

CAN ECE PROFESSIONALS BE ADVOCATES?
PERSPECTIVES FROM THE CHILD CARE ADVOCACY MOVEMENT IN MANITOBA
AND ONTARIO

by

Lyndsay Macdonald

Bachelor of Arts, Ryerson University, Toronto, 2011

Diploma with honours in Early Childhood Education, George Brown College, Toronto, 2009

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Author's Declaration

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Abstract

In this major research paper, findings from a qualitative study with fourteen informants from four child care social movement organizations (SMOs) in Manitoba and Ontario are presented. Using the political economy of care theory to interpret informant perspectives on early childhood educators (ECE) as advocates, the purpose of this study was to understand what role, if any, ECEs should play in provincial child care advocacy. Based on informant perspectives, the primary finding of this study is that ECE professionals can be advocates on the micro level, for children and families, within their own programs. This paper discusses informant perspectives on where we are in provincial child care advocacy, where we might be headed and what role ECEs can play in the continued fight for child care provisions that reflect values of inclusion, equality and a better Canada for all children, families and parents.

Key Words:

Professionalism , advocacy, early childhood education and care , child care advocacy movement

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The Canadian Child Care Movement: This project was carried out in solidarity with the women and men of the Canadian child care movement. Thank you for dedicating your life's work to advocating for a universally accessible, publicly funded, high quality, inclusive early childhood education and care system in Canada.

Dedication

To the early childhood professional,

I dedicate this major research project to the proud women and men of the early childhood education professional workforce, thank you for taking on the profound responsibility of caring for our children. To the ECE professional who believes that play and learning and care and upbringing are inseparable and interconnected facets of the early years (Moss, 2006, “the pedagogue”). To ECEs who ensure safe, inclusive learning environments and promote opportunities for development and a sense of belonging for every child. My fellow educators, it is time to care for one another, to realize our worth and our professionalism. There is a place for us in child care advocacy but we must realize it first and support one another. There is power in our voices because we know, better than anyone, that children can flourish in quality child care programs because we have seen it in the children we care for. The professional is the program.

In Solidarity,

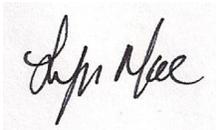
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daphne Moss". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Table of Contents

Author's Declaration	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Dedication	v
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Provincial child care advocacy.....	4
Theoretical Framework.....	6
Key Terms	9
Chapter Two: Literature Review	10
Social Movements	10
The early childhood education professional workforce	16
Chapter Three: Methodology.....	22
Setting and Participants	22
Research Design	23
Data Analysis.....	26
Researcher characteristics and bias	27
Chapter Four: Findings	29
ECE professionals as advocates.....	29
Type and scope of advocacy	38
Provincial context.....	44
Chapter 5: Discussion.....	56

The role of the ECE professional in provincial advocacy	56
Where we are in provincial child care advocacy	61
Where we are going – towards solidarity?.....	64
Limitations.....	67
Conclusion.....	68
References	69

Chapter One: Introduction

Canada has had a sustained child care advocacy movement since World War II with public protests against the closure of the wartime day nurseries – the only time Canada ever had universal funding for child care (Friendly & Prentice, 2009; Langford, Prentice, Albanese, Summers, Messina-Goertzen & Richardson, 2013; Prentice, 2001). During the rise of the women’s movement in the 1970s, child care reached the public agenda when the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) publicly stated that child care was an essential component of women’s equality (Friendly & Prentice, 2009). Since then, however, child care policy in Canada has evolved into a tattered patchwork of diverse services and programs where affordability, availability and quality vary widely between the provinces and territories (Langford et al, 2013; Friendly & Prentice, 2009).

Over the last five decades, child care advocates, organizations and allies on national and provincial/territorial levels have fought to make a place for child care in the Canadian welfare state. The child care advocacy movement in Canada is comprised of a number of provincial and national child care social movement organizations (SMOs) as well as unions, individual activists, research bodies and academic sympathizers. The organizational actors that identify as part of the Canadian child care movement share a collective identity that reaches back to their roots within the women’s movement (Prentice, 2001). Child care social movement organizations (SMOs) have mobilized to support social change that would see provincial/territorial and federal governments develop an inclusive, high quality and publicly funded system of early childhood education and care (ECEC) for all children and families across Canada.

Although not widely documented, the child care advocacy movement in Canada has had some noteworthy successes and has been regarded internationally as “a vigorous advocacy

movement for education and care” (Penn, 2010, p.8). Irrespective of the strong claims and evidence that the child care advocacy movement has put out over the years, Canada still ranked last-place among 25 developed countries in the UNICEF Report Card 8 (UNICEF, 2008). In this report, Canada failed to meet nine of the ten key benchmarks of quality early childhood education and care. Of the 10 benchmarks outlined in the report Canada only met the benchmark for 50% of child care staff in accredited programs have relevant qualifications (UNICEF, 2008).

Today, even though 76% of Canadian mothers, with children aged two to five, participate in the paid labour force, there are only licensed child care spaces for one in five Canadian children or 20% of children aged 0-12 (Friendly, Halfon, Beach & Forer, 2013). Access to quality, inclusive, non-profit, publicly funded, regulated child care remains out of reach for most Canadian children, parents and families. The lack of access to regulated child care programs has had adverse affects on Canadian children and families and has resulted in a heavy reliance on unregulated and sometimes unsafe child care arrangements within a market system.

A serious issue within ECEC in Canada is that the early childhood education workforce sector continues to be underpaid and undervalued for their work. Even though the ECE workforce sector has become more professional it remains a workforce that is predominantly lead by women, (98% of respondents in the 2013 You Bet We Still Care Survey were women) who are, in most cases, underpaid (Flanagan, Beach, & Varmuza, 2013; Centre for Spatial Economics, 2009). Scholars, researchers and advocates within the field of ECEC in Canada have noted, time and again, that the biggest workforce sector issues continue to be recruitment, retention and remuneration (Flanagan et al, 2013, Child Care Human Resources Sector Council, 2009; Centre for Spatial Economics, 2009; Prentice, 2001). These workforce sector issues exist

because there is no public funding for ECEC and child care is still perceived as women's work, which is largely undervalued in society (Moss, 2006; Fitz Gibbon, 2002).

It is evident that there is still a dire need for a child care advocacy movement to exist – perhaps now more than ever given the lack of a stable system of regulated child care in Canada. This research study was fueled by two closely related challenges within the state of ECEC policy and advocacy in Canada today. One, the fact that the child care advocacy movement has been destabilized and defunded, making it more difficult for advocacy organizations to move forward with their significant work. And two, the fact that the ECE professional workforce sector continues to become more professional and is expected to meet higher standards and demands while their wages subsidize the expensive cost of child care (Flanagan, Beach, & Varmuza, 2013). This research study sought to answer a question that is yet to be thoroughly examined in the research body on early childhood education and care, that is, can early childhood education (ECE) professionals be advocates? This topic is important at a time when the child care community acknowledges that it needs to draw in and nurture new leaders and activists to sustain and strengthen the movement.

The research questions guiding this study are threefold, 1) Can early childhood educators be advocates engaged in the child care advocacy movement? 2) What kind of advocates should ECE professionals be? 3) How does provincial context contribute to the ECE professionals engagement in child care advocacy? This research paper will describe the findings from interviews that were conducted with fourteen informants from the child care advocacy movement in Ontario and Manitoba. This research study is part of a larger, three year research project documenting continuities and changes in Canadian child care movement organizing with

particular attention to the processes of ECEC workforce professionalization (Langford et al, 2013).

Provincial child care advocacy

Within the Canadian federation the responsibility for child care services and other social services weighs more heavily on the provinces and territories and the federal government takes little responsibility in child care provisions. Given the variation in political context among the provinces and territories child care advocates have had to navigate multiple governments with varying political agendas (Friendly & Prentice, 2009). To answer the question: Can ECE professionals be advocates?, this research study narrowed in on the provincial child care advocacy movement in Manitoba and Ontario as both provinces have active child care social movement organizations (SMOs).

The child care advocacy movement in both provinces is comprised of networks that include a grassroots organization or coalition and a professional association. Any organization that is involved in a social movement dynamic can be regarded as a “social movement organization” (SMO) (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). These organizations can have common interests that are linked to the larger social movement but differences commonly exist between these organizations in terms of functions, goals and tactics (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). One of the commonly discussed challenges of a social movement is the tensions that can arise between individual SMOs as they work towards specific goals of the larger movement. These tensions often arise when the goals and mobilizing strategies of a specific organization are met with contention from others organizations within the larger movement (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). Tensions between the grassroots organizations and the professional associations in Manitoba and Ontario are heightened by the fact that most of them have recently been defunded and struggle to

maintain human and capital resources. Some of these tensions will be discussed in more detail throughout this paper as they contribute to informant perspectives on ECE professionals as advocates.

For now, a brief introduction to the four child care SMOs included in this research study is provided. In Ontario, the grassroots organization is the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC), founded in 1981; the coalition advocates for “universally accessible, high quality, not-for-profit, regulated child care in the province of Ontario” (OCBCC, 2013). The OCBCC is comprised of a strong network of union, labour and child care representatives, such as, Canadian Union of Public Employees, Ontario Federation of Labour and Kawartha Child Care Centres. The professional association, the Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario (AECEO) was first established in the 1950s as the Nursery Education Association of Ontario (NEAO) and in 1969 changed its name to the AECEO. Today the AECEO’s mission is to “serve and act on behalf of early childhood educators in Ontario” (AECEO, 2008). One of the most notable successes of the AECEO was their fundamental role in the establishment of the College of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario which was passed into legislation in 2007. Ontario is the only province to regulate the profession of early childhood education and all ECEs are mandated to register with the College in order to work as Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECE) in licensed child care programs.

In Manitoba, the grassroots advocacy organization is the Child Care Coalition of Manitoba (CCCM), established in 1993 and incorporated in 2007. CCCM’s goal is to achieve a “fully accessible, publicly-funded, non-profit system of comprehensive and high quality child care, with worthy wages and good working conditions for child care staff” (CCCM, 2010). The CCCM has no ongoing funding and does not charge for membership but maintains the coalition

through active volunteerism from 55 organizations and some project funding (CCCM, 2010). There is a strong presence of union and labour groups involved in the CCCM, such as, Canadian Union of Postal Workers, the Manitoba Nurses Union and the Manitoba Federation of Labour Women's Committee. The professional association in Manitoba, the Manitoba Child Care Association (MCCA), is quite different from the AECEO because they are able to provide group benefit plans, and liability insurance for child care centres. The MCCA is financially independent and is the only professional association in Canada to have successfully developed a competitive salary scale for the ECE workforce. Founded in 1974 and the MCCA is the largest provincial child care association in Canada and has had major successes in supporting the ECE professional workforce. The MCCA's mission is to "advocate for a quality system of child care, to advance early childhood education as a profession, and to provide services to our members" (MCCA, 2013).

Theoretical Framework

To gain better insight into this study's research focus, questions and findings, the political economy of care theory was used as a theoretical framework. The ECE professional workforce sector is predominantly lead by women and the work they do is identified as a *caring* profession (Mahon & Robinson, 2011). Care in early childhood settings can be described as an emotional labour, one that involves the development and maintenance of trusting relationships with children and their families (Taggart, 2011). Care has particular relevance in early childhood settings because the work requires more than custodial care and safety of children. The political economy of care theory evolved from the ethics of care framework, which has been widely adopted across disciplines (Tronto, 2013). The central focus of the ethics of care, as a moral theory, is that all human beings are dependent for many years of their lives, specifically during

the early years, in sickness and despair and in old age. The ethics of care provides a framework for understanding “how we do our particular care work and its ethical dimensions” (Tronto, 1998). An ethics of care perspective emphasizes the reality that all human beings will be dependent at some point in their lives and that the provision of care required is a moral concern rooted in universal experience (Held, 2006). This perspective is in sharp contrast with the prevailing social order which positions care as a private commodity awarded to those who can afford and access it (Tronto, 2013).

