From Policy to Practice in Early Childhood Education and Care Centres in Manitoba: ECE Perspectives

by

María Paula Rocha

Kinesiology and Recreation Management

The University of Manitoba

Winnipeg, Manitoba

MASTER OF ARTS

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Abstract

Prior research has noted that there can be gaps between the policies put forth by the government and the practices that Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) implement in Early Learning Child Care Centres (ELCCCs) (Dunst & Trivette, 2009; French-Lee & Dooley, 2015; Halbert, 2001; McFarland, Saunders & Allen, 2008). At the same time, prior research has also noted that positive guidance, as a pedagogical framework to managing behaviour, can pose barriers to implementation (McFarland et al., 2008). However, little is known about whether ECEs acknowledge the gap between positive guidance policies and what is practiced. To explore this topic, a qualitative study was conducted. Four ECEs (II and III) participated in a seven-question, electronic interview, which consisted of six open-ended questions and one question requiring a creative response. Participant responses were thematically analyzed and categorized. As a result, three themes emerged: *The field of early childhood education, Comprehension of policies,* and *Managing behaviour.* The themes, along with their corresponding subthemes, were represented utilising a creative analytical approach.

Keywords: early childhood education, child care, preschool, behaviour management policy, positive guidance, early childhood educators, creative analytical practice

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Preface

It is important to acknowledge that the development of this research project has been directly motivated by my personal experiences. In 2017, I completed my diploma in early childhood education and received the title of Early Childhood Educator II (ECE II). The training that I underwent, which consisted of both theory and practice-based education, certifies me to work in Early Learning and Child Care Centres (ELCCCs) in Manitoba. ELCCCs can range from home daycares to nursery schools, before and after school-aged care facilities, and fulltime preschool centres.

Early on in my journey to becoming an ECE, I was confronted with overwhelming amounts of information that contradicted with my own beliefs of what early childhood education should entail. Most of my internal conflicts surfaced during discussions of behaviour management in ELCCCs and I developed a level of scepticism, which never subsided. My cynicism regarding behaviour management policies in ELCCCs conceptualized as a result of the *positive guidance* philosophy endorsed by the Provincial government standards of child care. This philosophy, which will be elaborated on in my literature review, is foundational to the construction of policies and the way that such policies are practiced in ELCCCs. In my experience, abiding by such policies was quite challenging.

I found working in a room with 16 children under the age of four, with only two assistants, quite overwhelming. I also found it particularly challenging to adhere to a set of very idealistic positive guidance standards, especially in the domain of behaviour management. These standards basically endow children with the capacity to navigate their own preschool experience, such as being able to choose which activities to participate in and, as illustration, whether or not they would like to put their snowsuit on before going out into the frigid Winnipeg winter!

This positive philosophy means that ECEs, such as myself, have to support and facilitate many of the children's requested activities and respect children's wishes to reject participation in planned

activities. This stems from the positive guidance tenet that children should not be forced to do anything. For example, on several occasions, I would organize story-time on the carpet. The group would start with 16 children and eventually fizzle out to a mere three because, if children lost interest, they were allowed to leave. This usually led to me ending story-time and supervising the room because the other staff would be changing diapers or handing out snacks.

The individualized approach to pleasing 16 different preschool children was nearly impossible. The classroom environment was far from positive, as the children, free to do whatever they pleased, would eventually become restless with overstimulation or boredom. The positive policies, which discourage any form of forceful guidance, made it difficult to manage some of the children and the overall classroom environment.

The positive guidance philosophy condemns any type of assertive guidance. So, if a child refused to put a snowsuit on, I would have to stay inside with five other children (so as to stay in ratio), engaging in a power struggle with a three year old while the other toddlers would lose patience and undress themselves. On one occasion, a staff member expressed regret for not changing a toddler's diaper because the child was crying and refusing to have it changed. This type of scenario can put an ECE in a difficult position because, by avoiding the misconduct of forcefully guiding and potentially hurting the child in the process of changing the diaper, the ECE could also face malpractice by refusing to change the child's diaper.

At that point, the pattern of struggles that staff experienced, which surfaced as a result of accommodating to positive standards, led me to conclude the troubling reality that the children had more say pertaining to classroom governance, than the adults. I also came to realize that the ways I, and most educators, asserted authority in the classroom and created some level of structure were mostly in violation of the codes of conduct. One contributing factor to this is simply that not all children respond to one form

of guidance.

As result of my brief experience as an early childhood education student and ECE, I was strongly motivated to pursue research in this field. From the beginning, my intention has been to obtain and analyse data, gathered as a result of this study, in the most objective light possible. With this in mind, and considering my experiences in the field of early childhood education, I felt it necessary to acknowledge my researcher bias and provide the reader with a brief narrative of my personal life and how certain factors therein have likely shaped me into the person, and researcher, that I have become.

Autoethnographical Essay

In this section, I will illustrate my personal reflections as to why I interpret the world the way that I do. Specifically, I will reflect on those experiences that have influenced and continue to influence my current situation in this research. Through this reflexive exercise, I hope to not only acknowledge my unequivocal bias in this project, but also to acquire a deeper understanding as to why I hold such biases.

Background

My parents grew up in Mexico where they met and eventually married. My dad was 26 and my mom was 19. Upon my dad's completion of his medical degree, my parents moved Canada where my dad began his ophthalmology residency. One year later, I was born (1992) and, soon after, my sister was born (1994). After a few years, my family moved to the United States, then to Mexico, and in 1999, to Canada. In Brandon, Manitoba, my dad established an ophthalmology clinic and became the main eye physician for patients in the city and all of the surrounding, rural communities. While the move to Brandon was initially meant to be temporary, it became our home for the next 20 or so years.

Immigrants

My family was one of the first immigrant families at the school I attended, and this was quite obvious. One day, my sister, who is much darker-skinned than I am, came home crying because children had told her that she was the colour of poop. Diversity was clearly lacking in our school.

On my first day of school I showed up with my hair gelled back into pigtails with big bows, like all girls at my Mexican preschool, but unlike any of the girls in Canada. In addition to big bows, I had hoop earrings that had been pierced on me at the age of two weeks old. In Mexico, girls get their ears pierced in the hospital as soon as they are born but, because I was born in Canada and because my mom was unsuccessful at convincing her doctor to pierce me, we had to wait two weeks. My pierced ears were quite the novelty among other children my age, as most of them were told that pierced ears were for

teenagers or adults! This was only one of the unique elements of me being an immigrant.

Being from Mexico, my parents took a lot of safety-related precautions. I got dropped off at my school door every morning and picked up at my school door every afternoon. My friends would ask me to walk home or to school with them and it was not until I was eight years old that I was allowed to do so. My mom has since then confessed that, when she gave my sister and I the freedom to walk alone, she would hide behind bushes and follow us to make sure we arrived to school safely.

In addition, my parents were very concerned about keeping our Mexican culture in tact. My sister and I had a Spanish tutor and we were not allowed to speak in English at home. I am grateful for this because now I am fluent in two languages. Although most of the time I was embarrassed when my parents would speak in Spanish to me in public, it became useful because my mom could scold me with a smile and my friends would just assume she was conversing with me.

In the end, both my parents and I adapted. My parents *selectively* adapted to many of the Canadian ways and I adapted to being referred to as the *Mexican* in Canada and the *Canadian/Gringa* in Mexico. I outgrew all of the insecurities regarding my Mexican culture and, while I still am unsure of where I belong in terms of culture, I have no problem with where I am. During periods of reflection like this, I am reminded of how unique my upbringing was from other children's and I realize just how much my childhood has shaped me into the person I am today.

Upbringing

I grew up with so much unconditional love and nurturing affection and, from a young age, my parents instilled in me what I would call an immigrant mentality. My parents always did the best they could to provide my sister and I with everything we needed in both Mexico, when life was very difficult, and Canada, when life became stable. It is because of the hardships my family went through that I will never forget where I came from.

In Mexico, my dad, despite having gone through many, many years of medical training, was unable to find a job where we lived and would have to work in another city several days out of the week. This taught to me value the opportunities and resources that Canada provides for people to gain the necessary skills to find and keep a job. In Mexico, our home was located beside a family of drug dealers, my grandpa had been shot in the head at his place of work, we knew of people that had been taken hostage and some murdered, and my parents had begun to understand the bitter fragility of how easily money could come and go. This made me appreciate the safety and security that Canada provides.

Moving to Canada and leaving all family behind was difficult, but it was a blessing. It is because of this that my parents inculcated in me, the values that I live by. I have learned about the value of every single cent, the attitude of sucking things up and moving on, the importance of taking responsibility for my actions, working my hardest, and appreciating what I have. I now feel the obligation to maximize my potential and the opportunities that I have been given.

Having grown up in a country with Catholicism embedded into its very core, with a concrete set of values, my parents' approach to discipline was heavily influenced by Catholic childrearing traditions. I was raised knowing that my parents were in charge. They were consistent with the boundaries they set and I knew *no* meant *no.* My parents always followed through with their imposed consequences and I quickly learned what was expected of me as a daughter. For example, I grew up having to make my bed every single morning. My parents expected this of me. There came a point though, where I would go to school and leave it unmade. My mom became very frustrated with me and told me that if I left my bed unmade again, she would personally go pick me up at school and take me home to make my bed, and she did just that. I remember hearing her heels clicking on the floor and her keys jingling as she approached my classroom. When I saw her standing at the door, I knew exactly why she was there! I never forgot to make my bed ever again. Now that I am older, I see the value in what one simple act can hold. Making

the bed does not only represent completing a task, it is a morning ritual that expresses care for one's living environment, it signifies order and discipline, and it provides one with the confidence to establish other healthy routines. These are the types of character-building exercises that my parents provided me with and am very thankful for today.

With that said, there was definitely a time when I felt a sense of fear with my parents. I feared I would disappoint them, I feared I would disrespect them, and I feared I would fail them. During my pubescent years, whenever I told my mom that I thought she was mean, she would simply nod and tell me that her job was not to be my friend, it was to be my mother. I believe my mom was right and I believe the same when it comes to being an ECE. I believe that, as an ECE, it is not my job to be friends with the children and keep them in a comfortable and unchallenging state. It is my job to educate and guide the children, and to do what is best for them, all with as much love and care as possible. If not, I would simply be a babysitter! This became even clearer to me during a life-changing experience that I had at 18 years old.

During high school, I experienced severe bullying by other girls of my age and older. As a result, I graduated high school early and went to Cordoba, Argentina, to volunteer at an orphanage for four months. I worked with babies, as young as five months old, and children as old as 12, who had been through more trauma in the first years of their lives, than most adults will ever experience in a life time. I had the opportunity to work at two different orphanages and saw the ways in which love and stability were given to a group of 20 children at a time, but not at the cost of providing consequences and maintaining order. These children, many of whom had been abused and left vulnerable, were not treated as such. Yes, the children were hugged, kissed, sung to, given attention to and held. But even with heads full of crawling lice, bodies full of healing scars, and hearts full of dwindling pain, they were still expected to do as they were told and faced consequences when they did not. In these orphanages, infested

with bugs and rats, with only a sacred bucketful of donated toys and ripped books, the children were expected to participate in the activities they did not want to participate in, clean up after themselves, help prepare and serve meals, and behave according to the same set of standards as every other child in their presence. Despite these expectations, which some may view as being too high, the children still called the staff, and me, *mom.* Despite these expectations, the children would still crawl all over the staff, and me, hugging and kissing us, telling us they loved us. And, in spite of these expectations, many of the children were able to attend and *stay* in public school (children were removed from school if they misbehaved) and assimilate into society. This experience made me realize just how much children need someone to provide affection, guidance, and protection, but also authority.

Early Childhood Education: My Truth

My perception of what I consider to be my role as an ECE often contradicted with what was actually expected of me as an ECE. I can assert that my upbringing, heavily influenced by Catholic tradition, has shaped the way that I believe children should be raised and educated. This is not to say that the ways I grew up and was educated are correct, but they are the ways that I identify with. Having worked in the field as an ECE, I am able to attest the chaos that often breaks loose in ELCCCs, due to the lack of structure and consequences. The policies dictate the environment. If ECEs are not allowed to restrain children because they might bruise, put children in time-out because they might feel shame, reinforce children's good behaviour because they may later expect all good behaviour to be celebrated, how is order to be achieved and environmental stability to be maintained? If ECEs are unable to expose children to and guide them through the realities of what is deemed appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, in a way that prepares them for real life, how will these children thrive in society, make friends or secure jobs in the future? If ECEs walk on eggshells around children and only speak in a positive way to ensure that the children always feel empowered and never expose them to the joys of winning or the

sadness of losing because everything should be fair, how will these children cope with adversity and failure in the future? While these notions could be perceived as rather dramatic, one must remember that children are not children forever.

Children's lives depend on the adults around them and the skills that they acquire to later transition into adulthood. Children are tiny little beings that will one day evolve into adults. While little Tommy hitting his teacher at preschool may be shaken off as being funny or harmless, if little Tommy does not learn the repercussions to such actions at a young age, he may grow up into a big Tom that punches people and ends up in jail. In society, there are standards of behaviour that are enforced through lawful authority, so why do preschools shy away from authority as if it were negative or non-existent in the society which these children live?

Children should be exposed to the real world, not protected from it. How are children to be resilient if they are cradled every time someone calls them a name? How are children to form relationships if they do not know how to take responsibility for their actions and learn to apologize? How are children to understand work ethic if they are only expected to participate in the activities they love? How do we instil in children, the drive and hunger to succeed if everyone is always a winner? Children need to understand that adults know more and, as educators, it is our role to help them navigate their environments. Children will not understand that adults know more if they see adults as hierarchically equal to them, which is what the current system enables.

A child's most critical period of development is from the ages of 0-5. It is never too early to start teaching children how to behave in a socially acceptable way if they are to succeed in the social world they inhabit. For example, why are children allowed to leave the carpet during story time? In the real world, if a person leaves halfway through a work meeting because they are simply uninterested in the matter, that person will face repercussions. So, why is it that our current guidance philosophy allows this

to happen in ELCCCs? When I was an ECE, this situation occurred many times and, because we cannot force children to do anything, I eventually stopped organizing circle time and would simply read with one or two children upon request. With respect to the example brought forward, it is often argued that children are simply not developmentally ready to sit on the carpet and listen to a whole story. While it may be true that an educator must choose story lengths appropriate for the age-group of the audience, arguing that children are not capable of sitting through a short book deeply underestimates their capabilities. Children refusing to sit through a short story is likely more a reflection of the expectations placed on them than their actual capabilities.

Another example is the principle that we, as educators, cannot force children to apologize, regardless of how severe their actions were. The mentality behind this is that, if children are forced to apologize they may not understand the value of a true apology. I argue that if no one is expected to apologize, no one will ever feel the value of being apologized to and resolving a conflict. We do not learn the value of sharing by being forced to share with someone; we learn the value of sharing when someone shares with us.

These frustrations are the ones that led me to leave my position as an ECE. I loved the children, but it was so mentally, emotionally, and physically draining to adhere to the policies. It was mentally draining to be in damage-control mode all of the time and to adopt a role which I did not agree with. It was emotionally draining to always have to be on edge and speak to children employing a positive, and somewhat patronizing, script. It was physically draining to tend to the individualistic needs of each child and to feel defeated at the end of the day. Being an ECE is the most difficult job that I have done; even more difficult than when I did telemarketing for three weeks! With that said, being an ECE is also the most rewarding job that I have done.

I know that I am a product of my experiences and my upbringing. I grew up in a loving home with

parents who still love each other very much. I grew up with parents who not only planned for my sister and I to come into this world, but also prioritized us when we did. I know this is not the case with many families. I grew up in a stable and consistent environment, which gave me the security and ability to be a child, as a child should.

I know there are ECEs that do not feel the way I do, but I am genuinely worried for the future generation that we are creating. I am worried that some children will grow up without the required level of resilience and emotional self-control needed to cope with hardships and thrive in common social situations. Something needs to change and these changes need to happen in the earliest stages of a child's development, before it becomes too late.

Early Childhood Education

As a result of engaging in autoethnography and exploring my perceptions tied to early childhood education and care, two things must be acknowledged. First of all, while my research *does* aim to critique the current behaviour management policies framed within a scope of positive guidance, in Manitoba, it does *not* aim to compartmentalize such practices as useless or inappropriate. The claims that I make in this paper, regarding the downfalls of positive guidance, and the challenges I pose with regards to the efficacy of positive guidance, are done in an attempt to draw attention to one aspect of how the institutionalization of childcare has manifested in the specific area of behaviour management. Because positive guidance has its positive aspects and has also, undoubtedly, received high levels of praise from scholars and educators, I feel it important to bring attention to and inspire debate about a theme, which I believe lacks academic debate.

Secondly, I must acknowledge that my position in this research, as someone who feels that current behaviour management trends in ELCCCs have become *too* heavily governed within positive guidance parameters, is one that has been shaped by my own experiences. Such experiences include my own

upbringing and the childrearing methods that my parents imposed on me, the fact that I am an immigrant, along with every single personal, academic, and professional experience that I have had in my life until this point. While these experiences have enabled me to understand the world in certain ways, they have also limited me from seeing the world in other ways.

Wagner (as cited in Enslin & Horsthemke, 2015) describes how "all scientists [including philosophers and educational researchers] operate in a world defined by what they think and know to be true" (p. 1168). Wagner goes on to say that what scientists, philosophers, and educational researchers do not know "well enough to even ask about or care about are their blind spots" and that "what they know enough to question but not to answer are their blank spots" (Wagner, as cited in Enslin & Horsthemke, 2015, p. 1168). I identify with Wagner's (as cited in Enslin & Horsthemke, 2015) statements because I commenced this research with a level of knowledge of what I believed to be true.

I believed that childrearing had become too positive and that the traditions I believed and cared about were being threatened and, as a result, changing. I believed that this was a negative thing that needed to be criticized. With regards to this, what I failed to question prior to commencing this research, is that the traditions I believed to be changing are only relatable to a portion of the population that also identifies with the Western and Catholic traditions that I identify with. It could be the case that, for others who do not identify with such traditions, this institutional shift to positive guidance is a truly positive thing that signifies political and social progression- not regression. This, for me, was a blind spot (Wagner as cited in Enslin & Horsthemke, 2015) that I have challenged.

Blank spots, described by Wagner (as cited in Enslin & Horsthemke, 2015) as being what we know enough to question but fail to seek answers to, also surfaced in my research. From the beginning, I knew about positive guidance and postmodernist theoretical approaches to educating, but I failed to question the ways in which these approaches contained positive elements. I reason this to be due to my intense

conception, fuelled by a longing for change, that positive guidance did more harm than good. In retrospect, it could also have been due to a subconscious desire to prove myself right. Now that I have explored this topic further, educationally expanded my horizons, and brought myself to truly analyze how I feel about this topic, there are three very significant conclusions that I can make.

One, I must never stop questioning what I know and educating myself about what I do not know. Learning what I previously did not know enables me to seek answers to questions I would have never asked. Two, while I still believe that the institutionalized approaches to dealing with children's behaviour needs to be criticized and debated, this must be done in a way that acknowledges the experiences that have shaped my own criticisms and recognizes my position in this particular debate. Finally, the most important conclusion that I have drawn from participating in this experience is that one must keep an open mind.

Chapter I: Introduction

The concept of child care in Canada, emerged in the late 1800's, as a result of efforts made by the National Council of Women of Canada and other affiliated activist groups (White, 2002). Due to a lack of governmental support, it was not until 1916 that allowances for mothers began to be provided (White, 2002). This initiative, which was first introduced in Manitoba, enabled impoverished and single mothers in the workforce to enrol their child(ren) in care (White, 2002). In the 1960's, with industrialization on the rise and major improvements made to women's rights, the Federal government initiated their involvement in developing child care policies that enabled child care access to families of all economic and social backgrounds (White, 2002). It was at this point in time that child care evolved from a welfare service to a social service, in that it went from being a resource only available to those who *needed* it financially, to also being a resource available to those who *wanted* it.

