- 6.15 Develop a community strategy to eliminate financial barriers to achieving GED (General Educational Development)

6.16 Collaborate with postsecondary institutions to identify ways to support students living in poverty

6.17 Increase availability of financial literacy and “basic life skills” training for all Londoners, including children and youth. (Mayor’s Advisory Panel on Poverty, 2016, p. 40)

This poverty strategy has been an important driver for the child care strategy in London, and I have included this chapter of the report as a data source that speaks to discourses that permeate early childhood education and how they influence allocation of services and funding.

A Few Words About Linking Discourse and Methodology

As is the case with any research methodology, there are always constraints and questions of trustworthiness in a discourse analysis, particularly when a Foucauldian lens is applied. Since Foucault’s work on discourse was never actually laid out in a methodological framework, it leaves room for a researcher’s interpretations in ways that may stray from Foucault’s initial intentions. It is important for the researcher to be mindful of this and to be critical in her application (Hook, 2001). Even Foucault himself constantly interrogated his own understandings of discourse as he returned to his thinking constantly in his writings, probably to resist succumbing to any grand narratives and single truths that might permeate his work (Springer & Clinton, 2015).

Foucault insists that the researcher continuously evaluate herself to understand her bias and situatedness in relation to the effects of power. He states that “‘truth’ is linked in circular relations with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces, and which extend it” (1980, as cited in MacNaughton, 2005, p.

133). MacNaughton (2005) advises that the activist-educator who wants to “do Foucault” as researcher must avoid the trappings of being a knowledge keeper and remain true to the notions of multiplicity and diverse knowledges and truths. In this study I identify as the researcher, but also as someone who is immersed in the early years discourses in the community as a registered and working educator. I must constantly address and acknowledge my own biases, because I too am steeped in the indoctrinated developmental truths of the early childhood field. I must continuously revisit my thinking to contest these taken-for-granted truths, not only in my practice as an educator, but importantly, in this study as researcher.

There are also constraints in that there are very many discourses present in any particular situation, and as Clarke (2005) suggests, I will likely not be able to expose all of them. I have selectively chosen particular discourses to analyze in order to expose the hegemonic, taken-for-granted truths that exist in this local situation. Through the creation of the messy/situational maps and the iterative and immersive nature of moving the elements from the messy/situational map through to the relational situational map and then to the ordered situational map, I have gathered and named all of the relevant discursive material, keeping in mind the concept of saturation found in grounded theory (Clarke, 2005). Thus, I will be able to defend my choice of discourses as thoroughly as possible. The situatedness of this particular study is entirely local to this community, and it is important to note that the results are explicitly connected to this specific time and space.

Doing Situational Analysis

To analyze the documents, I utilized Clarke's (2005) situational analysis to ask questions about language and communities to uncover discourses in child care in London, Ontario.

As outlined above, situational analysis is an analytic tool developed by Adele Clarke (2005) that offers a set of cartographic tools to deeply study a particular situation.

According to Clarke (2005),

This analytic approach offers three main cartographic exercises that are performed by researchers who wish to examine complex situations of inquiry and "become stronger at generating the kinds of data in which we can find often invisible issues and silences" (p. 76)

According to Clarke, Friese, and Washburn (2015), since the release of Clarke's first book outlining situational analysis ten years ago, many researchers have used the method in exemplary ways, adapting the method's foundational aspects to suit their own research needs in interesting and meaningful ways. In the opinion of Clarke et al., these new research studies offer innovative ways in which the researcher can use various combinations of the maps in order to think deeply with the situation and reveal the discourses that are both implicit and explicit in each particular research study. Following this trend, in this study I altered the process of map-making slightly and combined the map-making exercises to reveal the discourses, using a Foucauldian lens to analyze the data. In this particular research study, the situational analysis includes a messy situational map, a relational situational map, and an ordered situational map intended to expose the discourses present in the local documents.

To remain focused on the analysis of the current child care situation in London, it was necessary for me to review, revisit, and constantly refer to the classic questions that Clarke (2005) laid out in the first iteration of her approach:

- What are the discourses in the broader situation?
- Who (individually and collectively) is involved (supportive, opposed, providing knowledge, materials, money, what else?) in producing these discourses?
- What and who do these discourses construct? How?
- What and whom are they in dialogue with/about?
- What and who do these discourses render invisible? How?
- What material things—nonhuman elements—are involved in the discourses?
- What are the implicated/silent actors/actants?
- What are the important discursively constructed elements in the situation?
- What work do these discourses do in the world? (p. 187)

Initially, I began by immersing myself in the documents by reading and rereading with these questions in mind. I made notes in the margins of each document, drawing out repetitive themes, words, and phrases. I then made the first messy map (Figure 1). I included all the relevant material that I was reading in the documents and added my own personal understanding of the current situation as someone who is presently working as a registered educator in this community, because, per Clarke, (2005) my situated knowledge matters. Figure 1 shows a large, messy, and disjointed map. I made many iterations of the map until I was able to truly focus on the relevant elements of the situation. This map includes human and nonhuman actors such as the mayor's panel, discourses, and other elements I believe are relevant to the situation. Once I had created

my final working messy map, I was able to begin to make a series of relational maps. I used the final working messy map and made many photocopies in order to physically draw the relations between the elements.



Figure 1. Messy map. Adapted from Clarke (2005).

I then chose an element, circled it, and drew lines between all the related elements. When I had completed this process, I had done an exhaustive analysis of every element and its relation to the other elements in the situation. At this point I was able to organize those relations into an ordered situational map (Figure 2).

This process required me to constantly return to the messy maps, all the relational maps, and the data sets in an interactive and iterative way to ensure I had captured all of the related elements in the situation. The ordered situational map helped to reveal the elements of the situation in a related and organized way and identified discourses that require interrogation. This ordered situational map is foundational in helping me to pull out the discourses in the situation. Once the ordered situational map was done and my experimenting with these cartographic tools was complete, I was able to organize the discursive elements of the situation, both explicit and silenced, and begin to analyze this data through a discourse analysis with a Foucauldian lens.

In the discourse analysis, I draw on Jennifer Gore's (1995) eight micro-practices of power, as laid out in MacNaughton's (2005) book *Doing Foucault in Early Childhood Studies*, in order to interpret ways in which the field of early childhood education can succumb to the taken-for-granted truths that exist in everyday practices. Gore (1995) drew heavily on Foucault's work to outline microaggressions that are commonly enacted in early childhood education. Here are the eight micro-practices that I consulted throughout this discourse analysis.

1. Surveillance: being—or expecting to be—closely observed and supervised in and through reference to particular truths. For example, the educator who expects to

be assessed based on her adherence to developmentalism will adhere to those notions in her practice.

2. Normalization: comparing, invoking, requiring, or conforming to a standard that expresses particular truths about, for example, the developing child. For example, if the educator understands child development from a developmentalism lens, then she will enforce those notions of development in her practice in order to produce a normal child.
3. Exclusion: using truths to establish the boundaries of what is normal, to include or exclude particular ways of being as desirable or undesirable and, in doing so, to define pathology. For example, the educator might decide what to include or exclude from her program based on a continuum of development rather than the particular interests of the children.
4. Classification: using truths to differentiate between groups or individuals.
5. Distribution: using specific truths to decide how to arrange and rank people in space. For example, if the educator believes in developmentalism then she will use *classification* strategies to determine how children are distributed according to ages and stages of development.
6. Individualization: using truths to separate individuals. This includes such practices as removing particular bodies who are not conforming to the particular notions of developmentalism.
7. Totalization: using truths to produce a will to conform.
8. Regulation: using specific truths to control ways of thinking and being by invoking rules and limiting behaviours—often through sanctions or rewards. For

example, the educator might use *totalization* by teaching the children to understand that the needs of the group are important above the individual and will use rewards and punishments to enforce these notions (Gore, 1995, as cited in MacNaughton, 2005, p. 24).

