Power Relations in Early Childhood Education: A Case Study of Perceptions, Space, and

Place

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Abstract

Shifting philosophical and pedagogical stances in early childhood settings have resulted in two binarized positions, where philosophy and pedagogy are frequently understood as either child-centred, or teacher-directed practice. These stances have ontological and epistemological implications for the power relations between Early Childhood Educators and young children. Drawing from multiple theoretical frameworks, including reconceptualist theory in early childhood education, children's geographies, and the work of Michel Foucault, in this qualitative three-phase case study I explored how power relations are enacted within one preschool classroom in Southern Ontario, and how power relations are affected when viewing the environment through the lens of *place* and *space*. Using semi-structured interviews, classroom observation, and reflective journaling with a teaching team of two Early Childhood Educators, this study sought to answer the following two research questions: first, what are the ways in which power relations are enacted within one early learning environment? Second, how do educators' perceptions of the environment as *place* and *space* contribute to the ways in which power relations are enacted? The findings from this study suggested that power was enacted within one early childhood setting in a multitude of ways. The findings are organized under four key themes: interrelational power; regulatory power; power and temporality; and power, space, and place. The findings suggest that power is a negotiated entity between children and Early Childhood Educators, and that viewing the environment as *place* may encourage a reconceptualization of traditionally hierarchical power dynamics between educators and young children.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Power relations between Early Childhood Educators and young children are enacted within early childhood settings through both interactions between individuals, and exchanges between individuals and the physical environment. In this thesis, I explore how power relations are enacted between Early Childhood Educators, young children, and the physical environment within one early learning classroom in Southern Ontario. French philosopher Michel Foucault (1980) sought to understand how power and knowledge circulate through society. His genealogical work on power and knowledge is a useful framework for exploring power relations within early childhood education, as the fluidity of power dynamics is a salient topic for study, given the myriad of evolving pedagogical stances within early childhood education. In present-day discourses of early childhood education, it is common to find educators invoking the stance of *child-centred pedagogy* (or derivatives such as *emergent curriculum* or *inquiry-based learning*) that philosophically position children as active, competent agents (Wood, 2014). Similarly, *place-based education* is an emerging philosophical and pedagogical approach to early childhood education, but one that Duhn (2012) argues is assumed, rather than interrogated, in theory and practice. In this thesis, I use a qualitative case study methodology to explore the ways in which Early Childhood Educators describe how power is enacted within their interactions with young children, and how power relations may be complicated when conceptualizing early childhood locales as *spaces* or *places.*

Understanding Space

According to Harrison and Dourish (1996), "Space is the structure of the world; it is the three-dimensional environment, in which objects and events occur, and in which

they have relative position and direction" (p. 2). The authors' description of *space* is sufficient for situating the physicality and locality of early childhood environments as geographical space, but further parsing of the meaningfulness of space is necessary to establish a conceptualization of early childhood spaces as locales of power. In this thesis, I distinguish the early childhood environment as *place* to advance the understanding of the environment as a place imbued with embodied and enacted power relations.

Understanding Place

Upon distinguishing *space* as the physicality of a locale, it is then necessary to briefly define *place* in a marked contrast to *space*. Harrison and Dourish (1996) argue that "physically, a place is a space which is invested with understandings of behavioural appropriateness, cultural expectations, and so forth. We are located in 'space', but we act in 'place. Furthermore, 'places' are spaces that are valued" (p. 3). *Place,* in early childhood contexts, is constructed through interactions between educators, young children, and the physical environment – where power is negotiated, refuted, and assumed. In this thesis, I employ a transposing of key conceptualizations of *place* and *space* in human geography (Cresswell, 2004; Harrison & Dourish, 1996; Tuan, 1977) into a site-specific exploration of early childhood places (Brillante & Mankiw, 2015).

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Context of the Study

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Shifting perspectives on who has power and knowledge within the early childhood classroom have resulted in a multitude of approaches to early learning that are often categorized within a binarized view of *child-centred* or *teacher-directed* practices. The divide has manifested itself across early learning environments as a philosophical and pedagogical shift away from teacher-directed practice, but questions of where power

is located within child-centred programs remain. The answers to these questions have ontological and epistemological implications for both practice and philosophy in early childhood settings. Foucault (1980) argues that the individual who wields power is dependent upon who produces and disseminates knowledge – but what does power look like in practice amidst shifting ontological and epistemological perspectives, and how does power operate when both educators and children are positioned as knowledge producers and individuals with agency?

Although the overarching trend within pedagogical discourse in early childhood education has shifted toward child-centred practice (Wood, 2014), the implications for theory and practice in early childhood settings are often centred around curricular practices, or *what* happens in early childhood spaces, rather than philosophical orientations that ask *why?* This suggests the need for further philosophical work, specifically ontological and epistemological arguments for why and how children and educators exercise or share power, and how (re)conceptualizing early childhood *spaces* as early childhood *places* affects the enactment of power. Further, there is ambiguity in how this philosophy and pedagogy is embodied within teaching and adult-child interactions. Much of the existing literature on power relations relegates the discussion of power to secondary foci that exist solely within research on broader phenomena (Ho, 2012; Millei, 2005). In this thesis, I argue that power relations are more fluid than suggested by binarized child-centred or teacher-directed perspectives, and that *space* and *place* are conceptually distinct ideas that cultivate, respectively, a distinction between the physicality of a locale and the meaning imparted upon that locale by its inhabitants. I argue that (re)conceptualising early childhood *spaces* as early childhood *places* is a

meaningful demarcation to aid in (re)positioning the balance of power. I use a

reconceptualist theoretical framework (Iannacci & Whitty, 2009; Pacini-Ketchabaw &

Pence, 2005) that weaves together the poststructuralist philosophy of Michel Foucault

(1980), and theories of space and place in children's geographies (Christensen, 2008;

Hackett, Proctor & Seymour, 2015; Tuan, 1977) to provide a framework for interrogating

power relations between children and educators.

Power circulates between bodies and spatialities, in interactions between

individuals, and the physical spaces in which individuals occupy. Foucault (1980)

contends that power and knowledge are enacted through the corporeal, the spatial, and

the temporal (Crampton & Elden, 2007). In early childhood education, the primary

corporeal bodies in question are those of Early Childhood Educators and young children,

while the spatial and the temporal are the situated contexts in which they gather.

Reconceptualist perspectives in early childhood education closely mirror those of

continental philosophy, namely, as Critchley (2001) explains, "if human experience is a

contingent creation, then it can be recreated in other ways" (p. 64). The interactions

between children and educators are enacted within socially-and-culturally-situated

ontological assumptions. Historically, obedience to the authority of adults has been the

dominant expectation of children and childhood (Raby, 2014). However, reconceptualist

perspectives have woven Foucauldian analyses of power as neither, "monolithic nor

total" (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999, p. 33), but rather as an entity to resist and

challenge and, in doing so, contribute to the evolving view of the agentic child.

Reconceptualist perspectives have shifted the discourse toward what Pacini-

Ketchabaw and Pence (2005) characterize as a willingness on the part of some educators

to accept a, "loss of certainty, control and predictability, openness to the presence of many voices and views, and the need to engage with those other views and explore a world of profound diversity" (p. 6). However, the liminal space of the ongoing theory/practice divide (Lenz Taguchi, 2010) has resulted in uncertainty in classroom practice, where educators may espouse child-centred pedagogy while enacting teacher-directed practices.

In this case study (Creswell, 2009), I explored how power relations are understood and enacted in the early childhood environment through interactions between educators and young children, as well as the broader context of the early learning environment when it is situated as *place* and *space*. In collaboration with the participating teaching team, I used semi-structured interviews, reflective journaling, and classroom observations to develop an understanding of how power operates between children and Early Childhood Educators in one preschool classroom in Southern Ontario.

Key Terms

To provide context for the conceptual framework of this study, it is necessary to map out some of the key terminology that will be used throughout this thesis. Key terms including *power*, *agency*, *place*, and *space* have shifting and contested meanings within the available scholarship; and so, clear descriptions of each term serve to advance the argument for reconceptualist perspectives on how power is enacted in early childhood contexts.

The notion of *power* is historically seen as one of an oppressive or reactive force (Foucault, 1980). The advancement of poststructuralist and postmodern ontologies (re)positions power as shifting and mutable, and here, I use Foucault's conceptualization

of power as a discursive, constitutive, embodied entity. Power, according to Foucault (1980), is not a centralized, held position, but rather a circulating force; this force is held neither permanently, nor is power exclusive to individuals by way of hierarchical positioning within society. The operation of power is, according to Foucault (1980), not always a singular, unidirectional negative enactment, but is instead multiple, shared, and circulating between individuals (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999). Reframing power as shared and circulating is useful for early childhood contexts, as it allows for the ontological argument for young children to be viewed as individuals with the capacity and social capital to share and exert power.

In Chapter Two, I will present the scholarly arguments for human *agency* within early childhood contexts as it relates to power relations and the image of the agentic child. Here, I provide a brief working definition of human *agency* using Mayr's (2011) three key premises. The philosophical and ontological arguments for human agency can be traced to Humean, Hegelian, and Marxist perspectives on the individuals' capacity to act and carry out actions with free will (Hume, 2011; Wood, 2014). In this thesis, I look to Mayr (2011, p. 6) who argues for human agency on the following criteria:

(1) human actions are instances of activity;

(2) human actions are part of the natural order;

(3) intentional human actions can be explained by the reasons for which they have been performed.

Agency is a pertinent concept when discussing power. It is particularly useful when describing power from a Foucauldian perspective, and is especially relevant to present-day early childhood discourse. From a Foucauldian ontology, agency in early

childhood contexts is embodied through individuals – Early Childhood Educators and young children – enacting constitutive power.

The notion of *space* in human and physical geography refers to the locality and physical dimensions within which matter is situated (Agnew, 2011). Space, in early childhood contexts, refers to the early childhood settings within which children and educators congregate. Space offers opportunities for embodied practices in early childhood settings, as Tuan (1977) argues that space can be experienced through the body by the availability of physical area.

The demarcation of *place* from *space* is intentional and imbued with meaning, or as Tuan (1977) argues, "[a] concretion of value" (p. 12). The value Tuan (1977) ascribes to the concept of place is mutable and contextual to the subjective experiences of those who inhabit or share a place. In early childhood contexts, the physical space gives way to place when meaning, or, "felt value" (p. 4) is shared amongst the participants – Early Childhood Educators and young children – who inhabit a particular place.

Background of the Problem

It is helpful to begin by framing the background of the problem with a question: who has power in early childhood classrooms? Dominant discourses in early childhood education situate environments as either child-centred or teacher-directed spaces (Langford, 2010). However, there is a need to reconceptualise the balance of power as negotiated within early childhood spaces where the realm of power is shared.

Child-centred practice has become accepted and prevalent within early childhood discourse (Langford, 2010), but there is the continued need to examine classroom practices and explore the theory/practice divide (Lenz Taguchi, 2010). While scholars in

early childhood education argue and advance theoretical and philosophical perspectives on teaching, the practice – or the enactment and embodiment of the theory and philosophy – may diverge from the theoretical space.

Furthermore, pedagogical, and philosophical discourses of early childhood studies have advanced the image of the agentic child, or children as competent, capable learners who are free within early childhood settings to make choices and act with agency (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999; Hackett, Procter & Seymour, 2015; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Pence, 2005; Tesar, 2014). However, there is lesser consensus within the research on the implications for practice, and the implications for the children and educators enacting the practices as inspired by prevalent pedagogical and philosophical underpinnings.

Similarly, while there is a broad and well-developed abundance of research into children's environments and spatialities (Christenson, 2008; Gandini, 2008; Hackett, Procter & Seymour, 2015; O'Brien & Christenson, 2003), the body of available research is less clear on the fluidity of power and agency within early childhood spaces. It would appear logical that places for children should locate power within child-centred perspectives; however, from a Foucauldian examination of power, it is understood that power is never entirely resting with one individual or group – but rather, it circulates and is shared.

Both child-centred and teacher-directed perspectives locate power within two binaries and, thus, within opposing pedagogical and philosophical stances. The problem with viewing pedagogy and educational philosophy within binary perspectives is that the nuance of everyday practice and interrelations is overlooked. By positioning early childhood pedagogy and philosophy in diametrically-opposing terms, power is located

and privileged within assumptive practices. In this study, I explore power when positioned as a nuanced entity, never resting solely within the children or educators - but rather, existing within and circulating between both the children and educators.

Statement of the Problem Situation

There is a gap in the existing body of scholarly research on the intersections between power relations in early childhood settings when viewed within the context of space, and place. Reconceptualist scholars have developed theoretical and practical conceptualizations of dissolving binary perspectives in early childhood education, with some attention directed toward the production of power relations (Lenz Taguchi, 2010). Reconceptualist scholars have also contributed a breadth of knowledge toward theorizing the ontology of children's agency (Divers, 2014; Lee, 2015; Lenz-Taguchi, 2010; Smith, 2011) and power relations within the early childhood classroom (Lee & Recchia, 2008; Tesar; 2014; Ylitapio-Mäntylä, 2013). Scholars in children's geography have developed a body of research (Duhn, 2012; Giamminuti, 2011; Kernan, 2010) that establishes early childhood locales as place, or, as Tuan (1977) argues, "centres of felt value" (p. 4).

However, there is a need to explore theory in practice and consult with Early Childhood Educators on how power is operationalized within the classroom. I argue that decision making – and, thus, control over classroom happenings – is an embodiment of power that is located outside the shared space, despite shifting perspectives on who holds power in early childhood settings. A brief breakdown of the binary pedagogical perspectives is illustrative of my argument: If teacher-directed perspectives position educators as primary decision-makers, it follows as a congruent ontological argument for educators to exert power over children's experiences through directives and overriding

decision-making processes which subvert children's agentic actions. Conversely, if child-centred perspectives position children as competent, capable learners, it follows as a congruent ontological stance for educators to recognize and honour children's capacity to act with agency, and to share power within early childhood settings through power-sharing interrelations.

Similarly, pervasive discourses surrounding the early childhood environment position the classroom space itself as the "third teacher" (Gandini, 1998; Torquati & Ernst, 2013). The influence of global perspectives on early childhood pedagogy have resulted in cross-cultural and cross-continental transmissions of pedagogical approaches to the physical environment. Inspired by the famed preschools of Reggio Emilia, Italy, the notion of environment as a space in which children's rights as learners are enacted (Gandini, 1998) has been colloquialized and canonized within early childhood discourse which marks the environment as "the third teacher" (Ellis & Strong-Wilson, 2007; Torquati & Ernst, 2013). I do not dispute the importance of the physical space; however, there is a need to explore how power relations are enacted through the arrangement and actions within the physical space. In Chapter Two, I contrast dueling perspectives of the environment as place and space to explore how power operates in the physical classroom. I use the perspective that considers the environment as a third educator to illustrate competing notions of the locality of power. I argue that positioning the environment as *space* connotes physicality that exerts power onto children, and that (re)positioning the environment as *place* may be a useful practice for shifting perspective on whose power is dominant within early childhood environments. I argue that (re)positioning the physical

and temporal space as early childhood *places* of shared value contribute to pedagogies that make space for children and educators to act with agency and shared power.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of how educators conceptualize how power is enacted within early learning environments. The study was framed by reflections upon both the interactions between children and Early Childhood Educators, and the ways in which the environment as place and space are steeped in power.

Research Questions

The following two research questions frame the qualitative enquiry:

1. What are the ways in which power relations are enacted within one early learning environment?

2. How do educators' perceptions of the environment as *place* and *space* contribute to the ways in which power relations are enacted?

Rationale

Although power relations have been researched in early childhood education (Lee & Recchia, 2008) the existing body of work has explored power from the perspective of social interactions and classroom leadership. Similarly, *space* and *place* have been researched, often to the exclusion of the power component, or merely broadly applied (Sack, 1993). My research makes a unique contribution to the existing field of research by combining teacher-reflections on power, place, and space by specifically situating these philosophical distinctions within early childhood locales.

The philosophical and pedagogical underpinnings of early childhood education have, in recent years, shifted toward a dominant discourse of child-centred learning environments (Wood, 2014). The child-centered classroom is markedly different from theme-based programming, where decisions on what learning experiences took place are largely teacher-directed. The shift in perspectives reflects an inquiry approach, where adults view children as competent, capable, and agents of their own learning. This shift represents a reframing of who has power and influence in the early years classroom. However, because child-centered or teacher-led perspectives encompass different pedagogical and philosophical stances in early childhood education – stances that impact the happenings in early childhood classrooms – there is a need to explore the nuances between binary views of how power operates.

Situating early childhood environments as both *place* and *space* is intentional and I demarcate *place* and *space* as necessarily separate entities. Although the importance of the physical space – both within and outside of traditional learning environments – of early childhood settings has been extensively studied (Christensen, 2008; Gandini, 1998; Torquati & Ernst, 2013) and there is a growing body of research into place-based education (Duhn, 2012; Ellis & Strong-Wilson, 2007; Taylor & Giugni, 2012) there is a gap in the available research that connects notions of space with a Foucauldian conceptualization of power.

Positioning the environment as space examines early childhood settings as being viewed through the lens of the curator – typically, the early childhood educators – where although the space is curated with the interests and needs of children in mind, it is still an assumptive process informed by adult perceptions of how a space for children should

look, and how children should use such a space (Wood, 2014; Wyness, 2000). *Space*, Tuan (1977) argues, encompasses a physicality, the geographical possibilities, and limitations of a unit of space. Framed by the language of freedom and choice, the prevailing early childhood discourse positions child-centered practice through the affordability of freedom of choice in early childhood spaces (Langford, 2010). Viewing the environment as *space* through a Foucauldian lens complicates child-centred practice when the locus of control remains with the individual(s), usually educators, who enact the power to shift and adapt the physical space. Thus, there is a need to contest this unilateral power in early childhood spaces.

To the contrary, the environment – when situated as *place* – denotes a sense of shared power through "felt value" (Tuan, 1977), agency, and ownership. Space is physical, but place emphasizes an emotional connection. In the same way that placelessness connotes a lack of place, or a lack of ownership or agency within a place, to experience place is to co-construct meaning through interactions between individuals and the spatial (Tuan, 1977). In early learning places, the setting takes on shared value as a purpose-full place, a place for children. For example, Duhn (2012) argues that the early childhood setting, first considered as space, is transformed into, "places-as-assemblages" (p. 104) when the multi-tiered intra-actions are understood by each of its participants. Duhn (2012) uses the negotiation of the mobility of classroom materials as an example of, "places-as-assemblage." While the impulse of the Early Childhood Educator may be to contain water to the water table or sand to the sandbox, children are capable of articulating and justifying reasons for moving beyond traditionally defined learning spaces. Transgressing these invisible divides opens up the environment to the interests of

all participants and it is in co-constructing the environment as being negotiable on the grounds of shared meaning between educators and children where *space* moves to *place*. There is a continued need to propel forward the argument for place-based education, as well as philosophical arguments for early childhood places as locales of shared power.

The child-centered discourse of the physical environment, conceptualized as space, is troubled when applying the concept to early childhood settings. When viewed as space, it is apparent that the physical environment, while negotiable, is typically prepared by Early Childhood Educators. (Wood, 2014; Wyness, 2000). Although the intention is to reflect children's interests and needs, the act of preparing a physical environment for children is itself an imposition of power, regardless of positive intent. This enactment of power is not necessarily negative, but it is worth noting whose voice and perceptions are represented and privileged within early childhood settings when they are viewed as *space*. Therefore, observing the practices and gathering the perspectives of Early Childhood Educators on the intersection of power in place and space may contribute further valuable insights into how power operates in early childhood environments.

However, this demarcation leaves unanswered questions about the role of power in the concepts of *place* and *space* in the early childhood classroom. In their geographical connotations, *place* and *space* can be perceived as locations imbued with power (Foucault, 1980; Sack, 1993), and transposing notions of *place* and *space* into early childhood contexts is a useful exercise in examining power relations between individuals and the physical environment. In early childhood settings, the environment as *place* is situated within the broader discourse of early childhood education as a locale for children. The environment as *place* positions children's sense of belonging and

ownership at the forefront of intentionality behind the existence of such places. The notion of environment as *place* supposes that children have power within such places.

