

Child Care Subsidies and Child Development: How Four  
Mothers Story their Experiences of their Child(ren)'s Development

by

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### **Abstract**

This study's purpose was to allow space for the voice of mothers in the realm of child care subsidy and child development research. Four Canadian mothers storied their experiences of their child(ren)'s development during a time in which they lacked child care subsidies. Each participant participated in a semi-structured interview designed to invoke narratives relating to their experience of their child(ren)'s development. Though each of the participants' stories was analyzed individually, a cross-sectional analysis revealed common themes which spanned across each of their stories. These themes included a desire for a community, a sense of struggle, feelings of guilt, and changes. The mothers shared, through their narratives, that each perceived lack of child care subsidies as negatively affecting their child (ren)'s development. Implications of the study's findings on social work practice at various levels of intervention were discussed, as well as recommendations for future research inquires.

## **Preface**

All conducts of this research were implemented with adherence to the guidelines and ethical grounds for research involving human subjects presented by the University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board. Approval was granted under the certificate number H10-03065 by the Behavioural Research Ethics Board.

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## **Chapter 1 – Introduction**

The study of child care subsidy receipt, particularly in the context of promoting women's labour market participation is a prominent area of focus in academic inquiry. Specifically in the realm of child care, the government's aim has been to drastically reduce social spending, and has managed this reduction by allowing for the complete restructuring of the child care subsidy system. The restructuring of the system has shifted the attachment of child care subsidy from the child to the parent. Rather than utilizing child care subsidies to continue to promote child development, the emphasis is to encourage and promote employment of lower income families, and specifically, lower income families that have been identified as being 'dependant' on the state. Therefore, any research in the area of child care subsidy has heavily focused on whether or not the receipt of child care subsidy promotes employment for lower income families. The above is especially true in relation to the employment of women.

### *A Brief History*

Canada, during the period of the Second World War implemented national social welfare policies. These policies included child care subsidies, universal health care, old-age pensions and veteran's pensions. The development of this 'welfare state' was premised on the belief that the government, as well as employers, had a responsibility in maintaining income security for all its inhabitants (Baker, 2006). In the 1970s, national policies once again included social welfare policies. Some of these social programs were designed to ensure that children had a good start in life as it was recognized that child poverty and lack of emphasis on child development had long term negative consequences for children (National Child Benefit Report (NCB), 2007). During this time, child care centres continued to expand and grow, and thousands of families received

child care subsidies which ensured children maintained a safe and appropriate place to be cared for while parents were at work or looking for employment (Friendly & Prentice, 2009).

### *Changes to the Welfare State*

The development of the child tax benefit (CTB) marked the end of universal income benefits for families in Canada (Olsen, 2007) and in 2009, the Federal Conservative government implemented the Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB) of \$100 per month, for each child under the age of six (Canada Revenue Agency, 2010). The benefit is a slim measure when child care expenditures across Canada average approximately \$400 to \$1200 per month, per child, depending on province (BCNDP, 2009). The United States has also had increasingly stringent requirements for welfare recipients accessing welfare, and as the economy and welfare policies continues to erode, low income children and families are becoming increasingly more vulnerable.

### *Women and Poverty*

Currently, the highest incidence of poverty for lower income families is among female led single-parent homes at 38.4% (Hunter, 2006) and Statistics Canada highlights that more than half of all people living in Canada are female (Statistics Canada, 2004). In 2005, there were approximately 16.1 million females in Canada which represents 50.4% of the overall population (Statistics Canada, 2004). Statistics Canada (2004) reported that 38% of all families headed by lone-parent mothers had incomes which fell below the after-tax Low Income Cutoff (LICO). The LICO is determined by the portion of income a family utilizes for food, shelter and clothing. Statistics Canada (2012) reports that families who fall below the LICO utilize 63% of their income for food, shelter and clothing, in comparison to the majority of Canadian families, who utilize 43% of their income on food, shelter and clothing. This is a significant portion of



Canada's population considering 38% of the population are lone mothers caring for children who are more likely to experience poverty, as well as lack stability in child care arrangements (Baker, 2006).

More recently, the federal and provincial governments and territories have suggested that social income programs create dependency among recipients and therefore cause harm by keeping them from paid employment (Hunter, 2006). Hunter (2006) shares that the current belief is that people are poor because they do not have a job and if they are moved off welfare by supports such as the Child Tax Benefit (CTB) program and into full time employment they will no longer be dependent on the state. Yet, even with the advent of workfare, a strategy in which welfare recipients have to meet certain participation requirements to continue to receive their welfare benefits, child poverty rates in Canada continue to increase and the province of British Columbia has the highest incidence of child poverty at 18% throughout the country (Hunter, 2006; Baker, 2006). Russell, Harris, & Gockel (2008) note that there has been a seven-fold increase in the risk of child protection investigations for suspected abuse or neglect for families living in poverty. This is alarming, and worthy of note as parents parenting in poverty are more likely to be scrutinized and stigmatized if their children display any form of 'inappropriate' behaviours. Yet, in order to curtail social spending and reduce dependency the government continues to cut social programs that have, in the past, benefited lower income families, such as child care subsidies.

### *Child Care Subsidies*

Child care subsidies have had a long history in Canada, as well as the United States, having first been created for the sole purpose of allowing women the chance to seek employment while their husbands were at war (Friendly & Prentice, 2009). As the number of eligible workers

decreased and thousands of men were sent overseas for war time efforts women took over employment positions that had once been occupied by men. This meant that while the majority of women were at work, they needed a safe and reliable place to care for their children and it was at this time that child care centres began to flourish. At this time the government also began to provide child care subsidies to working women in order to promote their continued employment. With the end of the war, however, the government rescinded child care subsidies and encouraged women to return to the home (Friendly & Prentice, 2009).

Child care subsidy regulations currently differ from province to province. Since this study is being completed in British Columbia (B.C), I have interviewed women who reside in B.C. In B.C. in order to be eligible to acquire a child care subsidy a person requires one of the following reasons for needing child care (MCFD, 2012). A person may be employed or self-employed, attending an educational institution, seeking employment or participating in an employment-related program. The person may also have a medical condition that interferes with their ability to care for their child(ren), have a child attending a licensed preschool, and/or have been referred by a Ministry of Child and Family Development (MCFD) worker (MCFD, 2012). Proof of income below a certain cut-off is also required. Through the implementation of these more stringent requirements to receive child care subsidies the government has hoped to further promote employment and reduce reliance on the child care subsidy system.

### *Mothers as Parents*

Throughout the literature review I noted that much emphasis has been placed upon the utilization of the word “parents,” yet many studies did not define exactly what was meant by the term. The word parents could have a variety of meanings in relation to people involved in a child's life and could include, but is not limited to: step-parents, same-sex parents, half-siblings,

and extended family units. Butler, Deirdre, & Tregaskis (2007) write that often people's stories, especially those of women, have been told by others, such as professionals and researchers, who at times present their own perspectives of females' narratives, thus imposing professional meaning upon their stories (Butler et al., 2007). I noted that in using the term 'parents' as a blanket term to define those who care for children that there was a general disregard for the specific experiences of mothers; experiences which have been specifically shaped by child care subsidy policies. Therefore, I would like to highlight that for the purposes of this paper I will be specifically sharing the experiences of females, over the age of 19, who define themselves as mothers, whatever that may mean to them. I further provide my rationale as to why I chose to interview mothers for the purposes of this study in the literature review.

### *Rationale*

In choosing to examine mothers' "stories" in this research study, I hope to explore whether or not mothers identify a connection between child care subsidy receipt and their child(ren)'s growth. I chose to interview mothers specifically because of the lack of attention to mothers' narratives in the literature. Through this research process I intend to share the mothers' "stories" of their experiences and how they construct their subjective realities in the form of narratives. I will also describe the epistemological assumptions that govern the primary research objective. This analysis will serve as a basis for positioning and framing the components of the study as I engage with the stories of four mothers.

### *Practice Implications*

The implications for children and families lacking stability in child care arrangements have plagued me throughout my time as a social worker. I feel this issue is very important for many social workers, specifically those who work with children. Many social workers utilize

child development assessment tools as a means with which to determine whether or not a child may be receiving appropriate care or may be in need of protection. These were precisely the skills I learned in gaining a child welfare specialization. In the terms of my personal experiences in child care settings I have over heard other care workers commenting negatively on a child's behaviour and likening the 'bad' behaviour to 'bad' parenting. This particular mother later shared that she herself had noted changes in her child's behaviour and that she felt these changes were in part due to a "string of bad luck" with child care providers. She shared that she refused to access MCFD for support as she did not want to be seen as a 'welfare' mom. This comment demonstrated that she believed that mothers who utilized MCFD services were considered 'welfare' moms, a label that in her mind held much stigma. Through my experiences in listening to these women's stories, I am concerned that without stable, quality child care there is a possibility of a child's development being negatively affected. The results of such could potentially mean that these mothers may face more formal involvement with MCFD, as a child's developmental markers is a tool in which social workers utilize to assess whether or not a child is being appropriately cared for.

### *Locating Oneself*

In my work as a ministry liaison social worker and a youth worker at Kiwassa Neighbourhood House and Kidsafe, I saw many mothers struggling to find appropriate, affordable child care for their children. Due to the lack of child care services and overflowing child care centres, as well as a lack of child care subsidies, I noted many of these parents accepting any form of child care they could secure. In many cases, hiring professionally trained child care providers was difficult at best, and the new definition of 'affordable' and 'quality' included "whatever they could get." More than one parent shared that because of the difficulty in

securing childcare they noticed changes in their children's language capacities and their children were displaying a variety of “strange” behaviours. The mothers expressed that the child care system was the most difficult one they have ever had to navigate and due to the struggle to secure child care they felt outcomes for their children were poor.

*As a Lower Income Child*

Having been raised by low income parents myself, I am often sensitive to the struggles that low income families’ face. At the age of ten and eleven, my brother being two years younger than I, we both were left home alone. This meant we were expected to cook for ourselves, complete our homework by ourselves, and regulate our own bedtimes and whatever care needs may have arisen. I remember, quite vividly, calling my mom at work to mediate conflict between my brother and I over the phone. This was a difficult time for us as we spent most of our time fighting and trying to parent each other as well as ourselves. My mother stated that child care was “too expensive and no one would look after us for what she could afford to pay, so we would have to be ‘responsible’ and take care of ourselves.” In this respect I matured rather quickly as my brother and I were left to figure out ‘parenting’ by ourselves.

When I work with parents who are struggling financially to provide stability in care arrangements for their children, I cannot but feel a sense of hopelessness. Child care policies, rather than being utilized as a means to support families in securing child care, tend to emphasize cost-effectiveness. The government’s purpose in implementing child care subsidies has been to promote employment, in the hopes that paid employment will reduce government expenditures in the realm of welfare costs and child care costs. The notion is that paid employment is superior in comparison to ‘relying’ on government programs for support. Thus the implementation of

child care subsidy has been a means in which to promote cost-effectiveness or cost reduction strategies for government budgets.

Thus, mothers face the choice between accessing a limited subsidy, and potentially risk putting their child in substandard daycare, or either accessing welfare benefits and continue to be stigmatized as a ‘welfare’ mom. Each day spent with these women I am reminded of my own childhood and am frustrated that in the last twenty years government policies, in the realm of child care, have yet appeared to make any significant positive changes. In this regard, I have seen mothers who bring their children to work and women who have arranged a myriad of care providers simply so their child can be cared for. I have witnessed mothers who have been in trouble with child protection workers for leaving their child home alone because it was safer than leaving them with the woman who lived next door. Yet, those mothers who need to rely on governmental funding to continue supporting their children are stigmatized as ‘lazy, welfare moms,’ a phrase which possesses many negative connotations.

### *Development and Growth*

For the purposes of this study I utilize the word ‘growth,’ rather than the word ‘development’ when asking participants about their experiences of their child’s development when there is lack of child care subsidies. I felt the connotations surrounding the word ‘development’ were inherently academic, the word having been utilized by researchers and professionals throughout the literature to describe and identify changes in the stages of children. Since my intent in this study was to give space (Creswell, 2007) for the voice of women, I had hoped that by utilizing the word growth rather than development I could alleviate the emphasis on academic language. However, this proved not to be the case, as during the interview process, most of participants did revert to the word development in order to describe their child’s growth.

This may have been due to the fact that three of the women in the study identified as having some professional background and training in child development.

### *Adopting a Constructivist Position*

The basis for this study is not only located in external experiences associated with mothers and child care subsidies, but also in my own work as a social worker, a researcher, and a child who lacked child care. Therefore, I acknowledge that the results of this research are products of co-construction and have arisen as a product or result of my interaction with research participants. This position is consistent with a constructivist orientation in qualitative research, particularly when one considers the acknowledgement of reality as “co-constructed,” and the abandonment of objectivity, as compromising elemental components of this epistemological lens (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Creswell, 2006).

I believe that adopting a constructivist position may be appropriate when engaged in research that is concerned with issues of women. Qualitative research requires that one adopt a reflexive position, specifically as the product of such inquiry is likely to be framed and conceptualized entirely differently as to the extent to which the researcher acknowledges their own locations throughout the research process (Creswell, 2006). In adopting a constructivist position, I have relinquished claims to objectivity in recognizing the intersubjective basis and nature of my study, while at the same time, constantly “checking” and re-constructing my interpretation of these experiences in order to strengthen the authenticity and genuineness of my findings. These processes of practicing “co-construction” will be elaborated as I discuss issues of credibility in chapter three.

## Chapter 2 – Literature Review

In this chapter, I present the reasoning for the development and creation of my study. I begin by providing a historical overview of both Canadian and American literature in the realm of child care and child care subsidies and discuss the rationale for the creation of these subsidies. The majority of research in the realm of child care subsidy has been presented through the lens of the professional. Also, policies with regards to child care subsidy have been created as a means to promote women's employment, rather than promote child development. I also outline the severe neglect in current research related to the effects that child care subsidies have on children's development. Through the process of this literature review I provide the rationale for choosing to design a research study that specifically addresses mothers' perspectives of the lack of child care subsidies on their child(ren)'s development. The section concludes with a framework for pursuing the research question being considered.

### *Child Care Subsidies, a History*

In Canada, child care subsidy has been linked to mothers' employment since World War I when child care centres first began to appear as a result of women's increased employment in the war effort. At that time, child care programs were provided by educational, philanthropic, or religious organizations, often led by prominent women (Friendly & Prentice, 2009). These first child care centres were created in response to changing social conditions and the pressures of industrialization, as well as the increased need for women to work outside the home (Friendly & Prentice, 2009). At the end of the war, the federal government stopped the funding for free child-care and tax concessions were rescinded to encourage women to leave the workforce (Friendly & Prentice, 2009). This put an end to Canada's first and only national child care program. Canada then introduced its first universal welfare program, the family allowance, or "baby bonus;"



however, the program was only designed to help families recover from the cost of the war and did not cover any out-of-home child care costs. Although the government did rescind the child care subsidy, many of the women who entered the labour force remained and female work participation rates never returned to pre-war levels (Friendly & Prentice, 2009).