The ethics of care values emotions such as, sympathy, empathy, sensitivity and responsiveness because care work is emotionally vested and relies on the emotional capabilities that enable care providers to understand the value of their work. In early childhood settings, the “care” in child care includes a high level of emotional investment and responsiveness that makes this work unique amongst caring professions. In Canada, society generally follows traditional divisions of private and public spheres where caregiving is largely seen as an aspect of private life. Care work in society – especially caring for young children – is greatly undervalued and the assumption is that caring is somehow “women’s work” (Tronto, 1998). Given the broad use of the term care, Fisher and Tronto (1990) offered this definition: “On the most general level, we suggest that caring be viewed as a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our world so that we can live in it as well as possible” (p.40).

Understanding the political economy of care is integral to this study as it provides a conceptual understanding of the nature of care work and the political and economic underpinnings of who provides care in democratic societies. How the state allocates the responsibility of care contributes to political commitments of equality and justice. The political economy of care, also referred to as a caring democracy by Tronto (2013) challenges how we

“care” in a neo-liberal society that misunderstands the freedom of “choice” by relying on private markets (Tronto, 2013). The very nature of care work is traditionally understood as a personal responsibility and a critical part of human life making it difficult to raise concerns about care and issues of justice and inequality. Tronto (2013) argues that this is due to the fact that ideologies of care appear as “natural” or a moral obligation rather than political which ultimately affects how we think about who is responsible for care work. We do not see care as political because of the traditional association between women and care work or more specifically as “women’s morality” (Tronto, 1998).

The aims of this theory are to provide a theoretical rationale for caregiving and care receiving so that they have a proper place in society where the allocation of care responsibilities are committed to equality for all (Tronto, 2013). This aim, which would position care as a political concern is, of course, highly problematic for our current neoliberal sociopolitical context. To reposition care as a political concern would directly challenge the historical distinction between what are considered as private or public matters. Care work has historically been considered as the concerns of women, working-class people and racial and ethnic minorities (Tronto, 2013). Writers of the political economy of care argue against the commodification of care, as the work itself requires trusting relationships between the caring parties and those being cared for. Therefore, care work is not just another service that can be sold on the market (Tronto, 2013).

Scholars have used this theory to explain why child care policy is absent and why the child care workforce is marginalized and underpaid. This theory helps to interpret the findings of this study that reveal informant perspectives on ECE professionals as advocates. The political economy of care, as described by Tronto (2011), states that the “actual relationships, and the

attendant responsibilities that they bring, provide a more coherent and action-oriented way to consider the problems of justice raised in the political economy.” (p. 177). Tronto’s (2011) conception of the ethics of care provides a theoretical perspective that focuses on the problem of care workers being viewed in political society as having a lesser status. The political economy of care recognizes the gravity of care work and its significant role within the social, economic and political economy. Tronto (2011), states that, the relationship between care givers and those being cared for are “made possible through, and are shaped by their political, social and economic contexts” (p.163).

Key Terms

In Canada, the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector is comprised of a number of diverse programs and services for children and families and there are similarities and differences from coast to coast to coast. The term ECEC, which is used throughout this paper describes “inclusive and integrated services that play multiple roles for children and their families” (Friendly & Prentice, 2009).

The College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE) in Ontario – the only province to regulate the profession through mandated registration – defines the early childhood education (ECE) profession as a “professional practice which includes the assessment and promotion of the well-being and holistic development of children through the planning and delivery of inclusive play-based learning and care programs within the context of diverse family, school and community groups” (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2011, p.29).

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter aims to provide a thorough summary of the key concepts, theories and descriptions from the literature that are pertinent to this research area. This paper engages with literature on social movements and ECE professionalization that are critical for examining ECE workforce sector professionalization and provincial child care advocacy in Manitoba and Ontario. A review of social movement literature that includes sociology and political science perspectives and arguments will answer three questions: 1) What is a social movement? 2) What is a social movement organization? and 3) What are the mobilizing tactics and theories of modern social movements? As this study deals specifically with perceptions of ECE professionals as advocates, it is important to review the current literature on the ECE workforce sector professionals. A review of the research literature on professionalism in early childhood education will answer three additional questions: 1) What is a profession? 2) Is early childhood education a profession? and 3) Is there empirical evidence that early childhood educators make good advocates?

Social Movements

Social movements have emerged as a common and central feature of the political landscape in Canada (Roggeband & Klandermans, 2007). Active and visible social movements reflect a critical component of democratic participation in society, where collectives can express their concerns, interests and claims (Snow, Soule, & Kriesi, 2004). Specific to this research study is Ferree and Mueller's (2004) argument that the key concepts of a social movement are integrated into "gendered repertoires of contention that address gendered opportunities through gendered structures of mobilization with gendered rhetorics of meaning" (587). Generally, social movements are formed to express dissatisfaction with existing policy in a given area. Using

Ferree and Muller's (2004) argument, the child care social movement has expressed gendered concerns about care and inequality, specifically women's inequality as related to their accessing out of home care in order to enter the workforce. Social movements that focus on the rights of vulnerable citizens are affected by neoliberal ideologies that celebrate market fundamentalism by turning these vulnerable citizens into consumers (Hasenfeld, 2012).

Indeed, social movements have become a central feature of social and political media coverage and are commonly sought out to provide a critical point of view on highly contested issues. Social movements have been studied across disciplines as the phenomenon continues to adopt different forms of strategies and action. Globalization, and the emergence of social media outlets would suggest that we live in a movement society or movement world (Snow et al., 2004). Snow et al. (2004) provide this broad definition of social movements:

Collectives acting with some degree of organization and continuity outside of institutional or organizational channels for the purpose of challenging or defending extant authority, whether it is institutionally or culturally based, in the group, organization society, culture, or world order of which they are a part (Snow et al., 2004, p.11).

Today, it is common place for social movements to overlap with political phenomena, such as electoral campaigns and policy consultations (Tilly, 2004). For example, in 2004 – a time when the sociopolitical climate was more inclined to support a new social program – child care SMOs played an integral role in the development of the Liberal initiative, the Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Foundations program. At the time the Canadian child care movement was a major player in the development of child care social policy. The child care movement gained strength as an influential lobby movement as educators, teachers, parents, unions, politicians, researchers and academics unanimously supported the value of a publicly delivered ECEC system (Prentice, 2001). Indeed, the fragmented non-system of care arrangements available for children and families in Canada is a clear indicator that a child care advocacy movement exists

(Prentice, 2001). The child care advocacy movement has always contested political decisions that undermine child care social policy on the federal level and regionally in Canada. According to Tilly (2004 p.3) a social movement is contentious “in the sense that it involves collective making of claims that, if realized, would conflict with someone else’s interests, political in the sense that governments of one sort or another figure in the claim making”.

Evidence from the child care advocacy movement tells us that through numerous campaigns and alignment of claims the movement has engaged in contentious politics. Over time, the political demands of a social movement become non-negotiable (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). This is evident within the child care advocacy movement that continually calls for a universal system of publicly funded, quality, inclusive ECEC. This claim is deeply rooted as an ideal of social change that would contribute to a more equal Canada for all children and families. Such a social system however directly conflicts with the current neo-liberal political landscape in Canada thus making the movements claims appear “radical” even though such a system almost made it off the ground not even a decade ago. Henceforth, it is quite evident that the socioeconomic and political structure of a society influences the type of conflicts that develop within it (Della Porta & Diani, 2006).

Social movement organizations (SMO). Social movement organizations (SMOs) represent current issues and conflict in society. Political power is created outside of the state through engaged social movement organizations – such as women’s organizations, justice groups, environmental groups, advocacy groups, alternative policy groups and trade unions (Meyer & Staggenborg, 2012). Social movement organizations represent the social change demands of larger movements and provide a platform for leadership within movements. Leadership within social movement organizations promote networking among different

movement organizations and work to establish connections with media and political actors to advance their claims. However, competition between SMOs that do not work in cooperation together can produce fractured relationships that ultimately hinder their ability to recognize and maintain solidarity (Della Porta & Diani, 2006).

The child care advocacy movement in Canada is comprised of grassroots organizations, professional associations, strong union and labour leadership, individual activists, academic sympathizers and political allies. The grassroots model of organizing combines strong network or coalition building with lower levels of formal structuration (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). Grassroots organizations are more locally based and speak to issues that are specific to provincial jurisdiction (Koopmanz, 2004). Grassroots SMOs are largely voluntary and change over time as human and capital resources are typically more limited. In this study the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC) and the Child Care Coalition of Manitoba (CCCM) represent grassroots organizations as coalitions that focus very specifically on influencing the child care social policy development, implementation and platforms of provincial governments but also identify as part of the larger child care advocacy movement.

Professional associations attempt to speak for a constituency or group of people whose interests they promote and attempts to influence policy toward that same constituency or group (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). Professional associations rely on membership from a the specific group of people whom they represent (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). Professional associations are typically seen as less radical and less contentious, as professional associations become more established as such their protesting capabilities become tamer (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). In the child care advocacy realm, professional associations on the provincial level are concerned with the ECE professional workforce sector and represent issues that are pertinent to early childhood

educators in their jurisdiction. In this study, the Association of Early Childhood Educators (AECEO) and the Manitoba Child Care Association (MCCA) represent the professional arm of the child care advocacy movement for Ontario and Manitoba.

Social movement strategies. Social movements themselves are complex and can involve any number of organizations that can pursue profoundly different strategies for making claims (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). Every social movement has a network of organizations with specific strategies that include decisions about the tactics, claims, targets and alliances of the movement (Meyer & Staggenborg, 2012). Many social movement organizations that advocate for issues of social justice such as, child and family poverty, child care and education, equality and the environment will often support one another's claims. Modern social movements tactics include petitions, rallies, blockades, and protest marches (Smith & Fetner, 2007). Social movements rely heavily on the media to cover their collective actions and claim making so that they can reach constituents, policy makers and third parties (Koopmanz, 2004). Meyer and Staggenborg (2012, p.5) stress the importance of social movement tactics, "the proximate and long-term outcomes are affected by the strategic decisions of activists as well as by the responses of allies, bystanders, authorities and opponents."

Resource mobilization theory. Resource mobilization theory (RMT) acknowledges that social grievances and unrest are constant, rather than outside-of-the-norm experience in society (Meyer & Staggenborg, 2012). Resource mobilization is the process through which human and financial resources of an organization are deployed to add to the collective goals of the broader movement (Prentice, 2001). For example, in Ontario, the OCBC and the AECEO coordinate their campaigns and advocacy messages to support one another on a variety of issues. Since government funding for child care organizations has ceased to exist, the human and financial

resources of these organizations are substantially limited. Unions have played and continue to play an integral role in the Canadian child care advocacy movement especially in terms of funding resources that support various child care SMOs to continue their work (Kass & Costigliola, 2003). Edwards and McCarthy (2004) argue that resource mobilization goes beyond the availability of resources and also includes the coordination of strategic efforts to merge the resources of individual organizations and to utilize those resources in collective action (116). The OCBCC and the AECEO in Ontario have deployed this strategy as they now share an office space which ultimately supports both organizations to share pools of individually held resources (Edwards & McCarthy, 2004).

Collective identity. Collective identity is a major aspect of most social movements today (Polletta & Jasper, 2001). With collective identity, social movements progress beyond protest events or specific campaign to involve the formation of interconnected networks of action (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). Collective identity signals the maturation and stabilization of a social movement and brings with it a sense of common purpose and shared commitment to a cause (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). For example, the child care advocacy movement is comprised of a number of SMOs and networks that generally support the development of a well designed, stable system of ECEC. Collective identity allows SMOs and single actors and activists to regard themselves as a part of the movement and to link themselves with other organizations that may not be identical but that share similar ideas and goals. Although the child care SMOs included in this study identify with the child care movement there have been some instances in the past where the organizations were on opposing ends of a specific issue. For example, it was not until the AECEO and the OCBCC in Ontario came to an agreement on the issue of for-profit child care that they were able to work together more effectively.