Reflective practice is valued within early childhood education. The findings of this study may be valuable for Early Childhood Educators interested in challenging dominant perspectives on how to inhabit roles with children within the early childhood classroom. Similarly, findings on place may be valuable for early childhood educators who seek to reconsider the ways in which power and agency are enacted within the physicality of the classroom, and whose power and agency is privileged within the early childhood place.

The findings may also contribute new insights toward the body of scholarly work in the reconceptualist movement within early childhood education. Though reconceptualist scholars have taken up Foucauldian analyses of childhood (Cohen, 2008; MacNaughton, 2005) and have situated early childhood settings within the study of children's geographies through discussions of place-based education (Duhn, 2012; Kernan, 2010), in this study, I made an explicit link between the divide between theoretical and practical conceptualizations of power, place, and space.

Theoretical Framework

Drawing from diverse disciplines including continental philosophy, post-structuralist philosophy, and children's geographies in early childhood education, I provide a review of the salient theoretical underpinnings and argue that a reconceptualist framework (Iannacci & Whitty, 2009; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Pence, 2005; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015) is the most appropriate frame for taking on the issue of power relations in early childhood education.

The underpinning of reconceptualist approaches to early childhood education represents a multiplicity of philosophical perspectives. The implications of a fluidity in practice of epistemological stances are such that meaning and truth is subjective, and socially and culturally contextual. The allowance for subjectivity makes the work of continental and post-structuralist philosopher Michel Foucault a useful philosophical framework through which to view childhood and early childhood studies. Foucault's (1980) work prioritized understanding how power operates within the different institutions in society. Foucault's genealogical approach was in pursuit of ontological and epistemological constructions of power, and how power is constituted within the corporeal, temporal, and spatial.

Although Foucault did not explicitly write of power relations in the early years, post-structuralist arguments for ways of being in early childhood education have utilized Foucault's conceptualization of power within society to (re)consider childhood (Cohen, 2008; MacNaughton, 2005; Millei, 2005). The role of the subjective body, temporality, and locality in power relations in Foucault's work are compelling justifications for its inclusion in the theoretical framework of this thesis.

The influence of Foucault – and, by extension, scholars who have taken up his work and applied it to early childhood settings – has reverberated throughout early childhood philosophy, culminating in ways of (re)thinking early childhood with fluidity through reconceptualist perspectives (Lenz-Taguchi, 2010; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Pence, 2005; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015). Scholarship from a reconceptualist framework has emerged as a reaction to the influence of developmental psychology in early childhood education that positions the child as necessitating intervention, and seeks to reframe the

image of the agentic child as "competent, rich, and full of potential" (Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kocher, Sanchez, & Chan, 2009, p. 102). Reconceptualist scholars position childhood within an ontology that argues against a singular truth or normative ways of being (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Pence, 2005). To contest normative hierarchical expectations of adult-child interrelations is to reframe power in a reconceptualist framework as a mutable entity, never resting entirely with educators or children.

Children's geographies are also a relevant inclusion in the theoretical framework, as the spaces and places of childhood are informed by power relations, and, as I will argue, hold the potential to influence the interplay between power and agency. The theoretical perspectives of *space* (Batycky, 2008; Tuan, 1977), *place*, and emplacement (Christenson, 2008; O'Brien & Christenson, 2003; Tuan, 1977) inform the theoretical perspectives on power in children's geographies. Lastly, Foucault (1980) provides a conceptual link between children's geographies and the interplay of power between children and Early Childhood Educators. Foucault argues that, "a whole history remains to be written of spaces – which would at the same time be the history of powers – from the great strategies of geo-politics to the little tactics of the habitat" (p. 149). Situating early childhood *spaces* and *places* as locales of power is an opportunity to examine power relations within children's spatialities.

Scope and Limitations

The study was a small-scale study that localized the issue of power in early childhood environments within one early childhood classroom. The collected data aimed to illustrate the perceptions of educators regarding power relations within their classroom, focusing on the relations between themselves and the children they teach, as well as the

power relations between educators, children, and the physical environment when conceptualized as *place* or *space*. Interviews, reflective journaling, and observations with one team of educators were the selected methodological tools to gather data, from which a narrative approach was used in writing the findings and discussion.

A small-scale case study, while potentially limiting in its capacity to obtain far-reaching conclusions, nonetheless allows for the researcher to engage with the participants and reach meaningful conclusions that may have wider implications beyond localized practice, and further into the broader realm of educational theory and future research. Mirroring post-structuralist thought, Merriam (2009) argues that because case studies allow for multiple truths and potentially paradoxical findings, they are a valid methodological process for exploring phenomena. In this thesis, thick description and triangulated data sources (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe & Neville, 2014) – interviews, observations, and collaborative reflective journaling – bolster the validity of the findings. Conversely, given the site-specific context of this study, the findings of small-scale case studies were potentially limited in the generalizability of results and findings (Merriam, 2009). The dissemination of research is then critical practice, to move beyond the localized knowledge and bring research findings into broader, early childhood discourses (Souto-Manning & Fincham, 2010).

There were possible insights that were not addressed due to time and scope limitations, including: how the findings might change across a range in the ages of children; how educators' perceptions shift longitudinally through the reflective process; how power relations shift across pedagogical/philosophical stances (e.g. Reggio-inspired practice, Waldorf inspired practice); and lastly, while including the perspectives of

children in the findings would be useful, to do so would broaden the methodological and ethical considerations beyond the scope of the timeline of this research. Case studies are useful research methodologies for introductory explorations into phenomena (Merriam, 2009), where initial findings are reached, and research questions are refined for further study. Consequently, the research questions that framed this thesis are suitable for future revision and revisiting for an in-depth ethnographic study, and future research with one or more teaching teams could address the lingering possibilities.

Outline of Future Chapters

In the second chapter of this study, I conduct a review of the relevant literature to provide theoretical and empirical context for the study. I begin by situating children and childhood through a reconceptualist lens that rejects dualistic and binary perspectives of how power operates in early childhood contexts (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Pence, 2005). I present an overview of the ontological arguments for recognizing children as competent and capable agents with the capacity to share power using multiple complementary theoretical lenses, including continental philosophy, post-structuralist and reconceptualist perspectives of early childhood education (Foucault, 1980, Mayr 2011, Pacini-Ketchabaw & Pence, 2005; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015). Lastly, I conclude with an overview of *place* and *space* (Sen & Silverman, 2014; Tuan, 1977) as a geographical concept within childhood studies and the implications for power within the early learning environment.

In the third chapter, I justify the case study approach as the appropriate methodological choice for contextualizing the phenomenon of power relations within one early childhood environment. The bounded system approach to determining the suitability of case study methodology (Merriam, 2009) necessitates the phenomenon to be

organized within one unit of analysis. In this thesis, I situated the singular classroom as a case to be studied, an important distinction that establishes a case study as a unit with an end, rather than an open-ended phenomenon. Here, I also detail the case study methodology (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009) that grounded the research, including recruitment procedures, data collection, and data analysis procedures. The study's aims and research questions foreground the decision to use case study as the research design. Case study methodology is appropriate for small-scale narrative research that emphasizes the role of the researcher in the process of inductive data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2009).

In the fourth chapter, I present the findings from the case study using a narrative design for sharing results (Creswell, 2009). Narrative analysis, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) suggest, is a method for presenting the results of human stories and experiences. Herein, I present the key thematic findings, using the participants' perspectives to shape the narrative approach.

Finally, in Chapter Five, I discuss the implications of the findings for theory, practice, and future research. In the discussion, I use critical themes that arise from the data analysis process to guide the thematic narrative. Using a thematic narrative approach, I frame the discussion of how power operates between children and educators, and how the balance of power may shift when conceptualizing early childhood environments as place or space.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptually, there is a broad spectrum of scholarly work that informs the following literature review. In this chapter, I begin by providing an overview of the available literature behind the chosen theoretical framework. Michel Foucault's (1980) conceptualization of power in society, as well as reconceptualist perspectives of childhood (Iannacci & Whitty, 2009; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Pence, 2005; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Prochner, 2013; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015) are utilized as a lens to explore the enactment of power within early childhood settings. Moreover, scholarly work from the study of children's geographies and power in early childhood settings are detailed to provide context for this enquiry. Interwoven throughout the chapter are the conceptual foundations of power, agency, place, and space. The underpinning rationale for this study is the questioning of binarized pedagogical stances, and the challenges within the theory/practice divide (Lenz Taguchi, 2010) – divisions that illuminate the need for further philosophical and pedagogical work in reconceptualizing power relations in early childhood settings.

It is necessary to situate the discussion of power relations in early childhood education within the context of current pedagogical discourse. Why power? Power has intersecting points and implications for the ways in which children and Early Childhood Educators interact. Power operates relationally between children and educators, but also through intra-actions between children, educators, and the physical and material environment (MacNaughton, 2005). Foucault (1980) argued that, "power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate

between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power" (p. 98). In this thesis, I draw from post-structuralist philosophy (Foucault, 1980), examining both original writings as well as the work of early childhood scholars who have taken up Foucault's theory in early childhood contexts, and look to reconceptualist perspectives (Iannacci & Whitty, 2009; MacNaughton, 2005; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Pence, 2005) on power in society to examine the enactment of power through spatialities, temporalities, and interrelations.

The available philosophical and empirical work on power in early childhood education suggests that power is enacted in ways beyond the parameters of interrelational power between children and educators. In addition to the enacting of power relations between individuals, power operates through temporalities and spatialities (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012; Satta, 2015). Thus, the concept of power must move beyond human interaction and be inclusive and considerate of the discursive and material interactions between humans and both material and geographical locales (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015) The pervasive influence of power that extends beyond human interaction, and into interactions with the spatial, temporal, and material world (Foucault, 1980) means exploring power in space and place have implications for theory and practice. Unpacking the implications of where power is situated in terms of relationships, places, and spaces is an integral piece of theorizing an ontology of power relations between children and Early Childhood Educators.

Theoretical Framework: Foucault and Power

Michel Foucault's (1980) conceptualization of how power operates within society serves as an important theoretical underpinning of this exploration of the enactment of

power relations between early childhood educators and young children. As the focus of this thesis is centered around the enactment of power between educators, young children, places, and spaces, an ontological framing of the problem is a useful philosophical perspective. An ontological reading of Foucault is useful for thinking about how children's and educators' ways of being are constituted by power. Gordon (1999) characterizes his work as an extension of Heidegger's philosophy, one that seeks, "an account of humans as beings-in-the world" (p. 395). I first examine Foucault's genealogical work through an ontological viewing of his analyses of power, and how the ontology of power relations is constituted through temporal, spatial, and relational experiences. Second, I outline the work of early childhood scholars in transposing Foucault's work into early childhood settings. Though Foucault did not theorize power in childhood contexts, his work has been taken up by reconceptualist scholars (MacNaughton, 2005) as a means of theorizing both childhood and childhood locales as environments within which the social production of power is constituted.

Michel Foucault and the Ontology of Power

There are competing claims between scholars on the ontological premises of Foucault's genealogical work on the origins and practices of power. Gordon (1980) argued that to characterize Foucault's work as merely philosophical or ontological is to miss the inherent scepticism of determinism that such a characterization attributes. Foucault, according to Gordon (1980), did not seek to reach deterministic conclusions about the production of power, but rather offers an analysis of how power operates between individuals and throughout society. However, I argue that within Foucault's (1980) contention is the premise that individuals are constituted by power relations,

including, though not limited to, the power relations between one individual and another. Thus, his conceptualization of power is, on some level, an ontological argument that frames the state of being. Similarly, Oksala (2010) has suggested that Foucault's contention that power is a social practice as well as a political practice, may contribute to the blurry conceptions of his philosophical work as solely political, or merely ontological. However, Oksala (2010) argued that to characterize Foucault's work without an ontological component is to ignore the constitutive nature of power as both a political and an emerging force. An ontological reading of Foucault's work within early childhood settings (MacNaughton, 2005) is useful, particularly as a means of reconceptualizing ways of being and how power is enacted between educators and young children. The ontological arguments for power as constituted within temporal, spatial, and interrelational experiences provide a conceptual framework for rethinking how power is enacted within early childhood contexts.

Temporalities. Foucault (1980) was clear that he does not encourage a reading of his work on power to be limited to the temporality of power. Time, he suggested, locates individuals within their specific contexts, and a more rigorous understanding of power is possible by analysis that moves beyond the power of temporality. However, Foucault's own work, characterized as genealogical or historiographical by situating individuals and contexts of power within history, past and present, would seem to contradict his assertion that time is inconsequential to an understanding of power. Both power as a temporal entity, and children as temporal subjects have been widely studied (Nuttal & Thomas, 2015; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2010; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012; Rose & Whitty, 2010; Smith,

2014), and here, I draw a connection between existence as temporal subjects and power in early childhood contexts.

Foucault's perspectives on temporality and power have been taken up by several academics, providing theoretical insights for early childhood settings. Braun (2007) argued that for Foucault (2003), temporality is a key component to understanding biopolitics, or the political life of individuals as subjects under regimes of truth, power, and authority. Similarly, Costas and Grey (2014) used a Foucauldian analysis of temporality to argue that power is constituted within temporal experiences, and that a temporal and historiographical reading of power is indicative of shifting power relations. These authors worked with adults in professional organizations on the construction of identity within organizations, and analyzing their findings using a thought experiment on the concept of, "imaginary future selves" (p. 917). Their findings indicated that imagining an alternate future identity is a useful thought experiment for reconceptualizing how individuals experience the power of temporality.

Reframing how power is experienced is central to the work of Binkley (2009), who characterized the power in temporal experiences to be one that overrides the innate desires of individuals as, "contradictory movements of the soul" (p. 89). Binkley suggested reflexive reframing and self-awareness as acts of resistance against the embodied nature of power and governance in temporal experiences. Here, I use a brief vignette to shift the work of other scholars and their understanding of temporality and power into early childhood contexts. It is helpful to imagine a child, three years-old, playing contentedly at home. It is 7:30 a.m. when her mother announces that it is time to leave for preschool, and she is suddenly compelled to tidy up and be taken to preschool.

The action is framed as a temporal move, as her mother's on-time arrival to work is contingent on bringing her daughter to preschool on schedule. In this imagined scenario, the child exists as a subject to temporal power, her movements and experiences constrained by her parent's need to abide by their scheduled work shift – itself an indication of operating under the authority and socially expected practice of work. This example does not necessarily need to be viewed as an insidious exertion of power: perhaps her mother loves work, and perhaps the child loves preschool and moves willingly – but that does not negate the experience of the subject as one informed by temporal power and regulation.

Young children experience power as constituted through temporality. MacNaughton (2005) has used Foucault's views on time and temporality as evidence of shifting discursive practice in early childhood education, and the shifting balance of power across time in childhood contexts. The shifting discursive practices, MacNaughton (2005) argues, are reflected in multiplicities, from the tangible adult-child interactions, to regulatory policies that govern actions and interactions from afar. MacNaughton (2005) uses an example from Foucault's work on institutions, where despite societal perceptions of insanity, shifting and reframed across time, people deemed "insane" (MacNaughton, 2005, p. 22) continue to experience the exertion of power through temporal regulation. Similarly, despite shifting perspectives on childhood, children's experiences in early childhood settings continue to be guided by temporal regulations – e.g. policy that dictates the length of time children sleep, or play outside – regulations that are enacted through social practices across time. This is not to suggest that temporal regulation is inherently oppressive – though it could be argued that to force a child who declares

themselves disinterested in rest to sleep is, in fact, an overriding of a child's right to agency and self-governance – but rather, it is accepted practice, a "regime of truth" (Foucault, 1980, p. 131; MacNaughton, 2005 p. 23) to shift activities and actions based on temporal regulations.

Power in spatialities. At times, Foucault's (1980) work expounded upon power as constituted within spatialities and geographies, and similarly, scholars have used his work to construct an understanding on power within spatial experiences (Crampton & Elden, 2007). Foucault's and other scholars' writings on power and spatialities (Agnew, 2011; Crampton & Elden, 2007; Philo, 2010; Smith, 2014) are useful for observing how power is constituted within both the physical expanse of *space* and the notion of *place*, critically demarcated as space imbued with discursive and material meaning.

In a 1976 interview with the French Marxist-Geography journal Hèrodote, Foucault discussed the role of space and geography in his conceptualization of power. Though initially hesitant to ascribe power to spatialities, Foucault (1980) ultimately relented and acknowledged that, "the spatializing description of discursive realities gives on to the analysis of related effects of power" (p. 71). Throughout the discussion, with the editors pressing him for elaboration, Foucault gradually changed his mind and acknowledged the constitutive power of geography: that space and geography can be used as a tactic of power. Geography, for Foucault, becomes one piece of the discourse of power, in which subjects are constituted and governed by the power in spatialities to guide and govern human activity.

Crampton and Elden (2007) contend that though Foucault was remiss to acknowledge the importance of geography and spatiality in his work, it was nonetheless a

significant and essential component of his ontology of power. Foucault's work on the role of power within places – hospitals, institutions, and schools to name a few – indicates his positioning of power within specific locales. But Crampton and Elden (2007) undertake a critical reading of his work while acknowledging his influence on the discourse of power in places. The authors characterize his work as particularly rigorous for an academic not intimately familiar with the field of geography, and in an interesting rhetorical turn suggest that Foucault wrote, "spatial histories" rather than "histories of space" (p. 293). They argue that because Foucault himself had an unsteady conceptualization of place, space, and power, it remains an undeveloped – but significant – aspect to his work, and thus, after his death, it has become the role of geographers and philosophers to move his work into the study of spatialities.

Taking up Foucault's work as geographers, Philo (2010) and Agnew (2011) each draw attention to the spatial histories of Foucault, and argue that his analyses of power within space is significant to the field of geography and spatialities. Agnew's (2011) analysis of the power of spatialities is contingent on interactions between space and humans. Agnew (2011) offers a conceptual shift away from most Foucauldian geographers, and does not ascribe power or agency to space; instead Agnew insists that a spatial history must consider the role of human interaction with the material-spatial world. Philo (2010), adopting an analytical stance to taking up Foucault, provides an overview of the works that constitute Foucault's spatial histories. Philo (2010) argues that from a Foucauldian perspective, spatialities are used as tools and strategies of governance and power.

Smith (2014) moves a Foucauldian view of spatiality into early childhood contexts, arguing that Foucault's (1980) conceptualization of disciplinary power is crucial to understanding the embodiment and enactment of power within children's spatialities. Foucault, according to Smith (2014), called this embodiment the, "art of distributions" (p. 123), wherein acting from disciplinary power is situated within space. The *art of distributions* refers to the ways in which individuals who govern children's movements and actions within space – parents and educators, for example – use space to control children's experiences. Recalling Gore's (1998) reading of Foucault, where surveillance is a key tool of power in spatialities, Smith (2014) argues that power is enacted within space by distributing children throughout spatialities to maximize supervision, or surveillance, thereby maximizing control and disciplinary power.

Power as interrelational. Foucault's (1980) conceptualization of power is fluid and multifaceted, and though extending beyond the limits of interrelations, is ultimately centred on the actions and interactions between individuals, and the ways in which individuals experience power. This fluid conceptualization of power is perhaps best exemplified in Foucault's second of two lectures in 1976 (Foucault, 1980). In this second lecture, Foucault presents three methodological guidelines for the analyses of power. First, Foucault encourages readers to look beyond the polarities in analyzing malicious or contemptuous power – e.g. abusive or oppressive acts of power – as these exertions of power typically operate outside of the bounds of legal and accepted practice. Instead, he suggests that it is within the everyday embodiment of power between individuals where the exertion of power becomes embedded within institutions, enacted through corporeality, thus resulting in accepted practice between individuals.

Foucault (1980) suggests in his second methodological concern that to understand power, individuals should forego attempts to centrally locate expressions of dominance and power within individuals, and instead consider how the subject is constituted, "through a multiplicity of organisms, forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts" (p. 97). Individuals – or subjects, as situated by Foucault (1980) – are in a state of continually exerting and experiencing power, suggesting an interactive view of power that affords both the capability to exert power and the inevitability of experiencing the power of another to the subject. Perceiving power as a force that the body is constituted by positions the subject as both experiencing and exerting power between individuals. This reframing of power propels Foucault's third methodological concern, which is the key conceptual point that underpins the theoretical framework of reconceptualizing power relations between young children and Early Childhood Educators. Foucault (1980) stresses that because power is multi-tiered and constituted within both the corporeal and the intangible, it must be viewed as never entirely resting within the control of one individual or institution.