In the late 1800s, in the United States, the child care system was characterized by the settlement house movement which included a push to expand child care centers for single mothers who had to work (Fuller, Holloway & Liang, 1996). Congress redoubled this effort during World War II, rapidly expanding centre based programs for female factory workers. In the 1930s, federally funded nursery schools were established to create jobs for unemployed teachers, nurses, and other female dominant professions (Fuller et al., 1996). In 1965, the American government implemented the Head Start program, a child development program, created in order to serve low-income children and their families (Fuller et al., 1996). This program was designed to serve children from birth to age five in order to provide educational support for children and parents to improve the child's social competence, learning skills, health and nutrition and promote their school readiness.

In 1966 the Canadian federal government introduced a new cost-sharing arrangement with provinces, the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP), in an effort to consolidate Social Assistance and other income security and social service programs (Hick, 2004). The 1980s and 1990s in Canada and the United States were marked by further welfare reforms. The reforms were designed to reduce social assistance expenditures, and dependence on the government, in order to reduce government costs, as well as to encourage adult welfare recipients into the workforce (Cleveland & Hyatt, 2003). In 1996 the federal government announced its intention to dramatically overhaul the social welfare system, abolished CAP and replaced it with the Canada Health and Social

Transfer (CHST). This now meant that provinces received fewer monies for social expenditures than prior to the reform and child care, as a priority, fell to the wayside (Friendly & Prentice, 2009; Westhues, 2006; Hick, 2004).

### *Policy Changes*

Cleveland & Hyatt (2003) further outline the types of policy changes that have occurred in the Canadian welfare system over the last thirty years. These changes have included: establishing a life time limit on Income Assistance, Work for Welfare (workfare of training requirements), cuts to income assistance, wage supplements or increases in minimum wage, tax benefits for low-income earners on conditional employment and a decrease in child care subsidies. Moreover, the consensus among child care subsidy researchers is that the receipt of child care subsidies does promote employment (Lopez, 2010; Blau, 2003) which is primarily based in empirical evidence relating child care costs to employment outcomes (Connelly, 1992; Kimmel, 1995, 1998; Anderson & Levine, 2000; Connelly & Kimmel, 2001; Blau & Robins, 1988; Blau & Hagy, 1998).

### *Current Child Care in Canada and the United States*

During the 2004 election campaign, the Canadian Liberals promised to build a national universal and high-quality Early Childhood Education and Care System (ECEC) coined “the Foundations program,” as ECEC was considered to be beneficial to parents and children. However, in the 2006 election the Harper Government opposed the creation of the Foundations program, stating it was “institutional” and a “one-size-fits-all” program and cancelled the ECEC agreement. The newly elected government then introduced the Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB) where each family would receive \$100 per month, per child under the age of six (Friendly & Prentice, 2009; Olsen, 2007; Westhues, 2006).

In 1996 in the U.S., the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWOR) consolidated four child care subsidy programs for low-income families into a single grant called the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) (Blau & Tekin, 2007). The Act increased funding for child care subsidies and gave states more flexibility in creating subsidy program rules. This Act also replaced the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) with Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) which now includes strict work requirements and a lifetime limit of five years on the receipt of benefits paid for by federal funds (Cleveland & Hyatt, 2003). Perhaps due to these significant changes in welfare policies over the last ten to fifteen years, the United States and Canada now lag behind almost all the major advanced industrialized countries in regards to supply, quality and affordability of out-of-home care services for children under age of five (Kamerman, 1991; UNICEF, 2008).

#### *Lack of Progress*

The Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have both highlighted Canada's and the United States lack of progress in the realm of early childhood education and child care (UNICEF Report Card 8, 2008). Canada failed to attain nine of UNICEF's (2008) ten benchmark indicators of quality and access in ECEC provisions and the United States failed to attain eight out of ten benchmark indicators (Friendly & Prentice, 2009; UNICEF Report Card 8, 2008). Currently, in both countries, child care is a user-fee service, almost entirely privatized and regulated under social welfare departments. This leads to child care services which are often unavailable and expensive and lower quality of care as limited public financing forces programs to operate as cheaply as possible (Friendly & Prentice, 2009).

### *The Need for Child Care*

The need for child care in Canada and the United States has risen steadily over the last decade (Huang, 2006). Since 1997, there has been an increase in child care closures in British Columbia whereas 34% of centres and 48% of the 2287 family child-care facilities that operated in 1997 were closed by 2001 (Kershaw, Forer & Goelman 2005). This high rate of closure for child care centres affects parents' access to affordable, appropriate childcare and the continued decrease in child care subsidies raises questions surrounding parents' ability to supplement their own parenting with quality formal support. Without access to reliable childcare, families are finding it increasingly difficult to support themselves and their children (Friendly & Prentice, 2009).

### *The Four Perspectives in Child Development*

There are four current voices or perspectives in the realm of child care as identified by Ceglowski & Bacigalupa (2002); Ceglowski (2004); and Katz (1993). These four perspectives include, as Katz has coined the terms, the “top-down” perspective which consists of the researchers and professional’s voice, the “outside-in” perspective, which includes the voice of parents, the “inside-out” perspective which includes the voice of child care staff and the “bottom-up” perspective which outlines the perceptions of children in child care. Although four possible perspectives exist in the realm of child care as identified by Katz (1993), the prevailing definition of child care quality is heavily influenced by the “top-down” approach or the researchers/professionals’ perspectives. This perspective has dominated child care research for many years, and although it is continuously argued that all four perspectives need to inform current child care regulations and policies, it still remains that the researcher and professional perspective is considered far more often than the remaining three.

### *The Professionals*

Urie Bronfenbrenner is generally regarded as one of the world's leading scholars in research on policy in child development. In Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), he outlines four types of systems. These systems include the *microsystem* (such as the family or classroom); the *mesosystem* (which is two microsystems in interaction); the *exosystem* (external environments, which indirectly influence development, e.g., parental workplace); and the *macrosystem* (the larger socio-cultural context). Dupere, Crosnoe & Dion (2010) note that Bronfenbrenner posits that each system contains roles, norms and rules that can powerfully shape an individual's development. These roles, norms and rules are important factors to understand as by manipulating one of these factors in each system one could promote positive child development (Dupere, Crosnoe & Dion, 2010; Holloway & Fuller, 1999). Unfortunately, this theory, which proved to be highly effective in promoting child's development, also promoted the heavy emphasis on the researcher's or professional's perspective in the realm of child care, and many child care centres began to vigorously adopt developmental approaches to child care.

In 1987 the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) began a process of articulating standards for the profession and published guidelines for what was considered "developmentally appropriate" practice to be used in evaluating child care centres. The guidelines reflected a general interpretation of development according to Piaget. Piaget's research, combined with practice based suggestions concerning the role of the teacher, conceptualized parents primarily as the recipients of and consumers of information (Holloway & Fuller, 1999). Guidelines included statements such as, "most parents do not understand how young children learn, and make negative comments about developmentally appropriate practice due to economic pressure, their own self-esteem, media misrepresentation, and the proliferation

of inappropriate programs” (Holloway & Fuller, 1999). Although these guidelines have been somewhat updated since 1987 and current studies are beginning to include the voice of parents in child development research, the emphasis in the realm of child development remains whether or not parents understand or ‘appreciate’ practices considered beneficial by early childhood educators, rather than focusing on the parents’ perceptions of current child care practices (Holloway & Fuller, 1999).

### *The Parents*

The concept of parents as consumers who can make informed choices about child care has been quite controversial, due to the emphasis and reliance on professionals’ perspectives (Cryer & Burchinal, 1997). Mason & Kuhlthau (1992) and Powell (2002) found that most parents were generally more satisfied with the care their child received in comparison to professionals’ opinions and provided higher ratings of child care centres in comparison to educators. It has been proposed that the information parents use to make their child care decision may be imperfect (Cryer & Burchinal, 1997) and that parents may simply not be able to admit that they have chosen an inappropriate placement for their child and therefore require further education (Cryer & Burchinal, 1997; Gamble, Ewing & Wihelm, 2008). Yet, Gamble et al., (2008) found that parents do possess a more coherent view and deeper understanding of important characteristics that affect their child’s development than previously believed and that parents *are* concerned about their children’s development needs and school preparedness.

Although parents tend to rate child care centres higher than professionals, parents shared that for them, important factors in child care arrangements for their children do indeed include health and safety criteria, the personal characteristics of the caregiver, and the level of parent caregiver communication, similar to professional’s interpretations of what consists of quality

care (Cryer & Burchinal, 1997). Parents also identified other factors as important for their children's care which include cost, availability, location, flexibility of hours, the type of environment, safety, program goals, and staff to child ratios (Holloway & Fuller, 1999; Gamble et al. 2008; Emlen, 1999).

The discrepancy between professionals' and parents' perspectives has not only fostered tension between the two groups, but also demonstrates that both groups may have differing developmental needs and outcomes for children (Early & Burchinal, 2001; Cryer & Burchinal, 1997; Hofferth, 1992; Mason & Kuhlthau, 1992; Pungello & Kurtz-Costes, 1999). These differing perceptions may lead to stigmatization, arguably for the parents, as it is not without merit to say that the professionals' do possess much more power in implementing child rearing practices they deem are developmentally appropriate. In this respect parents have been seen simply as recipients of information and education rather than collaborators and their perceptions generally come in second to those of the professionals (Ceglowski & Bacigalupa, 2002). This is further highlighted by the current emphasis on the professional perspective throughout the research and literature on child development (Ceglowski & Bacigalupa, 2002). The professional's continue to maintain more power to assess and to define children's development as 'good,' or 'lacking,' which in turn can lead to defining parents as 'adequate' or 'bad' parents. Some professional's, such as MCFD workers, possess the power to mandate parents to attend parenting classes for 'bad' parenting, parents are then mandated to learn 'appropriate' parenting skills to ensure they are promoting their child's 'best development.' This in turn may cause frustration for parents as they may not feel heard, they may feel powerless, and may internalize feelings of shame and/or guilt for not having provided the best care for their child(ren), as defined by the professionals, as possible.

Cryer & Burchinal (1997) believe that professionals need to understand what parental visions are for their children in that parent's perspectives may broaden the prevailing parameter of program quality. This would not eliminate or lessen the importance of the top-down approach in definitions of child outcomes, but expand it to include parents' perspectives (Ceglowski & Bacigalupa, 2002). This also means that the discrepancy between the parental and professional perspective needs to be reevaluated and better integrated, in the hopes that including the voice of both groups will broaden the scope of child care programs. This coming together or 'joining' of these two groups could in turn possibly enhance child care centres, and shed a more collaborative perspective on the allocation of funds for and delivery of these services (Cryer & Burchinal, 1997).

#### *Child Care Subsidies*

Although child care subsidies are seen as a way to promote mother's employment, they are extremely limited considering they have become one of the main policy instruments for helping welfare recipients move into the workforce and for keeping low-income families from becoming welfare dependant (Blau, 2002). Access to affordable child care is a critical precursor to employment for many parents, as working poor families typically spend a third of their incomes on child care (Crawford, 2006; Hofferth, 1999). Subsidies are mostly accessed by mothers, and only then when a mother begins to work (Blau & Robins, 1989). The difficulty in tying subsidy eligibility so closely to work means that women who lose their jobs face no income, lack of employment insurance, and no continued subsidy (Ha & Meyer, 2009). Problems in maintaining flexible quality child care can lead single mothers to leave jobs which can adversely affect attendance, work hours and career advancement (Danziger & Otlmans, 2004). Depending on a mother's income, the quality of child care that is available can be unevenly distributed, and could



potentially compromise a child's development. Many working poor and low income families must also choose from very limited options (Ceglowski & Bacigalupa, 2002).

Mothers tend to rely on informal child care arrangements when first participating in welfare to work programs due to continued barriers in accessing and securing affordable child care (Fuller et al., 1999). Fuller et al. (1999) found that families living below the poverty level as is defined by the Low Income Cutoff (LICO), relied heavily on relatives to care for their children. Families with a more substantial income used non-relative care as frequently as relative care. When there is a more stable income, mothers are more likely to choose a child care centre. It is found that children from poor households benefit most from high-quality care, but are less likely to be enrolled in high quality programs. This is due to uneven access to high-quality options in their neighbourhoods. "Welfare to Work" programs have focused heavily on policies that promote mother's employment, and have yet to take into consideration the positive results of high-quality child care for children's developmental needs.

### *Child Development*

Infancy and the preschool years are characterized by amazing growth in children's capacities for language, communication, self-regulation, and internalization of standards for behaviour, all of which are important developmental tasks for early childhood (Hungerford, 2006). High-quality care contributes to children's cognitive, social and emotional development, with stability being one component of quality child care. Children in stable environments are more likely to receive appropriate responses from their caregivers, enjoy more secure attachments, participate in higher development levels of play, and foster stronger language skills (Kershaw et al. 2005; Waldfogel, 2001). Research shows that developmental experiences during the first few years of a child's life have lasting effects on cognitive and behavioural well-being

(Heckman & Materov, 2004; Le, Miller, Heath, & Martin, 2005; Lynch, 2004). Kershaw et al. (2005); Keating & Hertzman (1999) and Shonkoff & Phillips (2000) highlight that disruption in care may have serious long-term implications for children, especially since child development is susceptible to environmental stimuli and high-quality care does contribute positively to children's cognitive, social and emotional development, with stability being one component of quality child care (Huang, 2006). Children in stable environments are more likely to receive appropriate responses from their caregivers, enjoy more secure attachments, participate in higher development levels of play, and foster stronger language skills (Kershaw et al., 2005).

### *Attachment*

Bowlby's attachment theory outlines that a child's early relationship with a caregiver creates mental representations that become the blueprint for children's future behaviour (Van Eecke et al., 2006). This behavioural map determines whether or not children will feel anxious, happy, sad or confused and facilitates a physiological pattern of responding to caregivers. If children are suffering with attachment issues early in life, especially with relation to their primary care giver, their relationship 'blue-print' may be affected and the chances of creating future healthy relationships can be compromised (Watanura, Kryzer & Roberston, 2009). The quality of caregiving a child receives and the quality of the relationship the child has with his or her caregivers are likely to be important sources of support for the child (Love, Harrison, Sagi-Schwartz, Ijzendor, Ross, Ungerer, 2003). The fact that child development has not been taken into consideration in relation to child care subsidies is a fact that is appalling and frightening considering child development is incredibly susceptible to environment changes and lack of consistency receipt of child care subsidies would be better off attached to encouraging and fostering child development (Kesiktas, Sucuoglu, Keceli-Kaysili, Akalin, Gul & Yildirim, 2009).