The early childhood education professional workforce

There are various and sometimes competing descriptions in the literature of what defines professional early childhood educators. According to Chandler (2012), early childhood professionals demonstrate up-to-date knowledge and strategies for working with children, participate in and understand the importance of reflective practice and continually learn about evolving theoretical foundations of ECE. Moriarty (2000) argued that a more inclusive definition of professionalism is needed for the early childhood workforce that is not based merely on technical expertise and curriculum knowledge in their work. Moriarty (2000) further suggested that educators in Western nations need to be supported to meaningfully engage in public debates by critiquing and contributing to them as professionals with firsthand knowledge of how policy impacts their day-to-day work. Harwood, Klooper, Osanyin & Vanderlee (2013) describe that early childhood education and care is exceptionally different from other, more traditional conceptualizations of professionalism given the emotional demands of their work. Harwood et al., (2013) argue that the ethic of care and the emotional presence of teaching young children requires close attention to fully understand the gendered and sociopolitical perspectives that make the ECE profession truly unique (p. 5). A review of the literature that defines and outlines the key aspects of an early childhood professional is a significant step toward examining if ECE professionals can be advocates.

A “true” profession is historically embedded in systems of knowledge that distinguishes the professional practice from other forms of production (Urban, 2010). The literature on professionalization provides a range of key features central to obtaining professional status. Urban (2010) discusses key features as including a regulatory body, code of conduct, and a growing body of knowledge. Specific modes of knowledge are a central theme within Urban’s

(2010) analysis of professionalism in early childhood. Urban (2010) argues that developmental psychology as a specific mode of knowledge in ECE is an effective means of regulating individual practice. Early childhood professionals who complete college and degree programs enter into the field prepared to work with children from 0-12, their training and professionalism contributes highly to the quality of programs and services where they work. Taggart (2011) adds to this idea by suggesting that the field needs to go beyond caring to include advocacy that challenges the dominant way of thinking about quality in early childhood programs.

Specialized bodies of knowledge. Feeney (2012) discusses the use of developmental psychology as central to establishing early childhood as a profession. Developmental psychology, as the key body of knowledge, establishes the field by providing scientific evidence that highlights the importance of the early years. A thorough understanding of developmental psychology such as cognitive development develops the ECE workforce into professional experts. In Ontario, curriculum documents and best practice frameworks such as Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT) focus on providing developmentally appropriate programs for young children supported by evidence within child development research (Chandler, 2012). Charles Pascal highlighted the importance of specialized knowledge in the ECEC field in Ontario with his 2009 recommendations on Full-Day Early Learning. The report *With Our Best Futures in Mind* states that the new full day curriculum will highlight educators who are “skilled at applying child development knowledge” (2009, p.32). In Manitoba, the Child Care Education Program Approval Committee (CCEPAC) and the Manitoba Department of Advanced Education and Literacy ensures that the training programs for early childhood education include the five competency goals outlined in the provincial Early Learning and Child Care Competencies (Flanagan, Beach & Michal, 2009).

The reliance on developmental psychology is red flagged by Urban (2010) as leading educators into a ‘regime of truth’ discourse where the scientific nature of developmental knowledge outweighs other types of knowledge in the field. Urban (2010) notes that there is a clear epistemological hierarchy where the bodies of knowledge are produced, transferred and applied to practice, which drastically increases the pressures and expectations for educators as professionals. This is evident in Ontario’s Full-Day Early Learning program, which focuses on a play-based learning curriculum that is anchored by the ELECT pedagogical framework. There has been an increasing amount of criticism in the literature about the heavy reliance on developmental psychology and child-centered ideologies for informing pedagogy and policy. Musgrave (2011) argues that current development of policy and pedagogy for ECE settings should consider unique knowledge that is derived from recent research, which reflects the development of all children and focuses more on care, culture, ethnicity and ability.

Prolonged training and requirements. The second determinant of a profession as discussed by Feeney (2012) is prolonged training, which varies from province to province given the licensing policy that sets the minimum standards for practice. In Ontario, for example, individuals entering the ECE field are required by the provincial government to obtain an ECE diploma from a recognized community college that typically includes a two-year study period (Chandler, 2012).

Prolonged training as presented by Feeney (2012) integrates the bodies of knowledge that anchor ECE field training programs. Accordingly, an ECE must be able to understand and conceptualize developmental knowledge. Martin, Meyer, Jones, Nelson and Ting (2010) expected that more years of education would impact how an educator saw themselves as a professional within their study. Ultimately the researchers found that educators attributed

professionalism to having direct experience working in the field with a diverse group of children, families and staff. Other researchers have questioned the minimal training requirements of a two year diploma for ECE professionals in comparison to a bachelors degree (Musgrave, 2011; Moss, 2006; Penn, 2008). Moss (2006), noted that ECE professionals in most western nations are generally only required to have a one or two year diploma; he argues that enhanced education for ECEs is necessary as the workforce gains recognition.

Code of ethics and standards of practice. The research literature on professionalism in ECE highlights the importance of a code of ethics and standards of practice to regulate the field. A code of ethics and standards of practice reflects the conceptions of what is deemed appropriate practice within ECEC (Feeney, 2012). The MCCA has their own code of ethics for early childhood educators that was adapted from the code of ethics developed by the Canadian Child Care Federation. Their code of ethics promote the health, well-being, care and development of all children in a program. The MCCA offers four professional development workshops to their members that “empower members to live these principles in their daily practice” (MCCA, 2011). In Ontario, ECE graduates are required by the province to become a member of the College of ECE in order to use the title of “Registered Early Childhood Educator” (Chandler, 2012). Once a new graduate becomes a member of the College they must adhere to the following statements from the College, “members have a responsibility to know and understand the standards...all members have an obligation to practice the profession in accordance with these ethical and professional standards.”

Professional status within the College’s code of ethics and standards of practice relies heavily on the application of child development knowledge within programs to deliver developmentally appropriate practice. Within the code of ethics “advocacy” is mentioned once,

in the last line, stating that early childhood educators “contribute to community society by advocating for and promoting an appreciation of the profession...” (p.11). There is no mention of educators participating in advocacy efforts to push for professional wages and working conditions or to engage in a campaigns run by provincial child care organizations.

Generally the ECEC sector across Canada has become more professional through a combination of several factors, including a wide recognition of the interplay between professionalism and program quality, increased regulations and training requirements set out by the provinces/territories, increased professional development opportunities for ECEs, the introduction of early childhood curriculum frameworks, the establishment of regulatory bodies (in Ontario only), the merging of children’s services within provincial ministries of education, and the introduction of new policy initiatives for full-day kindergarten (Flanagan, Beach, & Varmuza, 2013; Friendly, Halfon, Beach, & Forer, 2013; Prentice, 2001). One of the only pan-Canadian studies (Flanagan et al., 2013) that gathered data on the ECEC workforce found that 89.6% of ECE respondents held a post-secondary ECE-related credential, 11% of which received their credentials from a university program. The study also found that the average hourly median wage for ECEs in Canada is \$16.50 and 25% of program staff earn below \$14.00 an hour (Flanagan et al., 2013). Despite the fact that the majority of ECE respondents across Canada held a post-secondary credential in ECE the workforce remains underpaid. Although it is evident that the ECE workforce is in fact, professional and continues to gain legitimacy as a profession, there are still immense workforce sector issues, namely, recruitment, retention and remuneration. As the professional profile of the ECE workforce sector continues to grow the wages and working conditions have not kept pace. A contributing factor to this challenge is the fact that child care in Canada currently operates within the free market. The marketization of ECEC services, where

child care is largely driven by market supply and demand ideology greatly disrupts the stability of child care provisions (Penn, 2008).

ECE has not typically been regarded as a profession that engages in advocacy - either for their profession or an adequate child care system (Woodrow & Busch, 2008; Moss, 2006, Moyles, 2001). The purpose of this research study is to better understand why that is and gain insights into how the profession may address this. Specifically, this research study is expected to offer insights into whether or not ECE professionals could and/or should be engaged in the provincial child care movement in Manitoba and Ontario. Researchers and scholars have not specifically characterized ECEs as incapable activists or leaders, but rather focus on a professionalism which views ECEs as first and foremost caregivers, not as advocates (Moyles, 2001).

Chapter Three: Methodology

The purpose of this study is to examine ECE professionals as advocates from the perspectives of child care advocacy movement actors in Ontario and Manitoba. This study uses secondary data from an ongoing three year Social Science and Humanities Research Council funded study that examines the effects of ECE workforce sector professionalization on the Canadian child care movement. In the second year of the study, researchers used a qualitative approach for data collection and interviews were conducted with informants connected to the child care advocacy movement in Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and nationally. Researchers used interviews to gain a better understanding of the informant's experiences and perspectives on ECE workforce sector professionalization and provincial child care advocacy (Langford et al., 2013). Data sets from interviews with informants from the child care social movement organizations (SMOs) in Manitoba and Ontario were selected for the current study. A comparison between the advocacy movement in two provinces was used to understand how context shapes perspectives.

Participant interviews for Manitoba and Ontario were analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis, as discussed by Braun and Clark (2006), is an analytic method for qualitative research. The analysis of informant interviews aimed to answer three research questions 1) can early childhood professionals be advocates engaged in the child care advocacy movement? 2) what kind of advocates should ECE professionals be? 3) How does provincial context contribute to informant perceptions of ECE professionals as advocates?

Setting and Participants

Researchers working on the larger project recruited participants using a convenience sampling where emails were sent to known informants. Once initial contact was formed,

researchers conducted interviews in person when possible and over the phone when an in-person interview was not possible. Informants from the province of Ontario were from one of the two child care social movement organizations (SMOs): Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (grassroots) and the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario (professional association). Similarly, informants from Manitoba were associated with either the Child Care Coalition of Manitoba (grassroots) or Manitoba Child Care Association (professional association). Most of the informants had been active for a minimum of ten years. It is important to note that the informants who participated in this study have personal and professional relationships with each other and with other child care activists from throughout Canada.

Research Design

The larger project. In the first phase of the project, researchers conducted a content analysis of publicly available documents produced in 2008 by grassroots and ECEC workforce sector child care SMOs in the three provinces and on the national level, with the aim of examining the use of policy frames in their messages to stakeholders/members, government(s) and the general public (Langford, 2013). After receiving ethical approval, the research team began conducting semi-structured interviews with key informants involved in provincial and national child care SMOs. To gain access to key informants, publically available email addresses were searched through SMO websites and scripted recruitment emails were sent by a research assistant. Positive responses were followed up with either a telephone or in-person semi-structured interview about the experiences in their child care SMO. Interviews were recorded and stored on the desktop of the primary investigator of the larger project. The interviews addressed topics including, but not limited to: (1) an informant's involvement inside or outside of a child care SMO; (2) perceptions of a SMO's approach to activism and/or advocacy (political

opportunities, organizational goals and strategies, initiatives, internal dynamics, resources such as leadership structure, gender composition, funding, key political and organizational allies, main struggles/barriers to success, future plans); (3) the extent, effects, and consequences of professionalization of the ECEC sector on child care SMOs; (4) and views on the Canadian child care SMOs' successes. The specific interview questions relevant to this study were: 1) some people say professionals don't make good advocates, would you agree or disagree? Why?; 2) would you say there is a provincial child care advocacy movement? 3) What have been some of the major successes of your organization? 4) How has the shift in professionalization affected the goals of your organization? To date, researchers have conducted 35 interviews with informants involved with both grassroots and ECEC workforce sector child care social movement organizations (SMOs) in Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta and on the pan-Canadian level. A research assistant transcribed interviews verbatim.

This paper/ project. For the purpose of this paper, 14 interviews with informants from the four child care SMOs in Manitoba and Ontario were selected for analysis. All of the interviews that were conducted with informants from the four organizations in Manitoba and Ontario were included in the data set for this paper. All informants were either current or former Executive Directors, staff members, board Presidents, Vice Presidents or board members affiliated with one of the four organizations. In total, there were seven interviews from informants in Manitoba; three from the Child Care Coalition of Manitoba (CCCM) and four from the Manitoba Child Care Association (MCCA). There were seven interviews with informants from Ontario; four informants from the Ontario Coalition of Better Child Care (OCBCC) and three informants from the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario (AECEO). Table

number one and two below display the basic identifying information for the informants from Manitoba and Ontario.