Power, according to Foucault (1980), is a circulating entity that does not consolidate itself within one individual, class, or institution, and it flows amidst and between individuals, as the subject is both constituted by power and, "at the same time its vehicle" (p. 98). This point is imperative for developing a Foucauldian analysis of power in early childhood spaces, as it suggests that despite the seeming hierarchy that exists within traditional conceptualizations of adult-child interactions, both adults and children are simultaneously experiencing and exerting power. In the following section, I will

provide an overview of the relevant literature from scholars who have taken up Foucauldian analyses of early childhood.

Foucault and Early Childhood Spaces

Early childhood scholars have taken up Foucauldian analyses of power and have brought them into the field of education – and, more specifically, into early childhood spaces (Cohen, 2008; MacNaughton, 2005; Millei, 2005). This transference between fields of research has happened as Gore (1998) suggests that Foucault, "left the detailed analytic work to those 'specific' intellectuals with a closer attachment to education" (p. 234). Gore (1998), building on Foucault's scholarship, worked across diverse educational contexts, and developed eight techniques of power to illustrate how power is enacted within education. MacNaughton (2005) argues that Gore's techniques of power, including *surveillance, normalisation, exclusion, classification, distribution, individualisation, totalization, and regulation* (pp. 23-24), are similarly observable within early childhood settings. MacNaughton (2005), using qualitative data from global early childhood locales, uses Foucauldian analyses of power and knowledge to reframe early childhood practices. MacNaughton argues that in critical classrooms, the use of post-structural thought is useful for embracing shifting pedagogical practices, as educators reframe practice to be inclusive of multiple truths and multiple ways of constructing knowledge relationally with young children.

In addition to qualitative research that moves Foucault's theories of power into early childhood settings, scholars have also used Foucault to develop discursive, ontological, and philosophical arguments on power relations. Cohen (2008) uses Foucault's notion of, "regimes of truth" (p. 7) to conduct a Foucauldian discourse

analysis on policy documents commissioned by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) that position childhood within the constructs of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Cohen (2008) argues that Foucault's (1980) notion of *disciplinary power* is useful for analyzing policy documents that have contributed to discursive norms and expected practices. Cohen (2008) suggests that countering positivist notions of childhood is possible through a reconceptualization of accepted childhood discourses.

Similarly, both Millei (2005) and Ebrahim (2010) examine discursive practices in early childhood education through a Foucauldian ontological framework. Millei (2005) undertook an ethnographic approach to a discursive analysis of the interactions between educators and young children in one Australian pre-school program to explore ways of being with children. In her ethnographic work, Millei characterizes the classroom as one in a state of disruption, with educators imposing the language and practice of control over the children. Millei (2005) notes that power in this classroom, operated, in part, through temporality, where decisions around children's positioning within the timing of the day were guarded by the educators, recalling MacNaughton's (2005) framing of power as constituted through temporal interactions. Millei's findings are similarly viewed through a Foucauldian lens, suggesting that the educators' language and practice of control is rooted in Foucault's (1977) concept of disciplinary power, wherein children are viewed as in need of controlling. Conversely, Ebrahim (2010) did not observe classroom practices, and instead conducted a discursive analysis with seven South African Early Childhood Educators. The data collected focused on the educators' perceptions of childhood and their ways of being with children in practice, finding that the participants'

views of childhood reflected an overtly positivist, developmentally-minded perspective. Ebrahim (2010) uses Foucault's theories (1980) as a conceptual framework for understanding how dominant discourses take root and inform practice and perceptions of ways of being with young children.

Lastly, early childhood scholars have brought Foucault's philosophy into childhood contexts through critical reconsideration of discourse and practice. Fenech, Sumsion and Goodfellow (2008) use Foucauldian analysis and historiography (Gordon, 1980) of early childhood practice in Australia to reframe the philosophy behind regulation and risk in early learning. Fenech et al. (2008), argue that beyond the needed consideration for safety and well-being, the discourse of regulation and controlling risk in early childhood equates regulation with quality. This conflation of regulation and quality, Fenech et al. (2008) suggest, is indicative of the, "laugh of Foucault" (p. 44), or the enduring legacy of Foucault's conception of discursive power – where Early Childhood Educators are constituted by power that operates through accepted discourse and regulatory power. Similarly, Macfarlane and Lewis (2012) took up Foucault's (1980) notion of productive power to analyze how "truths" (Macfarlane & Lewis, 2012, p. 66) within early childhood education are reproduced through discursive means. The authors contend that philosophical divisions within the field of early childhood education can be critically reframed to be inclusive of multiple, site-contextual truths in practice. Lastly, Tesar and Arndt (2016) move Foucault's conceptualization of power outside of the interrelations between individuals, and reconceptualise power relations through intra-actions with materialities.

Reconceptualist Perspectives in Early Childhood

Reconceptualist perspectives in early childhood education first emerged in the period between the late 1980's and the early 1990's (Kessler, 1991; Pinar, 1988; Swadener & Kessler, 1991) as a loosely-organized conceptual counterpoint to the dominant ages-and-stages discourse of early childhood education (Bloch, 2013). In this section, I provide historical context for the development of reconceptualist theory and provide a beginning look at the ontological and epistemological map. Reconceptualist scholarship is posited as a conceptual link between the work of Foucault (1980) and the literature on reframing power relations in early childhood education.

A Brief History of Reconceptualist Perspectives

As Pacini-Ketchabaw and Prochner (2013) articulate, given the breadth of reconceptualist scholarship, it would be impossible to neatly encapsulate the genealogy of the field without exclusions, unintentionally perpetuating perceptions of universalities, and betraying the temporal and contextually situated work of reconceptualists. Here, I offer a brief glimpse of the reconceptualist movement before I explore the impact of reconceptualist work on philosophy and practice. Bloch (2013) traces the history of reconceptualizing early childhood education to the late 1980's and early 1990's, when likeminded scholars began to question dominant developmental, ontological, and epistemological discursive truths about childhood. Since its emergence, scholars within the movement have organized publications, and an annual conference, now entering its 26th consecutive year, dedicated to critically reframing and reconceptualizing a sociology of childhood. In one early reconceptualist publication, Kessler (1991) argues for a critical reframing of childhood curricula as a reaction to NAEYC's developmentally appropriate

practice (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997), suggesting that "appropriateness" (p. 184) is a philosophically unsound premise for situating child-centred practice. Although reconceptualist scholars have consistently emboldened the theoretical work with empirical findings (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999; Iannacci & Whitty, 2009), only recently has reconceptualist work shifted to address the divide between theory and practice (Lenz Taguchi, 2010; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015). Collectively, the work of reconceptualist scholars has contributed to reframing philosophical assumptions of childhood, and in the following section I explore the reconceptualization of early childhood ontology and epistemology.

Ontology and Epistemology in Reconceptualist Theory and Practice

Reconceptualist scholars have continually resisted ontological assumptions of children as incompetent (Cowden, 2016), contesting traditionally hierarchical adult-child relationships (Mayall, 2001; Woodrow & Press, 2007) while also opting for relational views of being between children and adults (Langford, 2010; Mayall, 2001). Recalling Foucault's Heideggerian-inspired ontology, the ontological perspective of reconceptualist literature repositions children as beings-in-the-world (Wollan, 2003) and as agentic participants in early childhood settings (Mayall, 2001). Lenz Taguchi (2010) provides a name for a reconceptualised ontology, describing an *ontology of immanence* (p. 175) in early childhood, an ontological view that observes the act of being as situated within the learning taking place in a given experience. Tesar (2016) takes the being/becoming divide a step further and argues for a denial of the discourse of development as a liberatory practice for reframing ontological assumptions of childhood. Tesar argues that development is temporal and reproduces power inequities; he suggests one way of

reframing children's temporalities is to avoid conceptualizing children as becomings-in-time, but rather, as beings within events.

Reframing ontological assumptions of childhood gives way to reframing epistemological assumptions and the epistemological stance of reconceptualist scholars acknowledges multiple ways of constructing and enacting knowledge (Brownlee & Berthelsen, 2006; Kilderry, 2015; Lenz Taguchi, 2010). Using a Foucauldian analysis of how knowledge is constructed and constituted within power relations, MacNaughton (2005) conducted qualitative research with Early Childhood Educators to contest positivist conceptualizations of knowledge production in early childhood settings, arguing that to disrupt the, "regime of truth" (p. 28) makes space for multiple ways of knowing. Empirical work on epistemologies in early childhood setting suggests that educators espousing relativist perspectives are more likely to engage with, "deep approaches to learning" (Brownlee & Berthelsen, 2006). In her work with Early Childhood Educators, Kilderry (2014) found that while some educators reject teacher-directed practice, the pervasive discourse that children may miss pertinent knowledge without the guidance of educators remains present in early childhood pedagogies. MacNaughton (2005) argues that it is necessary to resist hierarchical ways of knowing, and that educators and children must work relationally to resist, "oppressive and inequitable power relations in the classroom (p. 10). Critically reconceptualizing ontological and epistemological assumptions of adult-child relations is crucial to reframing inequitable power structures within early childhood settings. Next, I explore the literature on positioning children as competent and agentic as a means of reconceptualizing power relations.

Reconceptualizing Power

The critical-sociological reframing of children, in tandem with the philosophical

arguments for children's rights (Cowden, 2016; Dahmen, 2014; Stoecklin & Bonvin,

2014), is represented as a conceptual shift from children as being subjects *under* power to

subjects *with* power; an essential aspect to reconceptualist thought (Iannacci & Whitty,

2009). This reframing hinges on two ontological premises: first, that children are

competent, and second, that children are agentive individuals, rights-holders, and capable

of sharing power in early childhood spaces (Dahmen, 2014; Lenz Taguchi, 2010; Pacini-

Ketchabaw et al., 2015). Reconceptualist scholars have developed the ontological

arguments for children's capacity to share and exercise power over the last quarter-

century in research and practices within early childhood settings.

Reconceptualist arguments for interacting with children as competent and agentic

(Iannacci & Whitty, 2009; Lenz Taguchi, 2010) are intrinsically linked to ontological and

pedagogical practices of relationality and shared power with young children, as well as

philosophical arguments for children's rights as agents. Concerning children's rights,

there are philosophical differences in the available literature, clearly illustrated when

contrasting the image of the agentic child put forth by Divers (2013) and Cowden (2016).

Divers (2013) argues that children are intrinsically agentic, but that the exertion of

agency and their corresponding rights as social agents are linked to task-specific

competency, rather than the ages-and-stages approach to children's rights and agency.

Cowden (2016) counters that competence does not determine rights and agency, but

rather capacity; Cowden (2016) also asserts that as such, capacity is innate, and requires

agency to act on the capacity. Both Cowden (2016) and Divers (2013) represent a critical

reframing of children's rights, deconstructing the argument for rights as contingent on stages of development (Fortin, 2009), contending instead for an ontological argument for children's rights and recognition as agentic individuals. Next, I will explore children as agents within children's geographies, framing early learning environments as one example of children's spatialities, and distinguishing between space and place as a conceptual framework for understanding children's geographies.

Children's Geographies

To situate humans – and by extension, children – within the study of geographies operates on the principle that individuals exist and interact within the physicality of both space and place (Tuan, 1977). *Space*, Agnew (2011) argues, refers to, "a dimension within which matter is located" (p. 1), while *place* denotes meaning within space, as constructed by the inhabitants of a particular location. By establishing the early childhood setting as a geographical locale, I introduce the field of human geography, and by extension, connect it with the conceptual framework of this thesis: the study of power relations between educators and young children in the context of space and place, and children's agentic experiences within space and place.

> We live, act, and orient ourselves in a world that is richly and profoundly differentiated into places, yet at the same time, we seem to have a meagre understanding of the constitution of places and the ways which we experience them (Relph, 1976, p. 6)

The influential geographer Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) conceptualized human geography as an inquiry into existence. As with Foucault (Gordon, 1999), Tuan does not distinguish between being or becoming, but rather, as Wollan (2003) argues, adopts the Heideggerian

notion of *daesin*, or the state of humans existing as, "beings-in-the-world" (p. 31), leaving room for multiple perspectives. In one affirmative assertion of the ontology of childhood, Hackett, Proctor, and Seymour (2015) posit children as beings, an ontological framing of childhood that rejects the ages-and-stages perspective of developmental psychology that situates children as "becomings" (p. 1). Hackett et al. (2015) situate children's movements within space and place as agentic actions. Children's geographies are a relevant conceptual piece to this thesis, as children's interactions with space and place are informed by the relations between the act of being and the corporal space they occupy. Here, I provide a review of the literature that suggests that children, as all individuals do, exist within physical space, geographies, and localities, and construct their understanding of what it means to exist within the context of place.

Children's Spatialities: Space

Young children learn about *space* through their interactions with the physicality of space: both the expanse and the affordability of wide open spaces, and the tangible restrictions of spatialities (Tovey, 2007) – for example, a playpen during infancy. Spatial theory has contributed to understanding the multiplicity of young children's lived experiences through space and place (Hackett, Proctor, & Seymour, 2015). Hackett et al. (2015) argue that children's experiences unfold through agentic interactions with their surrounding environment. Children's spaces, according to Tovey (2007), are not limited to the notion of expanse, but also encompass size and shape. Tovey (2007) also suggests that *space* can enable or restrict movement. Similarly, Satta (2015) conceptualizes children's spatialities – specifically, children's play spaces – as conceptually positioned spaces for children, distinct from adult spaces, yet children's movements are controlled

and restricted by adults positioned as, "in charge" (p 179). Kernan (2010) echoes this perspective, suggesting that the conceptual demarcation between children's spatialities and adult spatialities has contributed to children's loss of independence. A critical reframing of *space* as *place* works to centre children's lives and experiences as valued.

Children's Spatialities: Place

Tuan (1977) wrote of the interconnected nature of *space* and *place*, that neither can exist without its counterpoint. *Place* as a conceptual center is rich with geographical, physical, and philosophical connotations (Cresswell, 2008), which are useful for understanding children's geographies. Agnew (2011) suggests that three defining characteristics constitute *place*: (1) *location*, or a physical space where people and materials are located, (2) *locales*, or the locations where social life is enacted, and (3) a *sense of place*, or meaning ascribed to a physical space by those who use or inhabit it. Similarly, on *place*, Cresswell (2008) ascribe the importance of materiality, functionality, and the attachment of meaning. In early childhood contexts, Tuan (1977) argues that children's understanding of place is developed through temporal, material, and spatial interactions with the world. Tuan (1977) suggests that children's identities and understandings of the world are constructed through space, in relation to those around them.

There are critical implications for reconceptualizing early childhood *spaces* as early childhood *places*, and there are difficult socio-political and historical contexts to reckon with in studying childhood spaces and places. Pacini-Ketchabaw and Taylor (2015) point to the challenges of reconciling past and present notions of space and place in the context of Indigenous worldviews as contrasted with the ongoing legacy of settler-

colonialism. Harrison and Hutton (2014) explore the design of *space* and *place* in educational environments, and argue that a place-based approach to designing learning environments is conducive to shared power. Hognestad and Bøe (2012) developed a methodological framework for understanding early learning environments as *place*, representing a methodological shift away from the traditional data collection of researcher-child practice and into researcher-place practice. The value in this methodological shift is understanding the power of *place*, and the capacity of educators and children to construct shared knowledge through intra-actions (Lenz Taguchi, 2010) with place. Agnew (2011) argues that knowledge is produced and reproduced in *place*, indicative of the power of place when imbued with meaning. Meanwhile, Duhn (2012) suggests pedagogical considerations for reconceptualizing early childhood settings as *place*, stating that "pedagogies of places negotiate flows and create spaces where matter, desire, human and more-than-human come together to modulate the self in relation to the world" (p.104). *Place*, Duhn (2012) argues, implies attachment for both children and educators, and the pedagogical implications require a critical reframing of power dynamics made possible through a sense of place in early childhood settings.

Power and (Re)conceptualizing the Agentic Child

Reconceptualist perspectives in early childhood education have countered dominant narratives of developmental psychology, narratives that have eschewed the prevalent view of children as incompetent (Cowden, 2016; Woodrow & Press, 2007). In this section, I connect the two key conceptual underpinnings of this thesis: power relations and agency in early childhood contexts, and children's geographies in early childhood contexts. I detail both the theoretical and empirical research of reconceptualist

scholars on power and agency in early childhood education. In the preceding section on children's geographies, I provided definitions for *space* and *place*, and a review of the available literature on children's geographies, spatialities, and place-based early childhood education. Here, I link power, space, and place, and I conclude with a review of the available literature, arguing that conceptualizing early childhood settings as *place* is conducive to shared power relations between educators and young children.

Power and Agency

I have previously outlined the ontological and epistemological premises that underpin reconceptualist scholarship on children's rights and capacity to act as agents and share power in early childhood contexts. As I contend in the section on reconceptualist theory, the argument for children's power and agency is a critical component to reconceptualizing power relations in early childhood settings. Many reconceptualist scholars have taken up the argument for power and agency, and here, I examine the available research, including theoretical and empirical work on children's power and agency, implications for pedagogy, and its implications for reframing the agentic child.

The divide between theory and practice is a continued debate within early childhood education. Reconceptualist scholars have contributed work that attempts to construct meaning from troubling the binarized perspectives that anchor both sides of the debate (Lenz Taguchi, 2010; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2010). Lenz Taguchi (2010) reframes pedagogy in early childhood education as one of intra-action, where children are recognized as agents, capable of sharing power. Lenz Taguchi (2010) contends that an intra-active pedagogy affords power to both children and educators, as well as space and materials. Ylitapio-Mäntylä (2013) researched Early Childhood Educators' perceptions of

power using a feminist/post-structural reframing of power relations and care practices within interactions with young children. The findings of this research suggest that power structures can be reconceptualised. Gore (1995) makes an important point: that from a Foucauldian perspective on power, power is not necessarily insidious, and often its impact on experience is unnoticeable, but that power is irremovable from daily practices. Gore (1995) and Foucault (1980) would argue that power can never be removed from human experience, but that within pedagogical practice, disciplinary and productive power can be reframed in aid of the goal of equitable practices and non-hierarchical pedagogies.

Researchers have invited children's voices into their work to support the critical reframing of power relations. These studies point to conceptual and methodological issues with implications for both the experience of researching, and the results of the research. Lee (2015) conducted interviews with pairs of young children to explore their perceptions of power and agency in their play. Lee's (2015) findings suggest that children view play as a time for freedom, for agentic movements and interactions within early childhood settings, and that children's participation in research is mutually beneficial. Conversely, Holland, Renold, Ross and Hillman (2010) conducted participatory research in early childhood spaces, and caution that participatory research does not necessarily produce better research, or reflect a more equitable power structure. The authors do not discount the value of blurring the lines of power and agency within research, but argue that the focus should be on how research practices are enacted, rather than quantifying quality research through sheer participation. Moreover, Gill and Howard (2009) conducted a large-scale study with over 400 children in Australia, asking them to share

their conceptualizations of power. Working with young children, the researchers found that children are capable of describing the power structures they inhabit, including the power experienced between themselves and the adults in their lives, as well as providing commentary on the equity and agency of their lived power structures.

Power, Place, and Space

To be clear, there is power in conceptualizations of both *space* and *place* (Cresswell, 2004; Cresswell, 2008); however, my contention is that contesting hierarchical power relations requires reconceptualizing early childhood *spaces* as early childhood *places*, as it suggests a shared intimacy and shared meaning within the context of spatialities. Hackett et al. (2015) and Hackett (2016) observed children's movements through space, and found that children's meaning-making blossomed through agentic movements through *space*, representing a conceptual shift to *place*. In this study, data were collected as children moved through a museum, but research on emplacement (Christensen, 2003) has suggested that the findings may be replicable across children's spatialities. There is a philosophical and emplaced precedent for place-based education in the famed preschools of Reggio Emilia (Ellis & Strong-Wilson, 2007), where meaning is constructed in a shared sense of emplacement. Similarly, Hognestad and Bøe (2012) and Brillante and Mankiw (2015) have contended that learning is co-constructed and embodied in place-based pedagogy. Children and educators experience *place* through shared movements in *space* that subvert traditional power relations, but there remain challenges to reconceptualizing power, space, and place.