### *High Quality Care*

Studies show positive effects of high-quality center-based care on children's cognitive growth and development (Kamerman, 1991; Blau, 2000). Ample evidence suggests that the quality of child care is associated with positive child development outcomes in multiple domains (Loeb, Fuller, Kagan & Carrol, 2004). In 1995 10% of infants, 25% of toddlers and almost 40% of three year olds in the United States received child care in a centre based setting (NCES, 1996). This is important to note as the quality of a child's environment plays an important role in cognitive and language development during the first three years. This raises concerns about the impact of non-quality child care on children's development as high quality center-based care has a positive effect on cognitive development, particularly for low income children (Waldfogel, Han & Brooks-Gunn, 2002; NICHD & Duncan, 2003). Lower quality child care has been associated with lags in children's development across all developmental factors (Burchinal, Roberts, Nabors & Bryant 1996; Howes, Phillips & Whitebook, 1992).

### *The Cost*

The cost of child care services for children is a deterrent to employment for many mothers as the cost of care can far out weigh a mother's average monthly income. Limited funding and categorical fragmentation have resulted in an ineffective system of aid for poor families (Meyers & Heintze, 1999). In the United States, the Abecedarian and CARE early intervention projects have demonstrated that preschoolers who experienced high-quality child care during infancy show better progress in language and cognition, in comparison to pre-schoolers without such experiences (Burchinal et al., 1996). In general, quality of child care has been shown to be more strongly related to developmental outcomes among children from disadvantaged circumstances (Burchinal et al., 1996; Howes et al., 1992). Yet, Head Start programs in the states were only

sufficient to serve 25% of ‘income-eligible’ children, meaning the eligibility for these programs were specifically based on the mother’s employment status, and were not attached to the child’s eligibility (Meyers & Heintze, 1999).

Mothers have had to rely heavily on informal child care arrangements which are generally not monitored and are usually non-licensed. In these circumstances issues such as violence, inappropriate child rearing methods, and differing cultural expectations can affect child development (Huang, 2007; Friendly & Prentice, 2009). In a study by Huang (2007) the author writes that many families and parents struggling to find child care are still not satisfied with the level of care they are receiving through informal care arrangements, but because of the location, convenience, and relatively low cost, parents have been using non-monitored, non-licensed, informal care arrangements. This practice creates problems for children and child care providers, as there may be language barriers between the care provider and the child, as well as a differing set of cultural values that may result in conflict between the care giver and the child.

### *Subsidies Negative Effects*

Herbst & Tekin (2010) highlight the belief in the child care subsidy system that child care subsidies free up income for parents to spend on private consumption and goods that enhance child care quality. The difficulty in conditioning eligibility for subsidies on employment creates challenges for maintaining stable child care arrangements which could undermine child well-being by severing productive relationships and exposing children to low quality care during unsubsidized periods (Herbst & Tekin, 2010). The aim in the realm of child care subsidies has thus been to support employment among low-income families, and has placed few restrictions on the types of child care arrangements parents may access. In this respect it can be argued that the government expects parents to find the cheapest care possible as long as employment continues.

In their research Herbst & Tekin (2010) discuss the Quebec \$7 a day subsidy policy for child care. This subsidy, which has lowered the overall costs for child care to \$7 a day, has increased the rate of women's employment, has reduced the child poverty rate to the lowest in Canada and has increased Quebec's birth rate (Status Report on Quebec's Family Policy, 2009). Herbst & Tekin (2010) argue that although the subsidy has yielded positive results for employment outcomes, it is still attached to mother's employment and thus continues to negatively affect child development. Gupta & Simonsen, (2007); Baker, Gruber, & Milligan (2008), also found that subsidized children were worse off in a variety of behavioural and health dimensions, were at an increase for illnesses, more hostile, and maintained lower quality parental relationships with their children. Therefore, if high quality care has been found to promote children's development, the question then must be asked, what quality of child care are child care subsidies actually promoting? As Blau (2002) concedes child care subsidies have moved mothers into employment, but asks, what are the consequences for children and their futures?

As Herbst & Tekin (2010) write it is unclear a priori whether subsidies are beneficial or detrimental to child development, and so this is ultimately an empirical question and a question that needs to be further researched. Based on the results of the study, Herbst & Tekin (2010) noted that policy changes directed at increasing the continuity of subsidized care would be beneficial to children, as would establishing reimbursements at a level high enough to allow parents to choose among high-quality providers in the community rather than the 'friend next door.' The question of whether or not child care subsidy receipt affects child development has had little to no attention. Most research in the realm of child care subsidy continues to focus specifically on whether or not the receipt of child care subsidy increases employment rates (Herbst & Tekin 2010, Blau 2000). This ideology reflects the current neo-liberal values and

current government strategies in spending as the goal is to reduce spending and decrease dependency of recipients of welfare or income assistance users, rather than discerning whether or not subsidies are improving the overall quality of life and health of the population.

### *Relevance of Presented Literature to the Research Question*

I have extensively discussed and reviewed current literature that relates to child care subsidies and child development and have provided an overview that outlines the implementation and receipt of child care subsidies as a means to promote women's labour market participation. Throughout the literature review, I have highlighted the lack of women's voices and perspectives in relation to child care subsidy and child development and described the heavy emphasis on the perspectives of researchers or professionals. I have also highlighted the extremely limited research which specifically asks the question whether or not the lack of child care subsidies affects children's development. As Herbst & Tekin (2010), in their very current quantitative research on child care subsidy and child development note, "researchers have neglected the question whether child care subsidies have implications for child development." Through the creation of this research study, the goal has been to investigate this neglected area of inquiry.

Given the applicability of constructivism as a theoretical lens for studying the women's experiences of their child's development, and more importantly, the overarching need to examine the under recognized voice of women in relation to their children's development, the need for a study aimed at identifying the connection between child care subsidy, and child development, from the under recognized perspective of mothers is clear. Attending to the narratives of women may facilitate a process of inviting an inductive "sharing" of these realities, the use of an approach to research that attends to "storying" the narrative process as a means to understand their experiences is appropriate. The research question I pursue in this study is as follows: How

do four mothers story their experience of their child's development when there is a lack of child care subsidies? I realize at this time I have yet to address the specific reasoning for the use of narrative inquiry; however, I will discuss my rationale for studying "storying" or narrative processes more substantively in the chapter on methods.

### **Chapter 3 – Methods**

The purpose of this study is to give voice to how mothers story their experiences of their children's development when there is lack of child care subsidies. Thus far, in the preceding chapters, I have discussed my rationale for forming this research study through the discussion of related literature. In this way I was able to demonstrate that the research in this area lacks a mother's perspective, especially in relation to child(ren)'s development. I applied the paradigm and theoretical perspective of social constructivism and social construction feminism which helped further inform this research study. I then discuss the overall design of the study, as well as the reason for using a narrative approach. I finally outline the methods that are used for the study and discuss participant recruitment, data generation, data analysis, ethics and credibility, and conclude with research limitations.

#### *Research Design*

In my research I am seeking to understand how women express their child's development when there is a lack of child care subsidies in order to fill the gaps in the current literature. I utilized qualitative research for my study as it allows space where researchers can bring their own world views, paradigms, and sets of beliefs to the research project while also allowing space for the voice of the participants (Creswell, 2007). I conducted four interviews, applying a narrative approach to the interview process, as is informed by Creswell (2007) and Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber (1998). The interpretive community, as is discussed by Creswell (2007), which informed my approach, was that of feminist theory. These methods combined, I felt, were the most effective methods to elicit, discuss and share the stories of how women story their experience of their children's development when there is a lack child care subsidy. I also



outline the sampling methods, recruitment issues, explain how data were generated and analyzed and finally, discuss validity concerns.

### *Qualitative Research and the Use of Narrative*

As outlined above, qualitative research allows for researchers to bring their own world views, paradigms, or sets of beliefs to the research (Creswell, 2007). Researchers are encouraged to use interpretive and theoretical frameworks to further shape their study and Creswell (2007) writes that good research requires making these assumptions and paradigms, and frameworks explicit in the writing of a study. Sandelowski (2002) also adds that qualitative research arises from multiple and evolving philosophic understandings of the world and nature of humanity and allows for unique opportunities in which other forms of inquiry may not. These opportunities might include the ability to meet with participants in their natural settings; flexibility to adapt and refine inquiry based on real-time data collection; interpretability of data through the personal; and a holistic view of social phenomena that more closely resembles the complexity of social interactions (Creswell, 2007).

These qualities drew me to a qualitative research method as much of the research in the area of child care, child care subsidies, and child development lacks the voice of those who are actively involved in a child's day to day care, and who are mostly affected by research and policies in this realm of inquiry. The desire to share the story of these women was the motivation to use a narrative approach as I believe that the stories people share are rich with meaning. Lieblich et al., (1998) believe that narrative research may provide researchers with a key to discovering identity and understanding it – both in its “real” or “historical” core. These authors posit that people are storytellers by nature, and a way in which to learn about a person's inner world is through verbal accounts and stories presented by individual narrators about their lives.

In essence, the language used in their stories becomes personal, literary, and is based on definitions that are constructed during the study rather than being defined by the researcher (Creswell, 2007).

### *Paradigm and Theoretical Perspective*

The paradigm that helped shape the nature of my research study was that of social constructivism. This paradigm posits that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work and subjective meanings of their experiences become directed toward certain objects or things (Creswell, 2007). Engel & Schutt (2003) add that constructivist paradigm is a methodology based on rejection of belief in external reality and emphasizes the importance of exploring the way in which individuals construct their beliefs. These ‘constructed’ meanings are varied and multiple which leads the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrow meanings into categories or ideas. The goal is to rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation which are negotiated socially and historically. These views are formed through their interactions and the questions are kept broad and general so that participants construct the meaning of a situation (Creswell, 2007).

In this paradigm, researchers focus on specific contexts in which people live and work and they position themselves in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their own personal, cultural and historical experiences. Lieblich et al. (1998) add that through studying and interpreting self-narratives, the researcher can access not only the individual’s identity but also its systems of meaning, and the teller’s culture and social world. In essence the constructivist paradigm outlines that social reality is socially constructed and that the goal is to understand the meaning people give to reality (Engel & Shcutt, 2003). Through my research study I emphasize the belief that reality, especially women’s reality, is a socially constructed

phenomena, and the only way in which to understand a woman's perspective and belief is to highlight the meaning she gives to her own reality through her own thoughts and perceptions. To further explain this notion that social reality is socially constructed, I applied social construction feminism, which shares that women's reality has already been influenced by the construction of gender roles in society (Lorber, 2010). These gendered divisions utilize categories of women and men to define gender-type roles within the family and the paid workforce. These gender roles have not only constrained people's choices and opportunities, but have also affected and shaped women's roles in society (Lorber, 2010).

As Denzin & Lincoln (2005) write, there are various interpretive communities for qualitative researchers. In my research study I found feminist theory informed much of the "behind the scenes basis" for my research design. When I designed the study I found myself reflecting often on feminism and feminist values. Feminist schools of thought believe there is an objective reality that has been shaped by a highly patriarchal, male dominated system. To further highlight this perspective I reflected on Lorber's (2010) discussion of social construction feminism. Lorber (2010) adds that social construction feminism explains that men and women are already carrying out pre-constructed meanings of gender. Men and women, for example, are acting out these pre-constructed gender identities through the application of visible markers, such as skin colour, genitals, or the way in which one dresses. These inherent or 'inborn' behaviours based on gender, continue to perpetuate a women's objective reality. Most important to the social construction feminism's politics is the concept of gender as social structure that constrains men's and women's choices and opportunities.

Social construction feminism believes that women's reality has already been shaped by gendered divisions of labour, where social constructivist schools of thought believe in exploring

the way in which individuals construct their own realities. Although these two schools of thought do somewhat differ, I felt that any research done with women needs to be aware of and highlight feminist values as I do believe that oppression has and continues to shape many women's realities. In terms of the social constructivist approach to my research and analysis, I believe it is the meaning individuals give to their lives and stories that help 'construct', or 'shape their realities.' In social construction feminism the belief is that perceptions shifts in gender is a possibility. I included my thoughts with regards to feminism and social construction feminism in order to provide transparency in my research and to share my own "constructed" process (Creswell, 2007).

### *Sampling and Recruitment*

For the purpose of this research study I recruited the participation of four women. The first participant I met through employment and I enlisted three more participants using purposive criterion sampling. This sampling method allows the researcher to select each sample element for a specific purpose (Engel & Schutt, 2003). In this respect, I needed participants who felt that lack of child care subsidies was affecting their child's development. Therefore I created a recruitment poster provided to Kiwassa Neighbourhood House, an establishment I had once worked for, which I knew to be connected to a variety of child care centres in which the attending mothers were more likely to be receiving a child care subsidy. The recruitment poster was hand delivered as well as e-mailed to the child care programs coordinator who then distributed the posters among the child care centres by e-mail and hard-copy. The recruitment posters asked questions such as: "Do you identify as a mother who has difficulty securing subsidized child care and believe this has affected your children's development?" (Appendix A). Participants were also required to speak English and be at least 19 years of age in order to provide informed consent for

the study. No children were interviewed in the study as the primary focus was the mother's story of their perceptions of their children's development when there was lack of child care subsidy.

Participants contacted me by phone and email and the women who contacted me appeared to be very excited to have someone to talk to about their experience with the child care subsidy system. I informed participants that they would be receiving a \$10 Save-On Foods voucher for a one hour interview and that they would have the option of child care. To secure child care, I recruited one of my colleagues who has had many years of experience in caring for children, has had a criminal record check, and is certified in first aid. Participants were allowed to review and revise the transcripts if requested; however, no participants requested transcripts to be reviewed. I guaranteed anonymity of the participants and obtained a written consent form in which I sent at least 48 hours in advance of the interviews to ensure the women a chance to decline if she should so choose. In scheduling the interviews I allowed for flexible times and meeting places based on each woman's individual schedule, as is informed by feminist principles. All four women chose to be interviewed in places where they were most comfortable. Two women chose their own home and two women chose the child care centre in which they were employed. The interviews were completed in January and February of 2010.

### *Sample*

Four participants in total took part in this study, all of whom shared that they felt the lack of child care subsidies was affecting their children's development. Three participants identified as members of a minority group, which was not intentionally outlined as a requirement of participation in the study. One woman identified as being of Jewish descent, another woman identified as Serbian, one as Aboriginal and the last woman identified as "Canadian." All participants resided in the Vancouver and the New Westminster areas of British Columbia. Each

woman was currently employed and all expressed that they were continuously struggling or had at one time struggled to maintain child care for their child(ren), due to work requirements. Each woman believed that lack of child care subsidies played a role in their child(ren)'s development. Three of the women shared that they were a single mother and two of the women had at least two children.