Table 1

Informant Information: Ontario

Informant	Organization/Role
Informant 1	OCBCC – Executive director
Informant 2	OCBCC – Vice President
Informant 3	OCBCC – Former President
Informant 4	OCBCC – Former Executive Director
Informant 5	AECEO – Executive Director
Informant 6	AECEO – Former President
Informant 7	AECEO – Board member

Table 2

Informant Information: Manitoba

Informant	Organization/Role
Informant 8	MCCA – Executive Director
Informant 9	MCCA – Board member
Informant 10	MCCA – Staff member
Informant 11	MCCA – Staff member
Informant 12	CCCM – Staff
Informant 13	CCCM – Staff/Board member
Informant 14	CCCM – Board member

Data Analysis

Transcriptions were printed and placed within a master binder for an organized analysis process. A thematic analysis method was used to identify, analyze and report themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is widely used as an analytic method in qualitative research and draws on the features that are common to many approaches in qualitative analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Braun and Clark (2006) describe it as, “qualitative analysis for commonly occurring themes and patterns within the data” (p.80). Essentially, thematic analyses seek to exhume the themes that are salient within text at different levels and offers tools to structure and depict these themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001). In this study the thematic analysis process included three types of coding to examine informant perspectives which were, a priori coding, open coding and axial coding.

A priori coding was an integral first step for this study as the researcher used secondary data (interviews) that covered a variety of topics within the larger study. A priori codes were used as the first step in the thematic analysis as a way to reduce the text into a manageable size and to address the research question (Attride-Stirling, 2001). A priori codes were developed before examining the data, in the form of questions. Questions were developed from these broad coding categories which allowed the researcher to extract relevant data. The five a priori codes that were used to access information specific to this study were: how are professionals described? ; How is professionalism described? ; How do informants describe ECEs as advocates? ; How should ECEs be advocates? ; How do they describe the role of advocacy in their organization? ; How do they characterize the child care advocacy movement? To extract the necessary information for this study the researcher coded any data that answered to these sub-

questions. This initial coding process allowed the researcher to become familiar with the data ensuring greater reliability.

Second, the interview data that fell within the a priori codes were organized into informant charts. These charts identified the informants by their province and association while also ascribing them a number. The second phase of coding followed a thematic procedure where the researcher produced codes directly from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). At this point in the analysis process the researcher was able to immerse herself in the data charts to draw out as many reoccurring themes as possible. The researcher worked systematically through each chart and used an open coding process that generated codes that were data-driven (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Codes were recorded directly on informant charts and were later transferred into a code book that included line numbers and specific references of each code. The codes that emerged from this phase of analysis included: gender, caring, professionalism, professionalization, ECE characteristics, collaboration, advocacy tactics, roles, strategies, successes, challenges.

The third phase of coding, axial coding, was used to identify and name final themes. These final themes captured data which represented a level of patterned responses or meanings within the data set and related to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Codes that were less prevalent across data sets were omitted unless they supported main themes or added dimension, in which case they were incorporated as subthemes.

Researcher characteristics and bias

The role of the researcher in qualitative studies raises some concerns regarding bias that may jeopardize the quality of a study (Chenail, 2011). A researcher's personal beliefs, values and experience are reflected in the interpretation of findings but also in the choice of research topic (Mehra, 2002). However, researcher bias and subjectivity are understood as inevitable and

important within qualitative research as the knowledge and experiences of the researcher adds depth to the overall study (Mehra, 2002). In this case, the researcher has a high degree of affinity with the population under study including being an ECE and an advocate for child care and workforce issues. Given the affinity to the informants and the topic of study, the researcher may be considered an “inside” investigator. It was essential for the researcher to limit her curiosities of the topics covered in the interviews and to only focus on information which answered directly to the research questions of the study.

Chapter Four: Findings

The thematic analysis was used that generated three main themes that help to answer the research questions. The three main themes are: 1) ECE professionals as advocates 2) Type and scope of advocacy 3) Provincial context. These themes emerged from the third phase of coding the 14 informant interviews from the four child care social movement organizations (SMOs) in Manitoba and Ontario. Informants from Ontario represent the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC) and the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario (AECEO). Informants from Manitoba represent the Manitoba Child Care Association (MCCA) and the Child Care Coalition of Manitoba (CCCM). The research questions guiding this study are threefold,) Can early childhood professionals be advocates engaged in the child care advocacy movement? 2) What kind of advocates should ECE professionals be? 3) How does provincial context contribute to informants perceptions of ECE professionals as potential advocates? To maintain confidentiality of the informants who participated in the study descriptive information that made the informants easily identifiable were removed when necessary. This chapter presents the main findings from the analysis process in three sections and highlights, in each section, similarities and differences that emerged as sub-themes.

ECE professionals as advocates

ECE professionals as advocates is a multilayered theme that combines the informant perspectives on ECEs as professionals, professionalizing the ECE workforce sector and professionalism as advocacy. Combined, each sub-theme showcases informant perspectives on the essential factors that contribute to an ECEs ability to advocate.

ECEs as professionals. Common words and phrases were used to describe ECE professionals across interviews. Overall, informants from both grassroots organizations and

professional associations characterized ECE professionals as: “caring”, “program specialists”, “knowledgeable about child development”, “passionate about working with children and families”, “finding fulfillment in their work”, “having strong interpersonal and communication skills”, and “ethical and reflective practitioners”. All of the informants from Manitoba and Ontario generally characterized ECE professionals in a positive light, acknowledging their commitment and dedication to the field. However, informants also described their experiences of working with ECEs in the field and noted that not all ECEs view themselves or their work as professional.

A former staff person from the MCCA describes ECE professionals in a way that captures some of the commonly mentioned characteristics, “I think ECE professionals act with integrity and ethically, in that they stay current and continue to learn and reflect on what they’re doing for the children and families in their program.” A former Executive Director of OCBCB reflects on her experiences of meeting ECE professionals from across Ontario,

I was always moved and inspired by the – mostly women – who I met working in child care as ECEs. They felt professional in the field and were proud of their work with young children. There was always a pride that ran through the workforce and the ECEs who I’ve met across the province reflect a real deep commitment and pride to their work.

An informant from OCBCB who also works for a labour organization describes ECE professionals from a labor perspective,

Child care workers are incredibly skilled, many of them have two year diplomas and more and more people are getting four year degrees and yet somehow they’re expected to work for 12-14 dollars an hour. I’ve met young women who are keen, excited and you can clearly see that talent of that person and they’ll go into child care for a few years until they can no longer afford to live on those wages or until they have to put their own kids in child care.

Although all of the informants from Manitoba and Ontario generally conceptualized ECEs as professionals, some informants report from their experience of working with front line

staff that ECEs do not always see themselves or their work in the same light. An Executive Director of a professional association described this trend, “I think practitioners sometimes have a bad opinion about themselves and they undervalue themselves.” This informant went further to explain her understanding of why ECE practitioners may feel this way,

In my darker moments I do see it as exploitation of the workforce. I think that because it is women perhaps doing what is traditionally seen as women’s work and because of who we are, we are a caring sector and we do it for the children and we love kids and I think that so far there’s been enough members of the child care workforce that are driven by their hearts and perhaps lose sight of the professional work that they put into the day to day.

Similarly, another ED of a professional association commented that not everyone in the ECE workforce views themselves as professionals,

Everyone is beginning to recognize that the only way that we are really going to address wages and equity is by focusing on the fact that these are now professionals and they need to be recognized as that and compensated as professionals but there is still this struggle with all those ECEs who don’t see themselves as professional.

A current board member of the AECEO recounted her own experience as an ECE and provided her thoughts on why ECEs struggle with seeing themselves as professionals,

I call it the cocktail syndrome...saying I’m an early childhood educator and its like the next minute the person you’re talking to is gone, they’re talking to someone else...that’s impacted us as a community, we struggle with that image all the time and I think that you know that’s why we’ve always had to fight as an individual for that respect from society, we have such a pluralistic view of ourselves, like I’m in my room at one child care centre and I just want the parents to treat me more than a babysitter.

As an ECE herself, this informant explained that there was often not enough time to articulate her roles and responsibilities to the families she worked with and to many of her colleagues with whom she worked alongside. This informant expressed her concern about the devaluation of her work, using the term “babysitter” to describe the unprofessional conceptualization she felt many outsiders have of ECEs.

In sum, there was agreement among all informants from both grassroots organizations and professional associations in Ontario and Manitoba that ECEs are in fact, professionals. However, it became evident that informants conceptualized what it meant to be “professional” differently. One informant specifically expressed concern that ECEs do not always see themselves as professional.

Professionalizing the ECE workforce sector. All of the informants more or less discussed the unique professionalization of the ECE workforce sector as gendered. This section presents the informants’ ideas concerning the gendered nature of care work and in most cases, gender was perceived to be a barrier to professionalism. This section also presents the informants’ outlook on the successes and challenges regarding ECE workforce sector professionalization. The establishment of the College of ECEs in Ontario and the increased training and education requirements of ECE professionals were considered to be the most visible and tangible contributors to the professionalization of the field. All of the informants agreed that retention and compensation of ECEs acted as a barrier to further professionalizing the ECE workforce sector.

Many informants associated the feminization of child care work as a principle characteristic of ECE workforce sector professionalization. A former President of OCBCC provided a detailed and gendered description of ECE professionalism,

It’s a professionalism that includes the critical element of caring and it doesn’t become a mechanical sort of understanding of professionalism or a male defined notion of professionalism but that we are still largely women that are doing this caring work.

Some informants explicitly linked the gendered nature of care work to the fact that ECE professionals are underpaid, forcing them to move on to “greener pastures” as one MCCA

informant put it. A current staff person from the CCCM identified a link between the feminization of child care work and poor compensation for ECE professionals,

There definitely is an imbalance [of men and women in ECEC] because the field is highly dependent on underpaid women to do that care work and perhaps we don't want to look at those issues too intensely because it creates some negativity in the field and I'm not sure that there is a lot of talk about that.

A current board member of the MCCA, attributed the societal perception of care as women's work as a barrier to further professionalizing the ECE workforce sector and links this to similar struggles of the women's movement,

It's difficult to professionalize a field when you are not able to actively seek out the solutions to the challenges that are there...such as, the societal perception that care is women's work and it's undervalued, we still have a long way to go in that sense and it goes hand in hand with the women's movement in the sense that it's [child care] still seen as a women's problem that if women are not able to access the job market because they can't find child care then it's all kind of interrelated.

All of the informants from the professional association in Ontario described the establishment of the College of ECEs as one of the most notable successes of ECE workforce sector professionalization. The AECEO was integral in passing the legislation that established the College of ECEs. A past President of the AECEO identified the establishment of the College of Early Childhood Educators as a success for the ECE workforce sector in Ontario,

By legislating the profession, those were very exciting times because ...we were actually talking about it not just in our field, not just in ECE, we weren't just talking to each other anymore. Other people and professions were talking about it, government was talking about it, people were actually saying yeah it's important, these professionals are important.

A current board member from the AECEO described the College in a positive light in terms of a step forward for professionalization but also noted some apprehensiveness about its implementation,

The most spectacular milestone that we've had is the Early Childhood Educators Act in 2008 that established the College of ECE that to me is ground breaking towards the

professionalization of Early Childhood Education but I think that the impact of that is yet to be seen.

A former ED of OCBCC also described the College of ECE in a positive light, however, she acknowledged that the ECE professional workforce sector was, in her experience, already professional,

I would say it's [the College of ECE] been praised, it's improved, it's rippled through the sector more but I don't necessarily want to give the impression that a switch went off and suddenly people felt professional because I think they always did, it was incremental because they weren't recognized by the outside world as much but it wasn't a sector filled with people that didn't value themselves or feel they were professional.

Overall, informants identified the establishment of the College of ECE as a success for ECE workforce sector professionalization. However, the majority of informants from Ontario and many from Manitoba acknowledged that the establishment of the College has not had all of the professionalizing affects that many advocates had expected. One of the issues, as noted by a number of informants from both provinces, was that the College can not advocate on behalf of ECEs. Although ECEs in Ontario are required to become registered members of the College the main purpose of this regulatory body is to serve the public interest and to ensure regulations and safety (as noted in chapter 2). A current Vice President of the OCBCC summarized this reality,

In some ways the College was more a step sideways because a lot of energy went into establishing this College and it is not going to do anything like improving working conditions, salary or benefits.