The challenge in reconceptualizing early childhood settings from *space* into *place* is the reticence on the part of Early Childhood Educators to adopt shifting pedagogical

stances, particularly ones that reflect a vision of shared power and shared meaning. Place-based education resituates power, as the *place* is not viewed as one for hierarchical, top-down learning, but one where knowledge and a sense of place are constructed and shared democratically (Brillante & Mankiw, 2015; Duhn, 2012). Knowledge constructed under the auspices of *space* is, as Christensen (2003) suggests, not emplaced, but guided by adult perceptions of children as receptacles for knowledge, waiting to be filled by skilled educators. Power that produces inequities or hierarchies within spatialities require critical reframing (Kernan, 2010), and to do so reflects a commitment to an ontological and epistemological view of children as agents with power, acting relationally in *places* with shared meaning.

Controversies in the Literature

It seems inconsequential, given the purpose of reconceptualist thought, to characterize the philosophical divergences between some reconceptualist scholars as controversial, but it is worth pointing out as one possible point of controversy within the literature. The distinction between postmodern theory and post-structuralist theory is hazy, as both are centred around the production of power and the resistance of universal, positivist (or structuralist) claims to truth and knowledge (Fox, 2014). The distinction, Fox (2014) has argued, is such that poststructuralism is primarily concerned with the resistance of domineering, socially-produced power relations between individuals rather than the politicized tone of postmodern theory, that frames the subjective experience as one that pushes against existence as governed by socially constructed and enacted institutional power and authority. This divergence is represented in reconceptualist scholarship, as the early reconceptualist theorists utilized postmodern theory to construct

their vision of childhood (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999), while later reconceptualist literature is often framed by poststructuralist thought (MacNaughton, 2005; Tesar & Arndt, 2016). Many reconceptualist thinkers have referred to both postmodern thinking and poststructural thought (Langford, 2010; Lenz Taguchi, 2010). Thus, reconceptualist theory exists as a conceptual link between multiple perspectives, and adopting a reconceptualist stance allows space for multiple theories that inform contextual discourses (Fox, 2014) within research in early childhood.

Secondly, the major conceptual split –and in fact, the conceptual split that birthed the reconceptualist movement – is the divide between positivist, determinist perspectives in early childhood education, perhaps most frequently observed in the pervasive influence of developmental psychology (Bloch, 2013). However, reconceptualist theories necessarily problematize developmental psychology by arguing that a developmental, deterministic perspective of human experience does not allow for a pedagogy of relational democracy (Langford, 2010). Reconceptualist perspectives in early childhood education emerged as a reaction and a counterpoint to the dominance of developmental psychology in early childhood discourse and practice (Bloch, 2013; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Pence, 2005). Proponents of developmental psychology challenge the contextual, nuanced view of childhood, promoting an ages-and-stages developmental framing of childhood (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) with the ensuing debate centred around ongoing arguments on the agency, competence, and capability of young children. In her dissertation-turned-philosophical work on the rights of children, Mhairi Cowden (2016) names and subsequently deconstructs the argument from incompetence (p. 25) that positions children as individuals with underdeveloped cognitive and physical capacities.

Cowden's argument builds from the ontological perspective that competence or capacity do not preclude liberty. In its ontological framing of human existence as a state of continual becoming, developmental psychology inherently positions childhood as a time of incompletion, where the natural antithesis to the undeveloped child is the mature, developed adult, tasked with guiding children toward their full capabilities (Bloch, 2013; Langford, 2010). This ontology undermines the reconceptualist perspective of children as competent, capable learners and represents the primary challenge, and ultimately the primary reason for the existence of reconceptualist praxis.

Summary

The preceding literature review provides the conceptual framework for the following research questions that guide this qualitative study:

1. What are the ways in which power relations are enacted within one early learning environment?

2. How do educators' perceptions of the environment as *place* and *space* contribute to the ways in which power relations are enacted?

This chapter provides a review of the available literature relating to this thesis' guiding theoretical framework, including Foucault's work on power and reconceptualist perspectives in early childhood education. I began with a synthesis of Michel Foucault's conceptualization of power from an ontological perspective (Foucault, 1980; Oksala, 2010), as well as the ontological arguments within power as constituted through temporal, spatial, and interrelational experiences, and then reviewed the available scholarship on relocating Foucault's theories within early childhood contexts. The ontological perspective is pertinent within the context of this thesis, as the research is

centred around the ways in which power relations are enacted between young children and Early Childhood Educators in early childhood settings. Next, I provided an overview of the available scholarship on reconceptualist perspectives in early childhood education. Reconceptualist perspectives provide a congruent conceptual link between Foucault and early childhood education (Cohen, 2008; Fenech, Sumsion & Goodfellow, 2008; MacNaughton, 2005), as reconceptualist scholars have sought to reframe childhood outside of deterministic and developmental views on the early years.

In this chapter, I conducted a literature review that provides a scope of the available research on power in early childhood education, framing the literature review around the concept of power in children's geographies. The literature review indicates a broad scope of theoretical, philosophical, and empirical research; however, there are still gaps in the available research. The guiding research questions of this thesis reflect the ongoing divide between theory and practice (Lenz Taguchi, 2010), and the need for further research on how power is enacted between young children and Early Childhood Educators, and how power relations are constituted within early childhood places and spaces.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

A qualitative case study was used to explore how power is enacted between children and educators in one early childhood classroom in Southern Ontario. A qualitative case study is a methodology for exploring phenomena within site or context-specific locales (Baxter & Jack, 2008) that was utilized in this study to explore the enactment of power in one early childhood classroom. The study was reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Brock University Research Ethics Board (File #16-214 - HARWOOD). In this chapter, I explain and provide justification for the chosen methodology and procedures used in conducting the research. Using a triangulated approach to data collection (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe & Neville, 2014), including interviews, onsite observations, and reflective journaling with one teaching team in a preschool classroom, this qualitative case study addressed the following research questions about how power is enacted between children and educators in one early childhood classroom in Southern Ontario:

1. What are the ways in which power relations are enacted within one early learning environment?

2. How do educators' perceptions of the environment as *place* and *space* contribute to the ways in which power relations are enacted?

Methodology and Research Design

Separately, power, place, and space have been widely studied in early childhood contexts in both theoretical and practice-based research (Christensen, 2008; Lee & Recchia, 2008; Tesar, 2014). Previous researchers have used qualitative methodologies to conduct participatory research with children on perceptions of power in early childhood

education (Holland, Renold, Ross & Hillman, 2010; Lee, 2015) and the role of bodily

expressions of power between children and educators (Åmot & Ytterhus, 2014). This

case study addressed several conceptual and practical limitations within the existing body

of research. Though pedagogical shifts have resulted in a move away from traditional,

teacher-directed practices (Wood, 2014), there is still a gap in the available research on

the connections between how power is enacted between young children and early

childhood educators, and the implications for power relations when conceptualizing early

childhood settings as *spaces* – or *places*. The research questions that guided the enquiry

were open-ended to allow for emergent findings (Creswell, 2013). Purposefully, the

research was planned as a preliminary examination of the lived realities of power

enactment within one early childhood setting. Consistent with reconceptualist

perspectives that reject universalities (Bloch, 2013; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Pence, 2005), or

generalizable findings, this qualitative research illuminated specific problems within the

available literature on the theory and practice divide (Lenz Taguchi, 2010) in early

childhood contexts. As the focus of this study was centred on researching a specific

phenomenon (Creswell, 2011), a qualitative framework was the appropriate

methodological decision for exploring the research questions.

Further, Creswell (2011) argues that the selection of the appropriate research

design is dependent on three factors,

> In planning a study, researchers need to think through the philosophical
>
> worldview assumptions that they bring to the study, the research design that is
>
> related to this worldview, and the specific methods or procedures of research that
>
> translate the approach into practice. (p. 34)

The ongoing and shifting perspectives on power relations in pedagogical practices, and the scope of discourse on ontological and epistemological perspectives in early childhood education established the topic as a salient phenomenon for exploration. Post-structural theory (Foucault, 1980) and reconceptualist scholarship (Iannacci & Whitty, 2009; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Pence, 2005) reflect a constructivist worldview (Creswell, 2011) and informed the theoretical framework of the study.

Case Study Method

A case study is a distinct qualitative research design, one that focuses on the unit, or case to be researched (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2000) where case can refer to one or more than one single participant as a unit of study. In this case study, I explored the experiences of how power relations are enacted between Early Childhood Educators, children, space, and place in one early childhood setting in Southern Ontario, a salient topic for research given the ongoing discourses of power and pedagogy within early childhood education. Yin (2008) identifies criteria for selecting the case study approach as a methodology. Yin states that to decide upon case study methodology the guiding research questions must be framed in terms of *how* or *why*, the design must not require a behavioural control, and the research must explore contemporary events. Stake (2000) offers six researcher responsibilities in identifying and developing the rationale for choosing case study methodology, and for carrying out a case study:

1. Bounding the case, conceptualizing the object of study

2. Selecting phenomena, themes, or issues – that is, the research questions – to emphasize

3. Seeking patterns of data to develop the issues

4. Triangulating key observations and bases for interpretation

5. Selecting alternative interpretations to pursue

6. Developing assertions or generalizations about the case. (p. 244)

There is methodological precedence for using a case study design for researching particular phenomena in early childhood environments (Hill & Millar, 2014), and precedence for the use of case study research design in early childhood contexts (Chapman, 2016; Cumming, 2015). Prior research has similarly established precedence for the case study approach to researching power in early childhood contexts (Holland, et al., 2010). A case study methodology situates a unit of study within a particular locale (Merriam, 2009), which, in this research study, was the one participating preschool classroom in Southern Ontario. Case study methodology is motivated by the intrinsic curiosity of the researcher to examine a phenomenon within a case-specific context, rather than the desire to reach generalizable, sweeping conclusions about a phenomenon (Stake, 2000). This instrumental case study (Stake, 2000) explored the phenomenon of power in early childhood contexts within one bounded case (Creswell, 2007). Case study methodology was the appropriate research design for this study, where the unit of study was the preschool teaching team, and the phenomenon that was researched was power in one early childhood setting.

Selection of Site and Participants

Qualitative research centres the experiences, perspectives, and phenomena as interpreted by the participants (Merriam, 2009), and participants are purposively selected from inclusion criteria that best serve the research questions. In this study, the sample population consisted of one preschool teaching team from a licensed early learning and

care centre in Southern Ontario. In the context of the early learning environments of Ontario, provincial legislation (Childcare and Early Years Act, 2015) provides the framework for the operation of licenced early learning and care centres. As stipulated in the requirements of the Act, preschool teaching teams may consist of up to three Early Childhood Educators working with a group of up to 24 preschool-aged children (Childcare and Early Years Act, 2015). However, while the participants of this study were employed in a licensed early learning environment, and thus were governed by the Act, the environment in question was a smaller classroom, and the teaching team was comprised of just two Early Childhood Educators.

Purposive sampling procedures were used to recruit participants. Purposive sampling begins with establishing inclusion criteria (Merriam, 2009) and targeting the distribution of research invitations to targeted populations (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). The sole inclusion criterion was that participants needed to be presently employed as Early Childhood Educators in a licensed preschool program. Aside from restricting the geographical region to Southern Ontario, there were no exclusion criteria based on the personal demographics of the participants. Participants were required to commit to participating in each phase of the data collection process, which included a focus group interview, an onsite observation, and brief weekly journal entries over four weeks in March 2017.

The site and participant recruitment process took place in February 2017. Purposive sampling was used to direct the research invitation to potential participants that met the inclusion criteria (Merriam, 2009). To begin, I recruited two local community development agencies with foci on professional outreach within the early learning sector

and requested the distribution of the research invitation through their listservs. Using the community development agencies as a resource for distributing the invitation addressed two key recruitment concerns. First, the potential audience of the agencies ensured a far wider reach than a single researcher could feasibly accomplish in a short timeframe. Second, using the agencies to distribute the invitation placed a digital divide between myself and potential participants. This early step mitigated the possible issue of power imbalance and a feeling of coercion that may have accompanied the recruitment process in research with human participants. Second, the invitation was posted to a personal social media account (Twitter) to reach further potential participants. In the chance that each of the initial recruitment methods failed to yield interested participants, I planned to consult a local directory of licensed centres and initiate contact with the supervisors of the centres. To alleviate the potential for feelings of coercion in the recruitment process, the research invitation (Appendix B) was written so that upon receipt of the research invitation, interested participants initiated contact with the researcher.

Instrumentation

There was minimal instrumentation needed to conduct the data collection. One semi-structured interview protocol and four reflective journaling prompts were developed for the purpose of gathering data from the educators, and were developed with guidance from Jacob and Furgerson's (2012) suggestions for qualitative researchers. The authors provide suggestions for establishing an interview protocol, including the use of expansive, open-ended wording in developing questions, and the willingness to adopt and revise questions throughout the interview process. The semi-structured interview and reflective journaling protocol were developed with these qualities in mind, for the

purpose of gathering data that flowed and reflected the aims of answering the research questions. The interview protocol (Appendix C) and reflective journaling prompts (Appendix E) were open-ended, and aimed to facilitate a conversation that addressed the key issues of the research questions. Most of the questions and prompts were densely written, with the potential for multiple conversational divergences embedded within the questions and prompts. The development of the interview and journaling instrumentation was conducted with concern for establishing validity within the study.

The observation format included one developed instrument (Appendix D). Developing the research instrument for observing and recording field notes involved consulting methodology texts and prior research (Kawulich, 2005; Wolfinger, 2002) to construct an understanding of the methodological concerns for ensuring credibility and validity of the data collected through observational recording and field notes. The observation and field note process was developed with reference from Creswell's (2011) suggestions for how to structure an instrument for conducting observations and gathering field notes. The observation protocol provided a clear framework for capturing observations and notes on how power operated within the sample site.

Field Procedures

I used a three-phase data collection process to establish a triangulated data collection process (Creswell, 2011). Here, with reference to the methodology texts used to inform the procedural development, I detail the procedures used for the data collection.

Phase 1: Interview Procedures

The initial step in this three-phase data collection process was a focus group interview (Creswell, 2011) with the two participants. The interview took place at a

mutually-agreeable time, and to alleviate any potential discomfort, took place in a

mutually-agreeable location, in a quiet meeting room of a school that was vacant for

March break. The interview was recorded, and prior to turning on the recording device,

participants were reminded of their right to pass on answering any question. During the

recording of the interview, the five questions were asked, and each participant was given

the opportunity to answer and share their insights. Because the interview protocol was a

semi-structured protocol, the discussion evolved, with new questions emerging – though

each planned question was asked during the interview. After completion of the interview,

the audio data was uploaded to a password-protected computer. The audio file was then

transcribed using word processing software, and upon completion of the transcript, the

file was emailed to the participants to initiate the member check process.

Phase 2: Field Observation Procedures

Multiple means of gathering data were used during the field observation,

including text and visual data (Creswell, 2011). Before the children entered the program,

photographs were taken of the physical environment. Sketches of the physical

environment were made using sketch paper and pencils. The sketches were scanned, and

uploaded to a digital format for data analysis. Using the observation and field note guide

(Appendix D), extensive observations and descriptions of the enactment of the observable

power relations were made over the course of one day in the program.

Phase 3: Reflective Journaling Procedures

The intent was to initiate the reflective journaling process upon completion of my

interview with the participants, with each participant answering one journal prompt per

week for four weeks. However, the participants expressed their interest in condensing the

timeline, and preferred to answer two prompts per week, and completed each of the four

journal prompts over two weeks. To facilitate data collection, the participants were

provided with a digital copy of the reflective journal prompts, and upon completion, the

participants' reflections were sent to me via email.

Data Collection and Recording

Yin (2008) identifies three critical steps to establish the validity and credibility of

the data collection process. Yin (2008) argues that multiple data sources, establishing a

case study database, and documenting for the purpose of establishing evidence of

methods and procedures used establishes both internal and external validity. In this case

study, triangulated data sources (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 2000) and a rigorous data

management process (Yin, 2008) contributed to the validity and credibility of the data

collection process. Here, I detail the three-phase data collection process.

Semi-Structured Focus Group Interview

In the first phase of data collection, I conducted one focus-group interview with

the two participants present, at a time of their agreement. Hatch and Coleman-King

(2014) suggest that focus groups are a valuable tool for gathering the perspective of a

group. As the research sought to understand how power operates between educators and

children, including interrelational power, it was appropriate to interview the participants

together in a focus group interview rather than in individual interviews. For instance,

individual interviews may have limited the conversation to the perspective of the singular

participant, where the intent was for the conversation to explore power from a shared

perspective. Using the interview protocol (Appendix C), the interview was conducted as a

semi-structured interview that gathered data on the participants' self-reported practices

and perceptions of power in their classroom. Interviews were recorded on a handheld digital recorder, and an additional recording device was used as a backup, should the first device have failed or malfunctioned.

The interview followed a semi-structured format with five overarching questions (Appendix C), and each participant was provided the opportunity to answer or elect not to answer. Neither participant refused to answer any of the scripted or unscripted questions. The semi-structured format allowed for questions and conversation points that diverged from the scripted questions, and allowed the participants to provide unplanned insight into their perceptions on power relations in their classroom.

Field Observation

The data collected during the second phase of the collection process was gathered from one onsite visit to the participants' classroom. The participants were willing and enthusiastic participants, but their schedule and timeline was such that one onsite observation could be accommodated, but more than one observation may have placed undue challenges on their staffing arrangements that were beyond their control. The data collected included visual data, where photographs and sketches of the physical environment (Creswell, 2013) provided a visual reminder of the classroom for data analysis. During the analysis process the visual data allowed for inferences to be made regarding the enactment of power within the interactions between the educators, in addition to the materialities and spatialities of the classroom.

Second, highly descriptive field notes (Merriam, 2009; Wolfinger, 2002) were used to gather data on two key conceptual data sources for this case study. Field notes described, throughout the day, the power relations observed between educators and

children, as well as educators and the physical environment. Field notes unfolded

temporally (Wolfinger, 2000), a methodological choice that was appropriate in the

context of a structured day in preschool – one that often follows an established schedule

(Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012). Given, as Foucault (1980) argues, that power is everywhere,

my observations included data on the interactions between children and educators,

including the ways in which power was enacted through language, regulatory practices,

time, materials, and space.

Reflective Journaling

Participants were asked to contribute to four weekly journaling sessions. The

journal prompts were sent to the participants digitally, and both participants returned their

responses to weekly questions and prompts (Appendix E) that encouraged reflection on

their pedagogical practices and power dynamics within their classroom. Kremenitzer

(2005) suggests that reflective journaling is commonplace within pre-service early

childhood education schooling, but that most educators abandon the practice upon

entering the field. The daily practices of educators, Kremenitzer (2005) argues, risk

becoming complacent without challenging one's perspective through reflective process –

and journaling is one such way of reflecting on pedagogy and practice.

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Data Processing and Analysis

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Data collection and analysis were simultaneous processes (Creswell, 2011), and

developing a method for organizing data began the process of making meaning from the

data sources through close and repeated exploration of the data. Developing a process for

the data organization and analysis, I looked to Creswell (2011) who articulates key

considerations in the process of qualitative analysis. Creswell (2011) explains that

qualitative analysis in case studies relies on an inductive process, and that it requires simultaneous collection and analysis. This study achieved this balance by working across a three-phase data collection process. Multiple readings of the data were done to establish an understanding of the breadth of data.

Organization of Data

There are multiple methods to carrying out the organization and analysis of qualitative data, and the suitability of each method is contextual to a given study. In this study, my preference was to use a software program for qualitative analysis that could handle the organization and analysis of large quantities and multiple sources of data. The data was coded and analyzed using a qualitative analysis program, Atlas.ti. The program is an example of analysis software that is useful for managing and organizing the process of coding and developing themes. The program accommodated large quantities of data, including text, audio, and visual data. The ability to manage each data source within a single program was an attractive feature, and one that contributed to the rigor and credibility of the analysis process, as data was accessible and contained within one program (Creswell, 2013).