*Table 3.1 - Participant's Characteristics*

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age of Participant</b>	<b>Number of Child(ren)</b>	<b>Age of Child(ren)</b>	<b>Relationship</b>	<b>Employed</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Canadian Citizenship</b>
Mana	35	2	age 3 and 7	Single	Yes	Serbian	Yes, immigrated
Gail	36	1	age 4	Married	Yes	Jewish	Yes, immigrated
Sally	unknown	2	unknown	Single	Yes	Aboriginal	Yes, born in Canada
Martha	unknown	1	unknown	Single	Yes	Canadian	Yes, born in Canada

#### *Data Generation*

Two of the women participated in a one hour long semi-structured interview. Martha and Sally participated in a joint one hour long semi-structured interview as they had requested to be interviewed together for time purposes. This may have had influence on or affected the information received during their interview. I will discuss the implications of this joint interview later in the paper. During these interviews I asked the participants the following questions: to share (1) your story of your child's growth; (2) to share your story of trying to find subsidized child care; (3) to share your story of how their child's growth may have been affected when you

were not able to secure child care. I structured the questions in a chronological manner in order to facilitate the story telling process (Creswell, 2007). The first question was designed to generate an understanding of how these women story their children's growth. Rather than use the word "development" I intentionally used the word growth, as the term "growth," I felt, was less laden with the professional's conceptualization of the term development. I used the second question to further elicit the women's story, particularly in light of literature that has addressed child care subsidies. The third question was intended to develop an understanding of how women structure their narratives and to conclude the first two questions.

I noted that during the interviews I used informal prompting and questioning to further elicit stories from participants. Throughout the interview, I continued to invite further description and explanation of their narratives and interjected with questions when I needed more clarification. I also noted that at times I began to share portions of my experiences while these women shared theirs, as Hollingsworth and Dybdahl (2007) write that narrative inquiry is often located amongst interactions between researcher and participant. I had also originally included in my recruitment posters that the participants could review their transcripts once transcribed; however none of the participants requested a follow up to the interview. I believe this may have been due to time constraints as these women already were facing a multitude of challenges in their busy everyday lives.

### *Data Analysis*

According to Creswell (2007), and Lieblich et al.'s, (1998) every story, whether oral or written, can be formally characterized by the progression of its plot. As Creswell (2007) posits the data collected in a narrative study need to be analyzed for the story they have to tell, and shares that one must first re-story the participant's narrative into a chronological sequence of

events, and then analyze the data utilizing the five elements of plot structure (characters, setting, problem, actions, and resolution). To further build on Creswell's description of data analysis I utilised Lieblich et al. (1998) holistic-form-based mode of analysis. This form of analysis finds its clearest expressions in looking over plots and following the assumption that every story can be formally characterized by the progression of plot, which can be achieved by constructing a "plot analysis." Lieblich et al. (1998) also posit that the elements of a well-constructed narrative include a story, a clearly defined objective, a series of events that progress toward that objective, and relations of sequence and causality among those events; you will note that in my findings section I have interpreted as such within the scope of the woman's narratives.

After the interviews had taken place I transcribed them verbatim and read each transcript in their entirety several times to get the sense of the story (Creswell, 2007). I took notes in the margins of the printed transcripts which enabled me to summarize the participant's narratives into a chronological set of events (Creswell, 2007 & Leiblich et al., 1998). Following this process of note-taking, I summarized each woman's narrative as a story from beginning to end that demonstrated a series of events and relations of sequence and causality among those events (Creswell, 2007). After the summarizations of their narratives I organized the events of the stories on a plot chart which provided a visual representation of the narratives and aided in distinguishing the main themes of the women's stories. This visual 'plot chart,' was informed by Lieblich et al.'s (1998) "plot progression" and consisted of an introduction, two points of a rising action, the climax, three points of the falling action, and the denouement or conclusion. Therefore I was left with seven stages or "themes" in each woman's narrative which aided in 'storying' their narratives in a chronological sequence of events. In the final stage of data analysis, I completed a cross-sectional analysis of the women's narratives which allowed for the



ability to distinguish themes across all the stories. Clandinin & Connelly (2004) note that cross-analysis in narrative inquiry can at times result in superficial and reductionist renditions of participant's accounts, and the richness of narrative data may therefore be lost in this process of comparative case analysis; therefore, I made attempts to outline the subtle differences in how these thematic experiences are discussed and storied.

### *Ethical Issues*

I would like to address a few ethical issues before I continue. First and foremost, my study's creation and implementation was the direct result of one mother's compelling and influential story about her difficulty in accessing child care subsidies. I heard her story over a period of time while I worked alongside her and she believed it important to include her voice in my research. This woman, having known about my study, requested a copy of my recruitment poster and after I received confirmation by BREBS I sent it to her by e-mail. The mother asked for an interview and requested to sign the consent form so her story could be included in the study. The mother shared that she was just "relieved someone was talking about child care subsidies."

Another potential ethical issue was that each woman was not only financially marginalized but ethnically marginalized, which makes the population I interviewed vulnerable. I feared that in offering these women an honorarium that I may have been coercing them into the study; however, I did feel it necessary to thank the women for their time and commitment to my study. I finally decided on a \$10 Save-On-Foods voucher which could be used for food and/or supplies and approximated an hour's wage of work. I also acknowledged that the questions asked may elicit sensitive or negative feelings; therefore, I was obligated to bring a list of resources to each interview in order to ensure respondents' access to follow-up general peer support, as needed.

Each participant was assured that at any time they could withdraw from the study with no penalization or loss of service.

It is also necessary to add that the study was subject to full ethical review by the Behavioural Research Ethics Board of the University of British Columbia, and was granted approval under the number H10-03065.

### *Credibility*

To establish the trustworthiness of a study, Lincoln and Guba (1985) used unique terms such as credibility as the naturalist's equivalents for internal validation, external validation, reliability and objectivity. In narrative inquiry, it is impossible as a researcher to stay silent or to present a kind of perfect, idealized, inquiring, moralizing self (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004). Maxwell (2005) posits that the existence of any "objective truth" is not an essential element to a theory of ascertaining credibility, nor is the researcher required to ascertain some ultimate truth in order for the study to be useful and credible. Creswell (2007) writes that in a narrative study he would look for the following aspects of a "good" study. These aspects include self-reflexivity, or locating oneself in the study, and possibly reporting on themes of the stories to build a broader analysis. Other aspects of a "good" study include focusing on two or three individuals, then collecting stories about an important concern related to the individual's life. The researcher should then develop a chronology that connects different phases or aspects of the story and restories the story in a persuasive literary fashion.

I focused mainly on the points discussed by Creswell (2007) and Maxwell (2005) for enhancing, and then evaluating, my study's credibility. First, I applied Creswell's work by locating myself in sharing my own experiences and thoughts regarding the current child care system, and my thoughts and feelings in working with this population of women (as mentioned

in the introduction of the study), and I then focused on the chronological storied narratives of the participants. I would also like to emphasize that I do not possess some objective or absolute truth in the presentation of my findings (Maxwell, 2005), but rather my intention is to share the “stories” of a group of women, as is discussed at length in my literature review, that have been left out. As Hollingsworth & Dybdhal (2007) write, “giving voice” may legitimately be considered a way in which to assess rigour in qualitative research, particularly for studies that are constructivist in nature.

### *Limitations*

One important limitation of this study is that the women did not review ‘their’ stories after I had had placed them into a chronological narrative. Therefore there was no way for these women to ‘validate’ that my interpretation of each of their stories was an ‘accurate’ account of their telling and possibly lacks co-constructed validity. However, as was previously discussed, Maxwell (2005) wrote that the existence of any “objective truth” is not an essential element to ascertaining credibility, nor is the researcher required to ascertain some ultimate truth in order for the study to be useful. I thus openly assert no ‘universal’ truth in the findings of my study or even attempt to presume that the findings are generalizable. I only hope to share the stories of these four women in order to shed light on their perspectives. Although I do realize the dichotomy in being a ‘professional’ giving voice to women, and I realize that no matter my intentions, I am sharing these women’s stories through my own biases and lens.

## Chapter 4 – The Stories

### *Mana's Story*

Mana was the first woman to respond to my recruitment poster having learned about my study through my discussions with her as Mana had provided the impetus for the direction of my research study. Mana requested specifically if she could be included in my study and shared that she wanted to finally have the opportunity to share her story with someone. After an at length discussion about ethics of including her in my study, since I had known her prior to the creation of the study, Mana insisted that her story be included. I had known Mana for a few years prior to this research project as I had provided brief child care for her children when she could not secure a babysitter.

Mana is a single mother of two boys, now aged seven and ten. She is originally from Serbia, and came to Canada when the boys were young due to the stress and safety risk of the war. Mana's ex-husband lives in the United States and does not visit the boys regularly, although he sometimes sends child support. Mana speaks and writes English fairly well, and has full time employment as a property manager with long and inconsistent hours. Creswell's (2007) and Lieblich et al., (1995) work both proved applicable in analyzing Mana's narrative, particularly since I was interested in Mana's story as a progression of plot in the sense of her narrative's holistic form which consisted of characters, settings, problems, action, and resolution.

### *"We Were Happy," Caring for Her Boys*

When I first asked if Mana could describe her story of her children's growth, she began by "storying" her boys' growth in terms of moving from Serbia to Canada, and just as the family was physically moving from one location to another, Mana describes a movement or "shifting"

in her attitudes, belief and behaviours:

In Serbia, I was a stay at home mom. I took care of the boys, and we were happy. I was fixing up the house, spending time with family. But things change and we had to move. When we came to Canada we didn't speak very much English and this made me afraid, I wanted us to fit into Canada, and to be able to communicate with others, so I made [the boys] speak English, even while at home. This seemed hard for them, as I was forcing more change, they were upset with me, I know, but I had to do what I had to do.

Mana further described her boys' behaviours and actions in terms of her own fears.

I remember when I first came here, and an ambulance would go by, I would wake up in a panic thinking it was air sirens again and that the airport was going to be bombed. I had such feelings of panic and worry and did not sleep very well in the beginning. I know the boys noticed but they acted okay and I did my best to shield them.

Mana shares that this time of her life was particularly difficult and she lacked family, friends and support but somehow she managed to get through that period in her life because she knew she "had to" as she had children she had to care for.

At this time the boys seemed fine, a lot better than I thought they would be. There was of course fighting between them, and me yelling, but what kids don't fight? They were still behaving and listening.

Mana describes her boys' growth in terms of how they had been affected by what was happening in their environment and shared that although there was much change in their lives she was still able to spend quality time with the boys, as she was not yet working, and was able to provide the stability, support and care they needed to be well behaved and well- mannered children.

*The Struggle, Trying to Keep Up*

When I first asked Mana about securing child care for her boys she shared that before the Conservative Government changed the child care subsidy regulations she had had no difficulty in securing and maintaining quality care for her children and it was apparent that this was the least stressful time throughout Mana's continued narrative:

I had a good child care provider, before and after school care that played games with them. I could drop the boys off early before school, and pick them up later after school. I had no struggles and little worries. I knew they were being well cared for and they came home happy and relaxed.

However, when Mana began to tell about the changes the federal government made in the child care subsidy system, this is when Mana's story changed. Mana shared that as soon as her youngest boy turned 7 she lost the \$100 per month for child care and could no longer afford the regulated before and after school care her children had been attending.

It was a mess. I could no longer afford the child care the boys were in, and every other centre I looked at had a two week wait list. The only centre that did not have a wait list and it was cheap, I took it, because I had to work. I needed a place for my boys. But I was sorry.

After two weeks of care Mana noticed a significant change in her children's behaviour. She shared that her boys' attitudes became more difficult to manage, as they were not listening, or paying attention to her, and were swearing more often than usual.

I became worried. They were acting different, fighting, crying, swearing, and I had to take them out of that centre. I couldn't keep them there.

At this time Mana had heard about a Serbian woman living in her building that would provide child care at a reduced rate and Mana shared that she believed this was the “answer to her prayers.”

This woman was close, so convenient, and she shared the same cultural values I did. I could work late now without worry, and she was cheap, affordable.

Mana describes the adjustment for the boys as difficult as the neighbour could not speak English and the boys who could understand Serbian were unable to fluently speak it. This lack of communication between the caregiver and the boys caused much frustration for all three and resulted in the woman often yelling at the children. The woman also used extreme disciplinary methods:

He told me she locked him in a closet for discipline. They said they could handle being yelled at but hated being locked in a closet. I know I struggle as a mother, but that I would never do.

Mana, left with no other options, had to once again pull her boys from the care provider, as she worried about their safety. Although Mana realized that the neighbour was not an appropriate person to take care of her children, she did not know what she could do, or where she could turn to find affordable, quality child care, and someone she could trust.

*“There’s not Enough Time,” Finding the ‘Perfect’ Child Care*

Time was an important theme in Mana’s narrative, as she expressed that lack of time also affected her ability to secure quality child care as Mana shared that there weren’t enough hours to do what she needed to do:

It is a holiday, but you still have to work, where will your children go? I would look at community centres and some would be open, in Delta, which is the opposite direction of

home, and I wouldn't know what kind of care they provided, but I had no time to drive there, to check out the centre, to ask around. I had to work, and the boys needed a place to go, so I would drop them off the same day I met someone, the care is licensed so I hoped it was okay.

Throughout Mana's discussion of time she also expressed feelings of guilt in that she was not able to appropriately screen each individual care provider, as many of the care providers she could afford were not regulated, nor were they licensed:

You have no time, you're tired, it's just one person. I see other mothers who tell me their husbands do this and that, and that way they have the time to do what needs to be done.

Mana also described one event in which her boys, after a day at a community centre, were very upset:

[My oldest boy] did not like the instructor, and they did not like the other children at the centre. I understand, they had just met everyone that day, and they had to listen, and I could see that after I picked them up they had spent the day nervous and uncomfortable, yet they had to participate and I had to bring them there, I couldn't leave them at home.

Mana also described other limiting factors of time which contributed to her lack of sleep, her exhaustion, and not being able to do what needed to be done. Mana also described the limitations she had in relation to spending 'time' with her boys and shared she would forego her own well-being to ensure that the boys could at least spend some quality time with her.

*"Making Do," the Exhaustion*

Mana thought many times about "giving up" and going on welfare, but shared that her pride would not allow her, as she did not want to be known as a welfare mom, although the struggle to raise two children in a system that did not support her was an endless cause of



frustration and a strong theme throughout Mana's narrative.

Sometimes I am so tired. I work long hours, but I have never once been on welfare. I have pride and I make do. I don't want the boys to be welfare children. It's hard enough fitting in as it is. We already accept clothes from friends and family.

I also noted that throughout Mana's narrative, especially when discussing her boys' growth and in relation to child care, she would do anything she had to in order to ensure her boys' safety and to ensure they had positive influences in their life.

The boys' lacked a father figure; they lacked a male in their life. Their father could not visit and I wanted them to have a man role model. So, at first I would take them across the border so they could see their dad, and I repaired my relationship with my brother. It was hard because he had been very mean to me when I really needed him, but this time, I realized my boys' needed family, and even though [my brother and his wife] tell me all the things I have done wrong as a mother, I take it because I want my boys to have family.

Throughout Mana's narrative it was apparent the lengths she went through to ensure her boys' safety. In her "storying" process the theme of "making do" permeated her narrative and it was apparent that Mana was willing to do anything she had to and to go as far as she had to, even when it meant she was putting more pressure on herself, so her boys could have a sense of stability.

#### *Wishing for Community, Seeking Support*

In further progressing with her narrative Mana shared the difficulty she faced in joining her own cultural community to seek out support for her and her boys. She discussed this in terms of being divorced and the lack of welcome she felt in attempting to join any Serbian function, as

she was, as she identified “the only single Serbian.”