A staff member from the MCCA also noted that the establishment of the Ontario College regulated the profession but without professional wages, it is only part of the equation to enhancing the a professional workforce, "as wages are under \$30,000 a year you're never really going to have a professional workforce. You can have a College of ECE but if people are still getting paid \$15 an hour than so what?" From the perspective of the Executive Director of the

MCCA, the way things have played out in Ontario has deterred the MCCA from “taking the lead” on establishing a regulatory body in Manitoba,

I think from the perspective of the public it would be useful but I'm kind of watching what's happening in Ontario where they've established the College and in order to work as a RECE in Ontario you have to belong to the College...I've seen what it has done to our sister organization [AECEO], they have seen their membership drop...while there is merit to the College for the public and for professionalizing the sector we [MCCA] are not quite there yet because the College doesn't advocate and we are a membership based organization.

This same informant described that the MCCA, as a solely membership based professional association could not support the establishment of a regulatory body in Manitoba and stated that it would be “proverbial suicide” for the MCCA. A board member of the OCBCC and a CUPE employee highlighted how the College has effected the ECE workforce sector from a union perspective, “what I see happening is that the College brought along additional expectations and responsibilities on the workforce which is already very undervalued in society.”

Across interviews informants from both grassroots organizations and professional associations noted that compensation and retention of the workforce were two of the biggest challenges to ECE workforce sector professionalization. A former Vice President of OCBCC, ascribed low wages and retention the core challenges to further professionalizing the ECE workforce and believed it to also impede the fight for a strong child care system,

We lose a lot of highly skilled, qualified, dedicated staff because they come back to school and the go on to be teachers or administrators or whatever because the cant afford to live on a child care workers wages and if they're lucky they'll get some benefits. So that's a big part of the equation right? You can't build a strong child care system without the recognition of the strong qualified staff right?

A past board member of the MCCA echoed this belief and stated that low wages attributed to ECE workforce sector retention issues,

The difficulty that we have in our field is that we're losing our good people a lot of the times...we're losing professionals with positive attitudes and that drive for doing better

because the reality is that we're still paying poor wages and we're struggling with workforce retention, people can't spend their whole career in child care anymore and I'm not sure what the impact is going to be.

To conclude, all of the informants agreed that there has been an increase in ECE workforce sector professionalization over the last decade. Some informants from Ontario attributed this to the establishment of the College of Early Childhood Educators while informants from Manitoba questioned the overall professionalizing effects of a formal regulatory body. Informants concurrently acknowledged that the establishment of the College in Ontario has left many workforce issues unaddressed and unresolved due to its inability to advocate.

Professionalism as advocacy. All of the informants from both grassroots and professional associations in Manitoba and Ontario, with the exception of one, believed that being a professional did not conflict with being an advocate. In fact, the majority of informants stated that advocacy was central to being a professional. Overall, “being professional”, “acting like a professional” and “professionalism” were the most frequently mentioned contributing factors for ECEs to participate in advocacy. In many cases, ECE workforce sector professionalization was linked to the future development and sustainability of the child care advocacy movement. This finding presents informants’ ideas regarding ECE professionals as advocates and showcases informants’ perspective on whether professionals can in fact advocate.

The majority of informants from Ontario and Manitoba stressed that a good professional can advocate and vice versa. This was articulated by an informant from OCBCC, “unless we are advocates, I don't think we are professionals because we have to care about the services that we are providing.” A current board member of CCCM, described how “being professional” counts as advocacy, “professionals that have studied and are able to look critically at issues and are able to pose certain questions and reflect...Those professionals can have an impact on the movement

when they speak up.” A former board member for MCCA included “being professional” as a form of advocacy, “if you’re working in an ethical manner you are promoting quality in every decision that you make then you are advocating for quality and to me they’re one in the same.” An informant from the AECEO stated that “acting like a professional” involves being a member of the professional association and related this to advocacy,

For years now we’ve been saying we are only as strong as the voices the we have so the more membership we have, the more ECEs who become members of the association the more government will stand up and listen to us, like the teachers and so on. Becoming a member of your professionals association gives you an opportunity to have input into what the association looks like and where it goes.

This informant further discussed how “acting like a professional” effects wages for ECEs,

Until we get more ECEs to recognize that yes it is about the children, and it is about the program but it starts with you because if you’re not the best professional you can be then that is going to affect the quality of the program and you’re not going to get compensated the way you should be.

Most informants believed that professionalizing the ECEs workforce would encourage young ECE professionals to be advocates and that this is essential for the child care advocacy movement. An informant from OCBCC, provided an optimistic perspective on the future of ECE professionals as child care advocates, “there is a renaissance to be seen, we will have ECE professionals publicly advocating.” A board member from CCCM highlighted that, even though she considers advocacy to be a key component of professionalism, speaking up is very much an individual choice and is better suited to some,

What does professionalism look like? Its about standing up when it counts or even when it doesn’t count. It means you participate in things beyond your day to day work but I don’t think that fits everybody.

Similarly, a long time ECE and a current staff member of MCCA reported her idea of what ECE professionalism looks like as advocacy from the perspective of a trained ECE,

What do I believe professionalism means? I would say, am I working within a code of ethics? Values? do I advocate on behalf of the families and children that I work with? Am I committed to life-long learning and realizing that this is a career and not just a jumping point to work somewhere else?

Among all of the informants, only one stated that ECE professionals did not make good advocates specifically because of how this informant described ECEs personal and professional characteristics,

I don't think child care people make good advocates because they're too nice and you know, our people are first of all caregivers and it's a challenge to get people to tell their stories publicly our people are fixers, their quite used to fixing all of their own problems as fast as they can...to get them to speak up on an issue is very difficult and they're very shy about it.

Another informant from the MCCA who agreed that ECE professionals could also be advocates, suggested that many ECEs are not able to effectively communicate the value of their work, "there are far too many people that still don't understand the work and the scope of the work and I think that people who work in the field aren't always articulate enough to speak out."

In the end, all in all informants, except for one, agreed that being an ECE professional was, in fact, compatible with being an advocate. Most of the informants did not believe that being a professional meant that an individual or the workforce as a whole would not make good advocates. However, informants did strongly believe that there were a number of circumstances where the ECE workforce sector was perhaps not in the best position to advocate.

Type and scope of advocacy

Although most informants agreed that professionalism and advocacy go hand in hand there was some variation in how informants described the type and scope of this advocacy. Thematic analysis revealed two clear differences in the informants perceptions of the scope of advocacy. Informants also had wavering views and opinions about what type of advocacy ECE professionals do or should participate in. In terms of scope, more than half of the informants

perceived ECE professionals as capable advocates at the micro level (i.e., within their own centres and programs). Many informants referred to this scope of advocacy as “small a advocacy”. In contrast, fewer informants perceived ECE professionals as capable advocates at the macro level (i.e., challenging the larger sociopolitical order). A number of informants referred to this scope of advocacy as “big A advocacy”. Commonalities were found across interviews in the way informants identified the characteristics of ECE professionals who advocate on micro and macro levels. In addition, informants identified a number of challenges to the ECE professional workforce sector’s engagement in micro and macro level advocacy.

Small “a” advocacy. The majority of informants from Ontario and Manitoba described the scope of advocacy that ECE professionals should engage in as small “a” advocacy or micro level advocacy. Small “a” advocacy was conceptualized as advocating on behalf of the families and children in their care. Some informants stated that ECE professionals are a key part of the child care advocacy based simply on their work. A past President of AECEO, identified ECE professionals as advocates for the families in their program but also recognized that ECEs can broaden their scope through working relationships with other members of the child care community,

I really feel strongly that you kind of mature in advocacy not in an age but in your field you start thinking very small you start thinking what you can do with the families in your program and the children in your program and how you can deliver the best program for them and the best services for the family. Then you kind of meet other people and you start thinking about how we can contribute things in our community.

An informant from the MCCA described an example where ECE professionals have participated in advocacy initiatives but maintained that they were not equipped to advocate publicly or on bigger picture issues,

We’ve seen good uptake if you give someone a sign and say come to this rally and hold up your sign that they can do that. If you say to them meet with your MLA well that just

becomes too much for people and that goes back to a lack of knowledge and a lack of confidence.

A board member of MCCA, stated the scope of advocacy was more subjective and suggested that it depends on the personality and experience of individuals rather than generalizing the capability of the professionals in the field,

It depends on the situation and what you're advocating for because sometimes you can be a silent advocate and it can be just as effective as somebody screaming from the roof tops so it depends on the scenario...everybody is different, not everybody is happy talking to the press right? Not everybody is able to articulate well under stress so those who are do, or often do.

An informant from a grassroots organization described a situation where ECE professionals are sometimes limited to micro level advocacy due to the instability of the field, "we've got centres that are just trying to keep their doors open so here in Ottawa, everybody started putting their heads down, just figuring out how they're going to keep their own doors open." This informant suggested that taking on larger system issues may simply be too overwhelming for ECEs who are already overextended and underfunded in the work they do,

Our members by and large do want to feel good about the work that they do in child care even when they are very tired or they're already working longer hours doing fundraising in their centres...with working with more and more children with special needs...a lot of inner city centres work with families that are in crisis...so we've got these additional pressures on a workforce that is already undervalued and underfunded.

An informant from the AECEO also identified busy workdays and low pay as a major challenge to getting involved in advocacy outside of their day to day work, "you're talking about women who are working full time, working overtime, raising families and now you are asking them to get involved in advocacy work on top of that, so, it is difficult." A current board member of the MCCA, described that ECE professionals miss the connection between policy issues like compensation, parent fees and funding,

ECEs are just so overwhelmed with the changing professional standards and expectations and don't understand the connection between they can't pay me more because then they have to raise parent fees and if we had base funding and universal child care and government support then they wouldn't have to raise fees and they could pay ECEs more...they don't know the impact of what they could do.

Similarly, an informant from the MCCA acknowledged that ECE professionals were limited in their ability to advocate on larger issues but that their experiences as ECE professionals could be used as an effective advocacy tool, "part of the problem could be that there are not so many opportunities for the average ECE to gain that level of confidence and understanding and that level of knowledge so I try to tell people, just tell your story, and that is advocating."

Big "A" advocacy. Only informants from Ontario described the scope of advocacy that ECE professionals engage in as "big A advocacy". Big "A" advocacy was conceptualized as advocacy that addressed "bigger picture" or system level issues. Interestingly, informants were more likely to attribute membership in the professional association to an ECEs understanding of bigger picture advocacy. For example, an informant from OCBCC stated that,

In some of our meetings that we've done around the province I find that increasingly ECEs who are more part of the AECEO are also coming to our meetings and showing that they understand that it has to be a big picture approach, it has to be about a strong, funded, stable system.

This informant's perspective highlights an interesting trend in Ontario where the Coalition and the AECEO have been trying to establish an advocacy approach that blends workforce sector advocacy and system level advocacy. This informant went on to discuss ECEs' important role in big "A" advocacy, "with ECEs on the ground, they see the impact of social programs or lack there of or cut backs or what have you. So they, in fact, can speak with on the ground experience of what the needs are." From this perspective, ECE's are involved in advocacy for the program and for the larger system issues that impact the child care needs of children and families. An

informant from the AECEO also identified members of the professional association as likely advocates for larger system issues,

I think [ECE professionals] make good advocates but I think it's difficult, you know, if you were to go out there and you were to interview some of our long time AECEO members who have always considered themselves professionals...they would say absolutely I can advocate, you know, they're the ones who on their own will write letters to their politicians and so on.

Type of advocacy. Whether discussing small “a” or big “A” advocacy, informants identified two types of issues ECEs should advocate for. Most of the informants suggested that ECE professionals should primarily be concerned with advocating for the child care program, children and families. Some informants equated this type of advocacy to the ECEs dedication, passion and attachment to the families they serve. An informant from the AECEO explained her perspective on the topic, “it depends on their passion for their program...I would say that if that's [the program] what you're passionate about then that's what you'd be advocating for.” An informant from the MCCA also stated that ECEs can advocate for anything that they are passionate about,

I think probably professionals make the best advocates but in the same sense it's not just the professional that makes it, there has to be an underlying passion for something within them. I see it over and over again when people believe in things... that's where you see the advocacy and until people are charged up about something or mad about something, until they know the facts about it and feel that it is an injustice it's really hard to advocate for anything.