Current Child Care

Federal and Provincial governments are associated with child care on different levels. As of 2017, "the Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Ministers signed a Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework" (Government of Canada, n.d.) outlines a series of objectives and strategies to ensure that child care programs in Canada continue to develop and improve.

Federal involvement in child care is slightly more generic than its Provincial counterpart. The Federal government body provides provinces with the financial means to deliver their child care services and is directly involved in funding matters that concern child care programs on reserves, military families, and child care for newcomers (Government of Canada, n.d.).

Currently, it is the Provincial governments that oversee child care in Canada (Manitoba Child Care Association, n.d.). Provinces are responsible for developing their own regulations, financial policies and budgets, as well as supervising the operation of licensed centres and creating procedures for optimal child

care provision (Manitoba Child Care Association, n.d.). In Manitoba, it is the Manitoba Child Care Program that takes control over many of these responsibilities (Manitoba Child Care Association, n.d.). For example, in Manitoba, all licensed centres must adhere to the operating standards found in the *Community Child Care Standards Act* (Province of Manitoba, 2019), *The Best Practices Licensing Manual* (Manitoba Child Care Program, 2005), and *Developing Enhanced Safety Plans and Codes of Conduct* (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.) manuals, which are put forth by the Manitoba Child Care Program. The types of licensed centres that must adhere to proposed guidelines include: in-home family and group child care, fulltime preschools for children aged three months to six years old, school aged care for children aged five to twelve years old, and nursery school for children aged two to five years old (Province of Manitoba, n.d.).

In addition, licensed centres are expected to follow the staff-to-child ratios, indicated as: "1:4 infants, 1:8 preschool and 1:15 school age… as well as the maximum number of children allowed in a group" (Manitoba Child Care Program, 2005). Furthermore, staff education and trained staff requirements in child care centres are based on the type of centre (school age, nursery, in-home, preschool) (Manitoba Child Care Program, 2005). For example, in a preschool setting, two thirds of staff must hold either an ECE diploma or degree, and support stuff must have completed a 40-hour course (Manitoba Child Care Program, 2005).

Without trained staff, formal child care services cannot exist. The important role that ECEs hold in the child care system makes this research very important. Given that ECEs work on the frontline and have a set of experiences unlike those who have not worked in a child care centre, ECEs have the ability to provide us with perceptions about and ways to improve the behaviour management policies.

In the words of Simmons and Sheehan (1997), "A child's potential is determined in the early years-from the first moments of life to countless hours spent in day care. These are the years when we create the

promise of a child's future" (p. 97). The ways that educators deliver programs, significantly impact the experiences of children that attend those programs. In Manitoba, half of children under the age of six are currently receiving formal child care (Statistics Canada, 2019). Considering that 70 percent of mothers with children under the age of six are working mothers, the demand for care is undeniable (Manitoba Child Care Program, 2005). This information illuminates the critical role that ECEs have in the Manitoba child care system.

In caring for children, ECEs must also adhere to a number of formal policies mandated by the government of Manitoba. A number of studies have indicated a gap between child care policies and the ways that educators implement said policies (Dunst & Trivette, 2009; French-Lee & Dooley, 2015; Halbert, 2001; McFarland, Saunders & Allen, 2008). The behaviour management policies in Manitoba, which will be further explicated in the sections below, are structured within the realms of *positive guidance* (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.). McFarland et al. (2008) acknowledge that the situational nature of positive guidance can pose barriers to its implementation. French-Lee and Dooley (2015) also assert this notion through their findings, which reveal that most educators are often aware of policies but, when faced with ethical dilemmas, are unsure of how to apply them in real life settings.

The positive guidance approach centres on guiding children in a positive way without the use of punishment, negative words, blaming, shaming, or time-outs (Firmin & Castle, 2008; McFarland et al., 2008). This branch of guidance appears idealistic on paper, which can make it difficult to apply in real life. McFarland et al. (2008) draw attention to data that indicate a low level of comprehension of positive guidance among ECE students, both before and after receiving a course about the concept. Furthermore, ECE students expressed that behaviour is one of the most challenging themes to manage in the classroom and I anticipate a similar attitude to be true among ECEs in Manitoba (McFarland et al., 2008).

In a room with 16 children under the age of five and only one educator with two assistants,

managing conflict and problematic behaviour can be quite overwhelming. Because the positive approaches outlined in the government policies are quite methodical, ECEs may not be as inclined to implement them. For example, the government policies encourage following a seven-step process to solve problems with children (Province of Manitoba, n.d.). This lengthy and cognitively advanced process, which may be unsuitable for children under the age of five, takes time to complete, which also takes time away from supervising other children.

It is guidelines as such, that might attribute to a gap between policy and practice. Thus, my research questions were: 1) What are ECEs' perspectives regarding behaviour management policies? 2) Do ECEs perceive a gap between policy and practice? 3) How do ECEs feel about the positive guidance philosophy and its applicability in real life scenarios? And 4) If there is a gap, how can it be narrowed? To that end, I decided to explore ECEs' perspectives concerning the efficacy of current behaviour management policies and codes of conduct.

The behaviour management policies and best practice guidelines that spurred the development of this project, stemmed from two main sources of government literature: *The Best Practices Licensing Manual* (Manitoba Child Care Program, 2005) and the *Developing Enhanced Safety Plans and Codes of Conduct* (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.) manual. As a result of my own analysis of this government literature, I found several inconsistencies that may contribute to the gap. These inconsistencies will be detailed in a later section of this dissertation.

In order to provide centres with the most up-to-date information, the two documents are prepared by teams of professionals with access to research findings (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.). The Manitoba Child Care Program, which oversees the operation of licensed ELCCCs, is responsible for authoring the two documents, which assist ELCCCs in developing their codes of conduct and behaviour management policies (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.). These documents outline a series of

guidelines for best practice, strategies to manage inappropriate behaviour, and instructions on how to properly frame a code of conduct and behaviour management policy.

The gap between policy and practice is a matter worth investigating. A number of studies confirm this gap and indicate the necessity for further research on the matter (Dunst & Trivette, 2009; Halbert, 2001). There is currently a paucity of studies examining the gap between policy and practice and ECE perspectives. Therefore, this study contributes to scholarship on the development of early childhood education and care programs, by presenting findings on whether ECEs perceive a gap between policy and practice, what some of the major issues are, and possible solutions to narrow the gap.

The lack of literature pertaining to this theme raises the significance of the research I conducted. This is why it is of the utmost importance that we look at the existing early childhood education system and the efficacy of particular policies currently set in place. While the long-term goal of this research is to improve the way that policies are developed and implemented, the short-term goal is to first gain ECE's perspectives regarding possible issues in policy, which I anticipate do exist in our Manitoba system of early childhood education.

Chapter II: Literature Review

The sections in this literature review involve a concise description of the government policy and guideline manuals, an overview of the positive guidance philosophy and its constituent parts, and a critical analysis of the government manuals. Furthermore, the review includes a brief depiction of ECE perspectives on the matter.

I collected literature through a series of academic databases made available by the University of Manitoba's online library database. The material chosen for the succession of my literature review mainly originated from online journals like *Early Years* and *Young Children,* in addition to the government policy manuals previously discussed, which were found on government websites and also provided to me by the Child Care Information Services of Winnipeg.

I also utilized several different search criteria during the course of collection. Such searches included, but were not limited to: *early childhood education positive guidance, early childhood educators perspectives policies, early childhood education Manitoba policies, early childhood education behaviour management, ECE perspectives behaviour management, gap policy and practice early childhood education, educators Canada perspectives,* and *effects of positive guidance.*

The sources employed in this literature review stem from various academic backgrounds that range from the fields of neurology to child psychology. I also drew from literature including more explicitly biased perspectives revolving around the themes of positive guidance and traditional discipline. The diverse academic literature presented in this review, which ultimately provides a more rounded analysis of the theme, reflects the real-life multiplicity of perspectives that accompany the controversial debates of child behaviour management.

The Best Practices Licensing Manual

The Best Practices Licensing Manual (Manitoba Child Care Program, 2005) provides a summary of

Provincial child care standards and best practice guidelines, founded upon *The Community Child Care Standards Act* (Province of Manitoba, 2019). The manual aims to inform centres on best practice regulations and also provides information regarding administrative procedures (Manitoba Child Care Program, 2005).

An example of a guideline found in the manual goes as follows, "A licensee shall not permit, practice, or inflict any form of physical punishment or verbal or emotional abuse upon, or the denial of any physical necessities to, any child in attendance at the child care centre" (Manitoba Child Care Program, 2005, p. 81). This principle is further detailed with examples of what exactly constitutes punishment, such as: spanking, hitting, restraining, shoving, and force-feeding (Manitoba Child Care Program, 2005).

While this manual gives a general overview of all possible themes that may surface in ELCCCs, *Developing Enhanced Safety Plans and Codes of Conduct* (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.) is specifically prepared to address themes within the realms of safety and conduct.

Developing Enhanced Safety Plans and Codes of Conduct

In June 2008, Manitoba passed legislation under the *Child Care Safety Charter Act* that requires all licensed ELCCCs to design and implement a safety plan and code of conduct to encourage a safe and positive learning environment (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.). *Developing Enhanced Safety Plans and Codes of Conduct* provides information regarding fire safety plans, drills, and nutrition, and is also an influential source for ELCCCs when designing a code of conduct and behaviour management policy (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.).

For instance, on page 18 (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.), the document states that everyone must work together to solve problems and that inappropriate behaviour will be responded to by acknowledging children's feelings. In addition, the document illustrates positive guidance strategies, such

as using positive language and redirecting inappropriate behaviour, while also articulating a rejection towards negative reinforcement practices such as shaming or isolating a child (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.).

The Best Practices Licensing Manual (Manitoba Child Care Program, 2005) reflects much of the information found in *Developing Enhanced Safety Plans and Codes of Conduct* (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.). For example, *The Best Practices Licensing Manual* (Manitoba Child Care Program, 2005) advocates the best practice standards for creating positive environments, which are also reflected on page 29 of *Developing Enhanced Safety Plans and Codes of Conduct* (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.). Where the documents differ is in their overall content, as one manual provides more of a general overview of all areas of child care while the other manual emphasizes safety procedures and codes of conduct.

Additionally, the two documents differ in their depth of information. In *The Best Practices Licensing Manual* (Manitoba Child Care Program, 2005), topics like overnight care and equipment requirements are addressed, while the latter provides more specific examples of how to act during specific scenarios, such as when two children refuse to share a toy (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.) Both manuals play an important role in guiding and protecting centres, staff, and children. As previously mentioned, both manuals adopt the positive guidance approach to managing ELCCCs, which will now be critically analyzed.

Positive Guidance

Positive guidance is a child-centred philosophy that aims to foster positivity in all aspects of a child's physical environment and internal being (McFarland et al., 2008). Contrary to traditional discipline techniques, the positive guidance framework condemns practices such as time-outs and positive reinforcement methods, and instead encourages the use of negotiation strategies and positive

communication (McFarland et al., 2008).

Positive communication is an important element conducive to the overall positivity of a child's atmosphere, which educators can promote by syntactically structuring phrases in an inclusive manner, through the use of words like *we* and *our,* and avoiding negations like *don't* and *can't* (McFarland et al., 2008). Educators are expected to tell children what *to do* instead of what to *stop doing.* An example of this is provided in *Developing Enhanced Safety Plans and Codes of Conduct* (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.) and it goes as follows,

> A gentle reminder followed by a statement of what is acceptable goes a long way in teaching self-control and self-discipline without sacrificing the child's self-confidence and control. Say: "Hang your coat up, please." Rather than: "Don't leave your coat on the floor" (p. 32)

In addition, educators are expected to communicate with children in a manner that is respectful and favourable to the development of their self-esteem. For example, by offering *meaningful* praise like, "I see you used purple and blue in your picture," rather than, "What a pretty picture" (Meece, & Soderman, 2010).

The shift from traditional teaching to postmodern methods is also reflected in the ways that educators are encouraged to guide children. From a postmodern perspective, education is viewed through a subjective lens and influenced by an understanding that where there exist knowledge and opportunities, there also exist limitations (Ryan & Grieshaber, 2005). This contemporary approach to educating is one that attempts to dismantle the power hierarchies between teachers and students, and encourages teachers to frame teaching practices in consideration of multiple perspectives, individualistic needs, and diverse ways of responding pedagogically (Ryan & Grieshaber, 2005). For example, educators should offer children choices, rather than telling them what do, as well as give them the freedom to solve their own problems, instead of solving problems for them (Meece, & Soderman, 2010).

Principles of Guidance

There are three principles of guidance that educators refer to when aiming to create a positive environment in which children can explore independently and safely (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.). Moreover, educators turn to these principles when faced with situations, such as conflict, that require adult intervention. The three principles of guidance involve: indirect guidance, prevention, and intervention (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.).

Indirect Guidance

Indirect guidance aims to create a positive experience from behind-the-scenes. Such as by scheduling the least amount of transitions between activities, ensuring there are enough toys for the children, and setting up a variety of gross and fine motor activities for the children to do (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.). This strategy is supported by the notion that, like adults, children's moods and behaviours are also affected by their environment (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.).

Prevention

The purpose of preventative measures is to minimize the potential for conflict to occur (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.). Prevention can include indirect guidance strategies but also includes tactics like giving children the ability to make decisions, redirecting children's inappropriate behaviour, constantly reminding children of expectations and limits, and ensuring that staff are trained to deal with problematic scenarios.

Intervention

When practicing positive guidance, there are many intervention practices that one could refer to. Redirection and acknowledging feelings are examples of intervention practices outlined in the Code of Conduct section of *Developing Enhanced Safety Plans and Codes of Conduct* (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d., p. 34).

Redirection involves redirecting a child's inappropriate behaviour to a positive behaviour. For

example, if Child A throws sand at Child B, redirection would involve giving Child A a bucket to guide the child from throwing the sand at others, to shovelling the sand into a bucket (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.).

Acknowledging the feelings of all the children involved in a particular issue is another method of intervention (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.). For example, if Child A takes a toy from Child B and Child B hits Child A, the educator should identify both of the children's feelings by saying, "Child A and Child B, you both look very frustrated. Tell me what happened" (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.). The educator could then ask Child B how it feels to have the toy taken away and provide assistance in finding a solution to the problem, perhaps by showing the children how to take turns or redirecting Child A to a new activity (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.).

Positive guidance aims to foster positive self-beliefs in children by "interacting with children in ways that make the children feel valued and special" (Meece & Soderman, 2010, p. 81) and promotes prosocial development through positive responsive techniques. The objectives and anticipated outcomes of positive guidance make this method highly desirable among educators and parents, but research reveals that this approach to behaviour management gives rise to limitations that impede its applicability (McFarland et al., 2008). This finding is imperative to understanding the root cause to the gap between policy and practice and magnifies the reasons why many of the guidelines are so inapplicable.

While much of policy is informed by science, there is literature to indicate that many of the studies that influence research are often simulated in controlled environments that lack similitude to the real life circumstances that educators actually experience (Dunst & Trivette, 2009). This alone, helps us understand why some of the guidelines tend to be unrealistic. These factors could contribute to the gap between policy and practice in ELCCCs.

A Genealogy of Child Care Governance

The advocacy of positive guidance strategies in ELCCCs is evidence of the recent shift away from traditional behaviour management practices, which often stem from biblical interpretations (Firmin & Castle, 2008; McFarland et al., 2008). This postmodern and positive approach to managing child behaviour, which has forced educators to rethink the ways in which their knowledge transmits authority in the classroom, has had an impact on the type of information delivered to ECEs and the way that ECEs engage in their roles. The genealogical progression that has led to the child care policies currently in place, in Manitoba, is one that constitutes a series of developments made to the human rights of children. In this section, I will outline the historical evolution of children's rights around the world and how these rights have influenced changes in the way that early childhood education is currently carried out. In addition, I will consider theoretical perspectives stemming from the works of Frank Furedi (2009), Michael Firmin (2008), and Sally Castle (2008).

History of Children's Rights

In Europe, prior to the 16th century, children were regarded as small adults and property of their parents, on both legal and social levels (Kosher, Ben-Arieh & Hendelsman, 2016). Parents had the freedom to do with their children whatever they pleased and, as a result of the high infant and child mortality rates in the past, historians postulate that parents had the natural tendency to detach from their children (Kosher et al., 2016). In addition, children as young as four years old were forced to work in factories and would be sexually and physically abused if they got tired (Kosher et al., 2016). It was not until the late 19th and early 20th century that the conception of children's rights began to change (Kosher et al., 2016). In 1889, France and Britain initiated the political change of children's rights and passed laws against child endangerment, which influenced other countries to do the same (Kosher et al., 2016).

The changes in the 20th century led to the social change of viewing children as labourers to viewing them as vulnerable beings in a dangerous world (Kosher et al., 2016). Just before World War I, children

were given lawful recognition as *persons* with the right to education (Kosher et al., 2016). Then, in 1959, the United Nations General Assembly asserted children with the right to a happy childhood (Kosher et al., 2016). It was not until as recent as 1989 though, that the biggest development in children's rights occurred.

In November 1989, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the *Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)* (Kosher et al., 2016; Collins & Wolff, 2014). This is the human rights convention with the most signatures in history and the only human rights contract to syndicate a number of social, political, and humanitarian rights, in one document (Kosher et al., 2016; Collins & Wolff, 2014). The CRC has been implemented on universal levels, spanning from Central and Eastern Europe, to the Americas (Collins & Wolff, 2014). Although in other countries such as Ethiopia, India, Sri Lanka and Japan, the CRC is yet to be adopted, significant changes have been made to the child and family codes, within their governing laws (Collins & Wolff, 2014). In countries like these, full implementation of the CRC may be challenging considering the lack of resources, and social services, and that women's rights "… are also competitive with the rights of children" (Peters 2012, as cited in Collins & Wolff, 2014). While this is evidence that, in some countries, the fight for children's rights still continues, it is important to highlight that Manitoba's own Indigenous children's fight for rights also continues.

Even though Canada became a signee of the CRC in 1990 (Government of Canada, n.d.) it must be noted that this occurred six years before the last federally-funded residential school closed in Saskatchewan (Canadian Encyclopedia, 2020). The residential schooling system, which began in the 1880's and continued well into the 20th century, was marked by its intention to erase "languages, cultural beliefs and traditions, and were largely ineffective at providing proper or even adequate education" (Deiter, 1999; Friesen & Friesen, 2002, as cited in Bombay et al., 2014, p. 322). "An estimated 150,000 First Nation, Métis, and Inuit children" (Canadian Encyclopedia, 2020), as young as three years old

(Bombay et al., 2014) attended residential schools. In addition, statistics reveal that an estimated 6,000 children died at these schools (Canadian Encyclopedia, 2020) and, while many *did* survive and live today, it is not without a level of transgenerational trauma and pain (Bombay et al., 2014), which Indigenous children in Manitoba suffer with today. The recentness of this politically driven, genocidal initiative warrants criticism of current treatment of Indigenous children in Manitoba, as well as the rest of Canada. As a result of the political changes to children's rights over the years, an array of theoretical perspectives and social stances have influenced current policy in child care.

Theoretical Perspectives on Child Care

The theoretical perspectives surrounding early childhood education can vary greatly. On one hand, there is the positive guidance philosophy on which current ELCCCs, in Manitoba, found their policies. On the other hand, there are theoretical postulations, like those of Frank Furedi (2009) that dispute and offer insight into the downfalls of positive guidance.