I swear, every woman thought I was going to take her husband. They looked at me with suspicion, Serbians don’t divorce, but here I was, no husband and two children, and what women in my culture raises children without a husband?

Mana described the difficulty in fitting into her culture so far from home, and the feelings of shame and regret she carried for being divorced.

I never thought I would be divorced, but it was him, not me, and in my culture they always wonder what the woman did wrong to lose her husband.

Mana also describes putting her children in folk dance as she decided, since she could not secure quality child care, she would place her children instead into extracurricular activities as she could secure discounts for being a lower income mother. In this effect she still expressed the difficulty she faced in showing up at the dance classes:

I knew what [the Serbians] were thinking, but I wanted the boys to have a piece of our culture. So I volunteered to help. I was already working many hours, but I wanted to show them I am a good person. I wanted acceptance.

It was evident through Mana’s narrative that because she lacked child care subsidies she was willing, for the sake of providing appropriate role models for her boys, to cause herself more stress in order to connect with a community she felt looked down upon her.

### *Time for Change, Back in the Game*

Throughout Mana’s narrative it was increasingly apparent that she was filled with less and less hope and her energy waned as she continued to tell her story of working toward stability in child care arrangements for her children:

I finally broke, and I went to a counsellor, someone who I could speak Serbian to and to

express myself to. I hadn't gone earlier [because] I thought it would be known that I couldn't handle the boys, and the Ministry would find out, and then everyone would think I was a bad mother. But I needed help.

Mana also shared her fear in turning to authorities as she was worried she was going to be further judged by others in her life. Judgement and stigmatization was something Mana shared that she faced every day:

My ex-husband would get on Skype, and the boys would talk to him, and show him their piano, and he would tell me that I wasn't doing a good job raising them. Even when he finally came to Canada he told me what a terrible job I was doing, that [the boys] weren't respecting him.

Mana emphasized the pressure of outside forces and the difficulties she continued to work through in order to provide appropriate care for her boys. At this time Mana realized something had to change, and her job could no longer provide the flexibility she needed to arrange her children's child care arrangements and Mana returned to school to become a property manager so she could make more money to afford the care the boys' required:

If it was bad before, it was worse now. I was studying late, not getting much sleep, and it was so much work as I'm still ESL and reading English is a bit of a struggle. The boys weren't getting much of my attention, but I told them they had to make do, for all of our futures.

#### *Lack of Child Care Subsidies, the Results*

When asked whether Mana felt that the lack of child care subsidies had affected her children's growth Mana shared the following:

I know my boys have been affected by what has happened over the last few years, so

many changes. Even now they are walked to school by the next door neighbour's girl who is only a couple of years older than them. I worry because I know my oldest is being pressured. He helps me a lot at home, and doing things that I should be doing for him, as his mother. Yet, at school, he is so immature, and the teacher shares he's considered the class clown and he's always in trouble.

Currently Mana shared that she has managed to create flexibility in her work schedule, and comes home early and finishes her work at home so the boys have someone to care for them but highlights that the care is not what she would have imagined for her children:

I know I can't leave them alone, but when I come home, I do work, so I am just a physical body in the home, but I ignore them, and they watch T.V. because I have to do the work, but they also need to be cared for.

Mana believes that because of the lack of child care subsidies and because of the changes in the child care system she has had to make so many changes, changes in an already chaotic, turbulent lifestyle that she knows her boys have been affected by the changes. Mana shares that the lack of stability for her boys has at times changed their behaviours such as when her youngest developed a "tic:"

[My youngest] he started to make strange faces, like pinching, and I looked it up the internet, a Serbian website and they said it was because of inconsistent parenting. Like at times I would be the disciplinarian, but also the one who had to provide emotional support, and the reason he was making faces was because he was nervous because he didn't know what mom he was going to get.

Mana shared that at this time she felt like a failure as a mother, and the notions of shame and guilt were themes that continued to permeate Mana's narrative throughout the "storying." Mana

appeared to believe that her boys' behaviours, and their 'acting out' was her fault, and even though she expressed that the difficulties in her life were exacerbated by the lack of child care subsidies, Mana continued to feel responsible for situations she had no control over.

The analysis of Mana's narrative provided the discussion for themes in relation to child care subsidies and child's development. Throughout her story Mana expressed the difficulty in obtaining a child care subsidy, as well as the continuous difficulty she faced in securing adequate child care. Mana also told of the low quality of care she felt she was providing to her children, as most of the time she was working instead of paying attention to her boys. Mana shares that even when she tried to seek family and build a community in order to create support systems for herself and her boys she was still isolated and looked down upon by others for her parenting. Throughout the telling of her story, it was apparent the significant responsibility Mana placed on her own shoulders for her boy's behaviours, and the feelings of blame she felt when she could not be the mother she "wishes she could be."

### *Gail's Story*

Gail was the second person to reply to my recruitment poster, after being forwarded the information through the UBC list serve. She expressed relief at the prospect of sharing her story, but at the same time appeared resigned as she seemed to believe that the sharing of her story would neither affect nor change the outcome of her situation. Gail is of Jewish decent, having grown up in a Jewish commune and had moved to Canada to seek a better life for her and her husband. Gail is married and has one son aged four. Gail has been working for the Ministry of Child and Family Development as a Social Worker for the last two years and shares that she has been struggling to find secure appropriate, stable child care for her son. She also shared that it was a constant battle of late to find any child care that could provide the support she needed

during her working hours. Creswell's (2007) and Lieblich et al., (1995) work both proved to be applicable in analyzing Gail's story, particularly since she appeared to organize her story into a progression of narrative and plot, over time, which consisted of characters, settings, problems, action, and resolution.

*Finding Child Care, the Endless Search*

In the process of first discussing her child's growth, Gail began to discuss the difficulty in securing child care and briefly touched on her child's growth prior to child care. Gail highlighted that for the first year she stayed at home with her son and seemed to emphasize this year as a positive year for herself and her son. Rather than go into any depth in relation to this period of time, Gail simply stated:

[...] in terms of child care, when we first started I was at home with him, which was really great. I was really happy you get that year off, let me tell ya. So I was home with him and that was nice. You get that one year to be really attentive to their cues and attentive to their schedule and do the whole breast feeding thing [...]. You can sleep when they are resting and you're not like a total zombie at work.

This brief description of her year at home with her child potentially demonstrates the heavy emphasis that attempting to secure child care has played. During the rest of the interview Gail continued to heavily emphasize her frustration in securing and maintaining child care rather than focusing on her son's growth, which perhaps highlights the importance that she places on securing and accessing child care. Gail's story began to further progress when her son turned one and she decided to return to school so she started to search for childcare for September.

Ah, then I wanted to go back to school so I had to find childcare. Just for September, it wasn't really a matter of choice. So of course we registered in all the daycares and stuff,

and ya, after they finished laughing at us they told us that it was a couple of years wait. I really didn't know where to go look. I know there's a list, but from reading a name you don't know anything about the place.

At this point in the interview Gail laughed uncomfortably and her frustration of not knowing where to look, or where to turn to, in order to secure childcare, was apparent. The theme of “frustration” permeated Gail's story throughout the interview as she shared the difficulties she has faced in attempting to secure child care due to limitations in the systems and especially cost.

### *Securing Child Care, the Cost*

The high cost in securing quality child care appears to be the next progression in Gail's narrative. Throughout Gail's continued attempts to secure child care Gail struggled not only with the difficulty in securing child care, but also the limited choices due to the high costs:

It costs so much for childcare, [...] and you know, the prices are just pricy, you pay as much for care as rent [...]. Unless you're really lucky, and have really cheap rent.

Gail shared that she had initially believed she could not find affordable child care because she lived in an expensive neighbourhood, yet she realized that no matter the area you reside, as her friend lived in a cheaper housing area, her friend described the same high costs of child care.

Gail then shared the amount she was paying monthly for childcare in her area:

it costs a fortune, and you know, all these different arrangements, each of them cost money, so I mean, I'm paying how much for daycare right now? Like about \$800 a month, for childcare.

In constructing Gail's narrative during the course of the interview, the theme of “cost” in the struggle to secure child care seemed to be a major contributing factor in Gail's distress as affordable quality child care centres seemed to be non-existent in Gail's story. Gail shared her

amazement and respect she had for those families who could raise their children on even less money than her and her husband made considering she had two incomes and possessed what was considered a “good job.”

*Searching for Subsidies, the Lack Thereof*

The final set in the series of Gail’s rising actions in her narrative is what appeared to be her quest to secure appropriate child care for her child. I had asked Gail about her experience in attempting to secure subsidized child care, and Gail’s initial reaction was “there is no subsidized childcare.” Gail then paused, and began to elaborate on the comment she had made. She shared that she had not even realized there were childcare subsidies and added that “if there are subsidies it’s because you’re in a bad situation.” Gail further elaborated on her previous comment discussing subsidies:

There is the \$100 child care subsidy you receive from the government, it’s just a joke, [...] why don’t they use that money for something useful? I know women who have nannies because it’s more cost-effective. If you have three children, it’s ridiculous, what’s the point of working? [...] either you work to pay for the child care or you just don’t work.

Through this line of questioning it appeared that Gail believed if there were subsidies it would have been easier for her to return to school and gain meaningful employment to further support her family. At this point Gail shared her theory that she believes the current neo-liberal’s policies are doing exactly what they were meant to do:

Keep women at home with the children. If it costs too much for childcare, then women will have to stay home and care for their child. These West Point Grey moms have the money and can afford to stay home.



However, Gail did also comment on the societal differences in being a stay at home mom, versus being a welfare mom and highlighted the distinction:

Or they're welfare moms, so there are two different approaches which come with its own stigma [...] but at least [women] who stay at home get to raise their own children and spend time with them.

Gail's struggle and frustration in attempting to secure quality child care in order to create a secure and stable environment for her child, without stigma was difficult at best. Gail describes the barriers she faced in attempting to secure child care and the continuous struggle she faces against a system and government that does not seem to have her or her child's best interests at heart. Gail's narrative at this point was marked by, as I interpreted it, resignation, and it appeared that Gail believed the search for quality affordable child care was futile, and to begin schooling, she would have to look elsewhere for child care or perhaps accept alternatives to care.

*The Luck, Child Care I Can Rely on*

The high point of Gail's narrative was the luck she felt when she had finally secured affordable, quality child care (as she defined it), a point she returned to continuously throughout the interview as comparison and reference to good care. Gail shared that she was finally able to secure affordable, quality child care with a woman who possessed the same cultural background as her, although the woman was not licensed she possessed qualities of a care provider that Gail could agree with:

it was a Jewish home care so she taught [my son] everything [...] from the more religious perspective. It was really cute because he gets into the car and he goes "pray" like this.

At this point Gail placed her hands together and bowed demonstrating the prayer and cultural relevance the woman had taught her son. In Gail sharing this action during the interview it

appeared that there was a significant spiritual element in the care this woman was providing to her son and Gail relayed this portion of her story with fondness. Although this experience was cut short, as the woman closed down, and left Gail (as she describes), “scrambling,” yet again, to find another caregiver. Gail shares that she got lucky again and that:

There was an opening at the University of British Columbia. So yeah, I was so lucky, and UBC’s a great childcare [...] they have very decent hours. [...] and it was kinda subsidized because I was a student.

Gail described these two child care providers with fondness and stated:

Well, like I said because we were kinda lucky, in the beginning, like the good, the tender years as they call them, like the really influential ones, he was fine [developmentally] cause he had really quality, good quality daycare.

This theme of luck permeated Gail’s narrative as she appeared to place much emphasis on the idea of luck when she was finally able to secure quality child care for her child. Throughout the interview Gail continuously offered this experience to prove she had at least done something right for her son in terms of his development and it appeared that the continuous struggle Gail had faced in attempting to secure quality child care was finally at an end.

### *The Guilt, What Have I Done?*

The next sections of Gail’s narrative were the description of the next three steps in her story which appeared to be the results of the cumulative effects of her continued narrative. Throughout the interview Gail continuously returned to the sense of luck she felt when she had finally secured childcare. However, when Gail was unable to secure quality child care for her son, Gail shared her very real feelings of guilt. Gail appeared to feel bad when she did not secure quality child care for her son, and took this lack of ability to secure child care, seemingly as a

failure on her part. Due to the lack of ability to secure stable child care, Gail described the arrangements she had to make to ensure her son was cared for at all times, and described the constant movement and shifting of her son's current care:

[...] just the whole moving around all the time and spending all this time in traffic because that's what he does because we transfer him from one place to another, and then I come and pick him up and he doesn't get to spend quality time, not with us, and not with the daycare.

When Gail was sharing this statement I could feel her sense of guilt as she described the complex child care arrangements she had to make for her son, although Gail was currently providing the best care she could manage for her son at the time with limited resources. It was apparent that Gail believed her son was not getting the kind of attention she wished he could have:

When you have to find something, it's usually in a pinch, right, you cannot have, I mean you need to find somebody before September first before you go to school, you don't have really a lot of leeway around that, you either find them, or you don't.

Gail also shared her feelings of guilt she felt as a mother if you put your child in a 'bad' centre:

You feel really guilty about this [...] and you feel so bad because you put your kid in substandard daycare. It's not as if you are intentionally searching for the worst daycare possible, things just happen.

It's interesting that as Gail identified barriers in being able to secure quality child care for her child, she emphasized the barriers in terms of personal failures and completely internalized the problem. In the telling of her story at this point Gail's apparent sense of guilt, and or shame in not being able to provide the care she hoped to for her son was evident. Even through the many challenges and struggles she has gone through in order to best provide for her son, Gail

still appeared to feel completely responsible for her child's lack of child care.

*Change in Behaviour, the Struggles*

Gail shared that her son is now in kindergarten and that childcare is just a:

big mess [...]. So he's in kindergarten then he's got like early morning care, ah, before school care, and then he's got kindergarten. Then he's got a babysitter that picks him up.

So it's like four different arrangements every day, it's just a pain.

Gail feels that because of all these arrangements her son's behaviour can "get really bad and kindergarten is hell for him." Gail states that her son has no friends, no consistency and he spends way too much time in traffic and she shares that:

he's not really happy [...] like when I go pick him up, when I used to pick him up from daycare or when, I pick him up [...] from school [...] he's all happy and jumpy and everything. When I pick him up from his babysitter, he's not. Its cause it's not fun there. Yeah, he gets to watch T.V., but she doesn't do that much here [he doesn't] get that interaction, that's not good.

Gail talked much about the lack of interaction she also has with her child and shared that she knows that research about children states that quality childcare is the basis that gives them a solid grounding; however, Gail noted that stability, in the realm of current child care, was unfortunately, something that could not be provided. Gail also articulated that she knew attachment for a child was very important and believed that in terms of her son's behaviour she knew that problems that would probably concern him later in life would be an indicator of his attachment, or lack thereof with current childcare providers.