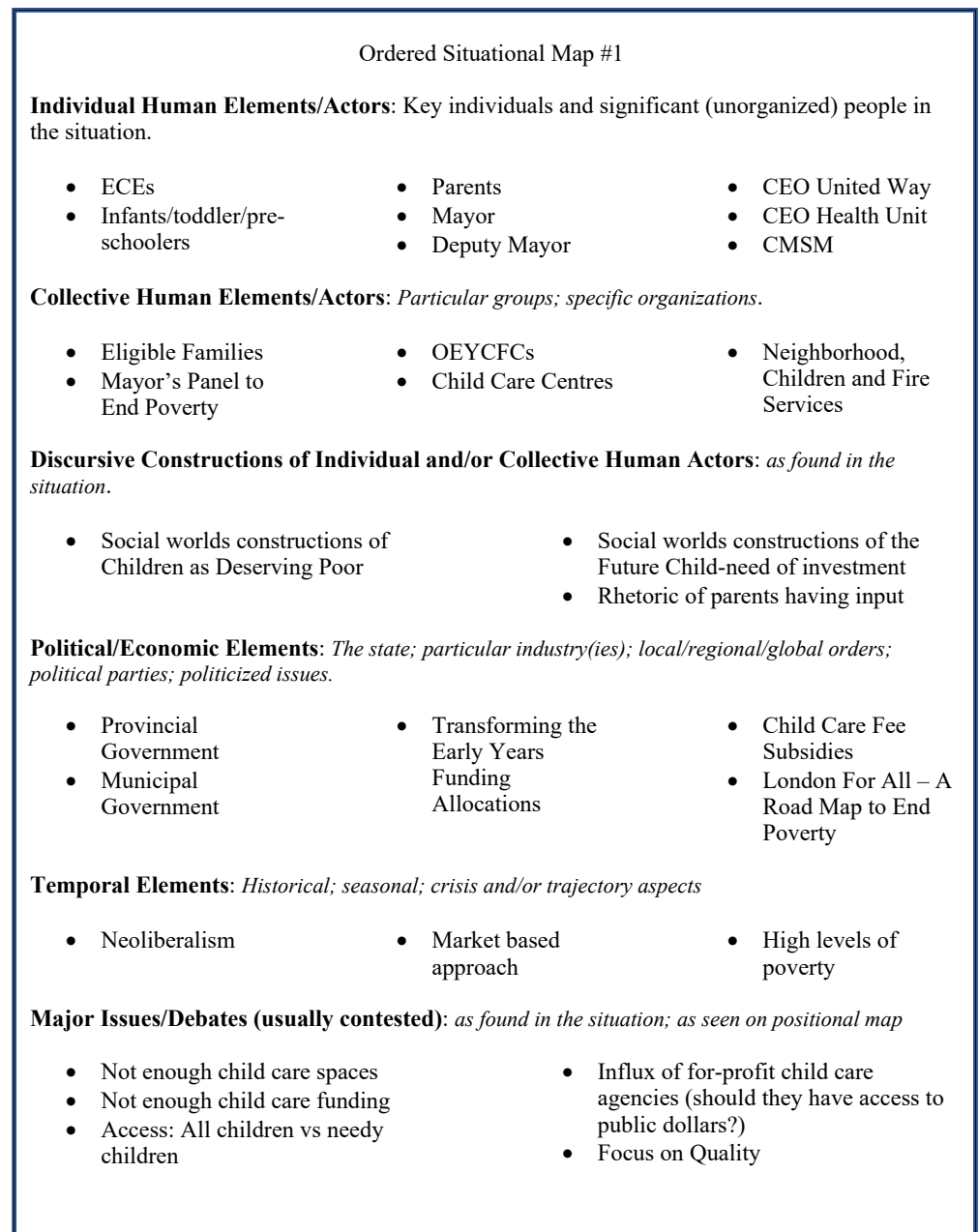


Figure 2. Ordered Situational Map #1. Adapted from Clarke (2015).

Figure 2. Ordered situational map #1.

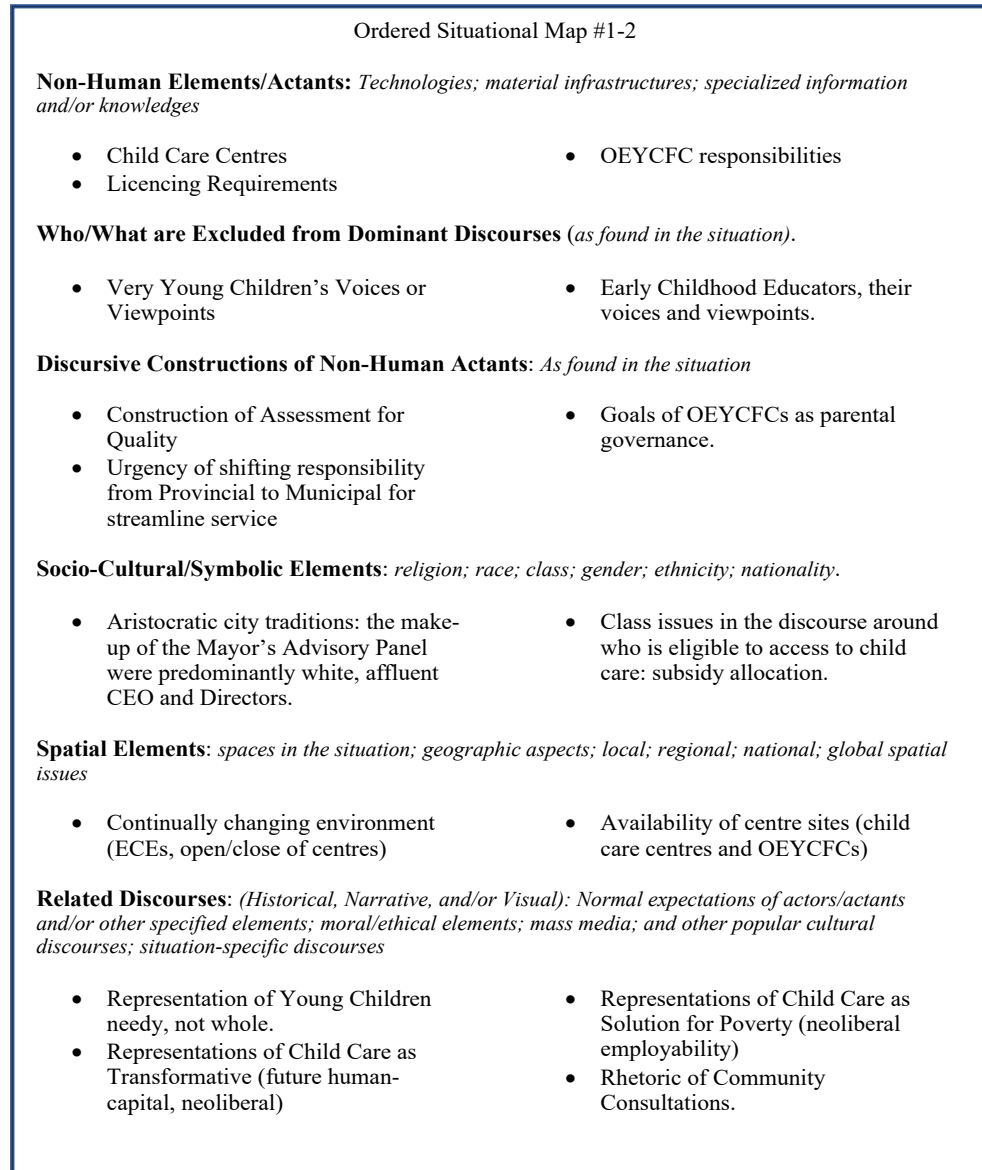


Figure 3. Ordered Situational Map # 1-2. Adapted from Clarke (2015).

Figure 3. Ordered situational map #1-2.