One must acknowledge the spectrum of behaviour guidance on which particular institutions may fall. For example, a school in Canada may fall on the *positive* end of the spectrum, while a school in a different country may fall on the other, *punitive* end. It could be contended that our early childhood education system currently lies in the positive range of the continuum and in opposition of any type of practice that may fall into the punitive range. Exactly when, how, and where the shift from punitive to positive occurred, is difficult to pinpoint. Yet, after reviewing the history of developments to children's rights and also considering a number of academic theoretical perspectives, I realize that the current system in ELCCCs is the result of a combination of factors.

Before describing the sources that have informed my analyses about the current ELCCC system, it is important to first note that the theoretical perspectives I will be discussing are framed within a Western tradition. Malone (2007) describes the Western childrearing tendency as one comparable to the

metaphorical vision of a child being a growing plant needing to be protected and nurtured by its adults- the gardeners. Within this metaphorical lens, the gardeners are meant to ensure the growing plant is cared for and protected from threats that may stunt its growth or harm it (Malone, 2007). Malone's (2007) illustration of current Western childrearing practices is one that yields to the philosophies that underpin current practices in ELCCCs. Given that the institutionalization of Canadian early childhood education is largely influenced by a Western tradition, I focus on these perspectives and how they relate to the Western approach of child care.

However, it is also important to note that there exist other cultural traditions within Canada and that these traditions are also adopted in Canadian early childhood education centres. For instance, in Manitoba, there exist licenced child care centres and programs which implement Indigenous (Manitoba Aboriginal Head Start, n.d.) and Jewish traditions (Rady Jewish Community Centre, n.d.). Therefore, a boundary condition of the subsequent section should be considered within the context of Western positionality and the impacts that such Western traditions have had on the institutionalization of early childhood education systems in Canada.

With the abovementioned considered, I will now illustrate Firmin and Castle's (2008) identification of four movements in the area of disciplinary practices of children. The first movement was the shift from strict to more relaxed parenting, which is also evident in ELCCCs as they have become less structured and ECEs have abandoned the authoritative teacher role and adopted more of a friend role (Firmin & Castle, 2008).

The second movement involves the transfer of authority from religious bodies to experts in fields such as the social sciences and medicine (Firmin & Castle, 2008). This movement has also manifested into our current system of child care practices, as policies are no longer governed by religious tactics such as isolating or physically punishing a child, they are governed by the Federal and Provincial governments.

The third movement constitutes the legislative developments made to children's rights which, as mentioned above, attest children with the right to an education and a happy childhood (Firmin & Castle, 2008; Kosher et al., 2016). This, too, is evident in our current system of child care and education, as methodical learning is often masked by play and grading schemes are rarely numerical.

The last movement was that in which fathers began to take on the caregiving role as mothers went to work (Firmin & Castle, 2008). This movement influenced the transformation in society from patriarchal and religious to paternalistic and political (Firmin & Castle, 2008). In current ELCCCs, it is the parents, not just fathers, that make decisions and care for their child(ren). It is parents, not just fathers, whom adopt and exchange roles of caregiving and breadwinning. These four movements are key to understanding how and why the early childhood education system in Manitoba is the way it is.

Furedi's (2009) arguments echo many of the notions that Firmin and Castle (2008) bring forward. For example, Furedi's (2009) account of the socio-political decline in tradition upholds Firmin and Castle's (2008) descriptions of the second movement in child discipline, in which the transfer of authority from religious bodies to experts is elucidated. Furedi (2009) claims that, "although many still seek security through an embrace of old traditions, the dominant tendency in western societies is to flee from the past… has been thoroughly assimilated into pedagogic policy"(p. 28), which can apply to Western European countries as well, not just Canada and the United States. This is supported by Firmin and Castle's (2008) illustration of the ways that laws objecting physical punishment in Western countries like Sweden, Norway, and Germany, have had positive outcomes.

With the erosion of Western tradition in society comes an erosion of authority, which also occurs in education systems (Furedi, 2009). Furedi (2009) contests that this erosion of authority in classroom settings is a manifestation of the pedagogical tendency to promote "child-centred and egalitarian philosophy" (p. 83). The child-centred approach is one that highlights self-actualization in children and

considers children as intelligent agents capable of "converting their experiences into assumptions and theories about the world" (Furedi, 2009, p. 85). In Manitoba, ELCCCs are child-centred and egalitarian in the sense that ECEs are not to engage with children as an authoritative figure but as a friend, support, and as someone equal to them. ECEs are to kneel to children's eye levels when speaking to them and ECEs are to allow children to lead their learning and play experiences, while serving as a facilitator (Meece & Soderman, 2010).

The reduction of adult authority in the classroom, leads to an increase of child authority, which causes a strange role-reversal and can risk having the teacher feel insignificant and at a loss of control over the environment (Furedi, 2009). Teachers may feel insecure about their position of authority and, because the concept of authority is somewhat taboo, as *authority* consists of exerting a power to influence one's behaviours (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d.) which some may interpret as a form of unethical behavioural control, teachers may actually feel uncomfortable asserting power over the group of children in their care (Furedi, 2009). This uncomfortable feeling could be due to political barriers that might indict the teacher of inappropriate conduct but it could also be due to social barriers that depict children as highly vulnerable and sensitive beings unable to cope with receiving firm directions or hearing the word *no*.

The political correctness movement and heightened sensitivity to hurting people's feelings that indoctrinates our culture, has definitely influenced a "therapeutic turn in education" (Furedi, 2009, p. 181) and has placed a significantly higher importance on children's emotions rather than education (Furedi, 2009). In Manitoba, preschools are meant to be a safe space for children. Some may argue that preschools are overly safe and do not expose children to enough real-world or uncomfortable experiences that ultimately serve as beneficial to their development. Furedi (2009) comments that educators have the responsibility to expose children to the world as it is. There is value in Furedi's words as, one way or

another, children *will* be exposed to the world as it is and it is in all children's best interest to have the tools and coping strategies to navigate it successfully.

Summary

This literature review offered insight into important issues that affect ECEs and children in Manitoba. It provided information regarding the government recommended guidelines, the composition of positive guidance, and a historical delineation of the development of children's rights and child care. This dissertation will now delve into the methodological approaches used to collect and analyse data.

Chapter III: Methods

This project examined the dynamic between the policies put forth by the government and the practices implemented by educators. My approach to generating and representing knowledge stemmed from several practices across the qualitative continuum (Ellingson 2008). First, the epistemological framework that informed my methodology derives from a social constructionist perspective. From that point, I engaged in discourse analysis and critical reflexivity. In addition, I employed creative methodology to collect and represent my data.

Methods of Inquiry

Social Constructionism

My study was grounded in a social constructionist epistemology, as it focused on synthesizing the ways in which reality is socially constructed, rather than analysing the ways in which it simply *is* (Hibberd, 2005). Social constructionism recognizes the ways in which experiences, contexts, languages, and interactions affect individuals and the ways in which individuals construct knowledge as a result of these factors (Hibberd, 2005). In this case, the reality I sought answers to relates to the current state of behaviour management policies. Such policies, which have been created and are implemented by people whose realities have been socially constructed, should be analyzed within the many contexts they apply to. In employing a social constructionist framework to inform my methodology, I was able to shed light on so many interacting factors. For one, this epistemology enabled me to identify the historical evolution of behaviour management policies in Manitoba, as these policies were created and have been redeveloped, as a result of their social context at a given time. Two, this epistemology opened the door for me to gain insight into the ways that ECEs interpret such policies, as a result of their own socially constructed belief systems. Finally, I was able to address my own interpretations of the policies and ECE narratives within a knowledge context informed by my socially constructed belief system. Without

operating within a social constructionist framework, I would not have been able to engage in the amount of reflexivity and depth that I was able to.

Discourse Analysis

The power that policies have over ECEs is a notion that can also be explored through discourse analysis. In the words of Meutzenfeldt (Taylor, 1997), the goal of discourse analysis is understand "the complex of … notions, categories, ways of thinking and ways of communicating that constitutes a power-infused system of knowledge" (p. 25). Discourse analysis considers the ways in which society engages with the obvious and less obvious messages that accompany text, politics, objects, and behaviours (Taylor, 1997). For this reason, Meutzenfeldt's (Taylor, 1997) application of discourse analysis, as a sociological framework to explore how social power relations affect policymaking, was of particular interest to me. Because policymakers develop the policies that ultimately affect how policy implementers (ECEs) behave, I felt that it would be beneficial to incorporate said concepts that offer insight into the power that text, objects, and societal influences, can have on an individual's level of adherence to particular policies.

Narrative Inquiry

From the very beginning, my situation in this research, as a former ECE critiquing current behaviour management practices, has been undeniably evident. This is why I chose to formally illuminate my perspectives through reflexive narratives, prior to, during and following the data collection process. This method of reflexivity that I engaged in, is one that is often adopted by researchers assuming a critical stance in their work, which further justifies the decision I made to embrace narrative inquiry for my research (Ellingson, 2008).

The purpose of this method of inquiry is to situate the researcher and emphasize the social construction of meaning (Bochner, 2001). Considering that my own personal experiences and internal

conflicts gave rise to the materialization of this project, formally recognizing my situation in this research served as a way to validate my candid perceptions on an academic platform. Furthermore, integrating narrative inquiry in my practice enabled me to untangle any internal struggles concerning my personal and cultural ties to the political dimensions of early childhood education and policy (Bochner, 2001).

Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative methodology is utilized when the research is concerned with attitudes, beliefs and experiences, and, because the advancement of this project depended on participant responses, a qualitative methodological approach was considered to be the most suitable for collecting the data (O'Donoghue, 2014). To intensify the quality of the written responses given by the participants, I chose to include creative analytical practices (CAPs). My use of CAP was carried out in both the data collection and data analysis phases of my study. In addition, I incorporated the use of autoethnography to illuminate my experiences working as a former ECE and the perspectives that I hold regarding the theme of behaviour management policy. In order to analyze participant interview responses, while also integrating the autoethnographical component, I undertook the practice of *thematic analysis* to codify the data and categorize it into themes. To that end, I will provide the reader with a brief description of CAP, how I employed autoethnography, and the way I applied thematic analysis.

Creative Analytical Practice

CAP emerged in the 1980's as a contemporary form of expressing lived experience through artistic forms such as poetry, drawing, storytelling and theatre (Parry & Johnson, 2007). In this case, the decision to include a CAP was done so as to strengthen and extend the overall insights expressed by ECEs.

While it would have been effective to only include the use of interviews in this research, utilizing CAP provided me with the opportunity to fortify participant results in two ways. First, some of the data revealed in the interviews was supported by the CAP responses. For example, one participant's

description of the role of the ECE was further extended in that same participant's CAP response in which the participant wrote a poem about the positive and negative aspects of being an ECE. In this case, the participant's written response was not only supported through that participant's CAP, but it also added depth to the initial written response.

Another way in which CAP strengthened and extended the overall insights expressed by the ECEs, was by providing participants with the opportunity to express themselves in a creative method of their choice. This gave participants the freedom to choose a creative approach they are most comfortable with, such as singing, writing poetry, or drawing pictures. This is a good option to give those participants who may feel that responding creatively is a preferred method of expression. Furthermore, this could be a good option for participants whose native language is not the language in which the interview questions are posed, as it does not require the use of language. Interestingly enough, half of my participants turned out to be speakers of another language, which goes to show that language barriers could certainly arise in data collection methods that do not provide alternative ways to respond.

"Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up" (retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/childrens-books-site/2016/may/17/picasso-ed-vere.). This famous Pablo Picasso quote is the reason that I chose to include both interviews and CAP as data collection methods, rather than solely doing a CAP study. Having had the pleasure of teaching several art courses and camps, for both adults and children, it has been my experience that adults are less inclined to express themselves creatively, with the same confidence, as do children. It is because of this, that I have carefully considered the lack of rigor that may accompany a CAP study without interviews. Thus, I chose to utilize CAP as a complementar*y* component to my interviews that I believed would further validate the verbal responses of ECEs. Another way, in which I utilized the power of creativity and language, was through the use of autoethnography, which will be addressed in the following section.

Autoethnography

As a method, and described by Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2010), *autoethnography* combines elements of both *autobiography* and *ethnopraphy.* Its autobiographical component allows the "author to retroactively and selectively" (Ellis et al., 2010, section two) write about experiences from the past. In terms of an ethnographical component, the writer is often situated in the research and acting as an observer of a particular culture (Ellis et al., 2010). The amalgamated components of an autoethnography apply in my own research, as I, a former ECE, was able to provide accounts of my own experiences in the field of early childhood education. Autobiographically speaking, I shared many stories about my time as an ECE. I provided accounts relating to not only the negative and positive aspects of the field, but also the ways in which my own perceptions have formulated. Although I consider myself to be a naturally honest and open person, it must be acknowledged that I revealed very personal stories and perspectives, which I have accepted may be judged. Ethnographically speaking, for the purpose of this research, I adopted an *observer* role and attempted to decipher the ways in which a particular culture of people, ECEs, implement the policies that are at the core of this study. To synthesize the autoethnographical narratives and depict the method throughout this document, I included autoethnographical accounts from the very first chapter through to the chapter in which the results are discussed. In the end, the autoethnography was also included in my analysis. This allowed me to categorize information with the participant data, create themes, and reflect on their relevance.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a systematic practice that aims to codify segments of speech, text, and other forms of data, into themes (Tuckett, 2005). Thematic analysis is composed of three elements: coding, writing, and theorizing (Tuckett, 2005). I incorporated this form of analysis by first collecting all my data, which consisted of: participant interview transcripts, participant CAP responses, and my personal

narratives. I then spent time analyzing and coding these sets of data.

For example, one participant verbally expressed that ECEs are likely influenced by their cultural backgrounds and another participant expressed that ECEs are sometimes forced to act in ways, which they feel, are best for the children. These two participant statements were codified and put under the category of *Diverse Practices.* After analyzing my personal narratives, I concluded that some of the data was applicable to that within the *Diverse Practices* theme and therefore, categorized it accordingly. In the end, I assimilated the information and created a more specific theme, titled, *ECEs' Personal Experiences Influence Responses to Behaviour.* Following the thematic analysis of all participant data, I represented the conceptualized, major themes through digital illustrations. Within each illustration of a major theme, I incorporated details to represent the subthemes that also emerged.

Data Collection and Analysis

My multimethod processes of data collection and representation involved conventional qualitative techniques, such as interviews and thematic analysis; but also incorporated a CAP component. In the end, I conducted electronic interviews with seven open-ended questions, of which one required a creative response. In this section, I will describe participant details, the process for recruitment, and information pertaining to the interviews.

Participants

In the end, I decided to generate a pool of four participants. I made this decision after considering a number of qualitative studies and also those involving the use of CAP and autoethnography. For example, Al-Adwan and Al-Khayat (2017) worked with eight participants to determine the reasons for psychological burnout in teachers and Giovacco-Johnson (2005) explored the perspectives of six preschool teachers new to the field. Furthermore, a CAP study, which observed a southern sorority culture, was creatively represented through a screenplay involving four main characters based on real-life

interpretations of the sorority members (Berbary, 2011). In this study, the researcher was completely immersed and kept a collection of reflexive journals throughout the process, which I also did in my own study. In addition to the electronic interviews and CAP, I incorporated an autoethnographical account of my experiences as an ECE and my perceptions regarding early childhood education, which is a timely and emotionally consuming endeavour. So, as a result of considering the amount of effort that would go into writing my autoethnography, keeping reflexive journals, and analyzing the CAP and interview responses , I concluded that four participants would suffice. I deemed four participants to be an appropriate number of participants for me to work with, for two main reasons. One, I acknowledged the fact that this was the first time I would be conducting a research study and two, that I was potentially taking on more than I would be able to handle- with the CAP and autoethnography components. Therefore, I was cautious of the risks associated with recruiting too many participants. I worried that, being so new to research and these methods, involving too many participants could negatively affect the creative portions of my data representation. I also estimated that four participants would likely provide me with a range of different experiences and suffice in depicting certain realities in the field of early childhood education.

My participants were required to have an ECE (Level II or III) diploma and be currently practicing in the field. While Child Care Assistants (CCAs) are governed by the same policies and perform much of the same duties as do ECEs, their education is less extensive, which I expected could present gaps in the overall data, as some of the concepts that would be addressed during the data collection process could be foreign to CCAs (Manitoba Child Care Program, 2005). Moreover, the main focus of my study was ECEs. With that said, I believe that including CCAs in a follow-up study could render interesting outcomes.

Recruitment

Recruiting participants consisted of a series of steps. I first contacted the Manitoba Minister of

Education and Training, to make myself aware of any procedures or requirements to conducting research in government-licenced centres and with ECE employees. According to the Manitoba Minister of Education and Training, because ELCCCs are "independent organizations governed by boards of directors" (Santos, Personal communication, August 27, 2019), each individual child care centre's Board of Directors needs to be contacted prior to approaching their employed ECEs. The original approval, from the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB) at the University of Manitoba, stated that I comply with the advice to request permission from the boards. Because I expected that being granted permission by each centre's Board of Directors would likely delay my recruitment process, I contacted over ten child care centres in both Brandon and Winnipeg.

From there, the first stage of my recruitment process involved contacting individual centre's directors so that they could forward the information, regarding my study, to their board. After receiving permission to contact a centre's ECE employees, I supplied most centres with a hardcopy of my recruitment poster and all centres with an electronic copy for directors to email to their ECEs. In addition, I reached out to several individual ECEs, that I knew personally or had previously worked with, but only after being given permission by the board, of their respective workplace, to do so.

Unfortunately, I really struggled to recruit participants. Months after being approved to commence recruiting participants, I still had none. I am confident that a huge component to this delay in recruitment had to do with seeking board approval from each ELCCC. As a result of my frustration, I contacted the ENREB about the possibility of approaching prospective participants *without* their centres' board approval. The ENREB advised that I submit an amendment request form to potentially pursue a critical inquiry study. While it was tempting to do so, I was made aware that there would be risks involved, for both the researcher and the participants, and that the focus of my study would likely shift. Due to my keenness to avoid having to likely restructure my research objectives and methods, I decided to power

through with my original plan.

In the end, the second stage of my recruitment process began five months after beginning the first stage. This consisted of sending potential participants with a project description (Appendix A) and instructions on how to proceed. The participants that agreed to be a part of the study were provided with a consent form (Appendix C), which outlined the data collection and dissemination procedures. Those participants that signed the consent form were considered official participants of my study, which meant that I was able to proceed with the data collection and analysis portion of my research.

Interviews

Interviews have been used in studies that aim to explore participant perspectives and have been found to be effective in generating results. For instance, French-Lee and Dooley (2015) conducted interviews to illuminate teachers' perspectives on ethics and professionalism. Shewark et al. (2018) also used this method in their study, in which 31 teachers were divided into small focus groups and asked to respond to a series of questions concerning classroom management. Because I was aiming to explore ECE perspectives, I decided that interviews would be a suitable method for prompting ECEs to materialize their interpretations. In addition to the interview responses, participants were asked to partake in a creative exercise, as a component of the interview.

Originally, my plan had been to conduct face-to-face interviews with the participants. While I remained open to collecting data electronically or by phone, it was important to me to have the opportunity to sit down with participants and engage in conversation with them. I intended for my interview guide to do just that- *guide* the interview process, and also allow a certain level of freedom for participants to feel comfortable and potentially expand on other issues. Unfortunately, the point at which I began to recruit participants, the Covid-19 pandemic started to evolve. This not only limited the amount of prospective participants' responses, as child care centres were slowly shutting down, but also their

level of commitment. While the reasons for people changing their minds about participating in my study could be endless, I believe that during this time of chaos and fear, many of them had other priorities. In the end, to make everyone's lives easier and to increase my chances of obtaining participants, I decided that conducting electronic interviews was the most appropriate course of action.

In the end, data was collected through an electronic questionnaire which also consisted of a creative exercise (Appendix B). I composed a seven-question interview guide (Appendix B) that consisted of open-ended questions relating to themes of behaviour management, personal values, and the positive guidance philosophy. I wanted to give my participants the freedom to expand on issues of their interest, especially those that I may not have anticipated to exist. To best achieve this, I felt that questions must be kept general.