*Community, the Isolation*

The resolution or final stage in Gail's narrative highlighted her want for community. Gail shared:

I know that sometimes you can have family, friends, your mom, you get lucky, but lots of people don't have that anymore, they don't live in the extended family structure anymore. I don't because I'm from a commune and none of my family is here, and I have to deal with finding childcare [...].

Gail shared that she had lived in an extended family unit, having been raised on a commune, and she stated that there was a community to help raise your child and everyone was supported by friends and family in caring for the children. Gail highlighted that there are current Canadian families who can utilize the grandparents but still, there is a noticeable lack of community. Gail shared her feelings of isolation in securing child care:

I find it's mostly me who deals with this. It's not my husband's problem. I mean it is, but not really his, he wouldn't know what to do if it hit him in the head and it would affect me, it would affect my work and my schedule, and in terms of organizing everything, it's me, I'm the one who has to go and find em' and everything.

Gail expressed her heavy feelings of responsibility for securing and maintaining stable child care for her child and that lack of familial support forced the responsibility as her sole undertaking. Through Gail's discussions of lack of community and lack of support Gail appeared to express a sense of loneliness and how alone she felt in her parenting as much of the responsibility for ensuring her child's care was completely on her shoulders.

The analysis of Gail's narrative or story provided the discussion for themes in relation to child care subsidies and child's development in a time when child care subsidies, as Gail

describes them, are non-existent. Throughout her story Gail expressed the difficulty in obtaining a child care subsidy, and her inability to secure adequate child care. During the interview Gail's son briefly entered the room and asked for "Snakes and Ladders." I found this simple request for Snakes and Ladders to be extremely interesting as the essence of the game of "Snakes and Ladders" can be applied metaphorically to Gail's struggle to secure childcare. One lucky roll of the die and you could be moving up the ladder, and one unlucky roll of the die and you could be moving down a "snake" and end up back where you started. Throughout her story, Gail shared in her belief, that lack of secure, quality child care was negatively affecting her son's behaviour and classified the \$100 a month from the government as the only subsidy she was eligible to receive.

#### *Martha and Sally's Story*

Martha and Sally were the last women to contact me for involvement in the study. Martha had been informed of the study by receiving a recruitment poster via e-mail and both Martha and Sally invited me to complete the interview at their place of employment and told me they were both excited to share their story. When I arrived at Martha's employment, a Neighbourhood House in the Hastings area of Vancouver, she lit up, and welcomed me openly. Martha then brought me upstairs to her office where she had Sally, at the time I hadn't realized both women wanted to be interviewed together, but they explained it was their lunch hour and they would not have another opportunity to share their stories. This combined interview demonstrated the time constraints these mothers faced, as they had both taken their lunch hour to share their stories. Martha and Sally assured me they were completely comfortable with the combined interview as they had been working together many years and trusted each other.

I agreed to interview the women at the same time as I wanted to respect their time limitations. I would like to point out also that this joint interview may have affected the data and

have further implications for the research. First Martha and Sally's interview format differed from the other participants, in that they both had less time to share their "stories." Second the information the two women shared throughout the interview was 'co-constructed' between the two of them. In that, through the analysis portion of the interview, I noticed that Martha and Sally continued to add to and reflect on each other's narratives, rather than share their specific stories. Although these two women shared that they had worked together for many years, and were comfortable with each other, I noted, there was a difference in the information that either of them shared. I noted that Sally was apt to provide a more personal interpretation of the questions asked, whereas Martha provided information more from a practice perspective rather than a personal perspective. I utilized Creswell's and Lieblich's work to analyze their stories, particularly since Martha and Sally appeared to organize their combined story into a progression of plot.

#### *Returning to the Workforce*

The interview with Martha and Sally was very interesting in that it was led by them. They had printed out a copy of my recruitment poster, had already looked over the questions, and Sally started the interview "okay, so let's just get going." Both women introduced themselves and it was very apparent from the start that they had worked alongside each other for a number of years as they both were very respectful toward each other during the entire interview and built upon each other's narratives throughout the "storying" process. However, it appeared the data may have lacked some richness as the shortened time frame may have limited the information that either of them shared as well as the potential for further elaboration. Sally began the interview by sharing that she was originally a user of the child care subsidy system:

I had three children, all under the age of three, I had twins [...] in my second pregnancy I was on income assistance, because I was ah, in a marriage [...] where I was abandoned with the children.

Martha shared that she was a “childcare and family programs coordinator” and hinted at having her own child although she never explicitly discussed her child or identified herself as a ‘biological’ mother. This may have been due to the joint interview and had the interview taken place separately Martha may have felt more comfortable and had more time to further elaborate her personal life. It was very apparent though, throughout the course of the interview, that Martha expressed herself in a mothering role and shared that she had cared for many children throughout the years that she had been a child care provider.

When asked about their children’s growth Sally shared that two of her children were special needs and related her children’s growth in terms of securing appropriate child care and moving toward the workforce:

[...] I got a fantastic family child care provider because my boys were special needs, [because] they didn’t work in a group care setting [...] It was a homey environment, and she was willing to flex her hours, it wasn’t like a group situation. This allowed me to dream again of getting back into the workforce, you know.

Sally continued to discuss her children’s growth in terms of propelling herself toward the workforce so that she could continue to provide for her children:

So, in other words, it was a vehicle for me to get back into the workforce. I got all excited about that, and all I wanted to do was share that [...].

Martha shared the story of children’s growth in terms of child care security and child care subsidy.



[Sally] put her children in pre-school, in which I was one of the teacher's and, pre-school was always a right for low income kids who qualified for the subsidy system. There was no criteria attached to the parent, the parent didn't have to be working, didn't have to be looking for work, it was a social criteria that was attached to the child to give every child the right to a pre-school, and to an opportunity.

As both women continued to discuss children's growth, they did so in terms of the systematic structures of the child care system and the security the system provided in maintaining quality care for children, as well as the stability it provided so that mothers could find and secure employment:

And that system was top notch. And we had relationships with the one stop access workers [...] and we were like a well-oiled machine. It was a system that changed my life because I got to understand again, whoo, I can back into the work force.

Similar to Mana, both Martha and Sally had positive reactions to the child care subsidy system in its earlier years as it allowed for all three of them the assurance that their children were being taken care of professionally while they entered the workforce.

I found it interesting that each woman, Mana, Gail, Martha and Sally each discussed their child[ren]'s growth in terms of 'outside' forces. In these cases the women appeared to specifically discuss their children's growth in direct relation to the child care subsidy system. When the system was "good" or "top-notch" the women expressed their children were being taken care of and "doing well"; however, when subsidies were reduced this is when the women observed notable change in their child(ren)'s "growth(s)" or "behaviour(s)."

*The Change in System, What Now?*

Immediately, the tone of the interview changed when the women began to “story” their experiences of trying to find subsidized child care. In relation to Gail, Martha and Sally struggled when changes in the system took effect. Martha shared that in:

2002 the liberal government decided in their wisdom of whatever wisdom that was [...] that the subsidy was no longer attached to the child, it became attached to the parent. And the parent had to be actively looking for work, going to school, or employed. [...] So if you lost your subsidy in January and it ran out, social workers were not renewing children’s subsidies.

At this time the women described the stricter requirements for accessing child care subsidies and Martha continued by sharing:

Some childcare centres completely closed [...] children were being picked off in pre-schools in the community, one at a time, so it was very emotionally attached to that child, in terms of what he was feeling about his environment, there was quick closure of pre-schools and people were just devastated.

Martha continued to emphasize the struggle many women were going through at this time, and Sally added:

The shift from what the child was needing became more about what the parent was doing. So it’s not about making sure the child is enhanced early childhood learning environments, okay, it’s all about being attached to the labour market and feeding that labour market.

In describing this shift in the system Martha and Sally’s frustration was apparent and it appeared to be a very emotional time in their lives. In terms of the difficulty in accessing child care for

their own children, especially since Sally's children were special needs and in terms of the work they did, as they both belonged to a system that was downsizing child care. As both women had begun their stories with excitement in being part of the system they felt was helping others, they now openly expressed their frustration and disdain in being part of a system that was not only making it difficult for women to secure employment but also a system that was disrupting children's lives.

*The Lack of Trust and the Increase of Stigma*

As Gail's narrative discussed the luck she felt when securing child care, Martha and Sally, similar to Mana's narrative emphasized concerns of trust when trying to secure child care. Mana felt that neighbours or care providers could not be trusted, where Martha and Sally felt that the system could no longer be trusted. Martha and Sally both felt the system was no longer concerned in promoting a person's best interests, rather they both felt the system was highlighting things women were unable to do for their children. This in turn created further stigma for women who were trying to access child care subsidies.

So it's always a dicey thing, for parents to trust, [...] you had to disclose everything about medical conditions, really private information, kay, again, STIGMA. [...] but you still have on [the subsidy] form that says something to the effect of what Martha was saying, that you are incapable, or that you have 'trouble' caring for your child. [...] There is a huge, huge stigma and a big fear.

Martha and Sally explained that many women they had seen in their neighbourhood house would avoid applying for child care subsidies because the mothers feared their children would be removed and that the forms would be used against them, especially if the women were Aboriginal as Sally shared: "it's particularly stigmatized within the Aboriginal community,

especially if you have a history of apprehensions.” As subsidy workers, Sally and Martha shared that they were both trying to counteract feelings of mistrust in the realm of child care subsidy by building relationships with women and in advocating on their best behalf:

And there’s trust now, and they know that when they come to see me to do an application for subsidy that I am advocating on their best behalf. And that I’m going through the paper-work with them, in a way to make that paper work for them, not against them.

*The Current System and its Effects on Children*

After having discussed the changes in the system, the women began to identify the results of the changes and what that has meant for them as mothers, as employees of the system, as well as what that has meant for other women and children in their community. Martha shared:

So, early intervention is all about child development, and cognitive and emotional and all that. But it’s also safety, and [...] not being allowed to be in a centre that exists within a community that is hostile. [...]. If you can put this in a context of child accessing an early learning, it doesn’t matter where their level of development [...] or whether they’re low income or not, if you go back to the human early learning project, you’ll see that, that early learning, access to early learning sites is key to a child’s development for kindergarten readiness.

Martha and Sally, through specific stories about children in their community, were able to share much more detailed examples of how they felt that lack of child care subsidies has affected children:

And so, yeah know, the seven year old who’s in the out of care school program, or whatever there, is being supported, but at the same time, she watches her sister go to

kiddie stroll... to make money, or her brother, cause, they are pimping because they have no safe place to go.

And Martha explained that “we get back to the subsidy system of not allowing these kids in safe environments.” It appears, through the progression of their combined narrative, that both women felt a correlation between lack of child care subsidies and children’s development in terms of safety and had a repertoire of examples of how children had been specifically affected by these changes.

### *The Difficulty in Accessing Child Care Subsidies*

When asked if they had experienced difficulty in securing and accessing child care subsidies Martha and Sally began to discuss the increasing difficulties women in their neighbourhood were having in securing and maintaining child care due to lack of subsidies which, as Gail expressed, reflects current government attitude toward child care:

And what [the government does] often, and what they do is they roll that \$100 in with the child tax benefit so the parent doesn’t see the distinction in there, it’s just all rolled in, and so they just spend it, of course the cost of living, the cost of everything is increased, and women don’t realize that money was for daycare, they go, what are you talking about? I spent that already.

The continuous decrease in child care subsidy highlights the current government’s attitude toward child care and perhaps reflects the current attitude toward out of home care. As Gail shared her theory in regards to neo-liberal policies in efforts “to keep women at home,” Martha and Sally appeared to address the same concern in their narrative. The implications for this current attitude are potentially disastrous in that the lack of subsidy makes child care completely

unattainable for many mothers. Yet, if one is a stay at home mom, accessing welfare, one is further stigmatized as 'lazy,' and encouraged to seek work through welfare to work policies.

Martha and Sally also shared the consequences of lack of child care subsidies and how it specifically has affected women and children in their community:

So the percentage of kids that can go to pre-school are minimal, the mom has to find work because the child is, you know, getting older, so she's leaving her child with an inappropriate caregiver cause she has to be looking for work, or they're gonna cut her off welfare.

Throughout Sally and Martha's interview, both women highlighted the difficulty in securing a child care subsidy due to fears of being stigmatized, as well as the extremely stringent requirements that are required in order so one can maintain their subsidy. This also further highlights the current neo-liberals attitude toward out of home care; mothers are encouraged to stay at home, as long as they do not access welfare. Martha and Sally both appeared to convey a real sense of hopelessness in relation to the child care subsidy system, and even after all the work they had put into helping other women in their community secure subsidies, the actual amount of subsidy received appeared not to be worth the effort. This meant that more and more women were becoming discouraged with what they could possibly hope to secure and more children began to lack stable child care arrangements.

#### *Lack of Child Care Subsidies, the Effects*

When finally asked if they believed the lack of child care subsidies was affecting children's development, both Martha and Sally vigorously agreed that they felt lack of child care subsidies was affecting children's development. In terms of the child's safety and security, lack

of early learning and school readiness and not having safe places to go to. Martha specifically told one story of a young autistic boy who lacked stability and security:

[...] you get those little guys and start doing stuff with them. One of the kids presents as having significant characteristics of autism, we have to send staff from the pre-school, over to the home because the transition of getting dressed and getting out of the house is so difficult. The parent left the kid in pre-school for two months, and the subsidy application comes back, denied, so now she owes us \$400 dollars that she doesn't have.

Martha explained that at that point, there was nothing anyone could do and the little boy lost his spot:

Where is he now? The centres are saying, we don't want you because I'm going to have two months of bad debt. Yet, where is he now? Studies show that those children do fair worse off later in life [...] because they [put] more costs on the health care system.

Martha provided further reasons as to why she believed that lack of child care subsidies was affecting child development:

So we have a little girl who didn't go to pre-school because she's got two special need siblings and could not qualify. The family moved from here and they moved to a poorer area, and this little girl was top of her class, she was doing really well., [...] but her grades dropped because she didn't have that appropriate intervention early on, and so does [lack of child care subsidies] affect child development? You bet.

Martha and Sally ended their discussion with regards to lack of child care subsidies emphasizing that the subsidy used to be about maintaining protective factors for children, "so the parents can get their stuff together, so the kids have a place to be while the parents live in hostile

environments,” and now the subsidy system causes more stress and complications for families and children then it prevents:

Say, [a care provider] lays down for a nap, the child leaves and walks down the street.

We find kids all over the place down here, and out on Hastings Street, right, where the predators are... and we find lost kids continuously down here. Three years old, walking around in the middle of the night.

Sally and Martha both believed that lack of child care subsidies was affecting children’s development in that the subsidy provided a protective factor for children that at times the children’s parents could not provide.

#### *Funding and Compassion*

At the end of Martha and Sally’s combined “storying” process both women seemed to be resigned to the difficulties of the new system, and the struggle they had been working through for the last 31 years almost seemed for naught. In a very poignant comment by Martha, she outlined how she currently felt about the system:

One’s funding, and one’s compassion, right, and they can’t work together, neither of them can work together.