Thematic Data Analysis

Identifying a framework for analysis was dependent on the type of data collected and the chosen methodology. Case studies that use interviews and observational data lend themselves well to thematic analysis (O'Reilly, Ronzoni & Dogra, 2013), where codes are organized into conceptual themes that are then displayed in a thematic narrative. The interviews and observations were analyzed using a thematic analysis of the collected data. Thematic analysis emerges from the coding of the data, and the grouping of codes

into a thematic narrative (Creswell, 2011). O'Reilly, Ronzoni and Dogra (2013) suggest

that thematic analysis is beneficial for researchers working with large quantities of data

and aids in, "developing a convincing story" (p. 225). This was the appropriate process

to use for the analysis, as it allowed me as a researcher to utilize the triangulated data

sources to construct a narrative.

Coding and Themes

The coding process took place as I sifted through the data. Coding involves,

"reducing a text or image to database to descriptions and themes of people, places, or

events" (Creswell, 2011, p. 261). The interview transcripts, reflective journal entries, and

field notes, including sketches and photographs, were uploaded to Atlas.ti. The coding

process involved going through each data source and assigning codes to the texts and

images. Codes were grouped into emerging themes based on observable patterns within

the data. The triangulated data sources provided a measure of validity for the emerging

codes and themes, as the multiple data sources were able to be cross-referenced. The data

analysis tools contained within Atlas.ti were useful, including the capability to graph and

sort codes to support the emergence of key themes.

Methodological Assumptions

In this qualitative case study, I used an inductive approach to explore the case and

the phenomenon of power in early childhood contexts. Creswell (2007) provides an brief

primer on the role of methodological assumptions in qualitative research. Qualitative

researchers, according to Creswell (2007), must ask themselves, "what is the process of

research?" (p. 19). An *inductive approach* was an appropriate methodological assumption

for this case study, as it assumes that themes and patterns will emerge from the data,

rather than a *deductive approach*, which begins with an established connection to theory. Creswell (2007) also suggests that a researcher, "works with particulars (details) before generalizations, describes in detail the context of the study, and continually revises questions from experiences in the field" (p. 17). Despite entering the data collection process with previously developed interview and reflective journal protocols, the inductive approach to case study methodology allowed for emerging data, inviting alternate, and unexpected findings to emerge from the data collection process.

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Limitations

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The limitations of the methodology included the sample size and the generalisability of the findings. The sample population was small, consisting of one preschool teaching team of two Early Childhood Educators. The findings from this single case may not be representative of broader pedagogical, ontological, and epistemological underpinnings of the field of early childhood education. However, the limitations of small samples and lack of generalisability are acknowledged throughout case study scholarship, and this approach is fitting with the reconceptualist theoretical framework of the study. Reconceptualist scholarship supposes that there are no universal truths (Bloch, 2013), and that context-specific findings are valid and credible, despite the avoidance of positivist, determinist perspectives of the world.

One critical epistemological limitation to note is the poststructuralist and reconceptualist theoretical perspective that underpins the study. Poststructuralist and reconceptualist theorists emerged as a reaction to positivist interpretations of the world (Bloch, 2013) and as a reaction against the notion of universal truth. Conversely, one pervasive discourse in early childhood education is the role of child development, which

positions children in a developmental continuum, marked by standards of practice

delineated across ages and stages (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) In conducting research

with Early Childhood Educators, I am prepared to acknowledge the impact of the

discourse of development on the field, and recognize that it has left a considerable impact

on the way practicing Early Childhood Educators conceptualize children and childhood.

Establishing Credibility

Scholarship on qualitative research has established procedural and methodological

checks for establishing both the credibility of the researcher, and the credibility and

validity of the findings (Creswell, 2007; Creswell, 2011). Here, I detail three strategies

for establishing the credibility of my research design and data sources.

Prolonged Engagement

Although I entered the participants' classroom as an outsider (McGinn, 2005), I

did so with shared credentials as an Early Childhood Educator, which supported the

establishment of my credibility as a researcher. *Prolonged engagement* (Hatch &

Coleman-King, 2014) involves establishing rapport, and building an understanding of the

site-specific context before, and after the data collection. Establishing prolonged

engagement with research participants was beneficial for both myself – as well as my

participants, as establishing rapport outside of the context of the researcher-participant

relationship served to provide insight into one another's goals for the research (Creswell,

2007). In the context of this case study, by establishing collegial contact with my

participants before commencing research, and ensuring their involvement in post-

research member checks, a connection was developed based on shared respect and

understanding, where I understood the participants' contextual experiences, and what

they hoped to gain from participating in the research – and likewise, the participants understood my goals in gathering and analyzing the data.

Triangulated Data

Methodological rigour bolsters the credibility of qualitative research, with triangulated data sources gaining prominence among researchers. According to Creswell (2011), triangulated data lends credibility to qualitative research because emergent themes can be cross-referenced for accuracy across multiple data sources. In this study, the semi-structured focus group interview, the onsite observation, and the reflective journals provided three distinct and methodologically rigorous data sources to be cross-referenced in the data analysis process. Triangulation, Stake (2000) argues, establishes credibility of the findings because it reduces the risk of misinterpretation of the data.

Member Checks

Participants were invited to participate in a member-checking process with each stage of the data collection process. Member checks offer participants the opportunity to verify whether the data provides an accurate description of the account (Creswell, 2011). In this study, transcripts of the focus group interview were made available to the participants within one week of the interview, and they had two weeks to review the transcript and modify it, including retracting any statements or clarifying any of the points made during the interview. Upon completion of the member checks, the participants expressed concern with grammar issues, pauses, and incomplete thoughts within the transcript. They felt worried that I would use incomplete thoughts, or grammatically-incorrect sentences. Participants were assured that if I included a sentence with grammatical inconsistencies that I would edit for clarity, and check with them to

ensure that their meaning was not altered before including any edited statements in the written results. At the end of the reflective journaling period, participants were asked to go over their responses and provide their approval of the data. Participants will also be sent a copy of a research report upon the completion of the research, detailing the findings and implications.

Ethical Considerations

As a study with human participants, commencing research was subject to approval from the Research Ethics Board at Brock University. An ethics proposal was submitted, and upon acceptance the invitation to participate in research was circulated to potential sites. There are ethical considerations to recognize in any undertaking of research (Merriam, 2009). The primary ethical concerns for the onsite observation were my responsibilities as a researcher to the participants. My ethical responsibilities were manifold and reflected an ethical duty to both the participants from whom I gathered data and the children with whom they shared space.

First, the undertaking of this research with human participants entailed ethical responsibilities to the participants. In this study, the ethical responsibilities I managed governed my interactions with the educators who volunteered their time and their valuable experiences to my study. The participants had the right to confidentiality, and are referred to by their chosen pseudonyms – Niki and Meet – in the results and discussion chapters. Participants were made aware at the time of obtaining consent that consent was an ongoing process, and that they could revoke their consent to participate at any point up until the completion of the member-check process. The member-check process was one ethical step in the researcher-participant relationship used to establish

credibility as an ethical researcher (Creswell, 2011). In research, assuming that

participants understand their right to withdraw, and that the researcher had taken steps to

mitigate feelings of power imbalances or coercion, the member check can be seen as

evidence that ethical research practices were observed.

Second, I had an ethical responsibility to the children whose space I was entering.

Although the children were not participants in the data collection, as a vulnerable

population, (Cameron, 2014), I had an ethical responsibility to maintaining awareness of

my presence in the classroom and its influence on the power dynamics in the classroom.

In this study, I conducted a day of onsite observation and data collection. Seeking ethics

clearance for children's participation in this study was outside the scope of the research.

However, as members of their classroom community, their presence and our interaction

during onsite data collection was unavoidable. To mitigate any discomfort on the part of

both the participating educator team and the children in the classroom, I made two pre-

arranged visits to the space outside of the requirements of my role as a researcher, to

familiarize myself with the site-specific context, and to establish rapport (Merriam, 2009)

with the educators and children who share the classroom. To attenuate the effects of my

presence on the day of onsite data collection, I positioned myself within the space so as

not to interrupt or impose myself into their activities. The children's relative lack of

interest in my presence, beyond initial questions to my identity and purpose for my being

there, indicated that I was able to make myself largely unnoticed and gather data without

interrupting or impeding on their course of action for the day.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of how educators conceptualize the enactment of power within early learning environments. In this qualitative case study, interviews, observations, and reflective journaling were the tools for data collection used with one preschool teaching team, comprised of two Early Childhood Educators. The following chapter will detail the findings from the study of power relations in the interactions between children and Early Childhood Educators, and the ways in which educators' perspective of the classroom environment as either space or place contribute to power dynamics.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

In an interview with the French journal *Quel Corps*, later reproduced in *Power/Knowledge,* Foucault (1980) argues that, "the phenomenon of the social body is the effect not of a consensus but of the materiality of power operating on the very bodies of individuals" (p. 55). From the onset, the research and data collection in this study sought to explore power from this Foucauldian conceptualization of power as a constitutive, circulating entity that is enacted through individuals' bodies and their relationships to one another and the physical environment. Niki and Meet are teaching partners in a preschool classroom in Southern Ontario. I met them both separately and informally, to introduce myself and explain the research, to establish a positive rapport, and to explain to them what was being requested of their participation, in addition to their rights as participants.

Niki has been an Early Childhood Educator for 17 years, while Meet is qualified as both a teacher and an Early Childhood Educator, and has worked in the field for two years upon completing his teaching degree and his diploma in early childhood education. Together, Meet and Niki have co-taught for less than one year, and describe their working relationship as respectful. They described the curriculum model that informs their programming decisions as a Reggio-inspired, emergent curriculum. I interviewed them on a Friday afternoon after their workday, and we talked for 75 minutes about how power was enacted, from their perceptions, in their classroom.

Two weeks after our interview, I visited their classroom to spend a day onsite, taking detailed observations of how power was enacted within their program. On the morning of the onsite observation, I wrote a brief research memo of my initial

perceptions of the physical space and the morning entry process. The classroom Meet and Niki share with the 16 children in their program was bright and carefully organized. I arrived before the children and educators had convened in their shared room, and I used the time to sketch the classroom. Sketching the classroom was a useful practice to familiarize myself with the physical environment and the materials. As I sketched, I walked through the classroom to gain a sense of how the space was used. It was bright and there was clear evidence of the children's presence and their work in the classroom. Shelving was stacked with artwork, and there were materials for creating within their reach, as well as just outside of their reach.

Soon after I completed my sketch, the children entered the program with an educator, who greeted the children and opened the program. She stayed with the children until Meet arrived at 8:00 a.m., and Niki arrived at 8:40 a.m., before her shift began at 9:00 a.m. Meet greeted the children by name as he entered the program. He prepared snack after spending a few minutes with the children, rearranging furniture, and materials as they interacted. Meet left the classroom at 8:30 a.m. to bring the school-aged children to school, and he returned at 9:15 a.m. The children were inside on this morning, due to the weather. Meet and Niki explained to me that they would otherwise be outside for a portion of the day, but that on rainy days, they stayed inside. As the rain persisted, it became clear that the day would be spent inside.

In this chapter, I present the findings from a three-phase qualitative case study that sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the ways in which power relations are enacted within one early learning environment?

2. How do educators' perceptions of the environment as *place* and *space* contribute to the ways in which power relations are enacted?

Data gathered included one semi-structured interview, one onsite classroom observation, and four reflective journals. Thematic analysis (Creswell, 2013) was used to analyze the data. Power, as I delineated earlier, is described, and observed during the three phases of data collection, specifically regarding the ways in which the participants are influenced by interactions with others, as well as with interactions with the physical environment.

Outline of Collected Data

The key themes were determined through the thematic analysis of all the collected data, gathered from the three phases of data collection. Niki and Meet first sat with me for a semi-structured interview that resulted in a 75-minute audio recording and 28 pages of transcribed conversation. Second, the data generated from my onsite observation was represented in 20 pages of detailed descriptions of how power was enacted over the course of nine hours in their classroom. Drawing from previous scholarship on the ways in which power relations are operationalized (Åmot & Ytterhus, 2014; Gore, 1995; Lee, 2015), I developed a tracking sheet (Appendix D) for recording the timing, the individual(s) involved, how the power was enacted (i.e. directive language that influenced behaviour or action; language to prompt a shift in activity), and notes to provide context for what was happening and what was said or done during the observed techniques of power (Gore, 1995). Lastly, both Niki and Meet provided me with reflective responses to the four journal prompts (Appendix E) designed for post-interview and post-observation reflections on power relations in their classroom.

Outline of Results

I used a process for coding and thematic analysis designed for case study methodology, as outlined by Creswell (2007), to ensure a thorough representation of the data. Creswell (2007) builds on Stake's (1995) case study methodology, which suggests that case study methodology use a, "categorical aggregation" (p. 163) for developing key themes: where coding is done in a thorough, line-by-line process, and codes are then aggregated. Codes are collapsed into key themes by collecting the codes as a series of instances observed during data collection. In the presentation of findings, the researcher assumes the role of making meaning from the observed instances and shaping the findings into a narrative. Creswell (2007) recommends that researchers also include a description of the case to provide additional context for the readers.

The findings are organized in this chapter under four key conceptual themes, with subthemes branching out from the four key themes. The four key conceptual themes are: interrelational power; regulatory power; power and temporality; and power, space, and place. There are two important considerations for readers to understand before I describe the findings. First, many of the examples throughout the three phases of data collection that I coded as examples of power are innocuous, daily happenings, and similar examples would likely be observable across early learning environments and contexts globally. Nonetheless, these examples represent an interaction with either an individual, or the environment that is constituted by the enactment of power; it is important to highlight that the actions of the individual(s) at the center of the interaction are altered due to the influence of other forces, including interactions with others, regulations, time, and the physical environment. To this point, Niki and Meet's interactions with the children were,

as they described during their interview, respectful and encouraging. It would be inaccurate to describe the power relations in their classroom as authoritarian. Niki and Meet spoke with authority at times, but never in ways that were domineering or that diminished the dignity of the children in their program. Similarly, where I have indicated that the preparation of the physical environment – setting out chairs and beds, for example – is an example of the educators' power in the classroom, it is not an authoritarian act: it is pragmatic. Children need chairs to sit on and beds to sleep in, but it was evidence of power in the classroom in that their arrangement appeared to be a decision made only by Meet and Niki, and those decisions influenced where and how children spent their time.

Second, there is considerable thematic overlap within the analysis and grouping of codes in a way that creates a full picture of power in Niki and Meet's classroom. In many instances, it was challenging to decide how best to group a particular instance of observed or reported power. For example, when Niki and Meet explained that there are times of the day – lunch time, outdoor time, sleep time – that are decided by their organization, it could be construed as both an example of power through temporality and power through regulations. In the context of how Niki and Meet described these examples, it was about the power of their organization rather than an example of how power is enacted through time. In this and similar instances, I looked to the context of the conversation, or the observation, to determine how best to organize the data into themes.

Interrelational Power

Although there is overlap between the way I have distinguished the role of language in power in the classroom and the remaining themes – interactions between

children and educators, and shared and negotiated power – language played such a prominent role in how power was enacted that it is a salient distinction to make and is deserving of distinct space in the subthemes. The interactions between the educators and children, and the ways that Niki and Meet describe their interactions resulted in valuable data on the enactment of power through interrelations.

Language and power. Language was a predominant method for enacting power. The use of language – on the part of both educators and children – was observable throughout each phase of the data collection process. During the interview, both Meet and Niki provided examples and descriptions of how they use language or respond to the children's language, and how language shapes their interactions and actions within the classroom. For example, Niki discussed how language can be used in a way that is more direct, such as stepping in when needed to solve a conflict, but that it can also be used to negotiate, providing the example of negotiating and encouraging a child to try new foods. The use of language was similarly observable throughout the onsite observation.

There were distinct ways of using language to enact power, each with separate intent and phrasing behind the words. The more overt examples of enacting power through language were the ways language was used to provide directives. For example, early in the observation, Meet called out to a child, "No running in the classroom," and the phrasing appeared purposeful. A child was running in the classroom, and Meet's intent was to put a stop to the running, and he did so by providing a clear and direct instruction that achieved the desired result. The use of directives was observable throughout the day, as when Meet directed a child to "go sit in a chair," and the child complied with the direction, or when, after sleep time, as the children left their beds, Niki

said "go to the bathroom." The tone of these directives was not malicious, but firm, and compliance was expected.

During the interview, Meet and Niki discuss the way language is used within the classroom to assert power in a situation. They use the example of phrasing a sentence around the command, "you have to" in combination with a desired action. Meet reflected on how he and Niki could opt to use language in a way that frames directions as a negotiable choice, but that there are times when the more directive approach is necessary. Meet used lunch time as an example, explaining that "I can not just ask 'ok, is anybody hungry? Do you want to eat lunch?'" and that in this situation, he is more likely to say, "you have to come to the table." Niki and Meet agreed that this phrasing is used to assert power in a situation; to influence behaviours to achieve compliance with a request. Meet finished the thought by suggesting that there are times throughout the day "that looks like we are not in power, but when we say it, we are totally in power."

Language was also used to affirm the educators' response to the children's power in the classroom. For example, during the observation, Niki initiated circle time, and sang a song with actions that required the children to hold hands. In this instance, Niki affirmed the needs of a child who had indicated that their hand was sore, and did not wish to participate. Niki responded, "that's ok, honey, I know it hurts." During snack time, a verbal request for a drink was made to Meet. He responded "Sure, just a second". He finished his current task and poured a glass of milk. The educators responding to the children's power, and how language is used in the power relations between educators and children, was thus observable throughout the day.

Interactions between educators and children. The ways Niki and Meet conceptualized and enacted power through interactions with children were described during their interview and reflective journals, and were observable in their interactions with the children over the course of the day. During our interview, Niki explained that part of her role is establishing a positive relationship with children, and that within this relationship, power is shared and negotiated. Her views on negotiated power are evident when she explained that within interactions with children,

> You're influencing them, but at the same time, you're giving them a choice of what they want to do, what they want to be. It's a lot of communication between you and the children, and that's, I think where the relationship building comes too, hugs, praises, communication.

Meet explained that a significant part of his teaching philosophy is his role in encouraging children's cognitive capabilities. During our interview, his perceptions are that this philosophy, and the interactions that accompany this philosophy are empowering to children. He explained, "I try to build a feeling into them that they can go anywhere, they can have interests in anything, but they need to grow into it." His descriptions of power relations within the interactions between children and educators indicate that he feels that he is able to guide children's cognitive development. Meet explained that he enacts this philosophy through their curriculum, where he indicated that the children's choice is present, and that it is his role to develop and encourage their independent thinking and learning skills through the interactions between children, educators, and curriculum.

Power within interactions between the educators and children was similarly observable in the ways in which the presence of the children, at times, influenced Niki and Meet's actions. During the interview, Niki described the children as having, "the power to guide us throughout the day." Niki and Meet were observed responding to the requests or needs of the children in ways that interrupted and shifted their actions under both overt and subtle displays of power. At one point in the morning, as she moved about the classroom, Niki's actions were shifted by the presence of a child showing her a Lego creation. The child held the creation toward Niki, and Niki responded "Do you want to bring that over there? I can clear off the table for you." She does as she has stated she would, and cleared the table for the child, her actions shifting under the influence of her interpretation of the child's request. Similarly, Meet experiences the children's power and his behaviour and actions are influenced by an interaction with a group of children. In the afternoon, children were calling out to him to read them a story, to which he shouted back, "Read a story! OK! I will read a story!" thereby affirming their request.

The physical positions and space occupied by educators and children throughout the room were observed as ways of enacting power through interactions. One example happened early in the morning. Meet called out "Is anybody ready for a story?" and approached a group of children who were using cars on the ground. He began telling a story off the top of his head, commanding the attention of the children. The children were sitting on the ground, backs to a wall, while he approached and positioned himself in front of the group. Meet's position made it so that he and the children were confined to a small portion of space. Although children joined the group, and left without Meet's direction, and it was clear that they were free to come and leave as they pleased, his

position created a physical barrier – albeit one that was easy to walk around, but that served to establish the boundaries of a space in which an activity was occurring. Similarly, in the afternoon when Meet and Niki used the hallway of the school as a space for the children to engage in gross-motor play, they positioned themselves at opposing ends of the long, narrow hallway as physical guidelines for the boundaries within which children could play. Their bodies, in effect, are markers of the boundaries, a physical cue that announces and enforces the boundaries of the children's physical range.