After carefully considering relevant literature in which similar methods were employed, while also considering the fact that I was to collect a creative response from each participant, I deemed seven interview questions to be an appropriate number. Shewark, Zinsser, and Denham's (2018) interview guide, in a study aimed at elucidating teachers' perspectives, consisted of eight questions. Furthermore, Halbert (2002), utilized a nine-question survey to elicit practitioners' evaluations of child and family interventions.

As part of the seven questions posed to the participants, one of the questions required a CAP response. Question number six of the interview guide, "Express the biggest challenges and triumphs that you encounter as an ECE" (Appendix B), was accompanied with a short description of how participants were expected to answer. The description went as follows: "Please note that for this question I am asking you to do a CAP (Creative Analytical Practice), which means that you must respond using creative materials/platforms. Some ideas include: writing a poem, drawing a picture, making a collage, etc. You can take a picture of your response and send it separately or attach it onto here" (Appendix B). With that

said, I applied CAP to not only collect my data, but also represent it.

Following the procedure of thematic analysis and examining the participants' CAP submissions, I represented each theme that surfaced, through digital art. Each picture, representational of a particular theme, combined aspects of the participants' written and creative data. In addition to ECEs' creative and verbal responses, my own interpretations of the data were reflected in the CAP works.

Materials

A series of materials were needed for the data collection, data analysis, and data representation procedures of the project. For the initial portion of the study, in which I contacted ELCCCs and their boards of directors, I utilized my laptop and required access to the Internet. To print my recruitment posters, I used a printer and ink, which was available to me at home.

For the data collection phase, my participants and I corresponded via email through my university student email account. For the CAP portion of the interview, which had the potential to render a broad range of creative responses, I notified participants that they might need materials like: markers, paper, or glue, which they would have to access on their own.

To analyze data, I used a colour coding technique to categorize information into different themes. Fortunately, because I had few participants, I was able to colour code using the Microsoft Word program on my laptop. Finally, to represent the data, I used Procreate, a program on my Ipad, with the use of my Apple Pencil. For this, my Ipad served as a sketchbook to create digital images with my Apple Pencil, which enabled me to showcase the main themes that surfaced as a result of the thematic analysis.

Safe Storage

I was responsible for storing all participant data. On my laptop, I had a password-protected folder titled, *Research,* in which I created a folder for each participant. The folders were titled, P1 (Participant 1), P2 (Participant 2), P3 (Participant 3), and P4 (Participant 4), to preserve the anonymity of each

participant. Within these folders, I stored participant consent forms and interview responses. In addition, any identifiable information within these documents was codified or eliminated. While both Dr. jay johnson and I had access to the coded information, only I had access to participants' original names and identifying information. Following the completion of the study, all participant information was destroyed.

Limitations and Delimitations

Data Collection

The data collection phase of my project is one that presented many limitations and required flexibility on my part. Firstly, prior to commencing my research, I contacted the Manitoba Minister of Education and Training (Santos, Personal communication, August 27, 2019), who informed me that I must be granted permission from each ELCCC's Board of Directors before contacting the employees of that centre. The process for this included sending an email to the director at the ELCCC of interest, requesting contact with a Board of Directors member, and then sending a project description of my study to the Board of Directors member for it to be presented at the next board meeting. Given that most boards do not meet on a regular basis, I was repeatedly forced into stagnancy as I waited weeks to initiate contact with ECEs. This process was very frustrating, especially during a pandemic, during which boards were not meeting as often and ECEs were not working at the centres.

In addition, I found that, although many ECEs initially agreed to partake in my study, a big portion of them stopped responding to my emails or never actually submitted their interview responses. I understand that, like most working professionals, ECEs are busy and have families to care for after work, which I believe became an obstacle for many of them to follow-through with their participant responsibilities. Because all of this was occurring at the height of the novel Covid-19 pandemic, in April 2020, one could say that I was overtaken by a level of guilt as a result of expecting people to participate in my study, when they likely had much more important things to worry about. In effort of wanting to

take a step back and give people the space and respect that they deserved, during such unprecedented global circumstances, I felt it would be better to conduct electronic interviews. I felt that, in giving people the opportunity and space to complete an electronic questionnaire, at their own time and place of convenience, more would be likely to participate and fulfil their role as participant.

The downfall to this method though, which I did not anticipate, is that the participant interview quality was quite low, as in, the detail and depth of the responses was not as I had hoped for them to be. In some instances, participants only gave a one-sentence response. This was disappointing because I felt there was very little data to work with and draw conclusions from. While in some cases, I was able to contact participants and receive elaborations on the responses that I felt needed expanding, this consisted of yet another waiting process.

On one hand, the lacking profoundness in some of the responses could have been due to a participant's personal motivation to fulfill the participant role. Given the absence of physical human contact (by phone, in person, or by video call) and the likely low level of accountability, it would be understandable for participants to feel less culpable about deprioritizing the study and rushing through the questions and responses. On the other hand, some participants may simply not have felt comfortable expressing themselves in written format, which could definitely influence the quality of responses. With that said, I did not provide participants with guidelines regarding the expected length of their responses which, in retrospect, I should have done. Needless to say, it was a huge learning experience for me and it has further piqued my interest in the sociological and psychological dimensions of human interaction.

Potential Conflicts of Interest

I expected the potential for conflicts of interest to arise during the course of my research study. First and foremost, being a former ECE, I recognized that my own practical experiences have influenced this research. I practiced in Winnipeg and Brandon, Manitoba, which put me in the position to face former

instructors, college peers, and coworkers. I was aware of the effects that such connections could have given rise to. I anticipated a range of scenarios that could surface if I approached former ECE colleagues or college peers. For example, I expected that former ECE colleagues or colleges peers might feel uncomfortable opening up to me in an interview. In addition, I considered that they might feel obligated to help someone they know, despite not wanting to. I did my best to minimize the effects of possible conflict of interest by staying distant and professional and only reaching out to ECEs utilizing the generalized email submission. I was aware that if I pressured a participant or tried to establish some sort of friendship prior to the study, it could complicate the person's decision to participate. At this point, I am unsure if any conflicts of interest occurred throughout the course of my participant recruitment and data collection phases. It is important to mention that out of the many previously known and unknown prospective participants that I contacted, two out of the final four participants in my pool *are* known to me.

Trustworthiness

I took several steps to ensure the trustworthiness of this project. To protect the data results from any personal bias, I was aware of utilizing only the interview questions approved by my committee and keeping a reflexive journal to express my own thoughts throughout the process (O'Donoghue, 2014). Furthermore, I engaged in peer debriefing as other qualitative researchers have in the past (French-Lee & Dooley, 2015). Throughout the course of this project, I shared my findings and perspectives with members of my committee to combat any bias, receive feedback, and clarify any inconsistencies.

Considerations

There were a number of factors to consider when collecting the data. Only one ethnographical question was addressed prior to the interviews. First, I wanted to ensure that the applicants *were* ECEs. Once this was ascertained, I identified the level of ECE the prospective participant held (II or III). The

ECEs' level of ECE did not affect whether or not they were chosen.

Ethics

There were a series of ethical requirements that were intentionally fulfilled during the recruiting, briefing, and consenting processes of the project. All candidates were provided a brief project description (Appendix A) regarding research objectives and methods, participant expectations, and ethical considerations pertaining to informed consent, information dissemination, and confidentiality (Thomas & Hodges, 2019). Interested applicants were able to discuss with me any pending queries before providing their approval (Appendix C) to participate.

Summary

This chapter summarized the practical aspects of conducting my research. It described my chosen methods of inquiry and also expanded on the limitations that each phase of this project was presented with. The results that surfaced as a result of all my efforts discussed in this chapter, will now be revealed in the next chapter.

Chapter IV: Results

Themes

In this section I will be making associations between the interview data that I have collected from four participants and the findings I have gathered from my review of the government policy manuals. To be specific, I will be highlighting the three themes that have surfaced as a result of my interviews, while also drawing from material in *The Best Practices Licensing Manual* (Manitoba Child Care Program, 2005) and *Developing Enhanced Safety Plans and Codes of Conduct* (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.). In order to preserve the anonymity of the four participants, they have been coded as P1 (Participant 1), P2 (Participant 2), P3 (Participant 3), and P4 (Participant 4). P1 and P2 work as directors (ECE III) and P3 and P4 as ECEs (ECE II), at ELCCs. With that noted, the three themes that surfaced as a result of participant interviews are: *The field of early childhood education, Comprehension of policies,* and *Managing behaviour,* along with their respective subthemes. With respect to the subthemes, the first major theme is composed of three subthemes titled: *The role of early childhood educators, Negative aspects of the field,* and *Positive aspects of the field.* The two subthemes that emerged within the second theme are: *ECE participants' contradictory practices and narratives* and *ECE participants' comprehension of positive guidance.* Within the final key theme, two subthemes were identified: *ECEs' personal experiences influence responses to behaviour* and *A depiction of ECEs' diverse behaviour management responses.* Within my delineation of these themes and subthemes, I will also be referring to specific sections of my reflexive narratives and digital images. The intent is to divulge and amalgamate all thematically relevant information, so as to reflect the multi-methodological nature of this highly compound study.

The Field of Early Childhood Education

Figure 1 (Rocha, M. 2020)



The field of early childhood education is one that is never dull. This first theme attempts to elucidate a fraction of the many dimensions that encompass the field of early childhood education. As mentioned above, there are three subthemes that underpin this first theme of *The field of early childhood education*. The first subtheme encapsulates ECE's perceptions of what they believe to be their role. The second subtheme describes the negative aspects of the field of early childhood education and the third subtheme depicts the positive aspects of the field of early childhood education. In the following subtheme descriptions, I will provide the reader with information that has spurred the conceptualization of such themes, while also referring to specific parts of my drawings.

The Role of Early Childhood Educators. Within this theme, there was an interesting level of congruency in the responses given by the four participants. P1 expressed that the role of an ECE is to

guide children and foster their independence, as well as to assist them in navigating their emotional experiences. In addition to this, P2 communicated the importance of being a good role model and play partner. P3 elaborated on the multifaceted role that encompasses being an ECE, as it requires one to be a facilitator, by constructing a "stimulating, caring, inclusive, safe, and clean environment" as well as "planning, preparing, and implementing a high quality, play-based, developmentally appropriate curriculum to foster physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development." P4's narrative regarding the role of an ECE derived from a more emotional perspective, as P4 placed emphasis on "building trusting relationships with children" and expressed wanting children to know that they can approach and confide in P4 because "no matter what happens" P4 "will still care about them."

On that same note, P4 described the responsibility that ECEs carry in teaching children concepts such as "patience, empathy, kindness, compassion, and how to deal with frustration, anger and disappointment" as well as providing children with "opportunities for decision making and problem solving."

Between the four written accounts, there is a common sense of obligation to personally invest into the role of ECE. In consideration of my own experiences as an ECE, I am able to identify with much of what my participants said regarding their role as an ECE, especially P4's perspectives regarding the importance of "building trusting relationships with children". I grew up in a loving home and, although I did not always agree with my parents, I never doubted their unconditional support and love they had for me. Not all children grow up in this way so, for me, it was always important to be a pillar of constant stability, affection, and support, to the children I worked with.

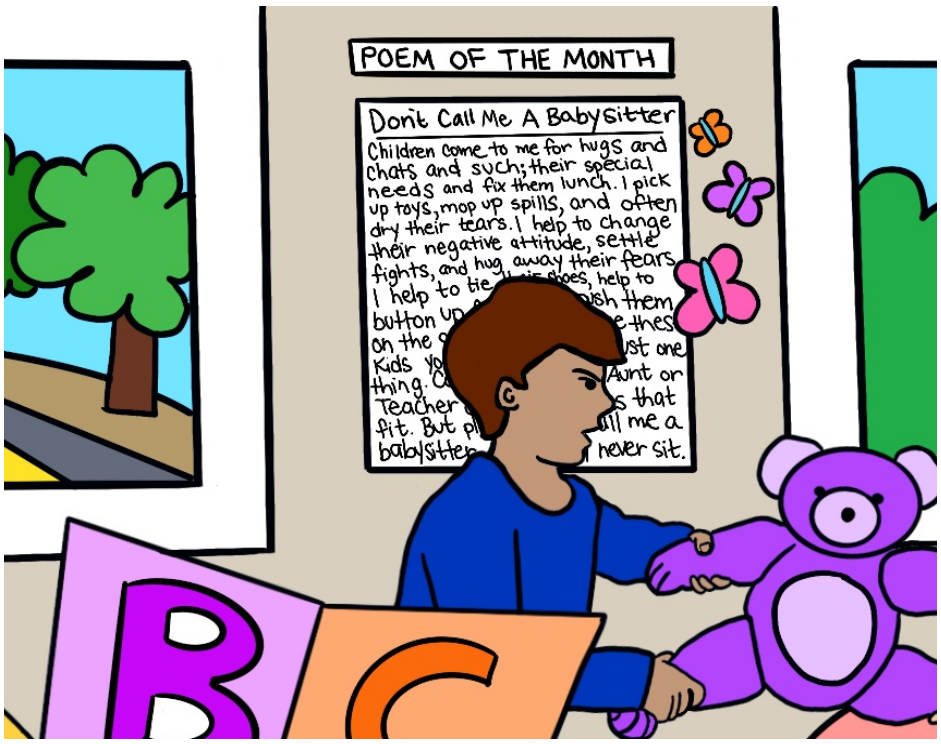
Most of the participants alluded to the importance of emotionally connecting with the children and serving as a guide and confidant. This ties into what I believed my role to be as an ECE; as I wanted to show children how to navigate the world the way I see it and answer to them according to the ways that

they see the world.

Being so deeply invested in a role could likely have an effect on the way that guidelines are implemented, which will be explored in this chapter. The next subthemes will look at the twofold features of the field of early childhood education. More specifically, I will be outlining the antonymous negative and positive characteristics of working in this particular field.

Negative Aspects of the Field. This subtheme contains a series of descriptions that reflect some of the challenges that ECEs face. Most of the data that emerged for this theme derives from the CAP responses prompted by a statement in the electronic interview, which goes as follows: "Express the biggest challenges and triumphs that you encounter as an ECE." As a result, what I have deduced from P2's powerful poem and P3's pictorial representations is that ECEs feel underappreciated. P2's poem, which is illustrated in the image, is titled, *Don't call me a babysitter.* It goes as follows:

> Don't Call Me A Babysitter
> Children come to me for hugs and chats and such;
> Their special needs and fix them lunch.
> I pick up toys, mop up spills, and often dry their tears.
> I help to change their negative attitude, settle fights, and hug away their fears.
> I help to tie their shoes, help to button up coats and push them on the swing.
> I really love these kids, you see, but there's just one thing.
> Call me mom or Aunt or Teacher or other names that fit,
> But please don't call me the "sitter", because I never get to sit



The tone of the last line of the poem, which I have interpreted to be an expression of feeling underappreciated, is also exhibited in several of the graphic images submitted by P3. One picture says, "I can't pay bills with [image of ice cream] and [image of rainbow]. Quality pay for quality education." Other examples of the text shown in P3's images are, "My teachers deserve a living wage", and "Manitoba can't work without child care". As well as "Fair wages 4 (for) ECEs", and "Education begins long before kindergarten. Quality early learning and care must be well funded." I did my best to represent this data in my original drawing. As illustrated below, one can see that I incorporated the use of words and phrases that denote such findings, as I wrote, "the good and the bad", "fair pay", and "help" on boxes. I have also included board game boxes with "teacher burn out" and "communication is key", written on them. Finally, I drew many books on the bookshelf, with titles such as, "patience", "positive guidance", and "tips for educators".

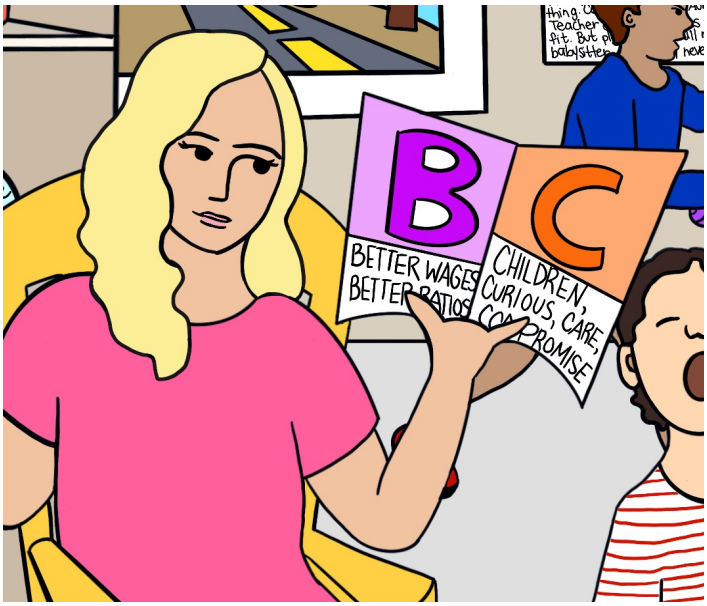


It is interesting to see that the data I gathered from my participants, resonates with a passage from my pre-research reflexive narrative, entitled, *Other educators,* and it goes as follows (Appendix D):

> As an ECE, I was able to connect with other educators on a deeper level and I gathered that many of them were unhappy, stressed, or burnt out. Many of them would complain and groan. I would find some of them falling asleep during their breaks, from the extreme exhaustion. It was such a burnt out, depressing, eye-rolling culture in the centres and it began to infect me.

In my narrative, I also wrote about how educators would talk about how unappreciated they felt and how they looked forward to retiring. In P4's acrostic poem of alphabet letters, the theme of feeling

underappreciated and underpaid is also reiterated. P4 wrote, “Y – Yearning: for better wages, for better ratios, for better.” These representations paint a clear picture that ECEs feel they deserve more support. This finding raises an issue that could strongly influence an ECE’s willingness to learn and integrate the policies. In addition to the abovementioned, P4 shed light on other difficulties that ECEs may face. For example, P4’s acrostic poem mentioned, “W – Worry”, “T – Tantrums”, “U – Unsure”, and “F – Frustration. Fevers. Fear.” Sections from P4’s acrostic poem can be seen in a small section of my drawing, shown below:



This theme summarized the negative aspects of the field of early childhood education. In the next section, I will shift attention to the positive aspects of the field of early childhood education.

Positive Aspects of the Field. This theme synopsises the positives of working as an ECE and basically describes the reasons why ECEs go to work every day and work as hard as they do. In P2’s poem it says, “Children come to me for hugs and chats and such…I really love these kids.” Furthermore, P1 expressed the triumph that one feels when “a child that struggled regulating their behaviour” is “able to do it.” Rewarding moments as such have the potential to make ECEs feel that there is merit to the work they do. In addition to P3 images in which the negative aspects of the field are articulated, there are other

images with the opposite effect. I found it noteworthy that out of the six submitted images depicting the field of early childhood education, the majority were positive.

I decided to reflect the image submitted by P3, in which superheroes are saying, “It’s official. Early Childhood Educators are now in the club”, by creating my own version of it in my personal illustration:





P3 shared another image, on which it is written that, “I know someday the time may come when we will have to part. But I know each child I’ve cared for, is forever in my heart.” This text, whether P3 wrote it or not, is one that P3 identifies with and validates just how much ECEs can emotionally invest themselves in their work. P4 strengthens this notion, as P4’s poem consists of sections like, “P – Precious: Moments/Time”, “L – Language. Learning. Love”, “A – Achievement. Accomplishment”, and “B – Belonging. Building relationships.” This subtheme detailed the positive outcomes of working in the field of early childhood education. The fact that all participants contributed to this theme shows that there is consensus that working as an ECE is meaningful and fruitful.