Sally shared her sentiments in a comment that closely resembled Gail’s, in that she alluded to the system as a game:

I have been at this game for the last 20 years, and you know, it’s just ludicrous that we have a country that still cannot wrap it’s head around the fact that if you don’t care for your children, if you don’t pay for it now, you’ll pay for it later. So I play the game.

The lost sense of community, emulated by Gail and Mana also permeated Martha and Sally’s sentiments during the interview:



We're not part of this large human community that takes care of everybody. [...] We don't have an idea, that to care for our children before they got to school is also part of our community responsibility.

Sally continued to emphasize the loss of community and the current impersonalization of the system as she explains:

So, now it's time to get rid of all these specialized subsidy workers and let's move it all the way to Victoria, where it's nice and impersonal. Just like the income assistance is now impersonal. You're all about the paper and the check mark.

It is clear that throughout the interview process of "storying" their narratives, Martha and Sally finished their stories, as not narratives full of hope, but narratives which emphasized feelings of resignation and frustration. These feelings are toward a system that was once described as supportive but now is failing those who are the most vulnerable. No matter the effort spared in hopes to increase the quality and the lives of children, the women expressed that there were many factors that simply could not be overcome. Martha and Sally both shared that they believed that children were suffering because of lack of child care subsidies.

## Chapter 5 – Discussion

In this chapter, I position the results of this study by first discussing the common themes shared across the four women's stories. In doing so I engage in a form of cross-case analysis that draws upon Leiblich et al.'s (1998) model of narrative inquiry and focuses on elements of plot. These elements of plot include character, setting, problem, actions and resolutions. In my analysis of relevant literature, I explore child care subsidies as a means to promote labour market participation, and propose a lens of intersectionality to help conceptualize the lives of the four women discussed in this research study. I conclude this chapter, and the overall paper, with implications of this study on social work practice. With reflection on the methods used in the current study, and with suggestions for further research, particularly in light of limitations specific to this attempt in trying to provide space for women's narratives of their child(ren)'s perceived development when they lack child care subsidies.

### *Across the Stories: Common Themes*

#### *Community*

Through cross sectional analysis of the women's narrative I noted that the lack of, and the desire for community, (especially when trying to secure appropriate and adequate child care), was a rather strong element in each of the woman's stories. Mana specifically referenced the difficulty she faced in joining her own cultural community as a single mother while in Canada. She expressed that she continuously felt stigmatized by fellow Serbians for having been divorced. Gail also specifically referenced the notions of community in that she had previously lived in an extended family unit. Gail shared that currently she lacked the support of an extended community and now felt added pressure to provide the majority of care for her child. Interestingly Martha and Sally both referenced community; however, both women noted the loss of community in relation to changes in the child care subsidy system.

Mana and Gail both made references to community in relation to shared cultural values. Mana enlisted her boys in Serbian folk dancing classes so they could experience and spend time with others who shared the same culture. Interestingly it was the Serbian cultural expectations which Mana had identified as having ‘shunned’ her for having been divorced. Throughout Mana’s narrative the importance of creating community was very apparent, most likely due to her newness to the country, and feelings of isolation as a single mother. These feelings were demonstrated throughout Mana’s storying process as she spent her time seeking out opportunities to create community, regardless of the loss to herself. Mana continued to emphasize that she wanted “[her] boys to be cared for.” In Gail’s narrative she also referenced the desire for community; however, unlike Mana, Gail shared her heavy feelings of loneliness and how alone she felt in parenting. Gail highlighted experiences of having lived in an extended family unit and how this community had worked together, and now that she was in Canada, she felt she lacked support.

Martha and Sally both discussed community in terms of the community’s physical location, and rather than identify community as a cultural experience, Martha and Sally shared that for them community meant the neighbourhood in which they currently reside. Sally began her interview by describing the sense of community she had felt in that the woman’s group she frequented helped support her to return to work. However structural changes occurred to the subsidy system, Sally emphasized issues of trust in relation to community. She shared that she began to see women avoid applying for child care subsidies because the mothers feared the new forms would be held against them. Rather than involve themselves in the extended community, these women and children became more and more isolated.

It is interesting to note that through the reduction of child care subsidies the government's goal has been to reduce the dependency of lower income families on the state; however, it appears that due to the changes in the system there have been other consequences to families as well. Although Gail, Mana, Martha and Sally never specifically addressed lack of child care subsidies correlating to a reduction in community, there appeared to be an overall consensus that prior to the reduction in child care subsidies each woman felt supported and was able to create networks of others in similar situations. When the change in the subsidy system occurred the women noted either a disdain, or 'fear' of the system, and either avoided it or did not use it all. Although I cannot specifically determine whether or not that lack of child care subsidies has either promoted or discouraged the facilitation of a community, each woman expressed, in their own way a want for community.

### *The Struggle*

Another theme which was apparent across each interview was that of an essence of 'struggle.' Each woman highlighted and imparted a sense of struggle throughout their interview. The theme was specifically outlined when they each discussed trying to navigate the subsidy system through discussing their difficulties in trying to secure and maintain child care with lack of subsidy. Mana shared the struggle she faced in terms of securing adequate affordable child care and highlighted this struggle through her stipulations of "there's not enough time." Gail's discussion outlined a sense of struggle similar to Mana's struggle as she identified the difficulty she faced in accessing and securing child care. The theme of struggle permeated Martha and Sally's interview as well, as they discussed how their struggles with the subsidy system have directly affected their lives, their work, and the women in their community.

Although Mana never specifically utilized the word ‘struggle’ in her narrative throughout her storying process she highlighted feelings of struggle as she explained the difficulty she endured in trying to access reliable, quality child care for her child. Throughout Mana’s narrative it was apparent that she fervently struggled with a system that appeared non-supportive and overwhelming to navigate. Mana further expressed her feelings of struggle within the limit of time as she shared she did not have enough time to finish all she needed to. Things she needed to complete in order to ensure her children were appropriately cared for, and at times, due to her ‘struggles’ Mana felt like “giving-up.” Gail had similar struggles to Mana in that she too expressed the difficulty she endured in trying to secure stable child care arrangements. Gail expressed her ‘struggle’ in navigating the child care system and the myriad of child care arrangements her son was currently receiving. Through her struggles Gail felt that her son was apt to perhaps have more behavioural problems later in life if she could not secure an appropriate base for him.

Martha and Sally shared their struggles similarly to Mana and Gail in that both women also struggled with the child care system. The ‘struggle’ they felt was against a system that did not support them, or provide any sense of security for women trying to secure child care. The struggles that each woman shared were in direct relation to the child care subsidy system and instead of feeling supported, and encouraged to return to work, the women continued to struggle to secure appropriate child care for their children. Martha and Sally made specific reference to “a system that serves nobody” and shared the repercussions the system has had on mothers in their community. Martha talked about having worked with, worked for, and having been part of a system for the last thirty one years, and due to the very recent changes in the child care subsidy

system Martha shares that she has never before seen such struggle faced by women in maneuvering the system to ensure their children are supported.

### *Feelings of Guilt*

Mana and Gail both expressed feelings of guilt in not being able to provide ‘appropriate’ care for their children, although each woman did share that each of them had difficulties and had struggled with the child care subsidy system at one time or another. Mana discusses her sense of guilt in not having things for her children, such as community, stability in care arrangements, family, a father figure, as well as not having enough quality time to spend with them. Gail highlighted her feelings of guilt, as she describes, her “inability” to secure child care for her son, although Gail had created a complex system of care arrangements to ensure her son was always cared for. Martha and Sally did not specifically state that they felt “guilty” in the same sense that Mana or Gail shared, nor did their interviews elicit that they each carried a personal sense of guilt. This may have also been a result of the dual interview, as there was little time, and perhaps little space for elaboration on either woman’s feelings. The women did, however, emphasize the sense of guilt they felt in telling a mother she could not qualify for a child care subsidy, and outlined the sense of guilt that women in their community were feeling. Martha and Sally’s lack of shared internal guilt may be due to the fact that they both worked for the subsidy system and understood the systematic structures intimately, or perhaps each woman may have felt uncomfortable sharing a personal sense of guilt in front of another peer.

Three of the four women involved in this study have had professional training in child development and/or child care and understand the inner workings of the child care system. Gail has had professional training as a child protection social worker and Martha and Sally were professionally trained in child care and child development. Gail, Martha and Sally all possess an

insider/outsider perspective of the child care system. Each of the women is not only a user of the system they themselves also access the system and aid other women in accessing the system.

This is important to note, in that these three professionals, although they have an insider perspective of the system, still share personal feelings of guilt in not being able to secure child care for their children. Gail outlined this most pertinent point when she expressed her admiration for other women who manage to do the impossible: "I don't know how [these women] do it. I know I barely can, and I have a good job." Gail, Martha and Sally's expressions of guilt reflect the lack of support the child care subsidy system continues to provide to mothers. Regardless of whether a mother sustains employment, or accesses welfare, quality, affordable child care still remains unattainable. Rather than emphasize the lack of support within the system, the sense of guilt described in their narratives appears to be described as an individual or personal experience even with intimate understandings of the system.

Mana also expressed feelings of guilt throughout her narrative as it appeared to be an underlying theme, regardless of what point she was at in her story. Mana shared that not having family for her children was difficult and shared the feelings of guilt she had in this respect. Perhaps based on these heavy feelings of guilt she went so far as to mend a relationship with her brother who had not treated her too well to ensure her boys could have a sense of 'family.' Mana also took on the shame of her culture for being divorced. Regardless of the 'looks' and the feelings of ostracization she felt in attending cultural events, Mana did what she had to do so that her boys could be connected with others. It appeared that Mana's deeper feelings of guilt were more apparent when she discussed the struggle of trying to secure and maintain stable child care arrangements. Mana's narrative appeared to be filled with a sense of hopelessness and increased guilt as she discussed how her children were continuously shifted from care provider to care

provider. Mana shared that she felt nervous and scared in approaching the ministry to ask for help because she did not want to let them know she was struggling.

Gail shared her feelings of guilt in her “own” inability as she recounts it to secure stable child care for her son. In Gail’s case, similar to Mana’s, she had no choice but to create a myriad of child care arrangements so her son would always be cared for. Gail also discusses how guilty she felt in putting her child in a ‘substandard’ daycare because *she* could not find any other stable, or quality care for what she could afford. It is interesting that both Mana and Gail highlight how their feelings of guilt were attached to not being able to secure and maintain stable care arrangements for their children. Yet, throughout their narratives, both women appeared to be doing all they could to make safe and appropriate care arrangements with little to no support from others or the system. Both women shared that it was their own guilt which was causing them anxiety and stress when it appears that they were doing the best with what they had. It seems impossible to have expected them to manage any better in a system with such little support. Gail expressed that she works for the Ministry and sees families trying to raise children on lower incomes than herself and has no idea how they manage.

Martha and Sally started their combined narrative with positive memories about the child care subsidy system and how as mothers they both felt supported by it in its earlier years. As the years progressed, however, the child care system changed drastically, and both women felt the results directly, especially in their line of work. Martha and Sally discussed how the system is now inherently based on what the mother is doing or not doing and child care subsidy receipt is based on a woman’s employment. Martha shared that women felt completely guilty if they could not secure employment or maintain employment as this meant that their children suffered for it. Sally highlighted that the more stringent the requirements to secure child care subsidies the



guiltier the mothers felt about ‘their’ inability to secure child care. The feelings of guilt were exacerbated in the sense that if a mother required more subsidy, the mothers had to document that they were ‘unable to care for’ their child(ren). It appears that throughout all four women’s narrative feelings of guilt permeated their stories. Interestingly enough, the feelings of guilt the women shared were directly associated with systemic structures which included lack of quality, stable child care and lack of child care subsidies. It is important to highlight the fact that these women each felt guilt in areas in which they had little to no control.

### *The Changes*

The last theme which was common across all the women’s narratives was the theme of ‘changes.’ Throughout their narratives each woman told about the number of changes that have occurred in their lives. Each women discussed how those changes have played into their ability to care for their child(ren) as well as provide stable child care arrangements for their child(ren). Mana discussed ‘changes’ that have occurred in her life in terms of immigration, separation from her spouse, navigating a new culture, and changes in the child care system. Mana expressed how all these changes have in turn affected her and her children. Gail’s discussion of changes was very similar to Mana’s in that Gail talked about changes in terms of her immigration to Canada. As well as how the changes in the child care subsidy system has also affected her and her children. The theme of change was also discussed extensively in Martha and Sally’s narrative in terms of the constant changes in the child care system. These women expressed how these changes had affected not only themselves, but also the women they work with.

Mana’s narrative had a heavy theme of change as she described changes as ‘happening to her’ with little to no control or choice. Mana described the changes through telling about shifts in her personal life as well as shifts within the child care subsidy system. Mana’s first big ‘change’

was her immigration from Serbia to Canada, a change she had not planned. Her second big ‘change’ was her divorce, something she had not foreseen as ever possible. During the changes in her personal life, Mana was also confronted with changes in the child care subsidy system. Mana explained she could barely manage with the myriad of changes that were continuously co-occurring, especially as each change affected her ability to provide stability in care for her children. Gail had a similar story to Mana as she had also experienced many changes in her life; although Gail had chosen to immigrate to Canada the change was still difficult as she lacked community and support. Gail also shared that the changes in the child care subsidy system, a \$100 dollars a month, as one of the most difficult changes that had occurred. Due to this change her child was being bounced around from care provider to care provider. The theme of changes in Mana and Gail’s narrative demonstrate the difficulty each woman has had trying to provide stability for their child(ren) within a system that is not at all stable.

Martha and Sally’s discussion of change began on a positive note, as both women were so closely linked to the child care subsidy system prior to the current neo-liberal changes, that each woman described the system as supportive, and Sally shared that child care subsidies allowed her to re-enter the work force and ensured her children were cared for. Martha and Sally discussed the experiences of the changes in the system through relating the experiences of women in their community, rather than share in their own personal stories. This may have been another effect of having the joint interview as rather than relate their own personal experiences, the women appeared to be more comfortable in relating third party stories. Martha and Sally shared that they were “comfortable” with one another, and it did appear they were comfortable during the interview process; however, it may have been that they were comfortable in their roles as work colleagues, rather than comfortable with each other in their roles as mothers.

Martha and Sally also emphasized their roles as workers prior to changes in the system. They both explained that they helped women attain child care subsidies to ensure that these women's child(ren) received appropriate and stable child care. Yet, with the changes in the system, Sally and Martha no longer could provide the same support to the women as they once had, and rather they began to spend their time 'combatting' the new legislations. The theme of change also appeared in Martha and Sally's interview as they discussed change in terms of the constant shifting in the lives of the women they served. The women they served not only faced constant changes in their personal lives, the child care subsidies that had once ensured stability in child care arrangements also began to change. Martha and Sally both expressed that this inconsistency or changes in the child care system negatively affected stable child care arrangements which in turn affected children's development. Throughout the sharing of Martha and Sally's experiences each woman told of the effects of constant changes which they or the population they served had little to no control over. The women believed that the changes in the child care subsidy system, which has been significantly reducing child care subsidy, has led to lack of stability in care arrangements for children.