Shared and negotiated power. Shared and negotiated power are differentiated in the coding and grouping of codes into themes. Instances where power was shared tended to be situated around curricular decisions, where the educators sought input from the children, or when children sought a shift in activity, and decisions were made and acted upon communally. Instances where power was negotiated were often temporal, and were indicative of the flexibility, or negotiability of routines and transitions in the program.

One clear example of shared power came during the long period of morning play in the classroom. Niki disrupted the present flow of the classroom by calling out, "Does anybody want to help me make playdough?" Niki's prompt results in a shift in activity in the room; her prompt was interrupting play that was otherwise already happening, and resulted in an affirmation on the part of a small group of children to be influenced by her, as they responded to her next prompt, "If you want to help me make playdough, move over to the table." A grouping of children joined her, and as they mixed the ingredients and made playdough, Niki asked, "Do you want to make it red or green?" and her prompt elicited a response from the children. Their choice was represented in the activity.

Niki's perceptions and reflections suggest that power is, at times, negotiable, when in her journals, she described how outdoor time has been, "changed, or extended, due to the children wanting to explore more time outdoors." This phrasing suggests that the educators are receptive to children exercising their power in determining how some of their time is spent. Her actions bear out this negotiable approach to power relations, when, during the end of the sleep time routine in the classroom, Niki moved throughout the room, putting the children's beds in the storage closet, and asking children to go to the washroom. One child asked Niki why another child was still on their bed. Niki responded, explaining that the child in question, "likes to spend five to ten minutes on their bed after waking up." In this instance, the child still sleeping was not prompted to move at the same time as the remaining children, and was afforded the extra time to wake at an individualized, negotiated pace.

Meet also described power as negotiable, but while Niki's anecdote indicated a negotiated power that affirms children's power, Meet provided an example that indicated power as negotiable in a way that affirms existing expectations and routines, which are established by the organization and educators. Meet frequently referenced children's home experiences, culture, and familial expectations and interactions with the program as occasionally influencing their day. During our interview, he provided an example that children are sometimes dropped off later than usual, and occasionally, individual children will need to eat at different times than the rest of the group. According to Meet, while the needs of families are welcomed and accommodated where possible, he wrote in his reflective journals that, for example, the program, "cannot meet [a] child's need[s] if someone sits in bed at home for dinner and lunch."

Regulatory Power

Niki and Meet consistently returned to their perceptions of regulations that influence their actions in the classroom, with Niki describing these regulations as, "a power that's held over the workers." Several key subthemes emerged from the coding process, including the enactment of power through their organization's chosen curriculum model, the regulations ascribed to their practice by the Ministry of Education and their organization, and finally, the more impalpable regulations that are more difficult to define, but nonetheless, are felt as an imposition on Niki and Meet's power in the classroom.

Curriculum. Both Meet and Niki spoke of feeling beholden to the curriculum framework of their organization. Meet and Niki indicate that the organization follows an emergent curriculum model, and that this model is representative of shared power in the classroom. At times, during the interview and journals, Niki and Meet would seemingly suggest that they would act otherwise, were it not for their curriculum framework. In his reflective journals, for instance, Meet wrote, "children's interests are greatly appreciated and [are a] pillar of our classroom, but we can plan things in the classroom based on our curriculum only." Meet's comments exist in the context of a question about the differentiation between *space* and *place*. While Meet's comments elsewhere indicate support for the environment as a *place*, this statement suggests that the classroom conceptualized as *place* is potentially limited by the need to follow the curriculum model, which is regulated by their organization.

Meet made an interesting observation about the role of curriculum, and its potential to impose upon the will of individuals within the classroom. Meet gave the

example of planning based on the children's interests. He used a hypothetical situation to illustrate his point, where he imagined a scenario where in their preschool classroom, eight children share a common interest while, "the other 8 children are not into that interest." By following the curriculum model established by their organization, Meet suggested that, "we are stringing those children one way, according to the interest, and the other[s] [have] to follow it." In this way, Meet explained, "curriculum itself is a power."

Ministry regulations. Niki and Meet each pointed to the regulations that influence their actions as examples of power within their classroom. Niki and Meet refer to the limits of power and indicate that at times, the Ministry regulations establish the parameters of their power and also the children's power in the classroom. The power of the Ministry and the ways in which their regulations influence classroom happenings were described by Niki and Meet using specific examples of regulations that affected their practice. During the interview, for example, Meet and Niki described the logistical challenges of maintaining the mandated ratio. They explained that if they are outside with the children and one child needs to re-enter the program to use the washroom, one educator must take that child, plus seven other children inside at the same time, so that neither educator is outside of the 1:8 educator-child ratio.

Niki and Meet's perceptions of the power of the Ministry regulations wavered between specific examples and indications of a more general feeling of the power of regulatory oversight. In his reflective journal, Meet referred to the Ministry regulations as they shaped his interactions with the children, explaining that, "there are some powers [that] are forced on us by legislation or [the] Ministry that we cannot disobey, so we stay

in power." Meet's reflections on the power relations between himself and the children indicate a perception of shared power that is always operating under the recognition that there are regulations to adhere to that shape their program.

Organizational regulations. Meet and Niki each spoke positively about the company they work for, and their examples of how the power of the organization were not described contemptuously, but as factual examples of power at the organizational level. Their examples were both specific and more general, indicating the organization as a piece of the regulatory power that influences how their classroom operates. Niki described the timing of lunch, sleep time, and the educators' break times as an example of organizational power, reflecting that they are, indeed, "powerless" when it comes to these routines. These examples appear innocuous, but indicate regulations or expectations at the organizational level that impact how the educators and children spend their time.

Less specifically, the participants made frequent reference to the role of the organization as an example of power outside of their control that shapes how they act. Niki explained, "Ministry rules, organizational rules, we have to follow all that stuff when it comes to the power in the room." Niki and Meet tended to speak generally about their organization, citing it as just one example of a source of regulations that limited their power and freedom within the classroom.

Power outside of teachers' control. Niki and Meet's comments often referred to the limits of their power, and the limits of the children's power as seeming non-negotiable, a regulation – real or perceived – that limited their capacity to act or make decisions. The need to keep children safe from harm was a frequent justification for the educators enacting and enforcing limits to power. For example, when discussing their

outdoor learning environment, Meet explained that he felt a pressure to keep the environment safe and free from items that will hurt the children, and described the lengths they go to protect children from harmful items. Meet used the example of clearing sticks away from the children's outdoor play space, under the expectation that children are to be kept safe. Meet spoke of this example as being a detriment to children's personal power; moreover, it stood as an example of an instance where Meet's actions were dictated – again, whether perceived or real – by regulatory power.

Sometimes, these limitations were small; for instance, Niki described a regulation against curtains hanging from the wall, as being a tiny imposition, that while seeming innocuous, still placed limits on their autonomy in the classroom. Sometimes, the limitations were larger, regulatory, or organizational limitations, but were mentioned as examples of limitations to their power that were outside of their control. I asked Niki about the limits to their power, and she replied "money…lack of supplies." Later, as she discussed the children's choices, and their power in shaping the curriculum, Niki mentioned that in an emergent curriculum, despite the appearance of freedom and choice within the classroom, they are, at times, limited by the materials that they have on hand, or are limited by the amount of money they have for new materials.

Power and Temporality

Time was continually referenced and observed as a factor that exerted power over influencing and altering the actions of the educators and children throughout the day. In their interview, journals, and the onsite observation, power was observable throughout the participants' relationship to time. Here, I describe the ways that power enacted through time was observable in the daily routines of the program and the regulations from

the Ministry of Education and their organization. While I have described the role of

regulations in the preceding key theme, the participants referenced regulatory power in

ways that operate aside from temporal regulations that made it necessary to distinguish

them within a separate theme. Here, I describe the routines and regulations that are

shaped by time that exert influence over how the educators' and children's time is spent

over a day in the program.

Routine. Niki and Meet shared that they are not always the primary decision

makers of the structure of the day, and that many of their daily decisions which affect the

routines and structure of their daily schedule are shaped by power outside of their control,

including regulations from the Ministry of Education or from their organization. In her

reflective journals, Niki explained that she felt, "powerless when it comes to lunch, sleep,

outdoor, or snack time," and that these are examples of structure and routine that are

outside of her and Meet's control. During the onsite observation, it was evident that there

were commitments that affected the structure of their day, and that these decisions were

not theirs to make. Once each morning and once each afternoon, one educator must leave

the classroom and the Centre to walk the school-aged children to their local schools. This

obligation is a requirement of the organization, and is part of their daily role as

employees, and thus, an instance of power outside of their control.

Conversely, there were instances where Niki and Meet's power was either

observed in the classroom or described in their interview and journals in ways that were

dictated by the clock. At one point, as I asked her to reflect on the way the children's

power is enacted in the classroom, Niki explained that while the children's ideas drive the

curriculum – and that is one way they enact power – she returned to the role of time in

shaping the routine and structure of their day; ultimately, she indicated, it is she and Meet who are responsible for enforcing commitments, and shifts in activity as dictated by time. Similarly, in his reflective journal, Meet wrote that while children may have choice during their play time, actions within the classroom are, "controlled by routine" which is decided by the educators.

Regulations and temporality. As a licensed early learning environment in Ontario, the organization that Niki and Meet are employed by is subject to yearly licensing requirements under the Child Care and Early Years Act (2014), which are overseen by the provincial Ministry of Education (referred to throughout each phase of data collection as the "Ministry"). The necessity of acting in accordance with regulations that determine how time is allocated was identified as an act of power experienced by Niki and Meet during each phase of the data collection. For example, under the regulations of the Ministry, Meet explained that the structure of the day must contain a two-hour period of outdoor time. Neither Niki nor Meet believed that outdoor time is a negative, and they acknowledged that the children appear to enjoy their time in the yard; but nonetheless, the requirement for outdoor play is a regulation that supersedes their agency in determining the structure of their day.

One curious requirement, described to me by Meet as a recent Ministry of Education regulation, was the tracking of children's sleep time in ten minute intervals. During the children's nap time – also described by Niki and Meet as a requirement that influences the routines and structure of their day that is beyond their power – the educators must place their initials on a tracking sheet indicating that they have circled the room as the children sleep and have made note of the children's sleeping and breathing

patterns. The requirement is one way in which power is enacted where, via regulations, the educators are compelled to perform specific actions each at pre-determined times each day.

Power, Space, and Place

The role of the physical environment in enacting power between educators and young children is visible in the perceptions and practices of Niki and Meet. First, power was observable in the ways that Niki, Meet, and the children prepare, use, and describe their physical environment and materials. Second, Niki indicated that she believes, as I have suggested throughout this thesis, that there is a clear distinction between *space* and *place*, and that their classroom is perceived by its inhabitants as being somewhere in between, with characteristics of both. Here, as before, I have differentiated between *space* and *place* as a way to provide clarity on the ways in which individuals' interactions with the physical environment are constituted by power relations, and how power relations are mutable within the conceptual distinction between *space* and *place*.

Environment. Niki and Meet acknowledge that they are the arbiters of the setup of the physical environment, and this is observable as they carry out their daily routines: for instance, as Meet arrived and set out chairs around the classroom. He did not request assistance from the children, and it appeared to be his decision where the chairs went, and how many chairs belonged in each space. Throughout the day, Niki and Meet tidied as they moved throughout the room, moving materials onto shelving and storage areas that children appeared to have finished using.

When Meet and Niki reflect on power in the physical environment, their comments often intersect with curriculum and planning, and reveal how while this role is

theirs to inhabit in the classroom, their efforts are for the children's benefit. When Niki,

in her reflective journal, wrote about the environment, she explained that,

> The [richer the] environment is provided to the children the more time they will
>
> spend in certain areas of their interest. We have switched our environment many
>
> times throughout the year. We moved furniture and tables around always keeping
>
> in mind how we can make the environment more comfortable and spacious for the
>
> children to explore and interact.

> Niki's comments suggest that she situated the responsibility of attending to, and

changing the environment within her and Meet's control. Similarly, Meet's thoughts in

his reflective journal indicated that the responsibility and power of preparing the

environment is his and Niki's. Meet explained that in their program, "It is a process of

continuous changes in the environment based on children's interest but the process and

the routine cannot be changed throughout the day."

> **Materials.** The ways in which power is constituted through the use of classroom

materials suggests that power is shared and negotiated within the classroom. Both Niki

and Meet suggested in their interview, as well as their reflective journals, that the

children are free to use the materials as they choose. The shelves of their classroom are

well-stocked and during my time onsite, every area of the classroom was used, and

materials were shifted, taken out, and put away, throughout the day. The decision about

what materials to use, and when to use them, appeared to be a negotiated process. During

the morning play time, for instance Niki was approached by a child holding materials

taken from the shelf and she responded, "you want to use those? Go ahead, you can sit at

the table." Niki affirmed the child's choices and request for materials. Niki explained to

me, during our interview, that on the concept of access to materials in the classroom, that the children are, "free to do whatever they want, we have a free concept of open shelves."

When Niki and Meet elaborated, their insights provided further evidence of a negotiated approach to materials, which overlaps with their approach to an emergent curriculum. I asked Niki and Meet if the children bring their ideas forward throughout the day, and whose power is represented in those exchanges. Niki reminded me that their curriculum philosophy is based on the principles of emergent curriculum, but added that at times, there are limits to how they can introduce materials to the classroom. She explained that children might request a certain book, toy, or idea to explore and that, "we try our best, to accommodate to what their needs are. So, it might not be that day, but the next day we try to bring in things that would spark their interests."

There was a tendency on the part of Niki to intervene in children's play to explain or model the intended use of certain materials. Early in the onsite observation, for instance, Niki moved materials from a table, and introduced new materials to the same table. She selected a box of multicoloured pegs and peg boards and several children began using the materials. "You have to follow the pattern" she said, and her prompt guided the way in which children used the bead board. Her language alternated between directives, as above, and prompts to elicit the children's thinking, for example, "what comes next?" It appeared that Niki's intent guided the children's interactions with the materials, but the interaction was not coercive, and the children complied with her directives. However, this finding is put in contrast by both Niki and Meet's assertion during the interview that the children are free to interpret the use of the materials and that their interactions with the materials are self-directed.

The classroom as *space*. There was some overlap between the findings relating to the power in the classroom when conceptualized as space and the positioning and use of materials and furniture in the classroom. While Niki led circle time, for instance, Meet prepared the room for sleep time. He moved furniture out of the way to accommodate the children's beds, and he placed the beds throughout the room. I asked him who decides where the children's beds are placed, and he acknowledged that he and Niki determine their placement, and that it is determined by multiple factors, including the layout of the room and the personality and needs of individual children.

At times, there was conceptual overlapping within the participants' lines of thinking and their thoughts on the physical environment. Meet shared many thoughts on the classroom as either a *space* or a *place*. His perceptions on conceptualizing the classroom as either *space* or place was seemingly mutable, and intersected with who has power in a particular situation. In his reflective journal, Meet wrote, "I call it a space because space is something that is particularly designed for some particular purpose and that is what our classroom and curriculums are for." Meet's comments elsewhere during the data collection mirror this sentiment. When Meet discussed the need to keep the children safe, he discussed this in the context of the environment as a *space*. He seemed frustrated with this point, as he tried to articulate his philosophy of teaching, and how at times it is incompatible with regulations, and how this indicates that the environment is a, "space we made, It's safe for them, it's not a place for them, it's safe." He spoke of how even inside, he steps in as children play to say, "ok, you have to be away from that because it's going to hurt you" and how this acts against his philosophy of, as he says,

"making their mind strong. That's not going to make their mind strong because they are never seeing any hurdle."

Similarly, there was some overlap between the findings relating to the power in the classroom when conceptualized as *space*, and the role of regulations, and of power outside of the control of the educators. That is, Meet and Niki were more likely to consider their environment as a *space* when thinking about regulatory oversight: both theirs and the regulations that exist outside of their power. Niki suggested, "when we think about our classroom as a space, we think of limitations, we think of ministry, we think of the rules… our codes, licensing, capacity… then we've got rules and regulations that we have to follow." I ask whose power is enacted when the room is considered a space. Niki was quick to answer with, "It's everybody else's power except for ours."

The classroom as *place*. Both Niki and Meet indicate that they see their classroom as a *place*, and that their perceptions are that the children's interactions with the classroom are evidence of feeling a sense of place. Niki was clear that she perceived the classroom as a *place*, and she also believed that the children feel that it is *their* place. She explained that her conceptualization of *place* is driven by a desire to create a, "home away from home" within their classroom, a phrase she repeated when describing the children's comfort in their classroom and as her guiding principle for cultivating a sense of place. Niki's phrasing is purposeful when she described how she and Meet, "interact along *with* them to gather more ideas and information we need" to plan. The phrasing indicates a communal effort to plan, contributing to Niki's sense of shared power within the classroom, and the classroom as one where its inhabitants experience a sense of place.

Yet, there appears to be a hesitancy to supplant the notion of *space* entirely, in a way that blurs the boundaries between *space* and *place*. Meet's thoughts on the environment as *place* seemed to shift, and with it, who was enacting power. During the interview, Meet suggested, for instance, "if you think from above, it's a space, if you think for yourself, as a classroom [and] what you're trying to do, it's a place." Here, he seemed to be suggesting that the classroom can be both a *space* and a *place* simultaneously, and that where power is situated is dependant upon whose perspective one takes. In this way, power, as Meet said, may come from above them, or alternately, the power in the classroom when they are alone with the children. Meet offered that, in their classroom, "we try to make a place for them, but still it's a space because we created it." In this statement, Meet's phrasing appears to situate the power in establishing a sense of place within his and Niki's efforts in the classroom.

In the final phase of data collection, Niki and Meet's reflective journals provided an initial interesting contrast in perception. Both Niki and Meet responded to a journal prompt that asked the participants to reflect on how they might re-think the environment in terms of *space* and *place*. Niki's answer was centred on the role of the educators, and while the children are mentioned, her perception appears to be one of what she and Meet can do to alter the environment to meet the needs and interests of the children. Conversely, Meet acknowledged that one way they might re-think their practice is by inviting the children to participate in the preparation of the environment and the materials. He indicated that by doing so, "they would feel freer and feel that it's their place... It will create a sense of belonging and well-being in the classroom." Here, Meet appears to accept the conceptualization of the environment as *place*, but concedes that

despite the potential for sharing power, one final time, he reminded himself of his obligation to the regulations imposed upon the learning environment, and the power these regulations exert over the actions and experiences of the educators and children that share the room.

Summary of Results

The findings from this three-phase qualitative case study suggest that power is enacted in one early learning environment in multiple and, occasionally overlapping ways. The findings suggest that power is enacted through interrelations and interactions between individuals, regulations, temporal factors, and aspects of spatialities and the physical environment. The participants reported that power in their classroom may be shared or negotiated within interactions between educators and children, but that both their power and the children's power are subjected to the limitations of regulatory power and time. Lastly, power was perceived by the participants, and observable in the interactions between the participants, children, materials, and the physical environment, where power was situated differently when the environment was conceptualized as *space*, or *place*.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The field of early childhood education has undergone significant philosophical and pedagogical paradigm shifts, to where a child-centred approach to early learning has emerged as a prevailing stance, positioned in contrast against teacher-directed practice (Langford, 2010; Wood, 2014). However, despite shifts away from hierarchical power dynamics, there remain questions about where power is located within early childhood practice and philosophy, and how the enactment of power between educators and young children is understood and practiced. Likewise, place-based education is an emerging discourse in early learning (Duhn, 2012), where, alongside conceptualizations of the environment as the "third teacher" (Gandini, 1998; Torquati & Ernst, 2013) educators and young children experience the early learning environment with what may be understood as a sense of shared value (Tuan, 1977). However, philosophies and pedagogies of place, Duhn (2012) argues, are largely assumed and uninterrogated as standard practices, and thus, there are salient questions remaining on where power is located within the social and spatial experiences of the shared places of Early Childhood Educators and young children.