Conclusion. Aside from the binary analyses represented in this theme and illustrated in my drawing, it was also my intent to create an illustration that achieved an integration of all three of the subthemes exemplified above. It was my intention to show the challenging aspects of being an ECE (note the children fighting over a toy and the children not paying attention to the ECE reading), as well as the rewarding aspects of being an ECE (note the child being held and comforted by the ECE and the children playing independently). To illustrate the type of environment that ECEs work in, I attempted to depict a buzzing energy in the room by using bright colours and creating characters with a variety of facial expressions and participating in a variety of different activities.

My interpretation of participant responses regarding the topics at hand was surely influenced by my position in this research, which is somewhat influenced by a desire to identify flaws in current ELCCC

policies. While I was interested to know the positive ways in which ECEs described their roles, I was most curious to know about any potential criticisms they had regarding the field and their roles as ECEs. While this could have predisposed me to focus more on identifying such criticisms, within ECE interview responses, it must be considered that there was little data to work with, which I believe leaves less room for speculative interpretations.

The subjects that this theme touched on could assist researchers, educators, and policymakers in understanding policy adherence tendencies in ELCCCs. In the next section I will present a series of findings within the scope of policy comprehension in ELCCCs.

ECE Comprehension of Policies in ELCCCs

Figure 2 (Rocha, M. 2020)



A number of studies reveal the loss of translation that exists between the information put forward for ECEs and the ways that ECEs exercise their knowledge and apply their skills (Dunst & Trivette, 2009; French-Lee & Dooley, 2015; Halbert, 2001; McFarland, Saunders & Allen, 2008). My own study has produced data that echoes the findings of previous research and in this second section I will provide the reader with examples of this gap. In addition, this theme articulates the ways in which ECEs understand and apply the behaviour management policies in place, which I will complement by referring to sections of my reflexive narratives.

Among the four participants, there appeared to be a good level of comprehension of the behaviour management policies. For example, P1 explained that the behaviour management policies underline the value of positive guidance techniques and also offer guidelines on the required steps one must take "to address challenging behaviours up to suspension of services." P2 expressed the knowledge that policies have been developed according to Provincial standards and that no ELCCCs shall "…permit, practice of inflict any form of physical punishment, verbal or emotional abuse…" On one hand, all four participants demonstrated a clear understanding that the policies function within a scope of positive guidance and are put forth by the province. On the other hand though, a substantial amount of data contradicting this understanding emerged as a result of the interview questionnaire, which I will expand on in the following section.

ECE Participants' Contradictory Practices and Narratives. This theme summarizes a series of participant narratives that contradict policy expectations or allude to the possibility that contradictions occur in the centres. It is notable to convey the deep personal interest that I had in gathering data specific to this particular theme. From the beginning, the development of this study has been highly motivated by an eagerness to expose, what I believe to be, a problematic gap and negligence of expected policy standards, in ELCCCs. I was most enthusiastic about collecting data about contradictory practices

because such data may reveal how extensive the gap between policy and practice truly is. In addition, if there is admittance of contradictory practices, other ECEs may feel brave enough to share the ways in which they fail to adhere to policies, which would hopefully spark discussion regarding the efficacy and applicability of certain policies.

In my case, I witnessed contradictory practices every day. Sometimes, I witnessed ECEs cross the line. For example, during one of my practicums at naptime, I observed that ECEs would wrap the children in blankets and slam them onto the mat, keeping them down with the weight of their bodies, so that they would stop moving and submit. It was interesting that all of the ECEs, in this particular case, adopted the same method.

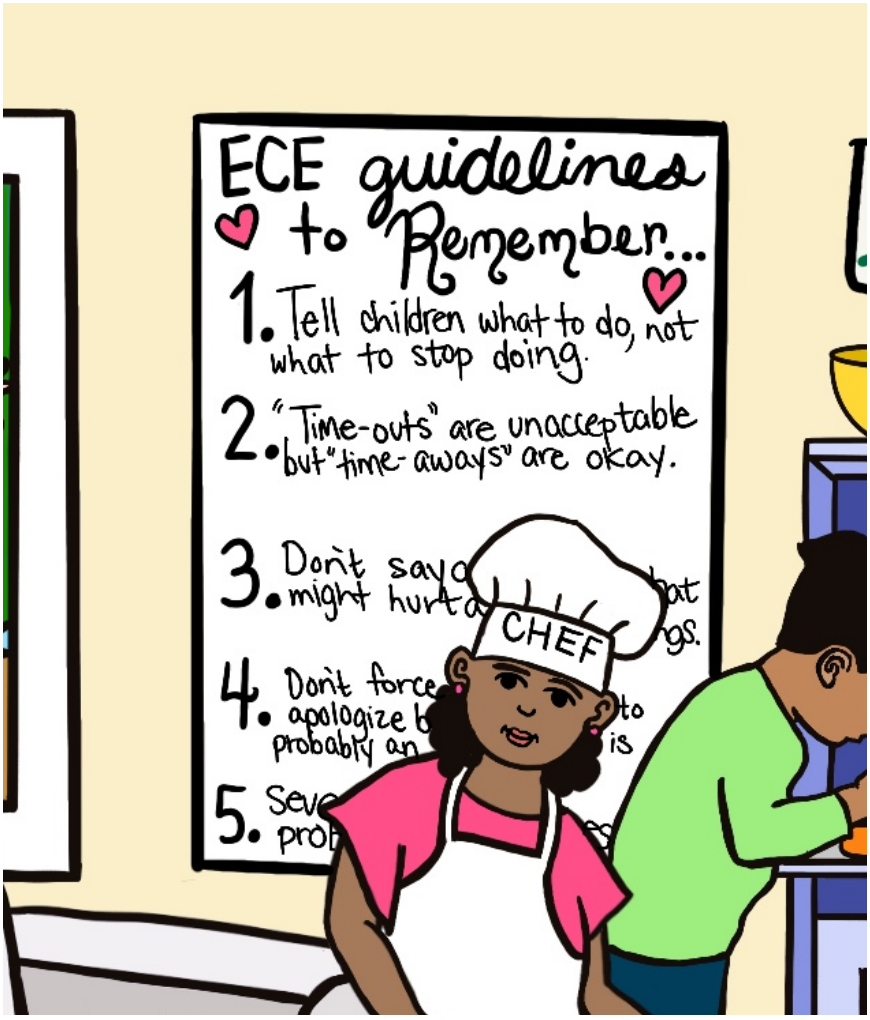
I can admit that I consciously engaged in contradictory practices. For example, during one of my practicums I learned that it is inappropriate to grab children by the wrists and that one must always grab children by their hands. I knowingly acted in contradiction of this implicit standard because, with some children's hands being so tiny, I felt that they would easily slip out- especially when wearing mittens. There were also times where I put children in time-out or took away the privilege of participating in a fun group activity, even if it meant that the children would feel left out. In addition to this, I likely engaged in other contradictory practices without consciously knowing. I write these examples, which are accompanied by many more, so as to draw attention to the normalization of acting in contradiction to policy. This is not to say that, because I practiced in contradiction to policy, that all other ECEs do as well. As a result, the purpose of this section is not to scrutinize the information that ECEs have shared, but to compare and contrast the different ways that ECEs practice in relation to policy expectations.

P1, who is the director of an ELCCC, believes that only half of the child care workers, at the centres which P1 oversees, understand the policies (this includes both ECEs and CCAs). P1 also made an opinion-based analysis in which it was revealed that, out of the certified ECE workers, it is believed that

only 75 percent understand or remember the policies.

The drawing I created, which is a culmination of participant experiences and my own experiences, has been methodically composed so as to depict the ways in which ECEs adhere or fail to adhere to certain guidelines.

In the image below, one can see that there are five main scenarios occurring in the illustration, which are all somehow related to five guidelines which I have created in reflection of my pre-research reflexive narratives. The five guidelines are as follows: 1) *Tell children what to do, not what to stop doing*, 2) *"Time-outs" are unacceptable but "time-aways" are okay*, 3) *Don't say anything that might hurt a child's feelings*, 4) *Don't force children to apologize because it will probably be an empty apology*, and 5) *The seven-step process to problem solving is best*.



The first guideline in my drawing, *Tell children what to do, not what to stop doing*, is exemplified in a section of my drawing, in which the ECE is telling the child what to do. In the below image, the ECE is illustrated using inclusive language while also offering the child an alternate way to fulfill his desire to jump. In this example, the ECE complies with policy expectations.



The second guideline in my drawing, *"Time-outs" are unacceptable but "time-aways" are okay*, which is illustrated in a way that does not satisfy policy guidelines, is meant to expose the ways in which ECEs may choose to reject particular policies. My decision to highlight this specific example, was inspired by P3's statement that if a "child displays persistent disruptive behaviour, you may remove the child from the group for a short period of time, commonly known as "time-out"." While P3 may feel that, in certain circumstances, this type of behaviour management technique is appropriate, it contradicts information found in *Developing Enhanced Safety Plans and Codes of Conduct* (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.), where it clearly states that

> Time-out punishes the child by separating them from their peers and draws attention to the punishment. Using cool down zones takes a different approach. Instead of isolating the child, the adult helps the child to understand the situation, their feelings and the feelings of others. After children have had their feelings recognized and have a chance to calm down, they are able to discuss appropriate ways to handle the situation and are less likely to repeat the inappropriate behaviour. This approach helps children learn how to calm themselves and to develop self-control (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d. p. 20)

Interestingly, P2 commented, “I feel like because it is looked down on having “time-outs” many people think that “time-aways are like that”, which sparks the question of whether or not ECEs know the difference between a time-out and time-away, because I certainly do not.

With that said, this example was also motivated by a pre-research narrative from my reflexive journal, titled, *Instruction: Disruptive Children Need Guidance not Consequences,* and it goes as follows (Appendix D):

> ... an instructor explained to our class that, when a child keeps interrupting during story time, the child should move to sit beside the reader and help turn the book pages. The reasoning behind this is that, if a child keeps interrupting, the child clearly needs attention and additional support and that, as teachers, we should provide that. *My* reasoning is that, if a child keeps interrupting and affecting the experience for the rest of the children, the child should be provided with a warning/consequence rather than being positively reinforced by being given the opportunity to turn the pages. Most children see this as a privilege (simply ask a group of children if any of them would like to help turn the pages and you will see)

Sugar-coating a “time-out” as a “time-away” and refraining from removing a disruptive child from an environment, as a blatant consequence, epitomizes the protective culture that indoctrinates ELCCCs. My illustration below shows a girl who is clearly unhappy to be on the time-out chair, but is complying because she will likely get to return to the activity from which she was removed- after completing her short stay on the time-out chair. It would be idealistic to assume that all children would respond so cooperatively in this scenario and it is important to assert that time-outs are not a technique that works with all children.

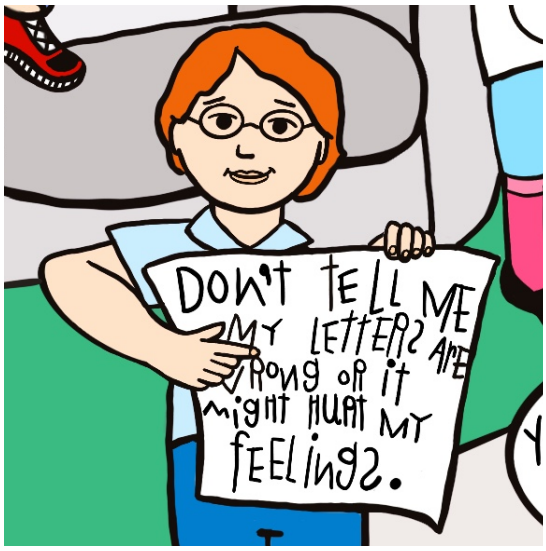


The third guideline in my drawing, *Don't say anything that might hurt a child's feelings*, is one that has been solely motivated by own personal experiences. My reflexive narrative (Appendix D) touches on this:

> It should not have to be said but, *obviously,* no adult should ever say emotionally or psychologically damaging things to a child. In the same breath though, I think it is just as dangerous to overprotect a child's self-esteem. How are we to raise resilient children that can receive both positive and negative feedback and stand up for themselves and others, when we are expected to educate them in an unrealistic petri dish of positivity? The college I attended made a strong emphasis on fostering a child's self-esteem and preventing/easing any exposure to negativity. For example, I learned that teachers should not tell a child when they have put their shoes on the wrong feet because it might hurt their feelings. I couldn't help but think how much a child's feelings would be hurt when the child gets to Kindergarten and trips in front of other students, because the child never learned how to put shoes on properly. I also learned that teachers should not draw or do crafts in front of children because the children may feel that their drawing or craft is ugly, in comparison to the teachers'… I learned that in these scenarios, the teacher's role is to *facilitate* the experience by providing the materials and *expand* the experience by saying things like, "now what colour will you use?" or "tell me about your artwork"

The well-intended school of thought of protecting children is one that does not benefit a child in the long run. One could also argue that children's innocence is not a reason to protect them from experiencing completely normal and human emotions. Children, who are constantly protected from feeling shame,

guilt, or self-doubt, are being robbed of opportunities to develop into independent and resilient human beings (Malone, 2007). Psychologists indicate that resilience is both influenced by biological and engivornmental factors (Donahoo, 2007). Donahoo (2007) refers to the positive effects associated with children's experiences of "some levels of stress, pain and trauma because their capacity for resilience will be informed by these experiences" (p.45). Donahoo (2007) adds that, "if we actively shield children from the breadth of reasonable experiences available to them, it is possible they may grow up to be more vulnerable adults" (p. 45). The idea of creating an environment absent of uncomfortable emotional challenges is somewhat idealistic. Children are very resilient beings, if they were not, there would be a lot more dysfunctional adults in society than there already are (Donahoo, 2007). As a result, I created an allegorical image of a little boy holding up his picture for all to see. I wanted to convey, from the child, a level of power that would ultimately influence ECEs to choose their words carefully.



The fourth guideline in my drawing, *Don't force children to apologize because it will probably be an empty apology*, is illustrated below and provoked as a result of P3's comment:

During a conflict between two children I have observed, many times, a co-worker demanding that the child apologizes to the other without mentioning anything else to the children. Rather than just offering the often-empty words “I’m sorry,” it is far more meaningful to help one child understand how another is feeling



The last scenario in my illustration, which reflects the fifth guideline, *The seven-step process to problem solving is best*, is of an ECE guiding children through a conflict.



The scenarios captured in my illustration are meant to expound the ways that ECEs may behave in specific circumstances. They are meant to be somewhat vague in terms of what strategies should be used and are intended to exemplify the uncertainty that can accompany policy adherence.

P2 described the policies as "… policies you must follow to keep and maintain a job at a program" and also stated, "I feel that other ECEs mostly adhere to the behaviour management" policies, but that, "everyone deals with behaviours in their own way – to each their own, however, in my shoes, as a director, I don't always see it as appropriate." P2 further expressed that, "in certain circumstances you have to do what you feel is best for the children and the program." P2's powerful statement is one that has been speculated in previous research.

For instance, French-Lee and Dooley (2015) explain that, because dilemmas are often "unique and contextual" (p. 378), it can make it challenging for educators to define whether a situation is right or wrong and force them to practice in ways that they believe to be best practice, rather than what is actually considered best practice. The fact that P2, a centre director, has alluded to the existence of a gap between policy and practice and the autonomy that ECEs can have when it comes to making decisions regarding how to apply policies, is valuable information for policymakers to consider. This information also merits the question of *why* ECEs are not adhering to particular policies and *what* is being done when they do not.

In any type of workplace, it would be surprising for all employees to perfectly adhere to policy standards. P4 claimed, "I fear that there could be ECEs who do not adhere to these policies, whether out of their own ignorance or frustration, but I can only speak for myself." This establishes an awareness of other coworkers' reactions to certain situations. While the intent should not be to scrutinize and patronize a co-worker, such observations should be utilized to facilitate dialect about policy and standards. Reading a policy manual is far more different than practicing it. Creating communication about policies and practices among ECEs, superiors, and policymakers, would facilitate more common outcomes.

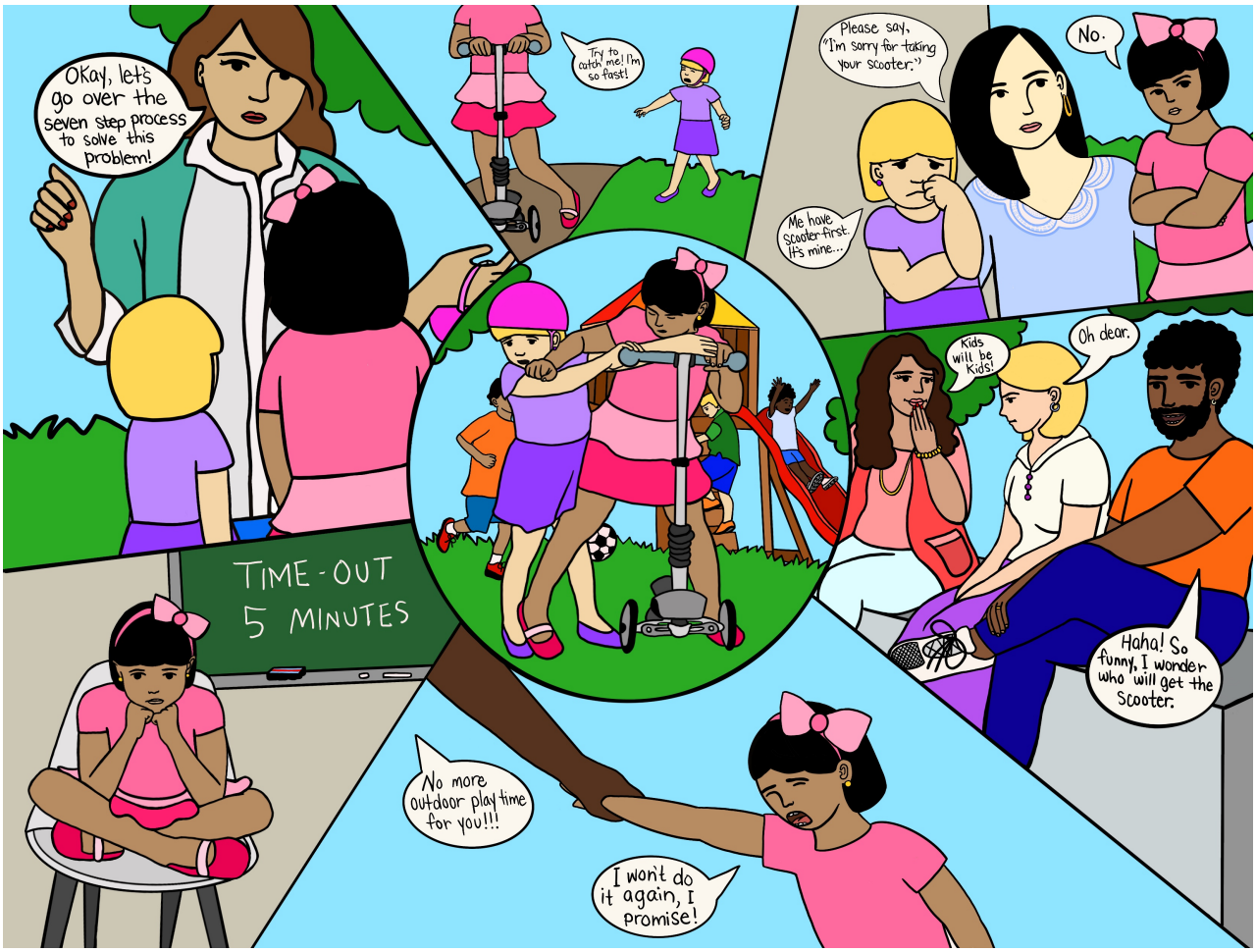
ECE Participants' Comprehension of Positive Guidance. Particular data that I collected from the four ECEs, suggests a lack of comprehension of the positive guidance method. P1 previously noted that approximately only 75 percent of ECEs understand or remember the behaviour management policies. Interestingly enough, a study, in which ECE practicum students were asked to describe positive guidance prior to and after taking a course, found that only 14.3 percent of students were able to accurately describe positive guidance (McFarland et al., 2008). This number only improved by 3.2 percent after students completed the course (McFarland et al., 2008). While there is no question that the four ECEs I interviewed *are* aware of the expectation to adhere to positive guidance, there is clear evidence, beyond my own research, exposing the vagueness of positive guidance.