Similarly, an informant from the CCCM provided an example of her experience of ECE professionals advocating for themselves by tapping into their passion,

When the ECEs were advocating for filling out the wage survey for the province they were passionate about it and that's why everyday they'd be on it. You know what I mean? because they thought it was important and you need to speak up and speak your mind.

An informant from the OCBCC had a similar perspective although this informant described the Ontario College of ECE as a source of outrage, “I think it [the College] has made ECEs even more angry and agitated about the lack of decent working conditions because they did go to school for a minimum of two years and so I mean people’s expectations are not being met.”

A board member of the AECEO, expressed that she was optimistic about ECE professionals becoming engaged in advocacy for themselves and discussed power in numbers,

I want to see a viral campaign that just focuses on ECEs...there’s 40,000 registered ECEs in Ontario everyone knows an ECE and they know the commitment and they know what they do, I think that we need the best advocates to be the broader society and the ECE professionals themselves.

However, most informants noted that ECE professionals don’t advocate for themselves and equated this to the fact that ECEs are “over worked”, “tired”, or that they don’t perceive themselves as “worthy”. An AECEO board member discussed a general problem in the ECEC field with inspiring new leaders and the ECEs willingness to speak out about program issues in the field but not about the issues that affect their careers,

I just have such admiration for younger people that are getting involved and really becoming part of it but I don’t see it enough and I see that we’ve had a real issue in cultivating leaders...we are such a giving and caring sector why don’t we do that for each other like we’re so focused on families and children which is like of course I believe in that and I idolize it by why not ourselves?

An informant from the AECEO suggested that some ECEs become apathetic about their work and described an indifference that impedes their ability to advocate for their own professional recognition and compensation,

Someone who went straight from school into a child care program has probably been there most of their lives or have only worked in a couple of places and have not engaged, not had ongoing learning and so on, you’d be hard-pressed to try and get them to convince you that they deserve more money and to convince you why other than saying I take care of these children.

This example emphasizes a prominent challenge within the child care sector where educators enter the workforce and become dispirited about addressing issues that directly affect their careers and their lives. An informant elaborated on this point by stating,

It is very difficult for those individuals to advocate and to find their voices you know, and to advocate for themselves as a profession because they haven't spent enough time thinking of themselves as professionals and behaving in some instances as professionals.

This informant, among others, explained how ECEs perception of themselves affects their willingness to advocate for their own professional recognition and compensation,

ECEs, they think that they're not worthy, absolutely, you can get an ECE out on the street fighting for more spaces for children and fighting for more funding for their program and for more families to have access to child care, they'll do that. They won't go out and say we all deserve professional wages because we are professionals.

A former staff person for the MCCA discussed ECEs hesitancy to advocate openly for themselves, "I think some people feel nervous about it from the perspective of what will their employer think...people are too shy to blow their own horn, they're not confident, they're not informed."

Provincial context.

All 14 informants discussed their specific provincial context and highlighted opportunities to work with government, their ability to influence policy, the strength of their organizations, the value of their organizations and their "non-negotiable" positions and mandates. This section will present informant opinions about the advocacy within their own organizations, including informants opinions on the highs and lows of advocacy in their jurisdiction. Thematic analysis helped to organize the overall theme of provincial context into three sub-themes: 1) Informants' ideas about their provincial advocacy roles, including what they've done for the workforce sector; 2) Informants' ideas about the organizations relationship

with and influence on provincial government; 3) This theme also includes informants ideas regarding their relationship with other provincial child care SMOs.

Perceived advocacy roles of provincial SMOs. All of the informants described the purpose, goals and major accomplishments/success of their SMOs. Informants from OCBCC generally characterized their organization as first and foremost coalition builders. An informant from OCBCC considered the organizations purpose to be centered around building coalitions with other likeminded groups and individuals. An informant from the OCBCC described the vital role of coalitions in a social movement, “coalitions bring together diverse groups of people, they’re not perfect but if you’re going to try and make change on an issue like child care that affects so many different groups then a coalition is an essential part.” Informants from the AECEO described the association as first and foremost representing ECEs and bringing the issues of the sector into different venues and with different stakeholders. An informant from the AECEO described the association as, “the professional association for ECEs and being the voice of the workforce. We look at issues like workplace standards, training, ongoing professional development, wages of course wages.”

In Manitoba, the grassroots and the professional association categorized their advocacy roles in a similar light by highlighting differences in their mandates. The CCCM spoke more on fundamental system issues whereas the MCCA discussed how they represented the workforce sector. A current staff member of the CCCM described the current advocacy aims of the organization as continuing to push the government, “right now we’re still concerned with governance, we still want to see the government move forward in an organized manner and to bring some public funding into it.” An informant from the MCCA described advocacy as a

secondary goal while supporting the workforce sector through various concrete programs was primary,

I call us a voluntary professional association for the child care workforce. While advocacy is a part of what we do it is actually a small part truth be told. We do insurance programs, a lot of professional development as well as advocacy with other organizations and stakeholder groups.

Another informant from the MCCA believed the association to be both a strong advocate as well as a professional association, “MCCA has always played that role of doing both the advocacy and supporting the profession.”

Working with government. All of the informants described their relationship with the provincial government. Thematic analysis helped to reveal how the contrasting sociopolitical climate in Ontario and Manitoba affect the working relationships between the SMOs and government officials. All of the informants from Manitoba noted a good working relationship with the long-standing NDP provincial government whereas the informants from Ontario noted a more conflictual relationship with the Liberal government. Most of the informants from Ontario specifically noted conflict with the provincial government around the implementation of full-day kindergarten.

Informants from OCBCC focused on their relationship with the public noting that working with the public was an important strategy to pressure the government. A current board member of OCBCC elaborated on the SMOs approach to building relationships with the public and how the organization used this as a mobilizing strategy,

We (OCBCC) support good policy advancement, a key part of that is being able to build the knowledge and involvement of the public and engage parents in order to create the political pressure needed for a good policy position.

Other informants from the OCBCC also noted the significance of reaching out to the public during times where working collaboratively with the government has been more of a challenge.

The Vice President of the OCBCC stated that, “talking to people in the regions, reaching out to the regions by virtue of doing that you actually strengthen the organization and you get more people involved like the fight to keep those centres open in Windsor and Peel region.” An informant from the OCBCC who also works for a labour organization recalled the struggle to find funding and how their limited resources made it more difficult to maintain a solid foot in the door with the government,

Funding was harder to get especially because we wanted to focus on our mission and that was advocacy but having to try and get funding took us in different directions and we had to work through that period to put child care action networks on the ground in communities and we had 9 communities across Ontario that were really strong.

Informants from AECEO noted a good working relationship with the government during the days when the association helped to establish the College of ECE, as one informant from the AECEO described, “we worked closely with the government on a special committee to look at the framework and the establishment of the College and in late 2007 the bill was actually passed and the College was established in 2008.” Informants from the AECEO agreed that after the College was established there was still support from other organizations, from government and from the College itself that the AECEO should still represent the voice of ECEs. When asked about the AECEO’s current relationship with government and the struggle of maintaining a collaborative relationship with no funding, one informant stated,

People said yes we need a voice because that is the one thing that the College can’t do...the problem was ok everyone thinks we should exist because we need a voice for workforce issues but how do you support an organization like ours?

Even though informants from the AECEO identified that they had less opportunity to work with government, they still maintained that when they were in the door the ECE workforce issues were always on the table, “we’ve always made a point of ensuring that we’re the strongest voice

at the table and that we represent that ECE voice. It can get forgotten and it is forgotten but we've been successful sometimes in convincing government.”

In Manitoba however, the MCCA and the CCCM were both adamant that their organization had a strong and positive relationship with government. All of the informants from the MCCA discussed their working relationship with the NDP government in a positive light, noting that their organization was often sought out over other organizations by government. An informant from the MCCA explained,

They respect the work and information and the efforts of the MCCA but in the end they are the government they'll make their own decisions but I think we're probably asked more and maybe cause our organization is the largest child care workforce professional association in Canada – the Manitoba government recognizes that and there's a reason for that.

Some long-time MCCA informants noted that in the past the association was known for using more contentious lobbying tactics, specifically referring to the “peanut campaign”. All of the informants from the MCCA noted at some point during their interview the peanut campaign from the late 80's as a time when the association was using visual lobbying campaigns that got a lot of media attention. One informant from the MCCA looked back at the peanut campaign as a “fun” time in child care advocacy and overall this campaign was noted as a success,

The peanut campaign was were there had been a funding announcement and in our opinion what we got was peanuts and so we launched the peanut campaign where we encouraged child care facilities to send peanuts to the minister of the day and so that went down in history as memorable because the minister just received a ton of peanuts.

Another informant reflected on the peanut campaign as a media hay day, and maintained that people were still talking about it three decades later “can't you imagine the media hay day about it? Do you know there are still reports to this day who say do you remember that peanut campaign?” As informants from the MCCA noted the peanut campaign as a time of tension with the government of the day they also reflected on their decision to try new, less conflictual

approaches when working with the government. One of the informants from MCCA stated that they changed their path when they hired a political consultant,

We hired a consultant to make recommendations on how we could be more effective in our lobbying and the recommendation was that government doesn't like it when you make them look bad over and over and over again and so you will have far more success if you work to understand what governments priorities are and help them meet them

Although the MCCA turned a new leaf and began working with governments in a more collaborative, less contentious approach some informants described their feelings when the 2004 Early Learning and Child Care Framework was dropped by the Harper Conservatives. An informant from the MCCA described her anger with the Manitoba government for letting it go without pushing back,

My attitude and one that I encourage the board to adopt as well is alright Manitoba you let that agreement float down the toilet without so much as a peep because there was no push back, there was no premier beating and nobody said no you cant do that. So our attitude was well fine then Manitoba, if you're going to let that go we are not letting you off the hook and you can just find the money from somewhere else and you go lobby the feds.

Most informants from the CCCM described a positive working relationship with the government and with specific MLAs. They also noted that they did not have a relationship that was truly collaborative. Informants from the CCCM described the advocacy approaches of the organization to be more "gutsy" putting their demands "out front on the table" and bringing up the "fundamental system issues" when other organizations didn't. One informant described the CCCM's advocacy tactic for influencing government, "we (CCCM) look at the system as there are other ways to govern child care...I think we have a little bit more guts when it comes to making suggestions to the government that might not come from another group." This informant went further to discuss instances where the CCCM has been successful in building a positive

relationship with local Members of the Legislative Assembly who are sympathetic supporters of the child care issue,

We always give out MLAs invitations to our picnics and of course they come and there's the handshake and the agreement that we will put your sign on our door – to me that's building relationships and that's part of advocacy you have to put your name out there, you have to knock on the doors.

Another informant from the CCCM explained that the organization has always aimed to work with government to address system issues. All of the informants from CCCM noted that having a seat on the ministerial advisory committee called the Child Care Regulatory Review Committee, which CCCM had not been invited to in the past, was a very promising step forward for the organization to work more collaboratively with government and with other child care groups in the province. One informant described what she thought of the Child Care Regulatory Review Committee, “it's kind of a par-public body, it's a mixture of people from the field, some child care advocates, some political actors and government people and it is very intriguing to have a seat at that table.”

Relationship with other SMOs. All of the informants identified some tension with other child care SMOs in their jurisdiction, in most cases, tensions typically came down to the mandate of the organization and their stance on advocacy tactics and approaches. Thematic analysis helped to identify that overall, grassroots organizations believed that professional associations needed to be more demanding in their advocacy approaches whereas professional associations believed that the grassroots approach to be more demanding and less strategic in their advocacy tactics. Thematic analysis also identified that there was more tension between the grassroots and professional association in Manitoba as informants from both organizations debated the overall strategies, tactics and value of the other. Tensions were less heated in Ontario; informants attributed this to the fact that both organizations have been destabilized through a lack of funding

and both are trying to meet the needs of the public and to work with government during a difficult time politically in Ontario.