The study was framed by two key arguments that addressed some conceptual limitations within the existing scholarship. I first argued that a binarized perspective of early childhood practice that positions teaching and learning in early childhood environments as either child-centred or teacher-directed do not adequately reflect the fluidity of power dynamics between educators and young children. Second, I argued that *space* and *place* provide conceptually distinct understandings and that (re)conceptualising early childhood *spaces* as early childhood *places* is a valuable conceptual shift for

(re)positioning the balance of power. These arguments have ontological and epistemological implications for early childhood philosophy and practice, and in this chapter, I address these arguments in relation to the findings, and the available scholarship on power in early childhood contexts. I also explore the implications of the findings for practice, theory, and future research.

Summarizing the Findings

The research was conducted using case study methodology (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2000), which proved a useful research design for a small-scale, descriptive narrative study (Creswell, 2011). Situating this qualitative inquiry within one early childhood locale was purposeful and necessary for an examination of the perceptions and practices of the two participants. The purpose of this case study was to examine how power relations are conceptualized and enacted between two Early Childhood Educators, young children, and the physical environment in one early childhood classroom in southern Ontario.

Through one focus group interview, one onsite observation, and four reflective journals I explored how the two participants, Niki and Meet, perceived, and enacted power relations within their classroom. The study was framed by reflections upon both the interactions between children and Early Childhood Educators, and the ways in which the physical environment is imbued with power when viewed through the lens of children's geographies – specifically the geographical concepts of *space* and *place*.

The following two research questions guided this three-phase qualitative case study:

1. What are the ways in which power relations are enacted within one early learning environment?

2. How do educators' perceptions of the environment as *place* and *space* contribute to the ways in which power relations are enacted?

Using a deductive approach to data analysis, four key findings emerged from the data, suggesting that power was enacted in a multitude of ways with differing effects on the individuals experiencing power. First, power was perceived and observable through interrelations between individuals, and that power was enacted using language and through interactions between educators and children, and ultimately, that power was shared or negotiated throughout the program. Second, power was observable through regulatory oversight, whether real or perceived, including regulations related to their curriculum model, regulations from the Ministry of Education and their organization, and power that operated outside of their control. Third, power was observable through the educators' and children's relationship to time, and the limitations of time on their daily routines and regulations that governed how their time was allocated. Lastly, the findings suggest that power relations were complicated by Early Childhood Educators' conceptualization of the classroom as either *space*, or *place*, and that the fluidity of power was observable through shifting conceptualizations of the ways in which educators and young children interact with the physical environment.

Discussion

Viewing the findings through a Foucauldian analysis is a useful practice, as Foucault's (1980) genealogical approach to understanding how power operates throughout society explored similar concepts, mirroring some of the key findings from

the research including power between individuals, discipline, and regulations, spatialities, and temporalities. Similarly, reconceptualist work in early childhood has addressed shifting ontologies of early childhood philosophy and practice (Bloch, 2013; Lenz Taguchi, 2010; Tesar, 2016) and epistemologies of early childhood philosophy and practice (Brownlee & Berthelsen, 2006; Kilderry, 2015; Lenz Taguchi, 2010) that embrace the fluidity of power relations. Here, the findings are discussed with relation to the previous literature on power relations in educator-child contexts.

Interrelational Power

The findings suggest that the participants perceive power as an interrelational entity, and that interrelational power is a shared, and negotiated force, enacted through language and within interactions between educators and young children. These findings are interesting considering the ontological and epistemological theoretical underpinnings of this research.

Power was described and observable as an interrelational entity within the classroom, and that interrelational entity was enacted through multiple techniques. One primary technique of power (Gore, 1995) was enacted through the use of language. That is, one frequent technique of power that was described by Niki and Meet, observable during the onsite observation, was the use of language to influence the actions of another individual. Predominantly, language was a directive tool, where Niki and Meet were providing directions to the children, or were themselves the recipients of directions from the children. The use of directive language has ontological implications for reconceptualizing power relations. For example, when the educators use directive language – i.e. "I need you to go to the bathroom" or "go put this on the shelf for me," –

the ontological concern is not that these directives are expressed with malintent, but that language is a powerful tool between educators and young children (Åmot & Ytterhus, 2014). To that end, there are ways of reframing language where educators express their perspective, while still honouring the agency and power of children, including phrasing that promotes a negotiated approach to shared interactions, rather than directives that override children's agency.

While the findings indicate that power was shared or negotiated within the classroom, these findings raise interesting ontological questions for how power informs relationships and interactions between educators and young children. It is helpful to use an example from the onsite observation to frame the argument that follows. Late in the morning of my visit, after the children had been playing for the morning, Niki announced "1-2-3, eyes on me!" calling the children's attention toward her. She announced that it was tidy-up time, and that circle time would begin after tidy-up time was finished. Her request was met with compliance, but it is possible to imagine an alternate scenario, where the children expressed their disinterest in tidying up and instead, wished to continue with their play. In an ontological repositioning of power as a shared and circulating entity, it may, then, be necessary for educators to acknowledge the uncomfortable reality that at times, even in child-centred pedagogies, children's interests may be divergent from educators (Millei, 2012; Wood, 2014). In an ontological framework where power relations are such that the agency and freedom of both educators and children are honoured within the classroom, resistance is a possible, and even likely, component within shared or negotiated power relations.

Similarly, educators must be prepared to face the fluidity of possibility opened by an epistemological stance that situates children as individuals with power and agency. Contemporary discourses of early childhood education posit the production of knowledge as a co-constructed, social practice between educators and children (Cohen, 2008). Foucault (1980) is perhaps most famous for his work on the intersections between power and knowledge, arguing that, "the exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power" (p. 52), and that power/knowledge is a constitutive force, enacted within interactions between individuals.

When Niki and Meet both describe their organization's curriculum model using variations of accepted terminology of child-centred practice (i.e. emergent, Reggio-inspired, children's interests), they are doing so in a way that suggests an epistemological stance that positions children as knowledge producers – and thus, from a Foucauldian (1980) perspective, as individuals with power. The findings are interesting, as they relate to reconceptualist notions of power and agency, and there are key considerations for the reconceptualizing of epistemological stances. When Niki and Meet discuss their program in the context of a learning environment, it is framed as a setting where curricular decisions emerge and are planned or developed as a response to the interests of the children. However, this is contrasted, at times, by the ways in which Meet and Niki prepare and expect the children to use the environment and materials. As in the above discussion on the potential for resistance within reframing early childhood ontologies, epistemological reconceptualists must also be open to the possibility of divergence between the knowledge constructed by children and the intended knowledge planned by educators (Millei, 2012; Wood, 2014).

Regulatory Power

The findings from this study indicate that power was constituted throughout multiple layers of power, and the ways in which power was operationalized have real impacts on the experiences of the educators and children. Here, I discuss power as it relates to the participants' conceptualization and experiences with regulations. Specifically, the educators described their experiences in the classroom as a technique of power (Gore, 1995) under regulations from both their organization, and the Ministry of Education, which regulates early learning environments in Ontario under the *Childcare and Early Years Act* (2015). Discussion of the additional examples the participants offered, including curricular decisions, and power outside of their control, are woven throughout the overarching discussion on regulatory power.

Although Meet and Niki's examples of regulatory power within their organization were largely pragmatic examples of how power is enacted beyond their control, they nonetheless exist as examples of how external techniques of power (Gore, 1995) govern their experiences in their program. Niki and Meet cited their curriculum as a frequent example of power outside of their control, one required by their organization. They did not speak negatively of their curriculum – self-described as emergent, Reggio-inspired curriculum – but their thoughts on curriculum as a technique of power are worth exploring in relation to the available literature. O'Brien (2000) argues that pedagogy is an exercise of power relations, and that Early Childhood Educators must be empowered to be creators of responsive and critical curricula, rather than subjects of curricula. Moreover, Wood (2014) notes the inherent tension between what educators know discursively as 'play-based' or 'emergent' curriculum and proscriptive, standardized

curriculum. While the participants did not describe a standardized, prescribed curricular approach, the ways in which they described their curriculum and feeling beholden to its ideals indicates their sense of powerlessness, rather than what Langford (2010) describes as a co-constructed or democratic approach to teaching and learning.

Similarly, the participants did not speak disdainfully of the Ministry regulations, but spoke of them factually, as guidelines that influence and shape the ways in which Niki and Meet interact with children, time, and the physical environment. Ministry regulations provide a framework for operators and educators; they concern standards for quality early learning environments and on first glance, the standards appear to be pragmatic and reasonable guidelines for practice (*Childcare and Early Years Act*, 2015). However, the ways in which Niki and Meet describe how Ministry guidelines exert power over the structure of their day illuminate some similarities with a Foucauldian (1980) framework of power in society. One clear example that provides interesting insight into the intersecting modes of power – including time, physical space, and interactions between educators and children – is made evident when the educators mentioned the Ministry requirement of two hours of daily outdoor time (*Childcare and Early Years Act*, 2015). On the surface, ostensibly, this regulation is about promoting healthful learning, and while the benefits of outdoor play are numerous, it is possible to imagine a day in the program when children are engrossed in play, occupied, and engaged in deep, meaningful learning experiences with supportive teachers; here, the duty of the teacher, under the expectations of abiding by this regulation, is to interrupt the meaningful experiences and enforce mandatory outdoor time. The educators recognize that, aside from their direct supervisors, this regulation is unenforceable. The Ministry's

licensers enter the program once a year, and are not seen again, unless there are

significant non-compliance issues that necessitate a return visit, or at worst, a revocation

of an early learning environment's licence. Still, educators comply with the regulations,

no matter the consequences to deep and sustained engagement inside the classroom, and

acting under the influence of an unseen force is evidence of Foucault's (1980) notion of

power operating under surveillance. It is important to note that I do not use this example

to position indoor and outdoor learning experiences as ideological opposites, nor do I

intend to disparage or privilege one setting over the other; rather, I seek to point to timed

requirements as an example of power through surveillance (Foucault, 1980; Gore, 1995).

It is similarly possible to imagine a scenario where deep and sustained engagement in

outdoor experiences are interrupted due to educators' perceptions of their time as

bounded by temporal expectations and regulations.

Foucault's work has been used to explore power relations in pedagogy (Gore,

1995), and scholars have taken up Foucault's work in early childhood contexts (Cohen,

2008; MacNaughton, 2005). When Foucault writes of *panopticism* (1980), he describes

the subtle and overt ways that surveillance is an enactment of power, where institutions

are constructed in ways that facilitate surveillance, and how power is constituted through

surveillance by virtue of the design of a space and the ways in which bodies are

positioned within that space. Similarly, Gore (1995) writes of Foucault's influence on

educators' perceptions of surveillance. For instance, when Niki and Meet referred to the

primacy of their need to attend to children's safety and well-being, it is operationalized

through their supervision, and their physical positions within the physical environment.

Power, as a disciplinary force and as a means of keeping order, in this way, is a

circulating entity (Foucault, 1980; Gore, 1995; Millei, 2012). When Niki and Meet described their role as needing to ensure the safety and well-being, it is not that children's safety and well-being are not important, but that Niki and Meet's actions are in response to external pressures, or regulations. When the participants discussed clearing sticks away from the outdoor place space, obstacles are removed pre-emptively, and not always because of imminent danger, but because Niki and Meet perceive that there are potential ramifications for failing to do so. The power of children and educators, in this example, is at odds with the idea of agentic interactions with place (Hackett et al., 2015; Hognestad and Bøe, 2012), because they and their environment are under supervision, and this supervision is multi-layered, with oversight filtering down from the Ministry of Education, the organization, and the educators. This is a pertinent example of how regulatory – or *disciplinary power*, to use a Foucauldian (1980) term – is operationalized within everyday practice. The role of regulatory power is germane to this discussion, because power is enacted through regulations toward children and educators in ways that compromise their individual power and agency.

Power and Temporality

When Meet and Niki discuss how power is enacted through temporalities in their classroom, it is within the context of their routines and regulations which are bounded by time. Niki and Meet describe both themselves and the children in ways that are echoed within the available literature, where educators and children are theorized as temporal subjects (Nuttal & Thomas, 2015; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2010; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012; Rose & Whitty, 2010; Smith, 2014). The educators' conceptualization of power through time is one of near constant subjection, a limit to their freedom, and that when it is in

their control, that it is their role to structure the day, a process that is similarly bound to time by the routines and regulations outside of their control. Power, in this sense, as Foucault (1980) argues, is a reproductive force, where individuals who experience power as a force enacted upon them, reproduce similar power structures within other relationships. While it is important to note that the children were agreeable to the flow of the day and there was no discernable discordance from the children, decisions shaped by the educators' relation to the clock were made by Niki and Meet without consulting the children.

The frequency with which the participants – particularly Niki – referenced the limitations of time and the sense of being bound to the clock in their practice was a surprising finding. Reconceptualist scholars have examined the role of time in early childhood practice (Lenz Taguchi, 2010; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012) and have described the ways in which power is constituted through temporalities in early childhood settings. Lenz Taguchi (2010) argues that the relationship between individuals and the physical environment, time, and materials is a mutually constitutive, repetitive intra-action. This echoes Pacini-Ketchabaw's (2012) work, who explains that clocking practices are intra-active, and that the clock in and of itself is merely an object. The findings were surprising in that the relationship between individuals and the clock are only constituted by power when individuals act upon real or perceived pressure when glancing at the clock. When Niki and Meet describe their perceptions of time as an example of power that imposes limitations on their freedom – and the children's freedom – in their classroom, it is only an example of power when their actions are shifted or influenced by their relation to time.

There are ontological and epistemological concerns raised by thinking through power and temporalities, and reconceptualizing power through time to reflect non-binarized power relations. When Niki and Meet describe their role as arbiters over the routines bounded by time in their classroom, it removes the children's agency and power over their experiences from the discussion. That is, as in my earlier example, although the children were generally compliant with Niki and Meet's actions through time, it is possible to imagine a scenario where they are not compliant. For example, when, in the afternoon of the onsite observation Meet announced that it was time to leave the classroom to go play in the hall, it was a decision in which the children were not consulted. The children complied with his direction, but in an environment where power through temporality is reframed to reflect an ontological and epistemological stance of shared or negotiated power, educators may encounter resistance with children asserting their power as temporal subjects, and refusing to shift activities on the bounds of time.

Power, Space, and Place

Brillante and Mankiw (2015) write of a place-based approach to early learning environments, and argue that children's power and agency is fostered in environments where they experience purposeful interactions between themselves, others, and the physical environment. One key conceptual argument to this thesis is that power operates differently when early learning environments are viewed as *places* rather than *spaces.* The findings from this study suggest that while the participants articulated how power is situated between *space* and *place*, the ways in which techniques of power (Gore, 1995) intersect may complicate how educators conceptualize their classroom in the context of *space* and *place*. Dovey (2010) suggests that, "a large part of what distinguishes place

from space is that place has an intensity that connects sociality to spatiality in everyday life" (p. 3). It would appear possible, then, to conceptualize early childhood settings as *places* that bridge the gap between social and spatial practices; however, Meet and Niki described the challenges in reframing their classroom as an issue of where power is situated and how it is enacted within the context of *space* and *place*.

There are contrasts and similarities between the theory and the practice when framing the findings within the context of the available literature. On power within the context of *space*, when Niki and Meet describe their conceptualization of *space*, it is in a way that situates power outside of their control. When Meet thinks of the environment as a *space*, he describes an environment where the power structure is beyond the limits of the children's power, and that it is merely a space made *for* children, rather than *with* children. But, as Harrison and Dourish (1996) argue, "space is the opportunity; place is the understood reality" (p.1). Further, Hognestad and Bøe (2012) outline three elements of *place*, arguing that, "our relationship to place is constituted in stories and other representations; place learning is local and embodied; and place is a contact zone for cultural contact" (p. 43). Niki and Meet's conceptualization of the environment as space and place differs from the scholarly framing of space and place (Harrison & Dourish, 1996; Hognestad and Bøe, 2012) in that they often describe a resignation to the existing power structures.

Examining the way power in Niki and Meet's classroom is situated within a conceptualization of place is purposeful, because as Satta (2015) explains, early learning environments are often "constructed following the adults' rather than the children's way of seeing things" (p. 182). When Niki and Meet described their perceptions of the

differences between *space* and *place*, each acknowledged the conceptual, or philosophical difference, but ultimately, described how it is their power over the physical environment that governed decisions, such as environmental preparation. This has both ontological and epistemological implications; Hackett (2016) explains that, "movement through place creates embodied, tacit ways of knowing and experiencing the world" (p. 169), and that young children experience *place* as a site for learning and being within. This is not to suggest that children do not learn or experience a sense of being within Niki and Meet's classroom, but in early childhood contexts, power is situated much differently in environments where decisions concerning the physical environment are made *for* children, rather than *with* children. Conceptualizing the early childhood setting as a *place* is one way in which educators and children work *with* one another, in ontological and epistemological stances where power is enacted in shared and negotiated ways.

Exploring how power is situated in Niki and Meet's classroom within the context of *place* matters because, as Curtis (2015) argues, a sense of place, "is key to the development of a deep understanding of time in terms of both personal and collective ideas of history, being the context in which people experience it" (p. 40). When children and educators cultivate a sense of place together, it is an effort that affords each participant power and agency over what is valued. When Niki and Meet described their perceptions of the classroom, and their relation to the concept of *place*, their descriptions were largely projections of how they feel in the classroom and how they feel the children perceive the classroom. Their perceptions and descriptions of practice were continually accompanied by the caveat that there are forces with power beyond their control – regulatory oversight, or organizational oversight, or time constraints – that limited their

capacity to share or negotiate power with the children in cultivating a sense of place. Admittedly, Niki and Meet offered, their efforts are purposeful: they want children to feel comfortable, and there was no indication from the onsite observation that the opposite is true, but it is worth continually reflecting upon how the process of placemaking (Hackett et al., 2015) happens as a collaborative and negotiated practice.

This argument is of continual import in light of the findings within the context of the available scholarship, as researchers continue to situate the responsibility of cultivating a sense of place within the role of educators (Brillante & Mankiw, 2015). As the philosophy of place-based education (Duhn, 2012; Ellis & Strong-Wilson, 2007; Taylor & Giugni, 2012) is developed further, it is necessary to ask who has power in determining what makes a *space* a *place*. In early childhood contexts that purport to be child-centred spaces or that honour children's agency, it is a presumptive action when educators arrange and prepare the physical environment without the input of the children whose learning and experiences are embodied within early childhood settings.

The crux of the argument for reframing early childhood *spaces* as early childhood *places* is that there are meaningful and actionable ways toward reconceptualizing early childhood settings in the context of a place-based approach, and doing so has both ontological and epistemological implications for how power is enacted in early childhood settings. The findings suggest that while Early Childhood Educators may understand intuitively the demarcation between *space* and *place*, that external constraints – real or perceived – are a barrier to actionable change. Power is enacted in a multitude of ways (Foucault, 1980; Gore, 1995), and while the scholarship on *space* and *place* has, at times, addressed power in spatialities (Duhn, 2012; Hackett et al., 2015), there is a limitation

within the existing scholarship that examines the differentiation between *space* and *place* and their effects on how power relations are conceptualized and enacted in early childhood settings.

Implications

Here, I examine the findings and their implications for practice, theory, and future research, and address some key limitations of the study.

Implications for Practice

There are key ontological and epistemological implications for reframing power in early childhood contexts. The findings suggest that power, even in purportedly child-centred environments, is a fluid and circulating force, never resting entirely with educators or children, and that there are meaningful ways in which this can manifest itself in ontological and epistemological stances. Langford (2010) writes that, in the framing of child-centred pedagogies, there is a discursive, "emphasis on individual subjectivity" and that the individualist stance "devalues collective identities and actions" (p. 120). Reframing power relations to reflect shared or negotiated power requires educators to avoid binarized thinking. When Langford (2010) writes of shared power relations, it is precisely in recognition of the rights, agency, and power of both educators and children. As suggested by the findings, power rarely flows unidirectionally, however, in binarized philosophies and pedagogies, to situate power as being diametrically-opposed means that one group is consistently denied agency.