Moreover, the "situational nature of positive guidance" (McFarland et al., 2008, p. 217) makes the approach more difficult to grasp than traditional discipline methods. This finding is supported by ECE practicum student responses, in which it was identified that the students felt overwhelmed with not knowing how to respond in certain scenarios (McFarland et al., 2008). A narrative collected during my research, in which P2 expressed that "if ECEs were provided with the support and resources about behaviour management and positive behaviour management they wouldn't struggle as much as they do", reinforces the argument brought forward by McFarland et al. (2008). Altogether, these pieces of data indicate the need for change. Policies need to adapt to ECEs and ECEs need more training to better adopt policies into their own practice.

Conclusion. The above subthemes capitulated the ways in which ECEs interpret and practice policies. There is evidence of disconnect between the expectations placed on ECEs and the ECEs' fidelity to such expectations. In this next and final section of my description of findings, I will be going deeper into the topic of how ECEs respond to behaviour management scenarios and possible reasons for how and why they do so in such ways.

Managing Behavior

Figure 3 (Rocha, M. 2020)



In continuation with the theme of policy comprehension and fidelity, this final theme highlights the behaviour management techniques that the ECE participants apply in their own practices and the ways that their personal experiences and perspectives influence the ways that they apply particular techniques. The CAP drawing that I rendered, as a result of the data collected and my own narratives, is composed of a central scenario surrounded by six different possible responses to it. The central scenario is of a small, young child having her scooter taken by a larger, older child:



Furthermore, one objective of mine, which heavily underpinned the way that I executed this final drawing, was to illustrate a range of races and ethnicities. It was important for me to evidence the broad range of cultures and ethnicities that can be present in one ELCCC. This is because, firstly, different ethnic backgrounds can lead to different personal beliefs, customs, and practices, in both ECEs and children- a statement supported by data that I collected. In the face of this diversity that I experienced and the supporting data that I collected, which indicates the diverse ways that ECEs can respond to behaviour, I am able to reconcile some of my previous perceptions regarding positive guidance. While my intended stance regarding positive guidance has never been to detest it, merely to challenge it, I can say that, more than ever, I am able to recognize that my perceptions are unique to my own experiences and belief systems, which might be considered more religiously traditional and conservative, than others my age or from a different ethnic, religious background. In some cases, I found that I was better able to relate my perceptions, regarding childrearing, to those workers who were older in age and immigrant.

Secondly, as an ECE, I was exposed to a diverse range of cultures. I was exposed to a variety of children's names and languages I had never heard, new smells brought from within children's lunches with food I had never seen, learning nursery songs I could barely pronounce, and family stories that

reminded me of my immigration to Canada. All of these factors were my favourite parts of working as an ECE and, while I am not certain that this level of diversity would be evident in other child care centres around the world, or even Canada, it was definitely evident in the centres I worked at. As a result, I wanted to ensure that this diversity was represented in all of my drawings, especially my final one, which specifically touches on diversity.

When asked about different ways to manage challenging behaviour, most of the participants' responses were in harmony with policy expectations. P3 discussed the benefits of using communication and reinforcement and P4 mentioned ways to use the "physical environment to foster positive behaviour, social interaction and safe play." Additionally, P1 attested that children with behavioural issues are not meant to be expulsed and that they should receive guidance and learn the tools to properly manage their behaviour. P3 supported this argument by defining a set of strategies to deal with behavioural issues, such as *prompting* and *supporting* children when they are "experiencing frustration, anger or fear", moving children to "a space where they can gain composure and control over their emotions", and offering reassurance to children when they feel overwhelmed. While there appears to be a general consensus regarding the management of challenging behaviour, I will now shift attention to the ways that ECEs' personal experiences influence the ways they manage challenging behaviour.

ECEs' Personal Experiences Influence Responses to Behaviour. P2 wrote, "There are many different ways that you can raise a child or implement different policies within programs." This statement validates that different perspectives manifest into different practices. P1 iterated that many ECEs are likely "unconsciously affected by how they were raised and their cultural background". P3 mirrored P1's statement by saying,

> My parents used appropriate behaviour guidance techniques that assisted me and my siblings in regulating our own behaviour so that we do not always rely on adults to guide our behaviour. I implement this personal experience and upbringing to the children at my daycare because I find it very effective

P3 practices in a way that reflects P3's upbringing, but this does not necessarily mean these practices align with policy guidelines. In this case, and because fostering independence in children *is* an outcome outlined in the manual, P3's narrative is not concerning, but could easily be representative of other ECE's ideologies and the ways they practice (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.). The problem with practicing in likeness of one's upbringing is that not everyone's experiences and philosophies align with the policies.

A Depiction of ECEs' Diverse Behaviour Management Responses. I will now take this opportunity to clearly illustrate the diverse ways that four ECEs can respond to the same problem. Question four of the interview questions that I constructed, asks, "If Child A and Child B are in a sandbox and Child A throws sand at Child B, how do you respond?" I formulated this question as a result of the combination of two examples found in *Developing Enhanced Safety Plans and Codes of Conduct* (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.), on how to manage behaviour. In consideration of the guidelines presented in the manual, I have interpreted the best practice, in this sandbox scenario, to entail: positively reminding Child A of the rules (e.g. saying, "the sand should stay in the sandbox") and redirecting Child A's behaviour (e.g. giving the child a shovel or helping the child dig a hole) (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.). In addition to the abovementioned steps, it would also be useful to: kneel at the child's eye level and help label Child A's feelings (e.g. saying, "you look angry" or "you look excited") (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.). If the child does not comply with the rules, the ECE should help the child problem solve and only remove the child from the sandbox as a very last recourse (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.). With all of this in mind, I will now summarize and comment on each participant's response to this question.

P1 responded by utilizing a positive statement to guide the child who threw the sand. P1 said, "Keep the sand in the sand table" and provided a reason why, by saying: "Peter can get hurt if the sand

gets in his eyes". P1 then identified guiding the child through the kind gesture of helping the other child get cleaned up. This response is in line with policy standards, although it would have also been expected that P1 redirect Child A's throwing behaviour (e.g. showing the child how to shovel sand into a bucket). It would have been interesting to know how P1 would have reacted, should the problem have escalated.

P2 responded by waiting to see Child B's reaction and allowing the children the opportunity to problem solve on their own. P2 said, "If Child B cannot react appropriately, I would help." P2 also commented on the utilization of positive guidance to "… explain to them that sand is for digging or building with and not for throwing". This reaction is also in line with policy standards, although P2 should have labeled the children's feelings to promote empathy, as well as aided Child A in finding an alternative activity to replace the sand throwing (e.g. showing the child how to dig a hole).

P3 responded by checking Child B's state and also saying to Child A, "Throwing sand at Child A made Child A feel very sad, that really hurt when you threw the sand." P3 also expressed wanting to find out if the child was "just flinging sand around for the joy of it" and if it were true, P3 would have said, "You can put your sand into a bucket!" P3 then stated that, if that had little effect, P3 would ask where a bucket might be. Then, "If Child A doesn't grab one right away, I would put one within easy reach and I would start shovelling some sand into the bucket myself." P3 also suggested organizing a game in which sand or objects are thrown in a safe way. P3's response went beyond policy standards. P3 also successfully modelled empathy by tending to Child B and suggesting an alternative activity to replace the sand throwing. This thorough response to the issue is reflective of the standards expected in an ELCCC.

Finally, P4's response to this scenario was to, first, assist Child B, "using lots of labelling and showing concern for their well-being." After assisting Child B, P4 would then go back to Child A and "talk about what happened, how it made Child B feel and what Child A could do next time, if the situation ever happened again." P4 took an emotionally-focused approach by assisting Child B, using a lot

of labelling, and assisting Child A reflect on the impact of such actions, on others. While this is an admirable approach, in the sense that it warrants an incredible amount of patience, it is not as reflective of policy guidelines as the other participants' responses were. P4 could have considered redirecting Child A's behaviour, especially because not all children are developmentally ready to engage in such abstract conversations about their emotions and behaviours.

These examples depict an evident variation in the way that multiple people can react to the exact same situation. The majority of the responses constituted some form of redirection, which involves redirecting a child's negative behaviour to a positive behaviour (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.). This method of behaviour management is one that has been scrutinized in research. Considering the sandbox example, in which Child A throws sand at Child B, and Child A is meant to be redirected with a shovel and bucket, while the intention is to redirect Child A's inappropriate behaviour to an appropriate behaviour, giving Child A a shovel and a bucket could also fall into the category of positive reinforcement (Lerman & Fritz, 2012). In addition, it could also serve as a potentially more enticing object for throwing! If Child A's behaviour is responded to by an absence of consequence and a presence of pleasure (e.g. additional toys), it could be argued that the child may not understand the implications of his behaviour and may repeat the actions. In such a case, it may be more effective to provide Child A with a warning and proceed with positive punishment, such as removing the child from the sandbox, if the warning is ignored (Lerman, & Fritz, 2012). Positive punishment, which could apply to a number of scenarios, in which it is desirable to decrease the likelihood of a behaviour reoccurring, challenges the fine lined boundaries of positive guidance, which condemns any sort of punishment (McFarland et al., 2008). It is in situations as these that can make it difficult for educators to achieve the outcome of a desired behaviour, within the restraining guidelines of current policies.

P1 and P3's responses were in alignment with information in the *Developing Enhanced Safety*

Plans and Codes of Conduct (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.), in which it is noted that inappropriate behaviour should be responded to by, "talking only about the behaviour, not labelling the person" (p. 21). This is because focusing on the child's character, rather than on the behaviour, could "produce feelings of guilt and shame" (Manitoba Child Care Program. n.d., p. 33), which could risk lowering a child's self esteem (Manitoba Child Care Program. n.d.).

For example, if Child A hits Child B, the ECE should say something like, "Hitting hurts our friends. Our hands are for gentle touches." This phrase would replace a more commonly utilized phrase like, "Child A, look at how your actions make Child B feel. We don't hit others. Please apologize for your actions." Unlike the second phrase, the first phrase emphasizes the behaviour, not the child, it uses inclusive and positive language, it identifies what the child should do instead of what the child should stop doing, and it does not force the child to apologize.

To conclude, this theme summarized the techniques that ECEs use when managing challenging behaviour. More specifically, the second subtheme expounded the various responses that multiple ECEs can have to one common scenario, which is enlightening information for policymakers and centre directors to consider.

Conclusion. This chapter provided a summary of the three main themes and respective subthemes that emerged as a result of the data. The collection of perspectives gathered from the participants, along with my personal narratives and literature findings, have revealed a mass of interesting information that, in some instances, I was able to support with findings drawn from other scholars. In the next chapter, I will discuss this amalgamated data in a more generalized tone and provide considerations for policymakers, and all other concerning bodies, moving forward

Chapter V: Discussion

In this chapter I will focus on the implications associated with the findings that surfaced as a result of my data collection. The findings that I will be discussing derive from data that has been collected through a series of electronic interviews, CAP exercises, narrative essays, and a critical analysis of the government guidelines under which current ELCCCs practice. To begin, I will briefly recapitulate the themes and then share a series of unexpected findings that materialized. In addition to providing considerations for policymakers, I will stipulate possible solutions to help bridge the gap between policy and practice.

General Findings

The previous chapter articulated the perspectives of four ECE participants, from which three major themes surfaced: 1) *The field of early childhood education,* 2) *Comprehension of policies,* and 3) *Managing behaviour.* Within the three major themes, a series of respective subthemes emerged. The first major theme was accompanied by subthemes titled, *The role of early childhood educators, Negative aspects of the field,* and *Positive aspects of the field.* The second major theme was complemented by subthemes titled, *ECE participants' contradictory practices and narratives* and *ECE participants' comprehension of positive guidance.* Finally, the third major theme was composed of subthemes titled, *ECEs' personal experiences influence responses to behaviour* and *A depiction of ECEs' diverse behaviour management responses.* The abovementioned themes were supported with the addition my own perspectives stemming from my personal narrative essays and information resulting from my analysis of the government guidelines.

Unexpected Findings

Information from my participants in director positions revealed an acknowledgement ECEs do not always act according to policy. While my research aimed to explore perspectives regarding policy

adherence, I did not expect participants in director positions at centres, to expose such concrete information. With this in mind, I believe that it would be noteworthy to learn how such situations are managed. I would be curious to know if this acknowledgement of poor practice stimulates discussion and action among superiors in ELCCCs, or if poor practice has become something that directors turn a blind eye to, due to the inapplicability of particular policies.

Another finding, which I did not expect would arise, is the issue of how ECEs believe they are perceived. My data uncovered the ways in which ECEs feel underappreciated and underpaid. Some participants expressed an attitude of wanting to be recognized and respected. While I did not expand on this theme, it would be valuable to respond to this type of data and see if higher pay and professional recognition (being regarded as a teacher, not a babysitter or an educator) would influence greater loyalty to the policies at hand.

Considerations for Policymakers

With all of the data that I collected, through the use of multiple methods, I would like to comment on the possible contributions to the gap between policy and practice. In this section, I will share findings that I believe could be of value to ELCCC policymakers in Manitoba. It is worth mentioning that it would be unlikely for any workplace to flawlessly and faultlessly adhere to all guidelines in place. With that said, I believe that there could be particular workplace guidelines that warrant more scrutiny than others. In this case, with ELCCCs in mind, I believe that some of the government-recommended practices related to behaviour management should be reassessed.

Current Policies Require Time

First and foremost, it is important for policymakers to understand that many of the current policies in place require a considerable amount of time. In Manitoba, the educator to child ratio, in one space of children aged two to six, is 2:16 (Manitoba Child Care Program, 2005). For every one to six children that

one ECE spends time with, there are 10-15 other children that two other staff need to supervise. This excludes the messes that might need to be cleaned up, diapers that might need to be changed, and booboos that might need to be tended to, in that specific time frame. Such scenarios make it unlikely that an ECE will have the capacity to acknowledge all children's feelings, assist in the seven-step process of problem solving, and redirect every child's inappropriate behaviour (Province of Manitoba, n.d.). In an ideal and predictable world, the policies would be applied in such a way that other children's supervision would not be interrupted and all children would receive the same level of care at all times. With that said, one must consider that the field of child care is far from predictable and actually requires a lot of adaptability on an ECE's part. In order to develop strategies to combat the efficiency of particular behaviour management methods, under the policy guidelines, ECEs must be part of the process. Only ECEs are able to vocalize the complexity and challenges of particular scenarios that only *they* are expected to manage.

Ethical Dilemmas Need Better Intervention Strategies

Educators are often confronted with ethical dilemmas. An issue that I noted during my review of *The Best Practices Licensing Manual* (Manitoba Child Care Program, 2005) and *Developing Enhanced Safety Plans and Codes of Conduct*, is that most of the scenarios exemplified were cut and dry with well-defined intervention strategies. I found that ambiguous and ethically uncomfortable situations do not seem to be addressed in the same light, probably because the management procedures are also ambiguous and uncomfortable.

For example, *Developing Enhanced Safety Plans and Codes of Conduct* (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.) outlines a series of recommended strategies to deal with children taking their playmate's toys and children throwing sand at others but lacks information on how to manage more ethically discomforting scenarios such as: children hitting their teachers, children biting other children, and bigger

children causing consistent bodily harm to smaller children, which all have the potential to arise in child care settings. Such circumstances may be difficult to navigate, especially under policy considerations. With that said, I appreciate that the manuals simply cannot address every single type of scenario, or the manuals would be thousands and thousands of pages long. When considering more ambiguous or uncomfortable scenarios, it would be valuable for ECEs to have access to government-approved information, may it be through an online government-led chat community or, say, an online or hardcopy index of complex scenarios with solutions that have been influenced by ECEs and crafted by policymakers.

For example, in my experience, I noticed that it was always the same scenarios (without clear or proactive solutions) reoccurring. The scenarios often had to do with a small handful of children causing consistent bodily harm to others. Withdrawing child care services due to a child's behaviour is clearly stated to only occur "in extreme cases" (Manitoba Child Care Program. n.d., p. 167). On paper, a directive like this is plain and simple. In reality, a directive such as this places an incredible amount of accountability on the person who must make the difficult decision to expulse a child, and under what grounds exactly? In *Developing Enhanced Safety Plans and Codes of Conduct* (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.) there are no indications of the type of behaviour that may warrant expulsing a child. ELCCCs are left to establish which behaviours warrant expulsion, while also considering the heavy weighted legalities that may accompany denying a child the right to care.

The Inclusion Policy Should be Revisited

In order to protect children and ensure that children with behavioural issues *do* get the support that they need, rather than simply being withdrawn from care, all Manitoba ELCCCs (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.) must have an inclusion policy in place. An inclusion policy is one that promotes equal access to meaningful education and care, regardless of a child's emotional, mental, or physical challenges

(Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.). Having an inclusion policy means that there is a system in place, created by the ELCCC and in alignment with government standards, when it comes to accommodating children that require additional support.

While the inclusion policy formalizes a basic human right, it is essential for staff to know exactly what this policy entails and how to adequately manage situations where this policy does or does apply. First of all, children with additional support needs do not receive additional support without their guardians paying out-of-pocket or, more commonly, receiving grants from the government (Manitoba Child Care Program, 2005). In such cases, the minister and director may request documentation that clearly states a child's necessity for additional support (Manitoba Child Care Program, 2005). This documentation consists of lengthy observations by the ECE in the room, as well as by a behavioural specialist (Manitoba Child Care Program, 2005). It is not until the specialist identifies a diagnosis, that the child can be considered for a grant (Manitoba Child Care Program, 2005). In addition, until the child receives a diagnosis, the child is technically not protected under the inclusion policy (Manitoba Child Care Program, 2005). This is why it is crucial that children, requiring additional support, receive it, so that they are not denied the care and support that they need.

Where a situation of this nature becomes problematic, is in cases where the ECE has identified that a child needs additional support but the guardians refuse to allow having their child be observed and potentially diagnosed by a specialist. A situation like this impacts every child and adult in the centre because if, for example, there is a child consistently causing bodily harm to other children, everybody is put in danger and the environment dynamic changes. Regardless of the reason for which the child behaves in this way, the other children are being hurt and staff have to constantly break up conflicts and spend extra time with the violent child. If the guardians of this child refuse to allow having their child be observed by a specialist, the child will not receive the needed support. In addition, other children will

continue to get hurt, parents will continue to complain, and staff will continue to spend more time with the child requiring additional support, which is not fair to the other children. With positive policies playing a critical role in the way that ECEs manage these types of scenarios, the outcome can be chaotic. To exemplify this, I have included a firsthand example taken from one of my personal narratives,

> Because all licensed centres in Manitoba must adhere to the inclusion policy guidelines put forth by the Provincial government, ECEs and centres are put in a very difficult position when forced to manage violent children. It is a difficult situation to be in because, when children are violent, they are *never* at fault. Recurrent violence is likely the manifestation of trauma, a learned behaviour, or the indication of an underlying condition (e.g. development disorder). I saw children under the age of six repeatedly hit other children, cause concussions, and send children to the hospital to get stitches. On one occasion, I witnessed a large child grab a toddler's head and repeatedly smash it into the pavement, for no reason at all. The child who did this did not face consequences. This child, who was violent on many occasions and required extreme supervision at all times, was not dealt with appropriately. This child, who exhibited clear signs of requiring immediate professional intervention, never received the proper care or support (additional staff or perhaps professional medical/psychological intervention) because the family did not agree that the child needed help. Because no child should ever be excluded from activities, let alone expelled from the centre, this child continued to hurt children on a regular basis. Because I, and the other educators, were not allowed to physically restrain or discipline the child (remove from environment, take away privileges, or exclude from a fun activity as a consequence), the only thing we could do was supervise and serve as barriers around the smallest children. I found this unacceptable. A child care centre is not a jail, it is supposed to be a positive learning environment where parents do not fear leaving their children and where children do not fear being left.