Summary

In this third chapter I explained how the methodology chosen for this study was particularly useful in revealing the dominant discourses in municipal early years documents. I argued that situational analysis problematizes the taken-for-granted truths that are prevalent in policy documents and reports in the early years sector. I explained that Adele Clarke (2005) developed this research methodology during her work using grounded theory. Clarke states that situational analysis has moved around the postmodern turn as it incorporates poststructuralist and feminist ideologies that were not as prevalent in grounded theory. I discussed the map-making process in which three different types of maps expose the discourses and reveal particular elements that are silenced. I outlined the historical context of each of the relevant documents and explained how the methodology and discourse work together.

Next, in Chapter 4, I present the study's findings and discuss them.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

Chapter 4 begins with a historical-social context in order to situate policy documents firmly in the immediate local municipality of London-Middlesex. I offer a thorough examination of the three dominant themes found in the analysis of the data, where I drew on aspects of Foucault's work to expose some of the implicit and explicit meanings that underpin the relevant discourses. Finally, I discuss the key findings. I revisit the original research questions of how children and families are viewed in municipal child care policy documents; what major discourses are present in these documents; and how the documents maintain power relations and regulate subjects.

Historical Context of the Documents

The *London-Middlesex Child Care and Early Years Service Plan* (CCEYSP; 2017), the associated *Needs Assessment Report* (Howard, 2017), and the report *London For All : A Plan to End Poverty* (Mayor's Advisory Panel on Poverty, 2016) are locally produced documents that pertain directly to early learning and child care in London, Ontario. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the documents were all created and written in a similar moment in time, in isolation from each other and by multiple local agencies. Though these sets of data are not technically related to each other, together they offer insights into the local early years sector.

The CCEYSP (2017) was created in response to major provincial transformation in the child care sector. The province, which had formerly been the administrators of the Ontario Early Years Centres (OEYCs), mandated the transfer of those responsibilities to the municipal government. In this transfer, the province mandated that the consolidated municipal service managers (CMSMs) would administer the programming through

municipal budgets; however, the province provided funding to the municipalities for the CMSMs to allocate as necessary. During this transfer of responsibilities, it was decided to combine OEYCs with three other provincial programs to streamline services to integrate and remove silos of education, parenting support, and child care. These new integrated early year service centres were renamed the Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres (OEYCFCs) and are located in municipalities across the province. In London, this change in the mandate of the municipal government and the role of the CMSM triggered the need to write the current local early years service plan, called the CCEYSP. One of the responsibilities of the OEYCFC was to have the County of Middlesex conduct a needs assessment to determine how early years services were distributed and to engage the community for parental input. The needs assessment was conducted in September 2017 by the London-Middlesex Committee of the Whole. They produced a report titled *Needs Assessment Report* (Howard, 2017) and it was submitted by the general manager of Finance and Community Services. The final data set was used in a report created by the Mayor's Advisory Panel on Poverty called *London For All: A Road Map to End Poverty* (2016). The panel engaged with experts, health officials, and the community to draw together this report, and one of the planks of the plan included early learning and education as an intervention to eliminate poverty in one generation (Mayor's Advisory Panel on Poverty, 2016).

Ending Poverty in London

The Mayor's Advisory Panel on Poverty was convened to devise a plan to eliminate poverty in London in one generation. The panel consisted of six community members, each with a stake in the conversation regarding poverty. The panel was assigned the task

of developing recommendations for actions on poverty. One key task was to engage in community conversations to gain the knowledge and experience of Londoners. The panel engaged in this process for six months and then produced a report with 112 recommendations, which were narrowed down and included child care as a recommendation for action. This led me to examine the advisory panel's plan to use child care and early learning as an action point. To start, I troubled the actual heading of this plank in the plan, which is titled "Early Learning and Education" (Mayor's Advisory Panel on Poverty, p. 22). I wondered what the difference was between early learning and education. This part of the report only speaks about young children: Because it references only child care and early learning opportunities, it is not referring to K–12 education. The distinction between early learning and education is unclear.

Angelique Bletsas (2007) states that poverty must be interrogated more closely in order to understand the multiple concepts of poverty that exist. She argues that contesting concepts of poverty helps to give context to how the problem of poverty is addressed. She goes on to assert that the majority of debates around poverty tend to be about an appropriate role of government, which creates a technical understanding of poverty devoid of ethics and places the individual as the cause of being deficient and in need of intervention. This seems to be the approach of this municipal endeavour to reduce poverty, when the panel explicitly positions the intervention of child care and education as contingent in halting intergenerational poverty. As the report states regarding investment in early years and education, "by focusing our efforts [on early learning and education], we begin to build supportive, inclusive, life pathways that can stop the next generation from living in poverty" (Mayor's Advisory Panel on Poverty, 2016, p. 22).

Again, it is unclear in the documents how this prescriptive approach to child care would have the ability to stop poverty in future generations. The discourse of return on investment, where money is injected into the child care sector with expected outcomes, as mentioned previously in the section on the future child discourse, has become a dominant taken-for-granted truth. However, as Moss (2014) argues, it tends to oversimplify the cost-benefit analysis that enters the political conversation.

Themes

Three dominant themes emerged in the situational analysis of the documents regarding child care in London: children, families, and educators as impoverished; the marketization of child care; and healthy child development. In this section, I provide a detailed analysis of each of these themes as they relate to the original overarching question of this study: What are the major discourses that inform how children and families are viewed in municipal child care policy documents in London, Ontario?

Theme 1: Children, families, and educators as impoverished. There are multiple discourses present in the documents that view children, families, and educators as impoverished in some way. “Impoverished” does not only mean financially poor, though that is also the case. What interests me here is how children, families, and educators are seen as impoverished when they are perceived as deficient in some way. The language of the documents imply that parents of young children are incomplete because they lack appropriate parenting skills and need monitoring and/or intervention if their employment status is less than full-time. Children are incomplete because they are seen as preformed adults and deficient in their full human development. Educators are

incomplete because they lack full access to complete employment deserving of a living wage.

Below I examine four subthemes: ways parents are perceived as incomplete; how subsidies and grants are distributed to create deficiencies; when parental employment as a solution for poverty could become another way for the state to avoid addressing the social causes of poverty; and how the image of the educator as deficient continues to undermine her recognition as a professional deserving of appropriate wages and status.

Incomplete parents. Both explicit and implicit discourses are present in the documents. For example, parents are described as needing access to an “integrated and cohesive system of supports” (CCEYSP, p. 3) with essential services provided at no cost through OEYCFCs. Such statements seem benign and neutral; however, they have implications for governance and control. According to the CCEYSP (2017), the goal of the OEYCFCs is to offer free access to services for young children and families, as stated below:

OEYCFCs provide families access to essential early years services and supports. Every OEYCFC will provide three “mandatory core services”:

1. Engaging parents and caregivers—information sharing on child development, pre-and postnatal support programs, and targeted outreach to caregivers not currently accessing services
2. Supporting early learning and development—drop-in programs and services that build responsive adult-child relationships, supported by

How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years

3. Making connections for families—working with families to identify concerns and opportunities related to child development and facilitating connections to services, both within and beyond OEYCFCs. (p. 3)