It is helpful to frame some of the implications for practice as they relate to Niki and Meet. MacNaughton and Hughes (2009) establish guidelines for reciprocal research in early childhood contexts, and in my initial meeting with Niki and Meet, I felt that it

was important that they understood that their participation could contribute to the knowledge of scholars and educators, and may also benefit their daily practice. The first and third phases of the data collection process were purposefully arranged, beginning with the interview, which was designed to establish initial reflections and perceptions on past or current practices. The intent behind the journal was to then prompt reflections on possible future practices, or actualizing reconceptualised practices in light of new information and experiences. Niki and Meet's participation indicated a willingness to reflect on their experiences, and an openness to rethinking future practices. This openness to rethinking practices can manifest itself in small, but significant, reflections and reframing of practice. For example, in our initial interview, Meet and Niki, when describing their practice, suggested that they are the primary decision-makers for where furniture and materials are positioned within the room. Contrasting this stance with his final reflective journal, Meet indicated a willingness to consult with children on the layout of the classroom, and acknowledged that doing so would contribute positively to a shared sense of place. With the prevalence of child-centred pedagogies, there may be disparity between how educators perceive power relations within their practice and how power relations are enacted within their practice. The willingness to rethink and reframe practices is valuable within the context of power relations, space, and place, because it bridges a conceptual gap between theory and practice, and ultimately works in the interest of equitable power relations.

Implications for Theory

This research is situated within two complimentary theoretical paradigms, first, drawing from post-structuralist theory of power (Foucault, 1980) and established and

second, leveraging ongoing reconceptualist research and theory in early childhood education (Iannacci & Whitty, 2009; Lenz Taguchi, 2010; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Pence, 2005). Reconceptualist theorists have continually explored power relations in early childhood contexts through theoretical and empirical work (Iannacci & Whitty, 2009; Lenz Taguchi, 2010; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015; Tesar, 2016), in addition to taking up the work of Foucault in early childhood settings (Cohen, 2008; MacNaughton, 2005). This research builds on the work of reconceptualist scholars in two key ways: first, the explicit ontological and epistemological arguments for children's right to share and enact power in early childhood settings, and second, making clear the distinction between *space* and *place*, and arguing that power relations are more likely to be enacted with equity when early childhood environments are viewed through the lens of *place.*

The framing of power relations within an ontological and epistemological discussion on children and childhood addressed a limitation within the existing research. Power relations affect the ways in which educators and young children interact within early childhood settings (Lindahl, 2015), and power relations similarly affect the ways in which knowledge is constituted by power (Brownlee & Berthelsen, 2006; Foucault, 1980). Reconceptualist scholarship emerged as a reaction to the pervasive ontological assumptions of children as incompetent (Cowden, 2016), and ongoing theoretical work continues to contest hierarchical adult-child relationships (Mayall, 2001; Woodrow & Press, 2007). From a reconceptualist framework, the ontological arguments for shared power examine negotiated power through relational ways of being between children and adults (Langford, 2010; Mayall, 2001). Missing from the available literature was an in-depth examination of the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of *space* and

place, and how power is situated differently within conceptualizations of the early childhood setting as *space*, or *place*. It was valuable to address this gap in the research, as philosophical and pedagogical paradigms continually shift, reconceptualizing how children and educators share and negotiate power in their interactions with both each other and the physical environment.

When Niki described her understanding of place as a sense that one is in a, "home away from home" her conceptualization indicates, as explained by Tuan (1977), that children anchor their understanding of place to familiar surroundings – home, most frequently. Although place-based education is an established educational theory and philosophy, and there is existing scholarship on the notion of place in early childhood contexts (Hognestad and Bøe, 2012; Kernan, 2014; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015; Satta, 2015), there is limited research on the differentiation in how and where power is located when early childhood *spaces* are reconceptualised as early childhood *places*. The findings from this study indicate that Early Childhood Educators recognize the concept of *place* as a philosophy where more equitable or shared power relations are fostered. While there were some similarities between the educators' conceptualization of *space* and *place*, it would be useful for continued work on the theory/practice divide.

Implications for Further Research

There is existing, and ongoing research into both power relations (Dahmen, 2014; Lenz Taguchi, 2010; Tesar, 2014) and conceptualizing early childhood settings as spaces and places (Hognestad and Bøe, 2012; Kernan, 2014; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015; Satta, 2015). This study addressed a limitation in the available research and aimed to explore the ways in which power intersects between individuals, space, and place. While

a small-scale case study was useful as an introduction to this line of enquiry, the concept

of power between Early Childhood Educators, and the intersections between power

relations, space, and place, are significant, and require longer, more sustained research.

In-depth ethnographic research into power relations across single or multiple sites would

be a useful contribution to reconceptualist early childhood philosophy and pedagogy.

A significant limitation to the study was the small-scale research design. The

triangulated approach to data collection was intended to establish legitimacy to the

findings (Creswell, 2009), and the participants' perceptions and reflections were largely

corroborated by the onsite observation, which suggests that both Niki and Meet are

reflective educators who are attuned to their pedagogy and philosophy. Contrasting these

findings in relation to future research within different early childhood settings may prove

useful in establishing new theoretical contributions. Scaling up the scope of the research

is one method under which future research would benefit from an ethnographic approach,

profiting from both the scope of gatherable data, and the potential for the development of

more significant narrative and theoretical contributions (Merriam, 2009).

Research into how power is enacted within any segment of society exists in the

broader sociological context, and it is valuable to note *what* or especially *who* is present

or absent from such discussions and to acknowledge further limitations of the research.

Two key exclusions are worth noting as limitations in this study. First, the role of the

body and its relation to power, *space* and *place* are evident in the literature on both power

relations and spatialities (Foucault, 1980; Hackett et al., 2016). This point is

acknowledged at times throughout the study, in both the literature review and in the

presentation of results, but future research would benefit from narrowing the scope to

examine the effect of educators' and children's bodies on power and interactions with *space*, and *place*, as the data provided some, but not enough examples of power enacted through the body to warrant its inclusion as a theme. Second, it is apparent given the scope of the available literature that continued research is needed to explore the intersections between power, *space*, and *place*. Critically, it is apparent in countries (including Canada, where this study was situated) with histories under colonialism, that such discussions are all-too-often lacking the important perspective of *space* and *place* from Indigenous perspectives (Hamm, 2015; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015). The findings from this study did not support drawing connections or references to power, *space*, and *place* and Indigeneity, but future research would benefit from the inclusion of educators' conceptualizations of power and shifting power relations between the notions of *space* and *place* within the context of Indigeneity. The experiences of Indigenous educators and children who navigate their relations to *space* and *place* amidst the legacy and ongoing experiences under colonialism are critical perspectives that necessitate continued representation and the inclusion of Indigenous voices within future scholarship.

One final limitation to the research was that children's perspectives were absent from the research design. The decision to focus on educators was a decision informed by methodological and ethical considerations. Including children's perspectives would have complicated the ethical considerations, extended the time commitment of both the researcher and participants, and potentially affected the manageability of the already sizable quantity of data given the timeline and scope of this research. Waller and Bitou (2011) argue that participatory research with young children is challenging on both

methodological and ethical grounds, and that often, participatory research merely reflects adult assumptions and interpretations of children's experiences. In this research, while Niki and Meet provided thoughtful reflections on their own perceptions of power relations, the discussion was one-sided without the experiences of the children in their classroom.

Echoing many of the conclusions of this work, Waller and Bitou (2011) argue that research with children must honour children's rights as capable agents, and that research with children must rely on an interdependent relationship between educators, researchers, and young children. As the present research aimed to explore the fluidity of power relations in early childhood settings, future work that includes children as participants would be useful for gathering children's perceptions and experiences of power, provided that, in the spirit of equitable power dynamics, researchers honour children's capabilities to narrate their own experiences.

Conclusion

Prevalent discourses in early childhood philosophy have shifted to reflect an ontological and epistemological stance that views children as competent and agentic participants in their learning. The theorizing and enactment of responsive pedagogies has been in kind, and Early Childhood Educators have worked to develop and enact pedagogical practices that reconceptualise power relations in early childhood environments. However, despite the profound philosophical and pedagogical changes that Early Childhood Educators have undertaken, it would seem that the pendulum swing away from teacher-directed pedagogies toward child-centred pedagogies has not always materialized in equitable power dynamics. In some cases, the shift has resulted in the

power imbalances being more explicitly observable due to the obvious contrasts between what is theorized and what is practiced. By avoiding binarized pedagogical stances, both children and educator are afforded time and space to share and negotiate power.

Power relations are further complicated by thinking of early childhood locales as geographical sites. The philosophical and geographical distinctions between *space* and *place* (Tuan, 1977) are significant, and are made more-so by interrogating where power is situated in both distinct conceptualizations. When I argue that power is more likely to be viewed as shared or negotiated when the environment is conceptualized as a *place*, it is precisely because the notion of 'felt value' that Tuan (1977) attributes to *place*, is, in social environments, a co-constructed feeling. Examining power relations through the lens of children's geographies and spatialities may be valuable practice for educators who eschew hierarchical power relations between themselves and young children. Such reflections may prompt meaningful changes in the way environments are prepared and used, with power as a negotiated or shared force resulting in agentic interactions with *place*.

Ultimately, the enactment of power and agency are negotiated acts in early childhood settings. Power is rarely unidirectional, but often complicated by external factors. Educators act in accordance with the regulations and standards of their profession and their organizations, while the divide between what happens in practice, and the discourses of children's power results in philosophical and pedagogical practices that exist within muddled ontological and epistemological stances. Early Childhood Educators must continue to reconceptualise early childhood environments to avoid hierarchical power relations between themselves, young children, and the physical environment.

Philosophies and pedagogies that reflect an understanding of the environment as a *place* with shared meaning can contribute to the cultivation of early childhood *places* where the enactment of power and the construction of knowledge is shared between educators and young children.

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APPENDIX A

Supervisor's Approval

As the supervisor of the Centre, I acknowledge that Cory Jobb is permitted to conduct

research in the preschool classroom at

_____.

Supervisor's name (printed) _____

Supervisor's signature _____

Date _____

Thank you for your time. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to

contact myself, or my faculty supervisor using the contact information below.

Cory Jobb   **Dr. Debra Harwood**
MEd Candidate   **Assistant Professor**
905-934-3534   **905-688-5550 x 5873**
cj12nd@brocku.ca   dharwood@brocku.ca

APPENDIX B

Research Invitation and Consent Form

Title of Study: Power Relations in Early Childhood Education: A Case Study of Perceptions, Space, and Place

Researcher: Cory Jobb, Master of Education Program – Faculty of Education, Brock University

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Debra Harwood, Associate Professor, Brock University

Invitation: My name is Cory Jobb and I am a student researcher conducting a research study under the supervision of Dr. Debra Harwood for a Masters degree in Education at Brock University. The title of the study is Power Relations in Early Childhood Education: A Case Study of Perceptions, Space, and Place, and via one focus group interview with each member of your teaching team, onsite observations, and reflective journaling I am exploring how power relations are enacted between children and educators in early childhood settings, and how power is embedded and enacted within the idea of the classroom as space, or place. The study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Brock University Research Ethics Board (File #16-214).

Background: Shifting perspectives in teaching practice have resulted in a gap between theory and practice. Pedagogical stances tend to fall on two ends of a spectrum – teacher-directed, or child-led practice – however, in thinking of teaching as polar extremes, one side inevitably experiences reduced power and agency within the environment. Where child-led practice has becoming a predominant pedagogical stance, it remains unclear what power relations look like when enacted between educators and young children.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of how power is enacted in one early childhood classroom. The study aims to explore one preschool teaching team and their perceptions of power between themselves, children, and the physical environment. The data collection process aims to provide teachers with a reflective experience that encourages reflection on pedagogical practices, and rethinking who has power in early childhood settings. The results of the study will be used as a requirement for the completion of a Masters thesis in Education.

Invitation: I am seeking the consent of three volunteer participants, who must make up one current preschool teaching team, to take part in one focus group interview, one onsite observation, and four brief

reflective journals, designed to further explore educators' perceptions of how power operates in their classroom. The interview process will take approximately 30-60 minutes and the interview will be recorded on a digital audio device and transcribed to provide data for the analysis. Upon completion of the transcript, you will be emailed a digital copy for your approval, at which point you may make clarifications or changes, or request to withdraw from participation. The review of your transcript will take approximately 30-60 minutes of your time. I am asking for your approval within 7 days, with any changes or requests emailed to me. If I do not receive a response within 7 days, your consent for the inclusion of the data in my findings will be assumed. Upon completion of the research both the audio recording and the transcription will be destroyed to protect your confidentiality. Next, I will spend one day in your classroom making observations. During this day of observation, I will take photographs of your empty classroom, make sketches of the classroom, and gather notes and observations on how power is enacted within your classroom. Last, you will be asked to provide a weekly response to a reflective journaling prompt for four weeks. The journal entries will require between 15-30 minutes of your time, weekly, for four weeks. Upon completion of the journals you will be emailed a copy of your journal transcript All data will remain confidential, and will be destroyed upon completion of the research.

Confidentiality: The information you provide will be confidential and only accessible to the researcher and faculty supervisor. To ensure the safety of the data, you will be asked to choose a pseudonym for the researcher's use during the transcription process. The link connecting this pseudonym to your name will be stored securely in a separate location from your personal information. Your recorded interview will be kept on an encrypted audio recording device, and destroyed upon completion of the research. Your journal entries will be kept on a password secured encrypted website, and your responses will be deleted upon completion of the research. The estimated completion date corresponding with the deletion of data is June 2017. Your name and employer affiliation will not appear in the research results. Given the focus group format, the limits to your confidentiality are dependent on each team member ensuring one another's confidentiality before and after the interview. It is asked that participants respect one another's right to confidentiality as participants in the research.

Right to Withdraw: Your participation is voluntary in this research study. You are entitled to a clear understanding of the process and your role within the research. If at any point before, during, or after the

completion of any stage of the research you decide you no longer wish to participate, it is your right to inform the researcher and your team's data will respectfully be removed from the study. It is your right as a participant to answer or not answer any of the included questions, and the researcher will respectfully change the direction of the conversation.

Potential Benefits and Risks: The benefits to participating in the study include the chance to reflect, as both a team, and as individuals, on power dynamics within your classroom. Similarly, your participation will contribute to the ongoing debate within early childhood education on what power looks like in early childhood classrooms. There are no known significant risks to your participation, however, you may experience discomfort or hesitance in discussing this potentially sensitive topic. Please know that should you feel uncomfortable you are under no obligation to continue the discussion.

Publication of Results: The sharing of research findings is an important part of the research process. As participants in the study, you may be interested to know that the results of the study may be shared in a variety of academic contexts. The findings may be published in research journals, shared at conference presentations, or in academic books. If you are interested in receiving information on the publication of the findings from this study, you may contact myself or Dr. Debra Harwood for further details. Feedback on the findings of the study will also be provided to each participant approximately one month after the completion of the thesis. The estimated time for the availability of feedback is July 2017.

Acknowledgement of Consent

I am interested in participating in the study and have an understanding of what is required of me as a participant in this study. I have asked and received satisfactory answers to any questions I have had regarding my participation, and I agree to participate in this study.

Participant name (printed) _____

Participant signature _____

Date _____

Thank you for your time. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact myself, or my faculty supervisor using the contact information below.

Cory Jobb	**Research Ethics Office**	**Dr. Debra Harwood**
MEd Candidate	**Brock University**	**Assistant Professor**
905-934-3534	**905-688-5550 ext. 3035**	**905-688-5550 x 5873**
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APPENDIX C

Interview Questions

Each interview used the following scripted introduction, scripted questions and prompts

as a framework. Emergent questions are reflected in the interview transcripts.

I want to begin by reading you my research questions to provide some context for our

conversation:

1. *What are the ways in which power relations are enacted within the early learning*

   environment?

2. *How do perceptions of the environment as place and space contribute to how*

   power relations are enacted?

Scripted Questions/Prompts

1. Tell me about power in your classroom.

2. Tell me about an experience(s) you've had as an educator that shows how your power

in the classroom is enacted. Similarly, tell me about an experience(s) that shows how the

children's power in the classroom is enacted.

3. Tell me about what informs the way you interact with children, and what power, either

your power, or the children's power looks like in those interactions.

4. Is there a difference between envisioning the classroom as a space, and the classroom

as a place? How do you think of your classroom? How do the children think of your

classroom? Tell me about why you feel that way, and if, or how power has a role in your

perception of the environment.

5. What are the limits to power – yours, and the children's – in the classroom?

APPENDIX D

Observation Protocol

Time:

Place:

Setting:

Who?	How was power enacted? (and form of power. i.e. language, action)	Description of events.

APPENDIX E

Reflective Journaling Prompts

Week 1

For this first journal prompt, as this is a reflective exercise, could you tell me something you have changed, or have thought about changing about your practice, keeping the focus on how power is enacted between you and the children.

Week 2

How is power represented in how you spend your time with the children, or in the structure of your day? Do the children have power in choosing how they spend their time, or in the structure of the day? Why, or why not?

Week 3

In our interview, I asked you to think about place and space, and if, or how power is represented in the environment when thought of as place or space. Where is your power, and what does it look like in planning and participating in the use of the environment? Where is the children's power, and what does it look like in planning, and participating in the use of the environment?

Week 4

For this final journal prompt, I'd like you to write about how you might re-think the environment in terms of place and space, how it might change the layout, and how power dynamics might shift in the process. How might thinking about the environment as either place or space change how you and the children interact in the classroom?

APPENDIX F

Feedback Letter

Title of Study: Power Relations in Early Childhood Education: A Case Study of Perceptions, Space, and Place

Researcher: Cory Jobb, Master of Education Program – Faculty of Education, Brock University

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Debra Harwood, Associate Professor, Brock University

Dear Participant,

Thank you for taking part in this recent research study, entitled 'Power Relations in Early Childhood Education: A Case Study of Perceptions, Space, and Place'. Your perspectives and reflections on the power dynamics within your classroom provided valuable insight into some of the pertinent pedagogical and philosophical questions of working with young children.

The findings will be gathered and written about for my master's thesis, as a requirement for the Master of Education program at Brock University. Findings from such studies may offer valuable insight to other educators and researchers, and as such, the thesis will be made available in the Brock library database.

Attached you will find a summary of the findings from the study. If interested, I would be happy to discuss my results and how your participation has contributed to the growing field of knowledge in early childhood education.

Best wishes,

Cory Jobb

Cory Jobb	**Dr. Debra Harwood**
MEd Candidate	**Assistant Professor**
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APPENDIX G

Recruitment Tweet

For recruitment purposes, I will use my Twitter account to distribute the research invitation (Appendix B). My twitter account, found at

http://www.twitter.com/coryjobbRECE is used to communicate on professional/academic matters, and to communicate with other academics and the online early childhood education community. A sample tweet, provided below, will provide a link to a Google Doc containing the research invitation. The tweet will be non-coercive, and any perceived feelings of coercion are mitigated by the design of the research invitation, where contact is initiated by interested participants.

Sample Tweet

Seeking early childhood educators to participate in a research study on the enactment of power in ECE. Follow the link for more information.

*Note: Liking or re-tweeting this post may compromise confidentiality, should you become a participant in the study.

APPENDIX H

Parent Information Letter

Dear families,

My name is Cory Jobb and I am a graduate student from the Faculty of Education at Brock University. I am informing you that I will be in your child's program for one day observing the classroom and your child's teachers for a research study entitled "Power in Early Childhood Education: A Case Study in Perceptions, Place, and Space". In this study I am researching how Registered Early Childhood Educators describe and embody power dynamics between children, and the physical environment.

Your child(ren) will not be identified in the data, and I will strive to be as minimally disruptive to their daily routines as possible.

I appreciate your understanding, as a Registered Early Childhood Educator and a parent of a young child myself, I know the importance of trusting relationships between parents, ECEs, and young children. I look forward to joining the program for a day and learning from your child's teachers and the classroom they share together.

Should you have any questions about the study, or about the research process, please feel free to contact either myself, my faculty supervisor at Brock, Dr. Debra Harwood, or the Research Ethics Board at Brock University, who provided their approval that I have taken great care in ensuring that the research will be conducted ethically and responsibly.

Sincerely,

Cory Jobb

Cory Jobb	**Dr. Debra Harwood**
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