Certainly, severe situations like the one described above are not a regular occurrence in every ELCCC and, while it is stated in *Developing Enhanced Safety Plans and Codes of Conduct* (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.) that "any behaviour that puts another person at risk of harm is prohibited and should be followed by a series of moderate to severe consequences, such as alerting parents or defining a response plan" (p. 6), it could be difficult for educators to define when a person is at risk of harm.

This is especially challenging to discern when it involves the actions of a small child, as exemplified in my above narrative. With my narrative in mind, do the actions of the said three-year-old child who continuously hits other children and puts them in harm's way, constitute the level of gravity required to pursue a harsh consequence? To diminish subjectivity in policies, Dunst and Trivette (2009)

iterate the importance of keeping guidelines short and simple. Carroll et al. (as cited in Dunst & Trivette, 2009, p. 48) state that it is "easier to achieve high fidelity of simple [rather] than complex interventions... because there are fewer 'response barriers' when the model is simple".

Often times, parents may need to get involved in managing their child(ren)'s consistently problematic behaviour. P1 and P3 expressed the value in gaining insight from parents about "their child's strengths, interests and needs" as well as "the strategies that will best assist the child" so that the child can have a positive experience in the program. P1 added that,

> The biggest challenge is to talk to a parent that becomes defensive when you ask them for consent to bring support to the centre to meet their child's need. There are many triumphs in our field. Regarding children with behavioural issues, one triumph is to see a child that struggled regulating their behaviour to be able to do it.

This ECE's account depicts the realities that come with helping a child overcome challenges. Although it is nearly impossible to prepare an individual for such an emotionally charged setting, there exists a gap in both of the manuals regarding specific protocols for relevant cases. While manuals cannot address or prepare ECEs for every single possible type of scenario, something has to be done in order for ECEs to have the tools to manage such difficult situations. I witnessed situations of this nature on many occasions and I did not perceive there to be adequate procedures to manage them. For example, if educators are not permitted to physically restrain a child, what is an educator to do when a child hits an adult or another child (Manitoba Child Care Program, 2005)? If children cannot be physically forced to rest on their mat during nap time, what is an educator to do when a child refuses redirection and the teacher-child ratios do not allow for the child to be taken to another space (Manitoba Child Care Program, 2005)?

For ECEs to have the tools to deal with said circumstances, the manuals should provide more descriptive and realistic examples. Another consideration would be for the government to deliver the information in other ways, such as through videos or complementing the text with images. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, ECEs should have access to support regarding specific issues- may it be online,

by telephone, or in person.

Interpretation of Policies

The last issue that I want to touch on in this section for policymakers concerns the interpretation of policies. Referring back to the example in which Child A throws sand at Child B, there are many ways that that this scenario can be interpreted. One might wonder whether Child A is throwing sand out of anger or throwing sand out of excitement. The reasons for Child A throwing sand could be countless, which means that the intervention procedures would be as well. ECEs could benefit from manuals with more description and images, to better understand which contexts constitute which interventions. It is important to consider the type of environment that said policies are being applied in. Children in child care centres are vulnerable and it should be of the utmost importance to ensure that the people applying the policies (ECEs) are confident in their abilities to do so. Educators need digestible guidelines on how to act when in positions of ambiguity. At this time, ECEs are underprepared for the turbulent reality and over prepared for a smooth ideal.

This section has provided a breadth of information for policymakers to consider, which has been supported by participant and personal narratives. In the next portion, I will be proposing ways to help bridge the decoupled relationship between policy and practice.

Bridging Policy and Practice

The guidelines that policymakers set are often too cumbersome, which can result in poor implementation (Dunst & Trivette, 2009). Evidence suggests that effectual implementation of practices is best achieved when guidelines are kept short and simple, with little to no training required (Dunst & Trivette, 2009). This finding is somewhat inconsistent with the way that current procedures are published. As expressed earlier, one main issue with the policy and conduct recommendations is that they often require a series of steps and time to accomplish, which raises the question of whether the

recommendations are being constructed in an applicable way. Technically speaking, if ECEs do not adhere to the government guidelines, it is considered misconduct and with such a gap between policy and practice, misconduct is likely to occur on a regular basis.

In order to establish mutual outcomes and effective strategies, Dunst and Trivette (2009) indicate the importance of instituting communication between policymakers and practitioners. Policymakers need to better understand the challenging and real environments that ECEs work in, as well as consider ECE perspectives regarding the behaviour management standards (Shewark et al., 2018). Establishing communication between policymakers and practitioners would allow for ECEs to identify if and where exactly certain policies are flawed, unclear, or unrealistic. In doing this, the issue of misinterpreted policies would also be diminished because, if ECEs help develop the policies, it is less likely they will be misinterpreted.

Policymakers promote a high standard of ECE practice and often do not consider the actual environments in which ECEs have to practice (Shewark et al., 2018). This notion is supported by Taylor's (1997) conception that policies, both during development and interpretation, must be considered contextually. For example, if a policymaker for ELCCCs has never stepped foot inside of a child care centre, chances are that the individual will not accurately gauge the type of challenges that may arise in such a setting. So how do we close this gap? ECEs need to be involved in the policymaking process. It is worthwhile that the policymaking system shifts away from a control-based form of conduct, which excludes ECEs, to a supportive and inclusive method, thereby increasing the level of ECE fidelity to the proposed guidelines (Brunetto et al., 2010).

It may be the case that the lack of ECE involvement in the actual development of policy is a contributing factor to the institution of ineffective guidelines. With reference to Foucault's (Taylor, 1997) conceptualization of the juxtaposition between power and knowledge, the power that policymakers exert

over ECEs, with their policies, can fracture the relationship between policymakers and policy implementers. Brunetto et al. (2010) report that health care practitioners that are dissatisfied with the management policies have a 65 percent higher probability of quitting their job, than those practitioners who are satisfied. This finding could easily translate to the world of ECEs, which is why it is so critical that ECEs not only understand their policies but also feel satisfied with them.

Kumar and Scuderi (2000) state that "when teachers are directly involved in policy decisions, they are more likely to support them" (p. 1), which goes hand in hand with Brunetto et al.'s (2010) contemplation that when practitioners feel supported and valued, they are more likely to commit to their job. Because policy development largely involves Federal and Provincial political bodies and special interest groups, teacher contribution to policy development is minimal (Kumar & Scuderi, 2000). According to a study conducted in 1994 (as cited in Kumar & Scuderi 2000), only 39 percent "of teachers believed that they had significant influence over discipline policy" (p. 61), extending into other areas of policy. Although this study is from 1994, I believe it holds relevance in our current policymaking system.

A method to combat the insignificance that educators may feel when it comes to policy development is internal evaluation, proposed by Kumar and Scuderi (2000). This team-based approach involves direct participation from educators in the policy development process and gives them the opportunity to express concerns, offer information and, ultimately, shape policies (Kumar & Scuderi, 2000). As Kumar and Scuderi argue (2000) "to make policies that work, it is critical to involve those responsible for implementing the policies" (p. 62). This suggests that hearing from ECEs may be helpful for future policy-making. Other aspects to consider, especially for policymakers, are the conditions that ECEs practice in.

Summary

This chapter has summarized and discussed the key themes that resulted from this study. The

chapter has provided a general account of the main themes and unexpected findings, as well as detailed an array of information for policymakers to consider when developing future policies. Finally, this chapter has concluded with insight into ways that policy and practice can marry and thrive in ELCCCs. It has been my intention, through the presentation and discussion of the data, to offer different angles into the issue of policy adherence within the scope of behaviour management. I gather that the gap between policy and practice is one that is not solely due to ECEs themselves, but also with the policies. In the final chapter, I will be iterating the conclusions I have reached as a result of my research, as well as the implications for future research, and the ways that this study contributes to current literature.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

Conclusions

Although my participant sample was quite small, the results that I have gathered from this study have revealed interesting data. First of all, it has been discovered that there *does* exist a gap between the policies that ECEs are expected to adhere to and the ways that ECEs actually adhere to the policies. Second, there is evidence of policy misinterpretation. While this is not surprising, it definitely warrants further exploration, so as to determine the extensiveness of policy misinterpretation. For example, does policy misinterpretation extend into other areas of policy other than behaviour management? Lastly, it was revealed that most of the ECEs feel underappreciated and underpaid. With a finding like this, it would be interesting to further speculate on the ways that such perceptions influence policy fidelity. In the following section I will expand on these revelations.

With reference to the discovery of a gap between policy and practice, what I found most fascinating, is that two of the three participants (P1 and P2) that referred to the divorce between policy and policy adherence, are centre directors. While P3 also touched on ways that ECEs do not always act according to policy, I believe that the statements gathered from P1 and P2 add to the robustness of the data, as they come from participants in positions of authority. P1claimed that likely only 75 percent of ECEs in the centre actually understand or remember the policies. P2 expressed that the decoupling of policy and practice often occurs when ECEs are in situations in which they must act in ways believed to be best for the children and the program. Furthermore, P2 mentioned that ECEs have different ways of handling situations and that they are not always appropriate. For two participants in positions of authority to acknowledge the existence of a gap, is critical.

In addition to the allusion of the existence of a gap between policy and practice, it was found that there was an apparent lack of understanding regarding some of the policies. For example, P3 stated that if

a "child displays persistent disruptive behaviour, you may remove the child from the group for a short period of time, commonly known as "time-out"." While this is a method that other ECEs may use to manage behaviour, it is clearly stated in *Developing Enhanced Safety Plans and Codes of Conduct* (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.), that time-outs are not an appropriate approach to deal with challenging behaviour because it is considered a form of punishment. "Time-outs" are quite a controversial practice among educators, parents, and policymakers. The question of *what is too far?* is often at the heart of conversations and, with this considered, future research could explore whether other controversial practices are being unknowingly applied or ignored, in ELCCCs.

Finally, another prominent finding which surfaced, and had not been thoroughly speculated prior to conducting the interviews, is the lack of appreciation that some of the ECE participants noted. This finding reveals a previously not-contemplated component that may contribute to why some ECEs may not adhere to particular policies. It would not be surprising for employees who do not feel appreciated or validated as a result of the hard work that they do, to feel a sense of detachment from the consequences that might come with policy infidelity.

When I was working in the field, I adopted the mentality that we, ECEs, were unappreciated, underpaid and overworked. I also came to realize that ECEs are in high demand and, although I never speculated as to why, I simply assumed it was because ECEs were unappreciated, underpaid and overworked, and that no one wanted to work in a field in which this was the case. This led me to feel that, even if I chose not to adhere to particular policies, most would likely turn a blind eye because, being an ECE, I would be more difficult to replace. This mentality of feeling unacknowledged yet highly indispensable, along with the findings that my participants have given insight into, spurs questions for future research. For example, would policy adherence improve if ECE wages improved? Or, would something as simple as changing the job title from *Early Childhood Educator* to *Early Childhood*

Teacher change the way that ECEs see themselves? Perhaps confidence levels would increase or there would be a higher sense of accountability in living up to the title of *teacher* rather than *educator*.

Even with a small sample of participants, fruitful information surfaced and further questions emerged. In the next sections, I will give insight into the limitations and implications for future research.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

There are several issues that surfaced as a result of this study that warrant further exploration. Additionally, there were several limitations to my study that I would like to expand on, which I believe should be considered when future research is done within this domain.

For one, the extensiveness of this gap is unknown, as I only received data from four participants, solely regarding behaviour management policies. Future research could explore the comprehensiveness of this gap among more ELCCCs and whether or not this gap extends into other policy areas of interest, such as health and safety. Future studies could include a larger pool of participants and utilize quantitative techniques to render more data. While the methods I chose were quite unique and enabled me the opportunity to apply my creative skills and engage with participants on a different level than would quantitative research, it posed limitations. With the creative methodology I pursued, it would have been a lot of work to include more than 6-8 participants, within the time frame that I placed on myself. Therefore, should future research aim to quantifiably define the extensiveness of the policy and practice gap, I would recommend doing so with more participants and with the use of quantitative measures. Furthermore, future research could investigate the theme of ECEs feeling underappreciated. Research on this issue could look into the reasons why ECEs feel underappreciated, how this sentiment could be changed, and how this perspective shapes the ways that they practice. Additionally, given the cultural diversity in Manitoba ELCCCs, and likely in other centres in Canada, future research could address the cultural differences tied to ECEs' interpretations and implementations of behaviour management policies.

It would also be interesting to for future research to consider age differences in ECEs and how the adoption of cultural traditions and perspectives might vary depending on the ages and professional experiences of particular ECEs.

With the abovementioned considered, there is one factor that future researchers should consider when engaging in controversial topics like the one I explored. I recommend that the investigators find a way to reach participants without having to seek approval from each centre's Board of Directors. If participants know that their Board of Directors and superiors are aware of the study they are considering partaking in, they may feel as though they are being inspected, which could impede their likeliness to participate. Omitting this step would likely facilitate a snowball effect, which would establish more trust and a sense of accountability between prospective participants and the investigator. In research, when there is a sensitive issue as the core of a study, I believe it is that much more important to ensure that participants feel safe in order to freely disclose what they feel. This is where an anonymous quantitative-driven study could also be more effective, in that ECEs would not have to describe personal experiences or expand on their responses, they would simply have to answer close-ended questions.

Much of the information that I uncovered through this study either supports and adds to previous research, or spurs further research to occur. In the next section, I will briefly describe the ways in which my findings contribute to current literature.

Contributions to Literature

The data that I collected from four ECEs asserts the existence of a gap between policy and practice, in ELCCCs, in Manitoba. Now, with only four participants, it is difficult to say just how extensive this gap is. Future research on the matter could most certainly provide a more accurate depiction of the prevalence of this gap in ELCCCs, in Manitoba. In conclusion, pursuing this research has achieved three things. One, it has validated and confirmed that behaviour management policies in Manitoba should be

revised and possibly restructured, with the presence of frontline workers. Two, it has exposed other issues, such as ECEs feeling underappreciated and underpaid, that deserve academic exploration and attention. Three, the data that I have collected is only relevant to ELCCCs in Manitoba, but it could serve as a starting point for other provinces to begin to look at their own early learning systems.

Summary

This chapter has given me the opportunity to freely expand on the conclusions that my study has led me to make, as well as the limitations I faced, and my recommendations for future researchers to consider. Pursing this research has shed light on many issues and while there is much more research that needs to be done, one thing is for sure- policy and practice must be bridged.

Appendices

Appendix A: Email & Project Description for Participants

Dear _____,

I hope that you are doing well.

The reason that I am reaching out to you is because I am wondering if you would like to participate in my study. I am a former ECE but am now pursuing a Master's degree through the Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management, at the University of Manitoba.

I am recruiting six ECEs to participate in my study. Please read below for a description of the project: This project will focus on Early Childhood Educator (ECE) perspectives regarding the behaviour management policies currently in place, in Early Learning Child Care Centres, in Manitoba (ELCCC). The study will be conducted by Maria Rocha, a former ECE, and under the supervision of Dr. jay johnson. The project will consist of three stages, of which one has already been completed.

In stage one, the investigator reviewed the policies in both the *Best Practices Licensing Manual* (Manitoba Child Care Program, 2005) and *Developing Enhanced Safety Plans and Codes of Conduct* (Manitoba Child Care Program, n.d.). The investigator also reflected on her own interpretations of the policies and the ways that her personal experiences influence her position in this study.

Stage two will consist of data collection. For this stage, the investigator seeks to gather a group of 6 participants. Participants will be interviewed and asked to respond to six questions related to behaviour management policies, personal experiences, and the positive guidance philosophy. In addition to the questions, the last question will require a creative response. The investigator will ask participants to respond creatively, using the materials provided, to the question at hand.

Finally, in the third stage of this project, the researcher will transcribe all of the verbal responses and send them to participants for verification. Then, the researcher will perform a thematic analysis of the

data and represent the main themes that surface, through a creative response. The researcher will then illustrate the findings and conclude the study.

If you decide that participation in this project is of interest to you, please reach out to Maria Rocha at rocham@myumanitoba.ca. Moving forward, Maria Rocha will provide you with a consent form to complete prior to initiating the interview process.

Thank you very much for your time,

Maria Rocha

Appendix B: Interview Guide & CAP

1. Tell me about the behaviour management policies and how you apply them or not.

2. Describe the ways in which your personal values, experiences, or upbringing, affect how you implement policies.

3. What do you believe is your role as an ECE?

4. If Child A and Child B are in a sandbox and Child A throws sand at Child B, how do you respond?

5. How do other ECEs adhere to the behaviour management policies?

6. (CAP) Express the biggest challenges and triumphs that you encounter as an ECE. Please note that for this question I am asking you to do a CAP (Creative Analytical Practice), which means that you must respond using creative materials/platforms. Some ideas include: writing a poem, drawing a picture, making a collage, etc. You can take a picture of your response and send it separately or attach it onto here.

7. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Appendix C: Informed Consent



Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management

Faculty of Kinesiology and
Recreation Management
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2

Principal Investigator:
María Paula Rocha
Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management, University of Manitoba.
rocham@myumanitoba.ca
204-474-8996

Supervisor:
jay johnson, Ph.D.
jay.johnson@umanitoba.ca
204-474-8996

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

You may decide to participate in the entire study/project or to participate in some aspects of the research study but not others. If you choose not to take part in the research or if you decide to withdraw from the research once it has started, there will be no negative consequences to you, now or in the future.

Project Overview

In this study, we will be researching ECE perspectives regarding behaviour management policies in Early Learning and Child Care Centres in Manitoba. We will be conducting face-to-face semi-structured interviews (phone interviews if necessary), as well as a creative exercise to support and expand participant perspectives regarding the topic.

We are asking that you consider participating in this research. Your participation in this research is entirely optional. This information package is designed to give you an idea of what the research is about and what participation in the research will involve. If you would like more detailed information, or information not included here, you should feel free to contact Maria Rocha, the principal investigator, by

email (rocham@umanitoba.ca) or telephone (204-474-8996). Please take the time to read and carefully consider the information contained in this form.

Study Procedures

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in one recorded semi-structured interview. The interviews are structured in a way to gain a better understanding of your perceptions regarding the gap between policy and practice, as well as your attitudes towards current behaviour management policies and philosophies. During the interview, you will be asked questions that relate the abovementioned themes and you will also be asked to engage in a short creative exercise, during which you will be asked to provide a creative response (utilizing the available materials), in reflection of the concepts covered. The interviews will take 20 minutes to 1.5 hours, depending on the depth of your responses and the discussions that arise. The interview will take place in either a private or public location at the University of Manitoba, home, or a coffee shop. The interviews will be recorded by audio for transcription and analysis. In addition, the interviewer will print a copy of the transcribed interview and you will have the option to review it. In this case, you would have a transcribed version of the interview and will have the opportunity to change or clarify anything in the transcript that you wish to amend. If you object to any of the content in relation to your portrayal in the media project, we will remove or change the content at your request, per your instructions.

It is important that you know that this is a research project and is intended as a not-for-profit venture for educational purposes. The project will not be used by the researchers for commercial gain.

Risks

The risks associated with participating in this research are minimal. There are no known physical, psychological, economic, or social risks associated with participation in this study. Every measure will be taken to keep your identity private in all aspects of the media project. You should know that you may refuse to answer any questions during the interview(s). You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point by contacting Maria Rocha (Principal Researcher) by phone or email and withdrawing will not negatively impact you in any way. If you withdraw from the study, all of the information you have shared up until that point (e.g. interview recordings, transcribed material) will be destroyed. You can withdraw from the study either in person, communicating your wish to discontinue the research to the researcher (Maria Rocha) or through email or phone (see contact information below).