When thinking with Foucault, this set of statements involves both biopolitics and governance. For example, when the document refers to “supporting early learning and development” (CCEYSP, p. 3), it explicitly implies that parents are not capable of teaching their children properly alone and may not know what appropriate development looks like as prescribed by the state, and therefore require intervention. There is an implicit message in this same phrase which allows for the state to exert control over subject formation for both parents and children. For example, this programming is offered for free for parents with children up to 6 years of age; the services are presented in a way that suggests the program is simply a means to connect with parents who are not currently accessing parenting or family services (p. 3). In this instance, Foucault’s analysis of biopolitics in medicine can be applied in a similar way in the sphere of early childhood education at these OEYCFCs. That is, parents will self-govern and employ the correct ways to raise a child to ensure they are raising a developmentally normal child. There are also power/knowledge relations and a governance component to these particular goals of the OEYCFCs in the implication that the state is controlling the ways in which people self-govern and conform to the ideas of truth that surround developmental theory and the normal child. Gore’s (1995) micro-practices of power of *classification* and *distribution* are seen specifically in the third statement, “making connections for families—working with families to identify concerns and opportunities

related to child development and facilitating connections to services, both within and beyond OEYCFCs” (p. 3), where developmental regimes of truth are used to identify potential problems in development, and to identify those differences in children to determine where in the system they belong. This statement also implies that the government will hand over the tools to raise a developmentally appropriate child within the program, but they are also providing the tools for parents to self-regulate and conform outside of the programs. Bundy (2012) addressed similar implications in her work analyzing Ontario’s Early Learning Program (ELP) where the ELP is seen as a tool to govern parents. Bundy (2012) argues that when these practices of early years “educational” interventions are connected with the notion of biopolitics it is revealed that:

families are being trained in how to modify their behavior to fit within a tightly prescribed form of normalcy, and they are being taught how to self-regulate. The purposes of teaching parents how to be educators at home are to ensure that the discourse of childhood education and care extends beyond the classroom and asserts itself everywhere in the lives of children.
(p. 601)

The OEYCFCs, as laid out in the CCEYSP (2017), are sites to model and monitor parental child-rearing behaviour to mirror the government mandate for learning in the early years, albeit indirectly through the children. Although the stated goals do not outwardly imply any interference by the state, it does seem that there are political motivations to create these sites as a place to govern bodies and oversee the formation of a particular subject. With Gore’s (1995) micro-practices of power in mind, this is an

example of surveillance, which is the notion of being, or expecting to be, monitored to follow particular sets of truths as determined by society.

Deserving poor: Subsidies and employment. The child care system in London-Middlesex provides subsidized spaces for “eligible” families, yet the documents do not clearly identify who is considered eligible for subsidies (p. 2). CCEYSP states that in 2016, the municipality supported an average of 3,041 children per month, and an average of approximately 186 children per month were on the waiting list, with the highest numbers of children waitlisted at 293 children in December 2016 (2017, p. 2). Based on this information, there is already inadequate funding to support all eligible children, and the eligibility requirements appear to be based on family income. In this discourse of eligibility and limited capital, whatever the definition, the child care system is making a distinction between children in need and children not in need. Gore (1995) would argue that this is the micro-practice of power called *classification*, a way to differentiate between groups of people in order to assign a particular set of truths, in this case the level of neediness and the interventions required. When society views children as needy, they are seen as deficient in some way(s), and when children are viewed as deficient, they are seen as incomplete humans (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Armstrong de Almeida, 2006). For example, the *Needs Assessment Report* (2017) drew on data from the 2015 Early Development Instrument (EDI), which showed that “40.3% of children in North Middlesex and 33.0% of children in Southwest Middlesex are vulnerable on one or more domain” (p. 13). It is specifically this last part, “vulnerable on one or more domain” (p. 13), that suggests these children are indeed deficient and less than fully formed humans. This suggestion relates to Foucault’s notions of biopolitics. As Bundy (2012) explains,

“biopolitics is expressly concerned with the power dynamics between a population and the state, specifically as these dynamics relate to governance. There is an emphasis on controlling populations and the differences emerging within them” (p. 596). If children are seen in this state of incompleteness, then it places their family in a deficit discourse and allows, perhaps even needs, the state to intervene, or to govern their parenting. As stated in the *Needs Assessment Report* (Howard, 2017), “The resulting system transformation will build on the successful practices and relationships . . . to be responsive to the strengths and needs of children and families in our communities” (p. 17). Once the state has assumed control over access to child care and placed impoverished children in care, there is a form of governance whereby, with the support of the state and the child care system, parents can raise their children in the proper way to be normal children (Bundy, 2012). This is a form of *totalization*, which Gore (1995) argues is the micro-practice of using taken-for-granted truths that produce a will for parents to conform.

Parental employment. The attainment of gainful parental employment is a common theme in the case for child care all across Canada and Ontario. Lloyd and Penn (2014) argue that social mobility and the facilitation of parental access to the labour market is a major rationale for supporting early years programming in the Canadian context. The same themes emerged from the documents in this study. Parental employment and subsidies are major elements in the conversation around the need for affordable child care.

CCEYSP (2017) connects fee subsidies with opportunities to find employment, as noted here:

Fee subsidy provides families with access to high-quality centre-based and home-based licensed child care and early learning opportunities. It also provides parents and caregivers with opportunities to pursue employment or education. Investments in fee subsidy therefore generate multiple positive community impacts. (p. 7)

There are multiple discourses present in this passage that are common in early childhood education, such as discourses of quality, investments for future return, positive community impacts, and licensed child care opportunities (choice). All of these discourses are related to the taken-for-granted truths that imply that if high-quality child care is subsidized, it is an investment in the family, so parents can get back to work and children can access important learning opportunities. When parents get back to work and children are learning in the proper setting, then that initial investment by the state will pay back dividends. Parents will become tax-paying citizens and children will avoid becoming a burden on society when they are adults. In this scenario, the state is controlling what is right and true, and it is governing the formation of a particular subject. These are examples of Gore's (1995) micro-practices of power of *regulation* and *normalization*. Regulation is when particular truths are invoked to control ways of being and thinking, often using sanctions and rewards. When parents return to work, they are rewarded with a salary. The micro-practice of normalization is also present in the notions that the child care system is now able to help the child conform to the standards of what is considered a normal developing child through to adulthood, where they become contributing citizens (as cited in MacNaughton, 2005).

This particular story removes the multiplicities and the diversities that affect children and families and reduces it to the technical point of returning to work. This particular story does not address any of the complexities associated with poverty, nor does it address the historical traumas of colonization, which have intergenerational impacts on poverty (Barker et al., 2019). This could have the effect of implying that if these basic interventions of finding gainful employment and enrolling children in “high-quality” child care do not work by creating the perfect early learner who grows to be a contributing citizen, the state can argue it did its duty to the child and family, and it must have been the choices that this individual family made and therefore their own fault, rather than critically viewing the larger social situation. Child care subsidies and employment are interlaced in the *London For All* plan (Mayor’s Advisory Panel on Poverty, 2016) as a way to get parents back to work as a solution to end poverty.

The London For All Plan states:

Quicker access to child care subsidy can mean many things for parents. It can mean less time worrying about who is going to look after their children. It can mean the difference between being able to accept a job or not. It can mean knowing their child is going to have important early learning opportunities that position them for better outcomes down the road. (Mayor’s Advisory Panel on Poverty, 2016, p. 22)

The notion of subsidies for child care as a prescription to remedy poverty is highly simplistic in the larger societal context, yet it is the story being told here. This, again, tells a similar story as above. It does not address the historical connections between poverty and colonization or any underlying causes of poverty, yet if the child

care subsidies do not work to draw the family out of poverty, then it must be that they did not make the best choices, and therefore removes the state's ethical duty. Remaining in poverty becomes the fault of the individual rather than the larger social situation (Bletsas, 2007). An important point to note in the documents is that the focus on parental employment as the catalyst for supporting early childhood education has had the effect of silencing the voices of children in this situation. When these discourses become dominant in the public domain, such as getting parents into the workforce to better themselves and the community, the voices of those employed parents tend to gain privilege, and privileging the voices of parents has the effect of marginalizing the voices of children. Children's voices are not represented in any meaningful way in the early years documents that have been produced in the community.

Early childhood educators as impoverished. Educators are not given a voice in the discourses in these documents. Like children, educators are an important physical body in the system of early learning and child care, yet their voices are missing, and they are only discussed in terms of their cost to the system via wage enhancement funds. Dahlberg and Moss (2005) argue that in these neoliberal times there are strong connections in child care that position both the educator working in child care and the young children enrolled in early education programs as needy. The educators in this municipality are seen as needy in the same ways that children might be seen as needy, in that they require assistance from the government. When children are viewed as needy, they are also seen as deficient, and the same parallels can be drawn with educators in this context.