Overall informants from Ontario described a good working relationship between the child care organizations in the province. However, informants did attest to the fact that there were times of tension and times of collaboration between both organizations over the last decade. A former ED of OCBCC described a time during the early 2000 when there was tension between the grassroots and professional association in Ontario, “when I first came into the movement there wasn’t a unifying, direct message and a lot of the work was affected by the very visceral tensions between organizations...I was frustrated with the willingness to think strategically and to get over other issues.” This informant went further to discuss a later period where the movement sought to achieve a collaborative strategy by forming what was called the Common Table,

We (common table) hashed out sort of a common vision with all the elements we had encompassed in our discussion. We decided to put out short paper both supporting the Coalitions position by also each other’s and then at that point we brought the AECEO on board and started to work through some real structural changes to try and make it more cohesive.

Another informant from Ontario reflected on the Common Table as a mobilizing tactic that sought to create effective and collaborative working relationships between child care organizations, “I would say, to summarize our strategies were to bring the groups together at all levels so we stratified, we found common targets, we crafted common principles and we built relationships.” An informant from the AECEO provided some detail on one of the tensions that arose between the professional association and the grassroots organization,

During the whole non-profit for-profit era, that huge tension and in the end the AECEO did come up to support non-profits publicly but not completely because we’re supporting the professionals and many of them were working in for-profits.

Other informants from Ontario mentioned the for-profit and non-profit issue where informants from the AECEO noted that there was immense pressure to speak out publicly against for-profits. An informant from the AECEO reflected on this past tension and pressure and maintained that with moving forward the professional association had to, “think really carefully about the next direction and what will strengthen the association and be a little bit more self-serving than we have been, I think we’ve been serving others.” When looking at the current state of advocacy in Ontario all of the informants identified that tension between the child care organizations only hurt their overall goals of supporting good public policy. An informant from AECEO identified that one of the past weaknesses of the movement was their difficulty if delivering a cohesive message,

We get a lot of criticism in the sector for having so many organizations and at times appearing very divisive...having an umbrella organization that can identify issues that all organizations can agree on and then going to government and saying, on this issue all of us agree.

Informants from Ontario overwhelmingly identified that any past tensions between the AECEO and the OCBCC were now completely null since neither organization receives government funding. Informants also noted that the grassroots organization and the professional association now share an office space and that members were excited about it. As the ED of the AECEO stated,

What I’m hearing out there is that everyone is very excited. Our members are excited, the Coalition members are excited, everyone really thinks this is a really good move and I’m excited about the possibilities...now that we’re not getting any government funding at all I kind of feel like the chains have been lifted off of us.

Another informant from Ontario also noted that both the grassroots organization and the professional association are working more collaboratively in recent years and looked forward to a closer, stronger relationship in the future, “well the association has been on the Coalitions

board for a number of years now, we are working more collaboratively with each other...people are actually quite thrilled that the two organizations are sharing an office because it means for much stronger links.” Overall informants from Ontario noted a mostly collaborative and respectful relationship between the grassroots and professional association. However, many informants from Ontario described a lack of coherency in their messaging and in the advocacy tactics of the movement overall.

Informants from Manitoba noted a number of tensions over the years between the grassroots organization the Child Care Coalition of Manitoba (CCCM) and the professional association the Manitoba Child Care Association (MCCA). Most informants from the MCCA were even unsure if the CCCM was an active grassroots organization in the child care advocacy movement in Manitoba. One informant from the MCCA believed that they were the only child care organization in Manitoba other than the home office of the Canadian Child Care Federation. Generally, informants from Manitoba described tensions between the MCCA and the CCCM as a fundamental difference in their style of advocacy and the political goals of each organization. One of the informants from Manitoba summarized her opinion on the difference in approach, “it’s about the style of advocacy – we (MCCA) are more collaborative in our approach and they (CCCM) are more demanding in their approach and so we work at arms length.” Another informant from the MCCA identified that the CCCM looked at different issues but that they were all interrelated and she believed that the CCCM was supportive of their recent initiatives,

MCCA tends to speak about their advocacy work tends to be related more to improving prospects for the field so like the Provincial Salary Scale and that type of thing. Whereas the CCCM has supported that but has also talked about access issues and affordability issues and some of the things that would be more of interest to parents looking for child care and employers can’t hire for a position because there is no child care and that kind of thing.

The most frequently mentioned tension between the MCCA and the CCCM in Manitoba child care advocacy was around the MCCA's stance on parent fees and professional wages. One informant explained how the disagreement between the child care organizations on parent fees affected their ability to see eye-to-eye, "the MCCA, their position [on parent fees and wages] was that they didn't care how they got more money and so there was a recent parent fee increase in Manitoba and the MCCA endorsed it and the CCCM was opposed to it." Informants from the CCCM acknowledged the tension between the organizations and some believed that the MCCA was unwilling to share information. An informant from the CCCM explained how the organizations had at one point been more focused on enemies than working toward the same goal,

They (MCCA) felt we were adverse to their beliefs when it wasn't like that we were trying to hold hands with them and do this collectively and they took it on as a threat...it took a long time to make those inroads to be able to say lets share this information instead of looking at me like I'm an enemy. We're not enemies here we're all working towards the same goal.

However turbulent the relationship between the MCCA and the CCCM was in the past informants from both organizations spoke positively about both organizations having a seat on the Regulatory Review Committee.

Some informants discussed the past tensions between the two child care SMOs in Manitoba as a common issue when it comes to differences between grassroots organizations and professional associations. When it came down to quality child care, most informants recognized that both organizations were working toward a more collaborative relationship. A current staff member from the CCCM stated that "there were tensions between CCCM and MCCA at various times in the past. We were all trying to work for the same goals but we emphasized different things and now I think the relationship is much better." A current staff member for the MCCA

explained how the inherent differences between the organizations were unavoidable but that the bottom line could always be agreed upon,

They wanted us to be one way and we wanted them to be another way and we weren't so it was just a recognition and an understanding of that...sometimes they got mad at us and sometimes we got mad at them, that's just part of being different, at the end of the day quality child care is quality child care so there were many messages we could deliver together.

A current board member of the CCCM had a similar opinion, in that there are inevitable differences in the advocacy approaches of grassroots organizations and professional associations and believed solidarity to be a missing component, "I would say advocacy is still very much a necessity and it comes in different formats... we've had difficulty bringing some solidarity into it."

In conclusion, there were clear differences between the two provinces in terms of the child care SMOs advocacy roles, relationships with government, and with relationships with other child care SMOs, namely between grassroots organizations and professional associations. Informants noted some tension between organizations in terms of their stance on policy issues.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This research study is grounded in the assumption that there continues to be a dire need for child care advocacy in both Ontario and Manitoba. Both provinces have a significant amount of work to do to achieve a non-profit, publicly funded, quality, inclusive early childhood education and care system that would also increase the recognition of early childhood educators as professionals. Within this assumption is the broad understanding that at this point in time, the child care advocacy movement needs to mentor younger advocates for whom they can pass on their legacy, or “the torch” as many movement actors have come to think of it. The aim of this chapter is to pull together the findings of this study, to explore them and why they are important. What do the findings tell us about the present and future role of early childhood professionals in child care advocacy in two provinces?

The role of the ECE professional in provincial advocacy

This section explores the principal finding of this study, based on informant perspectives, ECE professionals can be advocates but there are some notable differences between the child care movement in Manitoba and Ontario regarding the scope of that advocacy. This section also discusses how informants characterized ECEs professionals in their province as this depiction ultimately contributes to their understanding of ECE professionals as advocates. As noted in an earlier chapter, the relationship between the feminization of child care work and ECE professionals was a trend that ran throughout the interviews and will be discussed in more detail in this section.

All of the informants from Manitoba and Ontario, with the exception of one, disagreed with the notion that “professionals don’t make good advocates”. Also, informant perspectives in general suggest that (in answer to the third research question), there are some notable differences

between the two provinces with regard to the scope of advocacy that ECE professionals can or should engage in. The previous chapter refers to the scope of advocacy as small “a” advocacy meaning that ECEs advocate within their programs for children and families and big “A” advocacy meaning that ECEs challenge larger system issues and social order and can be seen publicly advocating in multiple ways. Although some provincial variation in the scope of advocacy was evident the findings further suggest that (in answer to the second research question), informants agree that ECE professionals should be advocates for children and families in their programs on the micro level. Regardless of how informants perceived the appropriate scope of advocacy for ECE professionals the findings of this study reveal that, from the perspective of the child care advocacy movement in two provinces, a good professional advocates.

From the child care movement in Ontario, informants generally believed that ECE professionals who were members of the professional association, the AECEO, were capable of advocating publicly and were better able to understand system level issues. The informants from Ontario communicated a more optimistic view of ECE professionals as advocates. This optimism that more ECE professionals would be seen publicly advocating in the near future was shared by the majority of informants from Ontario. Although informants from Ontario generally recognized that it was *possible* for some ECE professionals to advocate publicly, the majority of these informants maintained that, in reality, advocating within the program was more realistic for the workforce at large. For example, professionalism as advocacy that was just “acting like a professional” in their day to day work was seen as advocacy because informants believed that this promoted quality. Based on the findings of this study, informants from Manitoba were less optimistic about ECE professionals involvement in advocacy beyond just “being professional”.

Generally, informants from Manitoba maintained that the ECE professional workforce was not able to advocate publicly due to their lack of understanding of bigger system issues. The findings suggest that informants from Manitoba generally perceived ECEs as first and foremost “care givers” who are more likely to quietly resolve their issues making it difficult for them to speak up. Overall, small “a” advocacy was typically associated with ECE professionals as advocates across interviews even though a number of informants from Ontario were optimistic about ECEs advocating publicly. This is not meant to say that informants perceived small “a” advocacy as a bad thing or a lesser form of advocacy compared to “screaming from the rooftops” or “speaking to the press” or “writing letters to their MPs” that informants associated with big “A” advocacy. However, this perspective, shared by the majority of participants, highlights the reality that ECE professionals are perceived as primarily *caregivers* for young children.

As Tronto (2013) states, care has been scripted as a private matter and to include it as a public concern would upset the distinction between private and public life (p.143). The marketization of child care services, also contributes to marginalization and retention of ECE staff as child care providers typically pay staff lower wages in order to keep parent fees low (Penn, 2008). Categorizing the ECE professionals’ advocacy abilities as small “a” advocacy actually *enforces* the societal perception of care and advocacy as a private matter. In this way, the scope of small “a” advocacy is problematic for ECE professionals as advocates because it marginalizes their role within the larger advocacy movement. Tronto (2013) argues that because caregivers are generally excluded from decision making they’re less likely to have respectable or even adequate working conditions and compensation. To say that ECE professionals can’t publically advocate because they are too busy caring for the children in their programs illustrates

how difficult it is for ECEs to defend their self interests as educators and argue for better wages because it somehow undermines their caring roles (Andrew & Newman, 2012).

Furthermore, the findings of this study suggest that informants maintained that ECEs should realistically participate in small “a” advocacy because of a number of identified challenges, such as, busy work days and being “too nice”. This further enforces neoliberal ideologies that people should take care of their own issues as a personal responsibility and privately, as one informant stated, “ECEs solve their own issues” (Tronto, 2013). To respond to this reinforcement of privately based advocacy, the child care movement, especially professional associations, could draw from the political economy of care to further challenge the privatization and domestication of advocacy as caring at the program level (Taggart, 2011). In this way, ECE professionals could be encouraged to push advocacy for the profession into the public sphere and develop a new kind of leadership identity for ECEs (Woodrow & Busch, 2008). Additionally, encouraging the ECE professional workforce to push advocacy for the profession into the public realm could be an incremental step in returning care responsibilities to their “rightful central place” in society (Tronto, 2013, p. 170).