Benefits

You will not directly benefit from the project. However, the project will generate new information regarding your field of work and the community.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

Information gathered in this research study may be presented at conferences or published in peer-reviewed journals. All spoken information that may reveal personal and institutional identifiers will be removed prior to the final version of the paper, to protect participant and institutional confidentiality.

All data (i.e. film footage, notes, transcripts, audio recordings) will only be available to the researchers (Maria Rocha). All data (i.e. film footage, notes, transcripts, audio recordings, journals) and other identifying materials (i.e. signed consent forms, release forms) will be kept in a secure location (i.e. a locked filing cabinet in an office located in the Max Bell Centre, University of Manitoba or on a pass word protected computer in an encrypted folder). After the completion of the study, research data will be kept for a maximum of 7 years and then destroyed. Hard copies of transcribed interviews will be shredded

through confidential shredding services available at the University of Manitoba and all electronic files (i.e. film footage) will be placed in the "trash" and the trash will be secured.

Compensation

There will be no compensation for your participation in this study.

Voluntary participation/Withdrawal from the study

Your decision to take part in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate and you may withdraw from the study at any time. Your decision not to participate or to withdraw from the study will not adversely impact you in any way.

Do not sign this consent form unless you have had a chance to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers to all of your questions.

Questions: If you have any questions about this research, you can contact Maria Rocha by email (rocham@umanitoba.ca). Alternatively, you may also contact the Human Ethics Officer at 474-7122, or e-mail humanethics@umanitoba.ca you decide to participate in this research study, please sign and return this consent form and return it to the project researchers.

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

The University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board(s) and a representative(s) of the University of Manitoba Research Quality Management / Assurance office may also require access to your research records for safety and quality assurance purposes.

Statement of Consent

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Release Statement

In signing this release it is my understanding that the material is to be used for educational purposes and that the major outcomes may include public critique of the final project, screening at film festivals, shared online via video hosting sites (eg. Youtube, Vimeo), or screened in schools for educational purposes.

I understand the risks and contributions of my participation in this project and agree to participate.

ANONIMITY -

☐ Yes, I consent to the inclusion of my identity (name) in all documentation and publications.
☐ No, I do not consent to the inclusion of my identity (name) in all documentation and publications. I choose to remain anonymous.

DIRECT QUOTATIONS -
☐ Yes, I consent to being quoted in all documentation and publications.
☐ No, I do not consent to being quoted in the documentation and publications.

I will indemnify and hold the student, and the University, and its employees safe and harmless against any legal prosecution or suit arising from or prompted by the use of all or any portion of the material in which I am quoted or appear.

I am signing this release freely and voluntarily and in executing this release do not rely on any inducements, promises or representations made by said student or the University of Manitoba.

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Guardian's Signature_____ Date_____
If participant is under the age of 18

Researcher and/or Delegate's Signature _____ Date _____

Feedback Request Form

☐ Yes, I would like to receive a final copy of the transcript and completed thesis.

Participant signature_____Date _____
(day/month/year)

Participant printed name: _____

Guardian's signature_____Date_____

Guardian's printed name_____

Appendix D: Personal Narratives

Narrative #1: August 11, 2019

To be honest, I had never considered working in the field of education until after I finished my undergraduate degree. I have always loved children and been fascinated by the ways they perceive the world, interact with others, and develop all aspects of their little beings. From a young age, I have wanted children of my own, so much so that, when adults would ask what I wanted to be when I grew up, I'd always say, "a mom".

Choosing to pursue a career in early childhood education was not a decision I took lightly. I had been exposed to working with children, which made me somewhat aware of the challenges that I might face in the field. I have worked as a children's English teacher for an immigrant program, taught art camps, and cared for children in a number of contexts (home care, orphanage, preschool). My love for working with children has often guided the work opportunities I have chosen to pursue, which is why I decided to enrol in the Early Childhood Education program. Soon after commencing my program, it became very evident that I had no idea about the philosophies and politics underpinning child care in Manitoba. Every day, I would get home and think, *I never want my future children being raised by these philosophies.*

I will now describe some of my personal experiences during my time as an ECE student and employee. The experiences that I will describe are those that have impacted me the most and driven me to pursue this research.

My Experiences. My practicums exposed me to a variety of child care environments and experiences, both the good and the bad. My first practicum was very eye opening and I learned a lot about adhering to policy standards, but it seemed as though everything I did was wrong. I wasn't allowed to hold children's wrists, I had to hold their hands. I wasn't allowed to force children into a snowsuit, I

had to negotiate with them and let them do it when they were ready. I wasn't allowed to put children in time-out, I had to comfort them and explain to them how their actions affected others. It was definitely a learning experience, but it left me feeling slightly discouraged and conflicted about my own beliefs regarding child care. My beliefs regarding child care were initially challenged prior to my practicums, during the theoretical portion of my education but actually practicing in the field was raised even more questions for me. I will now detail some of the concepts that challenged my beliefs.

Instruction: Children's Activities Should be Planned in Response to Their Interests. My response to this instruction is *how do we expose children to new things if all of the activities are to stem from their already-acquired interests?* The college instructor told our class that children should only be exposed to what they know, because that is what interests them the most. The reasoning behind this is that children are leaders of their own learning and that our job is simply to expand their knowledge within the interests they express. When I learned this, I did not hesitate to raise my hand and ask, "how will the children in Manitoba ever learn about ocean animals and African pyramids if we only expose them to farm animals and prairies?" The instructor did not have a response.

Instruction: Teachers Shall Not Hurt Children's Feelings. It should not have to be said but, *obviously,* no adult should ever say emotionally or psychologically damaging things to a child. In the same breath though, I think it is just as dangerous to overprotect a child's self-esteem. How are we to raise resilient children that can receive both positive and negative feedback, and stand up for themselves and others, when we are expected to educate them in an unrealistic petri dish of positivity?

The college I attended made a strong emphasis on fostering a child's self-esteem and preventing/easing any exposure to negativity. For example, I learned that teachers should not tell a child when they have put their shoes on the wrong feet because it might hurt their feelings. I couldn't help but think how much a child's feelings would be hurt when the child gets to Kindergarten and trips in front of

other students, because the child never learned how to put shoes on properly.

I also learned that teachers should not draw or do crafts in front of children because the children may feel that their drawing or craft is ugly, in comparison to the teachers'. Being an artist and having done a degree in Fine Arts, as well as having been a painting instructor to both adults and children, I struggled with this. I remember being spoken to, by my supervisors, about my "tendency" to draw and actually *do* crafts with the children. I learned that in these scenarios, the teacher's role is to *facilitate* the experience by providing the materials and *expand* the experience by saying things like, "now what colour will you use?" or "tell me about your artwork." On one occasion, as I made masks with children, I was confronted by an ECE. The children were lined up at the table, as I quickly cut the shape of mask they requested, such as: Captain America, vampire, or animal masks. In the midst of my activity, with children crowded around my table, decorating and giggling, an educator whispered to me that I needed to stop because I wasn't acting appropriately. I remember feeling as though my heart sank into my stomach. The educator stared at me until I left the table. The children were so confused and, as I fought back tears just thinking of how I had been held back from sharing my biggest gift, all I could tell the children was that I would be back. *Yes,* I was doing the cutting of the masks, but I also considered that the children simply did not have the fine-motor development to cut such intricate masks and that I was facilitating an individualized and exciting activity for them that would encourage them to glue, cut, and paste decorative materials onto their masks.

Instruction: All Decorations Should be Placed at the Children's Eye-Level. In college, the instructors taught us about how to properly set up classroom environments. There is a lot to be said for this, as a properly set-up classroom can enable proper supervision, prevent disruption among children, and encourage participation through easy access to materials. Colours are to be neutral and decorations should be put at children's eye-levels. I agree with most of it, except the part about putting decorations at

children's eye-levels.

At one centre I worked at, all the top halves of the walls were bare and all of the decorations that had been put on the bottom sections (children's eye-level) had been ripped and picked at by the children. Being an artist and believing in the beauty of exposing children's creations for all to see, I organized a little project. At this point, I was one of the ECEs in charge of the classroom, which is why I felt that this decision was appropriate for me to make. I made a large branch and hung it on the wall and asked the children to help me decorate it by creating leaves, flowers, and bugs. In addition, I spent days framing children's artwork and hanging it on the walls. Parents responded positively, which validated the children's efforts and only encouraged them to produce more art for everyone to see. Days after though, I arrived to work and it had all been taken down by one of the centre's supervisors. It was in that moment, that I decided to quit my job and leave the field for good.

Instruction: Disruptive Children Need Guidance not Consequences. On another occasion, an instructor explained to our class that, when a child keeps interrupting during story time, the child should move to sit beside the reader and help turn the book pages. The reasoning behind this is that, if a child keeps interrupting, the child clearly needs attention and additional support and that, as teachers, we should provide that. *My* reasoning is that, if a child keeps interrupting and affecting the experience for the rest of the children, the child should be provided with a warning/consequence rather than being positively reinforced by being given the opportunity to turn the pages. Most children see this as a privilege (simply ask a group of children if any of them would like to help turn the pages and you will see).

Guideline: All Children Must be Included. This guideline is pretty straightforward and, while at the beginning of my experience as an ECE, I agreed with it, my agreement eventually fizzled. I began to disagree with this guideline when I became exposed to severely violent children. Because all licensed centres in Manitoba must adhere to the inclusion policy guidelines put forth by the Provincial

government, ECEs and centres are put in a very difficult position when forced to manage violent children. It is a difficult situation to be in because, when children are violent, they are *never* at fault. Recurrent violence is likely the manifestation of trauma, a learned behaviour, or the indication of an underlying condition (e.g. development disorder). I saw children under the age of six repeatedly hit other children, cause concussions, and send children to the hospital to get stitches.

On one occasion, I witnessed a large child grab a toddler's head and repeatedly smash it into the pavement, for no reason at all. The child who did this did not face consequences. This child, who was violent on many occasions and required extreme supervision at all times, was not dealt with appropriately. This child, who exhibited clear signs of requiring immediate professional intervention, never received the proper care or support (additional staff or perhaps professional medical/psychological intervention) because the family did not agree that the child needed help. Because no child should ever be excluded from activities, let alone expelled from the centre, this child continued to hurt children on a regular basis. Because I, and the other educators, were not allowed to physically restrain or discipline the child (remove from environment, take away privileges, or exclude from a fun activity as a consequence), the only thing we could do was supervise and serve as barriers around the smallest children. I found this unacceptable. A child care centre is not a jail, it is supposed to be a positive learning environment where parents do not fear leaving their children and where children do not fear being left.

Supervision. ECEs and CCAs (Child Care Assistants) are to remain in ratio with the children at all times. Among many other reasons, this rule is put in place to prevent accidents, ensure that children are safe and content, and provide assistance to children if needed. The problem that I always found when working in child care was that, the guidelines for dealing with conflict or catering to each child's needs, took too much time away from supervising other children. When there are 16 children to supervise and only a few adults, for every issue that needs tending to, other children are denied supervision for that

amount of time.

Most of the daily schedule at a child care centre involves free time and, because educators are expected to facilitate the individualistic desires of each child, in addition to providing snacks, cleaning, and/or changing diapers, is it truly plausible that supervision is being maximized? I don't think so, especially when classrooms are combined with other classrooms and the number of children increases.

Does the daily schedule of a centre *really* need to consist of so much free time? To maximize supervision, is it not better to limit the number of activities available or plan *group* activities? Many will argue that children learn best through play, which is true in many ways, but I believe that children also learn valuable skills when placed in structured situations (e.g. story time, group science activity, group singing activity).

Because the conflict resolution guidelines put forth by the Provincial government require a lengthy step-by-step process or transferring "problematic" children to a more comfortable environment where they can label their feelings and discuss ways to manage their behaviour, other children's quality of supervision minimizes. Unfortunately, I learned this during my third practicum, when I was faced with saving a choking child.

Because children are not to be forced to do anything, not even stay at the table after they are done eating (which I believe should be done for supervision purposes), I found myself in a terrifying situation. During that practicum, I was considered *only* a student and not in ratio with the teacher-to-child supervision requirements. I remember the room was chaos. There were four large tables full of children eating and others leaving their tables to go play. At one point, I was one of only two adults in the room, when there should have been at least four others. I later learned that it was because incidents had occurred and the educators were busy dealing with them.

When I realized I was somewhat alone, I began to freak out, as it was only my first week at that

centre. I scanned the children in the room and, by chance, spotted a child eating while playing at the carpet. I asked the child to join me at the table. The child did not do as I said, so I went to her, took her hand, and led her to the table. When she sat down she began to turn purple. Any CPR and First Aid training I had taken, did not surface in my brain. I acted out of instinct. I dug the bread out of her mouth, which had clumped at the back of her throat, and triggered her gag reflex. She eventually vomited and was okay. I was terrified and alerted my mentor (the educator that I shadowed) and requested to write an incident report (which has to be signed by the parent).

After a whole day passed, I went straight to the director because my mentor had been "too busy" to get me an incident report. The director told me that there was no point in telling the parents because it happened on a different day. Eventually, I went back to the director and insisted that the parents be alerted. It wasn't until three days later that the child's parents were told a fluffed-up version of the incident and advised to cut the child's food, to avoid her choking.

This incident revealed important findings. One, the significance of "forcing" children to stay at the table until others are done eating (to ensure proper supervision and prevent choking), two, the inefficacy of current behaviour management guidelines which take too long to apply and minimize the supervision of other children, and three, the importance of structure (all children transition through activities at the same time) to avoid chaos and ensure that both children and staff are on the same page when it comes to activities, toileting, and meal times. Providing safety and security must be prioritized over providing children with freedom and autonomy.

Post Practicum. After my practicums, I grasped what was expected of me as an educator, but it conflicted with how I felt an educator should be. I wanted a classroom with an activity schedule and structure, but there was only free time, mealtime, outdoor time, naptime, and toilet time. When I was offered the opportunity to work as an ECE, following my practicum, I accepted. I though that, perhaps,

things would be better if I had control over *my* classroom and that, perhaps, I would be able manage the room in ways that were more reflective of my personal beliefs. This did not happen.

Initially, I went into the field giving 100 percent of myself. I would plan activities (which children were not forced to participate in), buy exciting supplies and toys with my own money, and I'd get so involved when it came to helping and playing with children. Unfortunately, by the end of my time as an ECE, I retracted to doing the bare minimum. I completely detached myself. I detached myself because I felt that the educator I was expected to be was not the educator I wanted to be. In addition, I felt I had to prove myself in some way when I became the acting ECE of the classroom. I was constantly challenged by the CCAs who had been working there longer than I had and were older than I was. This, in itself, took away from the empowerment that I thought I would have, being a certified ECE. With everything accumulated, disinvesting myself from the ECE role basically protected me from feeling defeated and burnt out.

Other Educators. As an ECE, I was able to connect with other educators on a deeper level and I gathered that many of them were unhappy, stressed, or burnt out. Many of them would complain and groan. I would find some of them falling asleep during their breaks, from the extreme exhaustion. It was such a burnt out, depressing, eye-rolling culture in the centres and it began to infect me.

I found myself in profound conversations with other educators about the idealistic nature of the policies, the difficulties experienced when attempting to manage some children's behaviour, and how badly we needed a break. Some educators talked about how unappreciated they felt, how they couldn't wait to retire, and how unsupportive some parents were when it came to disciplining/guiding their children.

At this point, I had already enrolled into the Master's program at the University of Manitoba, but with a completely different thesis in mind. It was at this time, at the end of my ECE career, that I decided

to change my thesis. I felt that, with all I had experienced in such a short amount of time, in addition to my conversations with other ECEs, pursuing research related to ECEs would be more meaningful and impactful, than the research I initially intended to pursue.

Conclusion. Now, I am at the beginning of my research and I am hoping to collect a lot of data that will help policymakers create the most effective guidelines for ECEs. I also hope to give ECEs the opportunity to be heard and validated. Children are our future and they need to be raised in an environment with people that will help them become the best future.

Narrative #2: May 18, 2020

This process has been quite frustrating for me. It took four months for my research to be approved and it has been a struggle to gather participants. At this point, I have a total of four out of the six participants that I would like to have. I feel that the participant recruitment guidelines, under which my study has been approved, have limited my ability to collect the participants that I need.

Guideline That has Possibly Hindered the Progression of My Study. One guideline that I really feel has impeded my research is that, before I contact ECEs individually, each child care centre's Board of Directors must approve my study. Not only does this process physically delay my ability to collect data, but it also serves as a barrier to the potential for any snowball effect to occur and could make prospects feel that their superiors are involved or supervising their participation. With that said, I understand that guidelines are in place for a reason, therefore, I have managed to work within the standards expected of me. In addition, I do not believe that this specific guideline is the sole reason for my difficulties experienced collecting data. I think that, considering I have reached out to at least ten centres, there are other underlying issues that may be contributing to this scenario.

Unexpected Outcome. At all of my practicums and workplaces, I observed many ECEs articulate a level of concern with current child care centre politics. On multiple occasions, I listened to and, quite

frankly, agreed with ECEs as they expressed their worries and proposed solutions. It is because of the narratives I heard and the situations I witnessed, that I felt my own perceptions validated. This led me to believe that something had to be done. Now, in the midst of my research, with only a portion of the participants I need, I am beginning to wonder *why has it been so difficult to get participants?*

What I think. Obviously, one reason that ECEs may not have reached out to me is that they simply did not receive my email or see the poster at their centre. In addition to that, some ECEs may simply not be interested or perceive the study to be a lot more complex and time consuming than I have presented it to be on the poster. We must consider that many ECEs have families, hobbies, and other things to deal with. With that said, I have postulated an additional number of reasons as to why ECEs have not participated in my study, up until this point.

One reason could be that, because the recruitment poster is posted in their centres, ECEs may feel that their superiors are somehow involved in the study or will be made aware of any disparaging commentary, which may lead them to get fired. Another reason could be that some ECEs may not want to put themselves in the position to critically analyze the career path they have chosen, as it may lead to discomforting realizations. Finally, another reason could be that some of the ECEs I reached out to, do not know who I am. The downfall of not being able to engage in the snowballing technique to recruit participants may lead potential partakers to think that:

1. I am not to be trusted because they do not know me.
2. There is no (social, professional) obligation to participate because we have never established face-to-face communication.
3. By this point, I probably have enough participants and that I can manage without their input.

Furthermore, we are now in the middle of a pandemic. This has likely triggered a lot of stress and anxiety in ECEs, leading them to deprioritize participating in a study, which is very understandable.

I do not want to exclusively blame external factors for the difficulties I am facing with recruitment, as I could easily be to blame. Perhaps, my poster was not detailed enough, I did not persevere or follow-up in the right way, or the gap between policy and practice that I genuinely perceived to exist- simply does not. It is a shame that I may not have the number of participants I originally thought I would, but I am keeping my spirits up. I want to complete my research and move on with my life. While there are many outcomes that I cannot control, one outcome I can control is that I complete my Master's degree and learn a lot of valuable life lessons and skills from it.

Narrative #3: July 16, 2020

At this point, I have successfully finished writing my dissertation and illustrating my CAPs. I have to say that, while this process was frustrating at times, it has been so worth it. I have learned so much along the way and I am pleased with the data I collected and the way that my illustrations turned out. I have become so "attached" to my thesis and consider it my "baby". This is a project that has always been very emotionally and personally motivated, which makes it that much more special to me. Now that I look back, there are things that I would have done differently, but this is to be expected, as I jumped into something that I had never done before. All in all, I am happy with the way my project turned out and I hope that others find it engaging.

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