CCEYSP (2017) states:

For the third straight year, the Ministry of Education provided Wage Enhancement Grant funding for the licensed child care sector. The CMSM's 2017 Wage Enhancement Grant approach remains similar to previous years; licensed child care providers apply for funding and the CMSM determines eligibility according to provincial criteria. Though the provincial allocation was not confirmed until April 29, 2017, the CMSM has continued to issue monthly wage enhancement funding to maintain stability and continuity for operators. (p. 9)

The Wage Enhancement Grant is a program that was organized under the former provincial government to enhance the wages of eligible educators by \$2.00 per hour, to close the pay gap that exists between genders in this province but also between educators who work in child care and their higher-paid counterparts who work in school boards. In order to be considered eligible in 2019, an educator must make less than \$26.00 per hour. Women make up more than 98% of the early childhood education work force in Ontario and make an average \$15 to \$20 per hour (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2018). Not only are educators' voices unheard, they are only represented in the data in a discourse of the deserving poor, in a similar way to families who live in poverty. This early childhood education work force is almost entirely made up of women, and women's work is not well paid. This discourse continues low wages, poor benefits, and the precarious work of early childhood educators (Bundy, 2012). Therefore, the Wage Enhancement Grant is no different than a child-care subsidy for impoverished families. It is precarious, in that it is simply a grant and the government could decide at any moment to withdraw the funding. Here again it is possible to understand this situation using Foucault's biopolitics. As

Bundy (2012) explains, Foucault's notions of biopolitics are based on a power imbalance between government and a population. The educators in this situation can be seen as two populations, one as a workforce and the other as women. It is possible, then, to understand how these women, who are by and large working poor, are dependent and therefor controlled by the whims of the state. It is the apparatuses of biopolitics that maintain this population of educators as just compensated enough to remain in this workforce in order to educate children to become the next set of tax-paying citizens. Langford and colleagues (2013) discuss the dominant taken-for-granted truths in neoliberal times that tell the story of educators, who are almost entirely women, and how they choose this type of work. This singular story suggests that women are equal in society and have equal access to all employment sectors. The work of educators is "women's work" of caring and nurturing, which tends to be undervalued, underpaid, and invisible in society. If women choose to be educators despite knowing these facts, then they have chosen to be undervalued in our society. In this story the story-tellers, those with power, in this case the state, normalize the notion that educators do not deserve a fair and living wage. The public hears this story frequently, either implicitly by underpaying and undervaluing educators in the Ontario context, or explicitly by referring to them as day care workers or babysitters, rather than by their professional title of educator. The public comes to believe this story and then the state can dismiss its ethical responsibility to ensure that all people are equal in our society.

Another discourse that emerges by leaving educators voiceless in these documents is the power/knowledge discourse. Delaune (2019) argues that when educators' voices are intentionally removed or omitted from policy making, or in the development of

assessments and outcomes policies, the policymakers create a power imbalance between themselves and the educators. It is likely that those at the top, who make policy, administer funding, and manage the business side of education, will have different ideologies or goals for educational programming than educators. It is this power imbalance that allows those at the top, who make the decisions, to see fit to omit the voice of the educator and thereby remove her as someone with knowledge and experience. It is in this way that educating young children is stripped of its subjectivities and multiplicities and rendered a technical task that can be self-regulated and self-monitored against desired practices. Foucault (1972) would argue that a discourse in general, when it becomes dominant, is a way to self-govern and normalize certain practices, and by removing educators' voices the power and knowledge imbalance could lead to change educators' practices and behaviours. For example, educators might learn to simply accept developmental theories that underpin policy changes in the child care system. Even when policymakers are not knowledgeable about education, they continue to hold the power. In this local case the outcomes framework (see Figure 4) from the CCEYSP (2107), which centres the child (in name and position on the graphic only), highlights theories of human development and claims a guiding principle of "high quality," though it entirely omits educators' knowledge and experiences. This normalizes the theories of human development that underpin the outcomes framework. The discourses that surround human development theory are discussed below.

Theme 2: The marketization of child care. Another common discourse that is seen in child care discussions is around what access to child care can do for our society. In these neoliberal times, child care is thought of as a commodity or a service that is

meant to inject interventions into the child today to create a particular future subject. This is revealed in this theme of marketization of child care as children are often viewed as preformed adults who will one day be tax paying contributors to society. In this section I outline three different components of the free-market thinking around how access to child care can change a society. Peter Moss (2015), a prolific researcher and writer on discourses in early childhood, outlines below how these free-market ideologies of quality, investment, and intervention are argued by policymakers to fix all of society's problems. He states:

Find, invest in and apply the correct human technologies—aka “quality”—during early childhood and you will get high returns on investment including improved education, employment and earnings and reduced social problems. A simple equation beckons and beguiles: “early intervention” + “quality” = increased “human capital” + national success (or at least survival) in a cut-throat global economy. Invest early and invest smartly and we will all live happily ever after in a world of more of the same—only more so (p. 1)

Moss (2014) is not contesting that “high-quality” child care is important; he is pointing out that it tends to force us to think about child care in terms of inputs and outputs without examining and contesting the power relations that are present. In this theme I explore discourses of quality, investments for the future, and choice.

Quality discourse. “High-quality” child care is a common theme throughout all the municipal documents I examined. However, it should be noted that there is no definition provided in any of the three documents as to what “high quality” actually is. As

Moss (2014) points out, the discourse of quality in Canada remains quite vague; it seems to have more to do with assessments of child care centres and evaluations of children than it does with excellent child care spaces. However, all three of the documents return to the rhetoric of quality and outcomes multiple times. For example, the following diagram is the Outcome Framework from the CCEYSP (2017), which illustrates a focus on “the vision, outcomes, and guiding principles for planning and implementation of OEYCFCs” (p. 4).

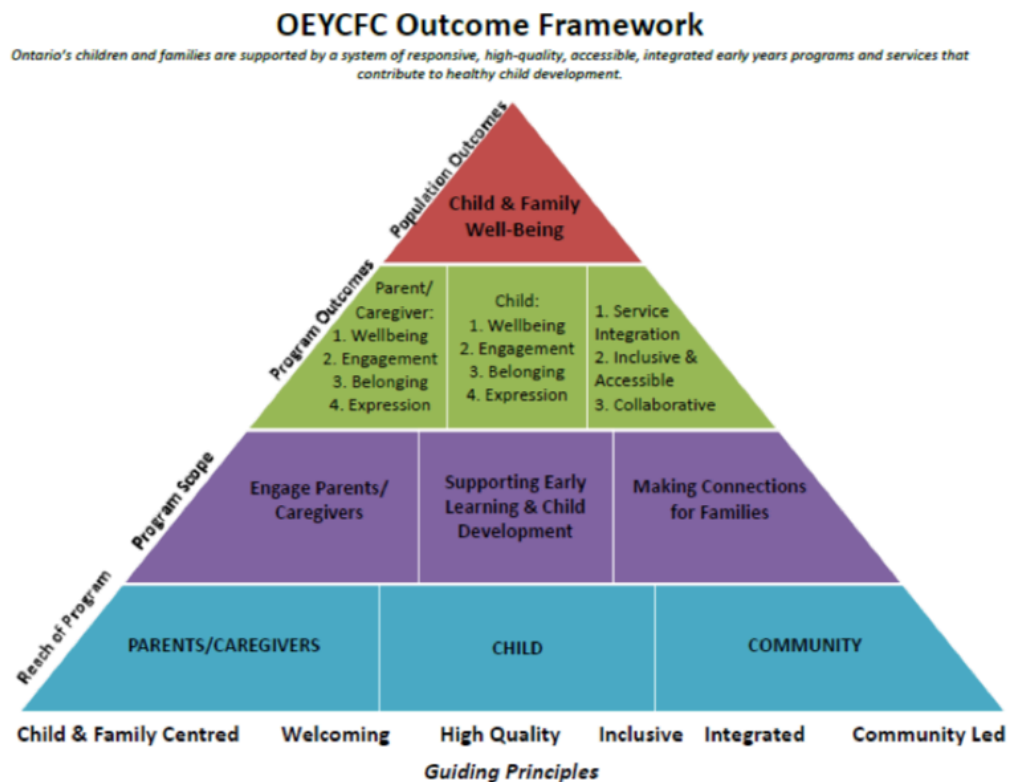


Figure 4. OEYCFC outcome framework.