Based on this study’s findings, it is evident that the child care movement in both provinces classified early childhood educators as professionals. Overall, the informants maintained that the ECE workforce sector continues to professionalize through a number of identified mechanisms. The findings show that informants categorized ECE professionals in ways that emphasized their commitment and passion for providing care and education to young children, which are commonly discussed in the research literature. Moyles (2001) noted that various researchers in the field categorized educators as “those who love teaching and who find it worthwhile and rewarding because of the children” (p.81). In this way, passion, commitment

and fulfillment are seen as desirable and perhaps essential characteristics of the ECE professional (Woodrow & Busch, 2010). A number of scholars have argued that the reliance on the traditional image of caregivers as passionate and selfless workers preserves and perpetuates the feminization of care work (Langford, 2008; Moss, 2006; Osgood, 2010; Taggart, 2011; Woodrow & Busch, 2008). Perpetuating this image is highly problematic for ECE professionals as advocates because it makes their claims for professional compensation appear to be more radical and less deserving.

Some informants identified that those who enter into the field of ECEC are young women who “want to do good work” and “who love children” and who are “committed to the well-being of children”, as one informant said “we do it for the children and we love kids...the workforce is driven by their hearts”. Tronto (2013) contends that this is problematic in realizing care as a political (rather than private) responsibility in a caring democracy, “care is seen as a kind of motivation, an existential account to the self for its reason for being...in this sense care remains an attitude of the caregiver.” Some researchers and scholars have argued that being driven by our hearts and centering everything we do as educators around those we care for alone is not sufficient enough evidence of the political, social and economic value of care work (Taggart, 2011; Langford, 2010; Woodrow & Busch, 2008; Moyles, 2001). One has to think, how do we (ECE professionals) overcome the centrality of caring for others and evolve into a workforce that also cares for one another? Answering this question could be one step towards remedying the ECE professionals who “don’t feel worthy” of realizing increased wages and better working conditions.

The findings of this study also show that informants from both provinces associated training and education, knowledge of child development and working as “ethical and reflective

practioners” with being a professional advocate. The terminology used by the informants to describe ECE professionals reflect many of the key dimensions of professionalism set out by Urban (2010). Generally, the findings indicate that there were not any notable differences in the ways that informants from the two provinces described early childhood professionals. However, the findings indicate that the majority of informants from both provinces maintain that ECE professionals themselves struggle to view their work as professional. Many informants suggest that this perceived lack of professionalism is because of the feminization of child care as “women’s work”. Even though several informants noted this gender issue they maintained that it isn’t something that is talked about in the sector because of the negativity associated with it. Many scholars and researchers have noted that the feminization of child care work is, in fact, a taboo topic and one that isn’t openly discussed within the field with ECE professionals (Andrew & Newman, 2012; Musgrave, 2010; Woodrow & Busch, 2008). Some researchers have argued that because of the feminization of care work the profession remains undervalued and underpaid (Andrew & Newman, 2012).

Where we are in provincial child care advocacy

A central feature of this study is that social movements are regarded both in sociological and political science literature as a necessary part of democratic society as movements represent public interests and aim to interact with the state on behalf of constituency groups (Maney & Kutz-Flamenbaum, 2012; Della Porta & Diani, 2006; Meyer & Lupo, 2007; Roggeband & Klandermans, 2007). As noted in a previous chapter, Ferree and Mueller’s (2004) argument that the key concepts of a social movement are always gendered is also central to the child care movement as child care remains pertinent to women’s equity, the ECE workforce is

predominantly lead by women, many of the child care advocates are women and the child care advocacy movement is rooted within the women's movement.

Generally, the findings suggest that Manitoba and Ontario are at different points in their child care advocacy. This is mostly due to fundamental differences in provincial context. The findings of this study confirm that there are complex differences in the histories and contributions of the child care movement in Manitoba and Ontario. This complexity can result in the weakening of collective identity and collective action, especially when SMOs are divided on specific policy issues. However, based on informant opinions and recollections of their past and present work it can be argued that regardless of the divisiveness between organizations and actors, the movement overall has been, in part, successful in shaping how the public thinks about child care (Langford et al., 2013).

Thus the advocacy efforts of the four provincial child care SMOs in this study can be considered an essential part of what Tronto (2013) calls a caring democracy. Caring in democratic societies involves larger structural questions about which institutions, people and practices should be used to meet public needs, questions that grassroots organizations such as the CCCM and the OCBC reported as part of their advocacy repertoire. The child care advocacy movement, through their identified advocacy roles (building networks, informing the public, running campaigns, representing workforce issues, influencing government) attempt to participate, whenever possible, in the allocation of care responsibilities.

For example, as the findings tell us, in Manitoba the CCCM is mostly concerned with governance of child care services and they argue that the provincial government needs to move forward with an organized, structured system that provides more public funding and responsibility for child care provisions. Ontario's OCBC reported a similar mandate and

discussed the value of coalition building as bringing together diverse groups of people which is integral when representing the public perspective. Both of these grassroots organizations represent the kind of participatory role that depends on the honest inclusion of everyone's perspective that Tronto (2013) highlights as an essential element of caring democracies. To further illustrate this argument, Tronto (2013) postulates that, "democratic politics should center upon assigning responsibilities for care, and for ensuring that democratic citizens are as capable as possible of participating in this assignment of responsibilities for care" (p.140). From this, Tronto (2013) asserts that the task of assigning such care responsibilities can not be left to existing institutions or governments but must include a large and diverse grouping of perspectives and argued that *caring with* is a political concern.

However, based on informants' discussion of SMOs' relationships with government and their limited success in advancing child care policy it is clear that we are still far away from Tronto's (2013) description caring democracy that values the opinions of all those giving and receiving care. The findings suggest that even though child care SMOs are vying for more participatory roles with government they are largely shut out when it comes to making decisions about the allocation of care responsibilities in their jurisdictions. It is entirely possible that child care SMOs like the CCCM who reported being an organization that was perhaps a little more "gutsy" than others at putting issues related to equity and social justice on the table are shut out because they upset the distinction between public and private life (Tronto, 2013). Rethinking the nature of responsibility is a radical project in today's neoliberal, sociopolitical climate because neoliberalism is a political reaction against the inclusion of such critical voices.

Furthermore, early childhood education and care has traditionally been considered women's work, even within the field. Therefore, including care in public life forces society and

the state to reconsider how we think about gender, race, class and children's right to access more public care services. Reconsidering care responsibilities is of course, a complicated task, one that the child care movement has struggled to initiate in the public arena. Neoliberal policies are a fundamental cornerstone of capitalism and aim to limit the state's interference with the market, henceforth directing many public concerns towards more privatized markets. It can be argued that the child care advocacy movement has very little room now to push for public allocations of child care services because neoliberal policies warn that making things previously private into public concerns would be disastrous. Such neoliberal ideologies have greatly shaped the way that society views public and private life, thusly making the aims of the child care advocacy movement appear "radical" and unrealistic. However gloomy this neoliberal reality may appear, there is still a great deal of optimism to be found in the informants' perspective. As the economy continues to be unstable and younger families are increasingly feeling the crunch of trying to balance work and family life the need for safe and affordable child care arrangements is gaining more and more public attention. All of the informants stated that in the near future, governments will have to decide what the future direction will be, in which case the child care advocacy movement in Ontario and Manitoba needs to be ready.

Where we are going – towards solidarity?

Based on the findings of this study, it is possible to summarize what informants see for the future of child care advocacy in Manitoba and Ontario. The findings suggest that informants were split between feeling optimistic and pessimistic about the ability to bring about social change. Some informants even suggested that it be better to wait for the political tides to turn and become more favorable in which case they would have more opportunity to influence government. Tronto (2013) argues that social movements today are still capable of producing

remarkable social changes but are faced with the challenge of how to create “truly inclusive democracies”. Extending mentorship and sustained encouragement for the ECE professional workforce to advocate publicly, the child care movement could actually foster a resurgence of advocacy and mobilizations.

As most of the informants report, the child care SMOs strained relationship with government have left them with less opportunities to directly influence policy but more flexibility in their advocacy focus and network building. Collective identity might suggest that SMOs maintain and improve positive relationships with one another and with governments; for example, the MCCA’s and the CCCM’s seat on the Manitoba Regulatory Review Committee. Whereas resource mobilization theory might suggest that at this point the movement should focus more energy into building networks of action by emphasizing the emotions of the public in a strategic attempt to mobilize constituents (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). Koopman (2007) argues that solidifying collective identity and strengthening collective action will prepare social movement organizations and actors for when “periods of relative quiet alternate with waves of intense mobilization that encompass large sections of societies, and quite often affect many societies simultaneously” (p.21). This could be especially true in the Canadian child care movement – since the Federal Conservative cancellation of the Early Learning and Child Care framework in 2006 and the defunding and destabilization of child care SMOs that followed. Although government relationships were still considered important, informants from the AECEO noted that they were no longer held down by their “chains” because of a reliance on funding. Therefore the AECEO informants reported that they are now able to focus more on initiatives that can strengthen the association.

This study's findings suggest that, from a political economy of care perspective, moving forward with child care advocacy in Manitoba and Ontario should encourage the workforce to push the societal public/private divide. Encouraging ECE professionals to see that this is not only possible but also necessary for them to find their advocacy voice will support the workforce to participate more publicly in the movement. By drawing on notions of the political economy of care, ECE professionals in the child care advocacy movement in both provinces can take incremental steps towards renegotiating care responsibilities in their jurisdictions. This study's informants have recognized that the movement must attract new activists who need optimism, mentorship and encouragement. Professional associations in Manitoba and Ontario, although at vastly different points in advancing the profession, could strengthen their organizations by supporting ECE professionals to cultivate a new professional identity that also includes advocacy. After all, the ECE professional workforce has played a central role in creating quality programs, even in the absence of a strong system. It is difficult to give any concrete recommendations on how exactly to do this especially when professional associations and grassroots organizations are limited in their resources. This might suggest that further research is needed where ECE professionals themselves are given the opportunity to discuss their views on advocacy and professionalization. However, supporting the profession to publicly *care for themselves* through advocacy that encourages ECEs to claim their essential role in delivering quality programs for young children could be a new vehicle for the child care advocacy movement. In sum, ECE professionals need embrace advocacy and push through to the public arena so as to engage in big "A" advocacy.

Limitations

This study was limited by the fact that secondary data was used, meaning that the interview questions that were pertinent to this study were actually a small part of the larger study. Therefore, the interview questions that focused on ECE professionals as advocates, informant perceptions' of ECE professionals and the professionalization of the workforce were discussed with varying detail from one interview to another. Another limitation of this study was that it examined ECE professionals as advocates from the perspective of the child care social movement actors and not from ECE professionals themselves. This resulted in interesting findings and insight from movement actors but also produced more questions about the actual ability and willingness of ECE professionals to advocate. Future research would follow from the findings of this study and would include interviews with ECE professionals themselves to gage their willingness to publicly advocate. Focus groups with ECE professionals from a different parts of the ECE field would be an interesting way to collect data that focuses on ECE's attitudes, interests and hesitations with advocacy for their profession.

Conclusion

In this qualitative research study interviews with 14 informants from four child care social movement organizations in Manitoba and Ontario were examined in an attempt to answer the question: Can ECE professionals be advocates? In general, informants from the child care movement agree that ECE professionals can be advocates and maintained that “a good ECE advocates”. However, findings suggested some provincial variation regarding the scope of advocacy that ECE professionals could or should participate in. Small “a” advocacy was conceptualized by informants as advocating within programs on behalf of the families and children. Big “A” advocacy was conceptualized as advocacy that addressed “bigger picture” or system level issues. Informants from Ontario perceived that ECE professionals could be engaged in big “A” advocacy if they were active members of the AECEO. Overall informants maintained that, given the characteristics of ECE professionals and some challenges within the field, in reality, ECEs could advocate only at the micro level, within their programs. Social movement, professionalization and the political economy of care theories were used to bring meaning to these. This paper argues that positioning ECE professionals within small “a” advocacy actually perpetuates and enforces gendered notions that ECE advocacy is a private matter. In addition, the perception that ECE professionals should advocate within their programs by simply “acting professional” extends the neoliberal ideology that all people can solve their own problems without involving state responsibilities. This paper suggests that ECE professionals should be encouraged by the child care advocacy movement to push the boundaries between private and public advocacy. And so, early childhood educators must recognize their role in provincial child care advocacy and in turn the movement must support the workforce to reach out and advocate publicly for the ECE profession and for a stable system of early childhood education and care.

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