It is evident from this framework that “high quality” and outcomes both for the program and the population are a major concern with the implementation of the OEYCFCs. However, there is a potential danger in this hyper-focus on quality, outcomes, and assessment, as Moss and Dahlberg (2008) articulate:

Quality is a language of evaluation that fails to recognise a multilingual world and, in so doing, denies the possibility of other languages. And as Clarke describes in the quotation with which we begin the article, “quality” is part of a process of depoliticisation that displaces “real political and policy choices into a series of managerial imperatives”— substituting managerial methods for democratic deliberation. (p. 6)

This passage explains the potential hidden underpinnings of the quality initiative of the above framework, which tries to remove the politics of the questions of quality and outcomes and replace them with neutral and technical methods of program and child outcomes to improve child care. The graphic implies that local policymakers base the success of the OEYCFCs on the implementation of “responsive, ‘high-quality’, accessible, integrated early years programs and services that contribute to healthy child development” (CCEYSP, 2017, p. 4). This particular outcome framework, which vaguely outlines standards for quality, is consistent with current global shifts in early childhood education in that it is promoting one type of learning as a singular truth (Diaz-Diaz, Semenec, & Moss, 2019). This singular truth stands as a shortcut to what is best, “best practice” if you like, rather than exploring the diversity of early childhood education and its multiple perspectives and knowledges; this, Delaune (2019) points out, is consistent in global trends towards standardization. Echoing Moss’s statement (2016), Delaune writes that the “story of quality and high returns lies in a preference for simplicity and standardisation over complexity and diversity” (2019, p. 63). This shift in highlighting quality and outcomes can be understood by thinking with Foucault, in the way Delaune

(2019) applies Foucault's notions of power and truth to the OECD's moves towards standardized testing. She states that,

Foucault argued that instead of a contiguous actuality which must be obeyed, "truth" is the product of discursive language and practice that normalises behaviours so that the individual conforms without even realising the ways in which s/he is being subjugated. (p. 17)

This quote explains how seemingly neutral words such as "well-being" and "supporting early learning & child development" (p. 4) found in the outcome framework are actually dominant discourses of quality and truth. These words hold power and govern the way society thinks, feels, and acts toward child care without paying attention to the ways children, parents, and community are being subjugated. Moreover, the structure of the pyramid graphic highlights "child" as the centre and foundation of the outcome framework directly above the "high-quality" guiding principle, which connotes another dominant discourse in early childhood education: child-centeredness. Though the documents do not highlight child-centeredness in text, this image implies that all the other elements of the framework place the child as the centre and foundation of the system. Cannella (1997) argues that the discourse of child-centeredness has underpinnings of developmental theories where "all" children have the same fundamental needs and meeting these needs through play is of utmost importance. This type of choice discourse adheres to the notion of "all children" as if they are one large monolithic, homogenous group, with direct and predictable ways of development and being, rather than a diverse group with multiple histories and many different life trajectories.

Investments for the future. The discourse of investment in children for future benefits is prevalent in all three of the documents. As with previous explicit discourses found in this study, investing in children does not seem inherently problematic on the surface, but it does place children and, by extension, families as market-based, neoliberal subjects, which implies ownership. For example, the concept of investment in early years programs and services is presented in the following passage from the *London For All* report, which states:

Investment in early years and education that ensures children get the best start in life has dramatic downstream impacts for the community. By focusing our efforts here, we begin to build supportive, inclusive life pathways that can stop the next generation from living in poverty.

(Mayor's Advisory Panel on Poverty, 2016, p. 22)

This passage is in the opening header for the early learning and education section of the *London For All* report (Mayor's Advisory Panel on Poverty, 2016). Here, it is explicit, not only that children and families are viewed as commodities that might lead to future gains with appropriate investment, but that if there are not investments in early years and education, these subjects will continue, potentially intergenerationally, to be a financial burden on society. This concept of investment for future returns is underexamined in these documents about child care in London. However, the concept of investing for the future is not new in early childhood education globally. It has become a dominant taken-for-granted truth that is based on dubious cost-benefit mathematics (Moss, 2014). Moreover, the concept of investing for tomorrow is akin to placing bets on the stock exchange or on a new business venture; there is some risk, but you own a tiny

piece of that enterprise. When interrogating these ideas of investing for the future and connections to ownership, I look to Foucault's ideas on power and governance. When the document uses language such as "investment in early years education . . . can stop the next generation from living in poverty" (Mayor's Advisory Panel on Poverty, 2016, p. 22), it injects notions of capitalism into the public discourse around child care and normalizes a market-based approach to education. It also contributes to the notion that early childhood programs can be the responsibility of the state to save future generations from poverty. This concept begins to influence how the public thinks, feels, and acts about government involvement in child care. Eventually, society may begin to think about child care as a free-market entity that can be invested in and owned, normalizing the neoliberal idea that child care should be a free-market service.

Choice. The discourse of choice is prevalent in early childhood education, as Richardson et al. (2013) point out. A strong political rhetoric favours notions of parental choice which state that parents should be able to choose the site and programming that they feel best suits their child. These discourses of personal choice are present in the local documents, as shown in the following passages from the *London For All* (Mayor's Advisory Plan on Poverty, 2016) plan, which states, "Increasing the number of child care spaces will provide more opportunities for parents to access this vital resource" (p. 22) and, along similar strains of thinking about opportunities and choice, the municipality is embracing these notions of expansion for opportunities and choice. The CCEYSP (2017) states:

We are excited and encouraged by the opportunities created by the ongoing transformation of the child care and early years sector. As a

community we have been on a trajectory toward increased capacity and integration in child care and early years for some time. (p. 1)

The neoliberal discourse of choice is noted in phrases such as “transformation of the child care and early years sector” (CCEYSP, p. 1), as well as “increased capacity” (p. 1), which implies more child care spaces and therefore more child care centres and OEYCFCs for parents to choose from. This statement in the document is presented to appear as though there is little government control, and these opportunities tend to feel liberating to parents and have great appeal. However, Richardson et al. (2013) state that this rhetoric is “inherently misleading” (p. 158). Notions of capacity building, choice, and transformative opportunities are words that Foucault would argue are about power and knowledge. In these notions of power and knowledge, it is the state that is seen to hold the true knowledge, and it is the state that determines what is right and proper, such as teaching parents what healthy child development is in these new centres. Parents will learn, through self-governance and self-regulation, how to be good parents by gaining the appropriate knowledge they need to educate their children according to current social standards.

Theme 3: Healthy child development. Healthy child development is not a new discourse. It is very prevalent throughout much of the early childhood educational context and is found in policy documents and early childhood educator training programs. It is also a major goal set forth by the World Health Organization (Diaz-Diaz et al., 2019). It is generally accepted as a positive, explicitly exposed discourse. However, child development discourses have underpinnings in developmental psychology and could be considered violent (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). MacNaughton (2005) states that

developmental psychology has its foundations in Minority World research contexts in places such as Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand, all wealthy continents and countries with a minority of the global population. Most in the child care sector are familiar with Minority World research of developmentalism that is foundational in most early childhood educator training programs. In contrast, the Majority World is the rest of the world: impoverished nations with the majority of the global population. However, Minority World research is the standard by which all early childhood education programs across the globe are viewed. MacNaughton (2005) states:

Developmental psychology is a Minority World social science that seeks to build universally applicable, factual and correct statements about how children develop. Its truths include statements that explain and predict normal child development, enabling developmental psychologists to identify developmental delay and abnormal development (p. 18).

Developmental psychology attempts to create an image of a normal child, one to which others can be compared, creating a particular subject that is considered the global standard for child development (MacNaughton, 2005). Normal children are what would be considered typically developing children. The following passage is from the CCEYSP (2017), which has adopted the Ontario Ministry of Education's vision for the newly acquired OEYCFCs. It states: "Ontario's children and families are well supported by a system of responsive, 'high-quality,' accessible and increasingly integrated early years programs and services that contribute to healthy child development" (p. 3). In this passage there is an explicit implication of the need for healthy child development, and that this is achieved by offering responsive, "high-quality" programming. "Healthy child

development,” as mentioned previously, is a taken-for-granted truth that reduces childhood down to one normalized story about children and childhood. In doing this, the fictional “normal child” is developed and all children can be assessed and evaluated based on this fiction.

It is also important to point out how the CCEYSP repeats the term “high-quality” in this statement, because as noted previously, Moss (2014) argues that quality is still an undefined term in the context of early childhood education in Canada. Therefore in this instance it seems to be a rhetorical statement.

It should be noted that in contrast to the single story of children and childhood in the CCEYSP, one part of the *Needs Assessment Report* (Howard, 2017) outlines particular ways in which it is difficult to reduce children to one monolithic entity with only one story. The document states that there are diverse needs in the community due to its wide geographical spread, and that urban and rural children potentially require child care or early years services. It also mentions that there are children who have particular needs based on their deficiencies as measured by the Early Development Instrument (EDI). The document refers to the fact that there are children from francophone homes as well as Indigenous children and families, lone-parent families, and families who struggle financially. So, as the document outlines, there are multiple and varied stories right here in this community. Therefore, the discourses of healthy child development and the normal child are not real truths in this local situation and should not be reduced to this single story.

Discussion

In this discourse analysis I have reviewed the situation of London's early years sector through the situational analysis method and uncovered many implicit and explicit discourses present in locally produced documents and reports that pertain to the early years and child care situation in London-Middlesex. This discourse analysis reveals how the seemingly benign and apparently neutral language used in the documents can have more than one meaning. Often there are both explicit and hidden meanings in the situation. When this discursive language becomes dominant, Foucault and other reconceptualist scholars would argue, it will govern how people think, feel, and act in particular ways, often without even knowing they are.

Importantly, this discourse analysis also reveals that there are unheard voices in the local child care and early years system. Though children are the subject of the reports and recipients of child care opportunities, their voices have been entirely omitted in these documents. Neither are the voices of educators present. Both children and educators are present in body in the situation, for without either subject there would not be an early learning and child care system. Yet interestingly, neither of their relevant voices are present in the documents. There are instances where their participation is implied, as in "child" in the outcome framework graphic from the CCEYSP (Figure 4), but even educators are not represented as a figure on that graphic. Somehow, educators are almost entirely excluded from the documents pertaining to early childhood education. This exclusion contributes to the invisibility of women's work in our society and the deficit discourse that leads many educators to be reliant on the province in the form of the wage enhancement grant.

In this content analysis of the local policy documents child care is thought of as a service, which is evident in the title of the CCEYSP (2017) service plan. This discourse analysis shows that the child care sector in this community has assigned many roles to child care, such as an interventional tool for poverty reduction and a strategy for achieving positive future outcomes. However, it does not reveal any real representations of what its role is regarding physical children

The local child care system does seem to have some barriers in terms of a child's access to services. It is noted in the documents the city does well in terms of getting children off the waitlist for subsidies quickly (no noted time frame was given). However, this leads to questions about how eligibility is determined for child care subsidies and who can access child care opportunities. This gatekeeper style of access will undoubtedly leave some children without access to education. It is unclear what the threshold for eligibility for child care subsidies is, so it is likely that there are children from working families who may not qualify because of their family's employment status. However, the fees might still be unaffordable for those families. Child care can be a large expense for many families and there is the potential that there are middle-income families who do not qualify for subsidy, but must allocate those funds to service other debts and expenses. Therefore, those children could be denied access to child care.

In these neoliberal times, the systems of early childhood education and access to child care should be problematized in the way the Foucault (1977) suggests; first by taking the problem in its present and then applying the history of the present (Bacchi, 2012). Therefore, to problematize early childhood education it must be asked, what were the conditions that cast early childhood education into this problem of unequal access to

child care? If access for all children is the problem, what are the conditions that created the situation that not all children have access and how has this problem been shaped as an object for thought (Foucault, 1985, as cited in Bacchi, 2012)? From a Foucauldian perspective, it is important to interrogate those histories and objects to understand how they serve to become truths and ways to govern. Problematizations emerge from practices, and in this thought process inaccessible child care emerges from the practices of those who govern the system. In the neoliberal practices of marketizing early education, the province has positioned it as a nice-to-have service rather than a common good; as well, they have controlled the narrative so that society believes this and behaves in accordance. They have positioned early education this way with the discourse of parental choice. For example, a popular political party uses rhetoric that implies “you do not want the government telling you how to raise your child” when the discussion of universal care is raised. The state proposes that they want to be arm’s length and allow parental choice and free-market discretion in the child care debate. The irony is, as Bundy (2012) points out, that the state does govern parents, in the ways they think and behave towards how to raise their children within the structures of early childhood education. This form of governance was revealed in this study in the way the state controls parents’ access to services through the OEYCFCs. The state also controls what information is disseminated from those sites of free parental supports, and in this situation, it is taken-for-granted truths about the normal child and pathways of normal human development. Furthermore, the government is highly involved in, and tells parents exactly what to do about, mandatory K–12 education. The implication here is that very young children are only the concern of the individual parent rather than a societal concern. It is important to

note that these practices enacted by our municipal and provincial state are deeply steeped in neoliberalism, which leaves the public trying to navigate contradictions and economic irrationality.

Wendy Brown (2003) argues that neo-liberalism is not simply a set of economic policies; it is not only about facilitating free trade, maximizing corporate profits, and challenging welfarism. Rather, neo-liberalism carries a social analysis which, when deployed as a form of governmentality, reaches from the soul of the citizen-subject to education policy to practices of empire. Neo-liberal rationality, while foregrounding the market, is not only or even primarily focused on the economy; rather it involves extending and disseminating market values to all institutions and social actions, even as the market itself remains a distinctive player . . . through discourse and policy promulgating its criteria, neo-liberalism produces rational actors and imposes market rationale for decision-making in all spheres. Importantly then, neo-liberalism involves a normative rather than ontological claim about the pervasiveness of economic rationality and advocates the institution building, policies, and discourse development appropriate to such a claim. (p. 1)

In other words, with a neoliberal understanding, it is in actuality the state, through taken-for-granted truths, who uses discourses such as proper child development as a means to govern and control the way parents behave, and thus seduces them into self-governing, self-regulating, and normalizing this system of unequal access. Neoliberalism is based on

the (untrue) notions of fewer state controls and regulations and free-market reliance, yet the state is steeped in controlling the behaviour of its subjects through subsidies, wage enhancements, free services in the form of OEYCFCs, legislation, licensing, capacity building, and funding allocations.

Summary

In this chapter I provided a historical-social context in order to situate *The London-Middlesex Child Care and Early Years Service Plan* (2017) (CCEYSP), the associated *Needs Assessment Report* (Howard, 2017), and the report *London For All: A Plan to End Poverty* (2016) firmly in the immediate local municipality of London-Middlesex. Then, I offered a thorough examination of the three dominant themes that were found in the analysis of the data: (1) children, families, and educators as impoverished; (2) the marketization of child care; and (3) healthy child development. I drew on aspects of Foucault's work to expose some of the implicit and explicit meanings that underpin the relevant discourses. Finally, I discussed the key findings by revisiting the original research questions: (1) How are children and families viewed in municipal child care policy documents in London, Ontario? (2) What major discourses are present in these documents? (3) How do these documents maintain power relations and serve to regulate subjects?

The discourse analysis revealed that the voices of politicians and bureaucrats who hold the power are present in the documents, but those of children and early childhood educators are not. These policymakers are entrusted to make policy decisions, yet they have only limited amounts of economic capital to provide services, and therefore they always seem to be running a system that is deficient in some way. This power imbalance

means that parents, educators, and children learn to normalize the discourse of never having enough: never enough subsidies, never enough educators, and never enough capital to pay educators a living wage without charity from the province. Further, there are dangers in turning children into voiceless subjects who are always less-than or deficient in some way and who are assessed and evaluated, rather than viewed as fully formed humans with the same rights as adults.

Next, in Chapter 5, I summarize the thesis, suggest areas for potential further research, and offer some final thoughts.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

This study was conducted as a way to review the discourses that are present in early years documents specific to the municipal level in London, Ontario. Previous discourse analysis work has been done at provincial, federal, and global levels (e.g., Bundy, 2012; Burman, 2008; Cannella, 1997; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Langford, 2007; Langford et al., 2013; McKenna, 2015; Moss, 2011, 2014; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2006; Pence & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2008; Polakow, 2008; Richardson et al., 2013) and this study serves as a way to add to the literature to understand the potentially unique situations of municipal governments in administering their child care programs. This work is important because it is at the municipal level where child care subsidies and funding allocation decisions are made. It is also important to interrogate the discourses that might underpin the policymakers' decisions in terms of allocating funds and who is eligible for subsidies.

In these neoliberal times, revealing the discourses present in child care policy documents is an important undertaking because it is necessary to understand the implications of how particular discourses in policy are then taken up to inform practice. The aim for this study was to provide a rich interrogation of the discourses present in municipal policy documents, thinking with Foucault and using a situational analysis (Clarke, 2005) to uncover the discourses. I sought to disrupt the powerful taken-for-granted truths and knowledges that are assumed to be free from politics and biases in child care and to make visible how those truths are not innocent.

This final chapter of the thesis provides a summary and discussion by returning to the research questions from Chapter 1. Next, I suggest two areas for potential further research and some final thoughts.

Returning to The Research Questions

Reconceptualist scholars, such as Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, Peter Moss, and Glenda MacNaughton, to name a few, have offered me new ways to think about policy documents. Their interrogations and reconceptualized notions of the ways in which powerful regimes of truth based on developmental psychology that permeate child care have disrupted my own educational background and my ties to developmental psychology. These new-to-me ways of thinking about child care and policy in my own practice led me to wonder what discourses might be present in the local policy documents found in my community of London, Ontario. My intention in this thesis was to use a situational analysis (Clarke, 2005) to uncover discourses and a Foucauldian gaze to interrogate their implications. I asked three research questions:

1. How are children and families viewed in municipal child care policy documents in London?
2. What major discourses are present in these documents?
3. How do these documents maintain power relations and serve to regulate subjects?

Three main themes emerged through my analysis of the policy documents: (1) children, families, and educators as impoverished; (2) the marketization of child care; and (3) healthy child development. My analysis found that child care in this community has been positioned in a prescriptive manner, as one that can solve many social problems that

arise during these neoliberal times, such as low employment, high levels of poverty. My analysis also found that child care can also be positioned as a necessary tool to provide interventions for the normal development of children toward a fulfilling democratic adult life. The techniques of governmentality of the self and others were identified in the ways discourse was used in the documents to exert power and control over the local child care system. The perception that policymakers are the keepers of the knowledge is apparent in the ways they wield power when making decisions regarding local child care programs without including the diverse voices of children and educators. The single story of high quality and returns (Moss, 2014) was told again and again in the documents, and it pushed its way to the centre of the policies and recommendations. The discourses around quality, investment in the future, and the healthy, normally developing child have permeated the conversation about early childhood in London and inspired actions to mold policies and practices for both child care programs and poverty reduction strategies in the community.

The local consolidated municipal service manager (CMSM) and the municipal government administer early years programs as potential solutions to social problems that are perceived to exist within children and families as individuals. Children, families, and educators are positioned as impoverished and requiring external governance; they are not perceived as fully formed subjects with full rights under the law, but as deficient and in need. These discourses, or taken-for-granted truths, lead to particular subject formation and self-governance around being “good parents” and producing a “normal” child. Educators and parents learn to self-regulate to adhere to these societal acceptances of truth. However, it is possible to contest and problematize the conditions that exist in the

current system by disrupting these hegemonic discourses and challenging policymakers to acknowledge the diverse and multiple voices of children and families as well as the knowledge and experience of educators. MacNaughton (2005) says that this is a radical and activist action that all educators should engage in, because there are no facets of early childhood education that are neutral and void of politics: Everything is political, and we have an ethical responsibility to act. As I held this idea in mind, some questions became clear to me around this community's perspectives on the image of the child. For example, if the dominant story became that all children are in fact full rights holders, regardless of class, race, or economic status, how then can any child be denied access to high-quality child care? It is worth wondering if it might be easier to deny access to subjects that are not viewed as fully formed, tax-paying, voting, and contributing members of the community. However, it seems from the analysis of the discourses present in this local community's policy documents that creating programming that is diverse, complex, and full of multiplicities was not the goal. Rather, the policymakers' focus seems to have been pursuing outcomes-based programming with assessments and evaluations at the centre, which is consistent with many OECD countries (Diaz-Diaz et al., 2019).

Further Research

Even while a new *London & Middlesex Early Years and Child Care Service Plan* is due to be released in 2019 (Howard, 2017), further research into how these policy documents are written and taken up in practice would be an important next step. For instance, conducting interviews and focus groups with municipal policymakers could be a possible avenue to explore how these documents are assembled and disseminated. Further, since this document analysis only reveals certain discourses, it is not clear how these policies

are enacted in the community. Another research study that explores how these enacted policies are experienced by educators, families, and children could deepen the understanding on the impacts of these policy documents.

Moreover, in my analysis and discussion of this study, I am also left with further questions:

- Why is K–12 education not thought of as a service the way early childhood education is, but simply as education for all? Why is there an age distinction for ECE?
- What possibilities would open up if children's voices were really heard when policymakers developed service plans on their behalf?
- What possibilities would open up if all children were considered full rights holders in the present rather than future adults? How then would it be decided which children to include in access to child care and who to exclude?
- Why is there a distinction between care and education?
- Why is it that very young children do not have the same rights and access to fully funded education as their slightly older counterparts? If society is to believe that healthy child development is the ultimate goal for very young children, why then is there not a system to achieve those goals available to every child, especially the very young child?
- If, according to developmental psychology, the years from birth to 6 are the most critical for brain development, why are high-quality educational opportunities not offered for all children in this period? It seems more critical to offer educational

opportunities to this age group than to any other, because according to developmental psychology, brain development slows after age 6.

Some of these questions provide an alternative way to think about the dominant stories that are told about early childhood education in this community. As MacNaughton (2005) argues, activist educators have a responsibility to disrupt these taken-for-granted stories. She argues that when we make visible the marginalized voices in the stories, some of these taken-for-granted truths fall apart.

Final Thoughts

During this time of change and transformation, with the relegation of more and varied child care services to municipal governments, now would be the time to engage with policymakers around contesting the dominant discourses that exist in the current system. Now is the time to encourage policymakers to finally see children, families, and educators, and to listen to the diverse voices and experiences that are present in the child care community. Perhaps if those in power begin to view their policies and practices with a critical eye and they disrupt some of the taken-for-granted truths of developmentalism, they might change the way children and families access child care, and child care may come to be seen, not as a prescription to cure an ailment, but as a right to education for all.

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