#### *The Findings in Relation to Relevant Literature*

As mentioned in the literature review of this study, the contemporary study of child care subsidies has heavily focused specifically on whether or not child care subsidy receipt promotes and increases employment rates for women. In this respect, the correlation as to whether or not the receipt of child care subsidies affects child(ren)'s development has yet to be thoroughly researched and very limited discussion exists in this area of inquiry (Herbst & Tekin, 2010). The professional's perspectives in research in this area may have been valuable in assessing whether or not child care subsidy leads to mother's employment. Yet, the heavy emphasis on this

perspective in the realm of employment outcomes for women may present a shortcoming in conceptualizing the findings of this study; since research in this area of inquiry has historically lacked the voice of those directly influenced by child policies (Ceglowski & Bacigalupa, 2002).

*Community, Struggle, Guilt and Changes*

As has been discussed throughout the literature review, this study's purpose is to allow space for mothers to voice their thoughts on whether or not lack of child care subsidies has affected their child(ren)'s development. The four common themes that were elicited in a cross-sectional analysis of each woman's narrative included those of "community," "struggle," "guilt," and "change," which appeared to be underlying factors that may have negatively contributed to their child(ren)'s development. These four themes are difficult to position within the results of the literature as most of the research in this realm of inquiry is quantitative by design and most of the current studies lump 'mothers' into the group of 'parents.' It is also difficult to position the results of this research study as the research question being asked has yet to be specifically studied or evaluated from a qualitative research design, therefore direct comparisons must be made tentatively. First I will discuss Herbst & Tekin's (2010) findings in relation to this study as their research question appears to be the most comparable to mine. Next, I will utilize the synopsis of the literature review (Chapter 2) as a guideline to further compare and contrast the findings of this study.

Herbst & Tekin's (2010) study was one of the first studies to specifically ask the question "whether or not the lack of child care subsidies affects children's development?" The study was quantitative in design in which Herbst & Tekin (2010) compared children whose parents received child care subsidies to children whose parents did not. They then examined the relationship between child care subsidy receipt or lack thereof and children's cognitive,

behavioural and psychomotor outcomes at the start of kindergarten. The researchers found that the receipt of child care subsidies was in actuality negatively affecting children's development. The authors theorized the reason for their results were the generally small sums of child care subsidies, as most subsidies were only enough to afford low level child care centres (Herbst & Tekin, 2010). Interestingly, a case in point, Mana, shared that when she lost the \$100 subsidy which allowed her to afford stable quality child care, it was at this time Mana had to pull her children from the quality care arrangements she had made as she could no longer afford the cost. This loss of subsidy was the catalyst to Mana's current endless struggle to secure appropriate and adequate child care for her children. It was at this time she noted significant changes in her children's behaviours. Herbst & Tekin (2010) would most likely agree that finding affordable, adequate child care has been difficult, even with the receipt of child care subsidies.

As is discussed in the synopsis of the literature review current studies in this realm of inquiry have relied heavily on quantitative methods to research and have specifically focused on the professional's perspective. There is currently no qualitative research question which attempts to answer whether lack of child care subsidy affects children's development, especially from the perspective of 'non-professional.' Contemporary studies in this area have been primarily concerned with uncovering whether or not child care subsidies are a 'good' economic investment for promoting employment (Blau, 2002). In other words, the existing studies that discuss child care subsidy receipt are simply a means to discern whether or not there is any economic benefit for government in continuing to supply child care subsidies. This is an important factor to take into consideration when assessing the current literature in this realm of inquiry. As the results of the studies have a specific purpose, to determine whether or not child care subsidies promote employment.

### *Missing Voice of Women*

First and foremost there are very limited studies which actually address a mother's perspectives in this realm of inquiry, and even when the "non-professionals" voices are included in research about child development, it is generally discussed from the perspective of 'parents.' A fact that can be rather alarming considering 38.4% of lower income families are led by single women (Hunter, 2006). Another alarming point is that research that has attempted to address a mother's perspectives generally provides a pre-generated list of questions. Thus the 'professionals' ask the 'parents' to rank what they feel is most important in a child care settings. Interestingly, the studies which did specifically address a mother's perspective, noted that most mothers wanted the same quality of care for their children as the professionals believed would promote positive child development.

### *Child's Development*

Secondly, in discussing quality child care and what that means for children's development the mothers in the study shared that their children's "growth" or development was a very important factor for them when searching for child care. A case in point, Gail discussed the "tender years" for her son, and how she was glad that for the most important developmental stage for her son, (as per the professional's perspectives); Gail was able to secure and maintain quality child care. In this respect she felt that although her son currently had a myriad of unstable care arrangements, he had received developmentally appropriate care at a very important stage in his growth and Gail hoped he would continue to do well because of this experience.

### *Child Care Subsidies and Children's Development*

The third and final question I asked the participants in my research study was to: "share the story of how your child's growth may have been affected when you did not secure child

care.” This is a difficult question to compare to the literature as child care subsidy research has lacked a specific focus on child subsidy receipt and child development. In current research, however, professionals are aware that quality child care promotes child development, and that stable care arrangements also promote positive child development. Gail, Martha and Sally, having had professional training in child development shared that from their perspectives they believed that lack of quality child care was affecting children’s development. These three women each expressed that in their opinion child care subsidies provided stability in child care arrangements for children. This in turn provided stable environments for children to reach their full developmental capacity. Although Mana did not have professional training in a child development capacity she still maintained the opinion that stable child care arrangements did improve her children’s behaviour. The focus for interviewing mothers in relation to their children continues to be more specifically related to income assistance receipt, rather than child development outcomes. Studies that focus specifically on mother’s perspectives in this realm of inquiry continue to be under represented.

### *Findings*

The findings in this study suggest that the mothers who had been interviewed did perceive that the overall lack of a child care subsidies has been negatively affected their child(ren)’s development. To further this statement, Mana shared that when she lost the \$100 subsidy she was no longer able to afford stable, “good” quality child care and Gail shared that the \$100 subsidy was a “joke” and that something more needed to be done to ensure her child was cared for. In this respect it might be interpreted that the women were also commenting on the overall lack in a comprehensive child care plan on the part of government. Martha and Sally shared that they have noted that there has been a significant decrease in early learning markers

for children who reside in their neighbourhood. As has been discussed in the literature, there has no doubt been a heavy emphasis on the researcher's perspectives in promoting positive child development and researchers such as Bronfenbrenner have highlighted the significant importance that appropriate, stable care arrangements are for children's development, not unlike Gail's sentiments for her child. Yet child care subsidy research does little to account for child care subsidies effects on children's development.

Gail, Mana, Martha and Sally each shared their perceptions on how lack of child care subsidies has affected their child(ren)'s development. Yet, I want to draw attention to the differences in the professional education and training that Gail, Martha and Sally possess. These women have been trained at a professional capacity to assess child development in comparison to Mana. The implications of this may be that Gail, Martha and Sally still maintain a more 'professionally' centred notion of child development, and their thoughts may be more consistent with the "professional's" perceptions. Mana on the other hand may be applying different 'developmental' markers to address the changes she noted in her children. Yet, regardless of the differences in background training and perspectives of each woman, they each agreed that lack of child care subsidies is negatively affecting child(ren)'s development.

#### *Implications of the Study on Social Work Practice*

As mentioned previously, the results of this study are not be generalizable; they nonetheless provide insight into how social workers could potentially practice with women whose lives may in some way resemble those involved in this study. At the direct level, it is important to have an understanding as to the reason for the implementation and creation of child care subsidy. Child care subsidies have been utilized, by government, as a means to promote mother's employment and reduce dependency on the state. This means that although child care



subsidies are continuously offered and provided by the Ministry of Children and Family Development to mothers as a perceived ‘helping’ measure, it is important to be aware, that the subsidy may not be completely a ‘helping measure.’ Subsidies in turn can be a very unstable ‘supportive’ measure, as they are attached to employment outcomes of parents and women, rather than the developmental needs of the child. This means that mothers who are unable to maintain stable employment risk losing their child care subsidy and stable child care arrangements. As the women in this study discussed, this lack of stability in care arrangements for their child(ren) led to personal feelings of guilt.

At the direct practice level, social workers must be aware of this notion of “guilt,” as at times it becomes internalized as the women’s personal failure, which may be a result of the persistence of gender roles in society. These feelings of guilt were expressed specifically in Mana, Gail, Martha and Sally’s narratives. These four women each discussed notions of guilt or self-blame when they could not provide quality stable child care for child(ren). It is thus imperative for social workers who work with women in this capacity to understand that the women may possess feelings of guilt or self-blame. Social workers also need to understand that these feelings may also be a result of historical underpinnings that have pre-defined gender roles. Social workers need to understand that women have been influenced to believe, through the construction of gender roles, that they are the sole proprietors for children based on gender characteristics. Meaning that feelings of internalized guilt may stem from feelings of not being able to perform or maintain their roles as mothers, roles which are continuously promoted by society. These mothers, having believed that they have failed their ‘inherent’ role of the ‘good’ mother, may also maintain feelings of guilt simple due to the ‘perception’ that they have failed. These feelings of guilt, or perhaps feelings of ‘failure’ may be difficult to share with a worker,

especially since most social workers involved with women in this capacity are generally ministry workers who possess much power to continue to influence the lives of women.

Social workers need to have an understanding of feminist principles, especially in relation to gender roles as gender roles do affect the nature and notion of what consists of women's 'work.' Therefore, as a social worker supporting a woman in filling out the child care subsidy application, a social worker must take into consideration that the subsidy form can be extremely stigmatizing. Some applications require women to share that they are "unable to care for their children," which could possibly be a deterrent for some women to apply or share their concerns with workers. The fear is that the application may be used against them, especially if the women are already involved with MCFD. This thought was expressed specifically by Martha and Sally who shared there was inherent stigma in the subsidy application process as was expressed by the type of questions the women had to answer. Therefore, Martha and Sally's work has been to shift the focus, as they described: "to make the paper 'work' for the women," rather than further stigmatize them. By this, Martha and Sally meant that social workers need to have a good understanding of the child care system, as the purpose of the system is to promote paid labour. Social workers also need to realize that women are being stigmatized throughout the application process. Martha and Sally shared that listening to these women and working collaboratively with them, and by helping the women liaise with public bodies, or liaising on their behalf in order to ensure the information shared does not further harm the women, is all part of the social work role. This is a good example in direct practice on how workers can collaborate with mothers to reduce stigma and fear in accessing child care subsidies.

At the macro-level social workers could possibly work toward facilitating and implementing group spaces for women who are trying to create a sense of community for

themselves and their children. I would like to caution this suggestion; however, with a description of what I found in my research. First, two of the four women involved in this study specifically identified and discussed community in terms of culture, whereas the other two women discussed community in terms of physical space, nonetheless; each woman shared her own individual sense of community and what that means to her. The women involved in the study, discussed and shared how a strong community had helped them each in terms of securing work, gaining support, and being able to support others, themselves and their children.

Therefore, for the purposes of social workers, supporting women, I would like to encourage that perhaps helping create a safe space so that women could attempt to create their own community may aid this vulnerable population. I would again like to caution this instruction with another caveat, that before one dive into attempting to ‘create’ a sense of community, it is imperative to always ask and to respect the autonomy of each woman, and to determine what community may mean for each individual to attempt to ensure that specific population needs are being met, among varying groups of women are being met. In addition women have had to traditionally go the “volunteer” route to get services. This is discussed by Sally who shared that volunteering, or ‘unpaid labour’ was her first point of entry into the labour force.

In outlining institutional or mezzo-level implications for social work practice, it is first important to note that since none of this study’s findings are generalizable, it may be important to consider these recommendations tentatively. Having provided this caveat, however, social workers also need to be aware that child care subsidies are not meant as a means to protect children nor are they meant as a means to promote child development. Therefore social workers who implement, apply, or attempt to secure child care subsidies for women must understand that subsidies are simply a means to discourage ‘dependency,’ on the state. This is inherently

important to understand, especially as a social worker, that lack of child care subsidies, or subsidies that are too low, may result in a myriad of unstable, possibly low quality care arrangements. It is known that low quality child care can lead to lower developmental outcomes for children and can possibly negatively affect a child's behaviour. Therefore, as a social worker, who utilizes child development assessors to determine whether or not a child is being care for 'appropriately,' one needs to be aware that a child's 'lack' of development may not be the direct result of a mother's 'bad' parenting. Rather other factors may be at play, such as lack of child care subsidies, which may lead to lack of stable quality child care and could perhaps negatively affect a child's development.

Another factor that may be important for social workers to work toward is policy changes in the realm of child care subsidy. The most alarming discussion to be elicited from the literature review is that child care subsidy receipt is attached to mother's employment outcomes, rather than children's developmental outcomes. Although this attachment does have lengthy historical underpinnings, the child care subsidy system potentially needs a significant change as the mothers in this research inquiry felt that lack of child care subsidies was negatively affecting their child(ren)'s development. Social workers thus need to be prepared to lobby for a perception shift in child care policies, as child care subsidy receipt needs to be attached to children's developmental outcomes, rather than employment outcomes. The sufficient receipt of child care subsidy will then ensure that child care arrangements are quality and stable, which will potentially lead to improved long-term developmental outcomes for children, as has been discussed throughout the current literature.

*Reflection on the Use of Methods*

As already mentioned I adopted a constructivist position and applied a feminist perspective in designing the current study. I drew particularly on narrative approaches for conducting qualitative inquiry into the experiences of how four women story their perceptions of lack of child care subsidies in relation to their child(ren)'s development. Specifically, I utilized the work of Creswell (2007) and Lieblich et al. (1998) to help me construct and examine how participants storied their experiences in a chronological series of events. The narrative method allowed for the generation and analysis of data specific to the experiences of these four women. In particular, because the interview process enabled participants to share their personal narratives, and also because the process of analyzing data necessitated strong attention to these individual stories, subjective and complex experiences were recognized. Indeed, I gained a deeper understanding of the specific experiences of these women and realized the almost seemingly overwhelming odds these women faced as they attempt to secure quality, stable child care for their children.

As I relied solely on verbal interviews for the sources of data, I feel I may have been limited in the type of data I generated as there are a variety of ways in which I could have further collected data from my participants, such as texts, photographs, journal entries and illustrations which could have further added more insight and richness to my data generation (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004). Time constraints also appeared to be a significant barrier in securing the participation of these four women for the purposes of this study. I thus wondered if my limited means of data generation affected my ability to gain more participants. This difficulty in recruitment may have also been reflective of the stresses experienced by this specific population of women. This may have potentially further demonstrated the effects of lack of meaningful subsidy has on women's lives. Allowing for other forms of data generation may have allowed for

more participants. The women may have not felt so constrained by time, and that asking for journal entries or even having “immersed” myself in their daily lives for a short time (as is informed by Clandinin & Connelly (2004)), I may have been able to gain a deeper understanding and further insight into these women’s narratives.

### *Implications of the Study on Future Research*

As has been thoroughly discussed, this study evoked a number of questions and themes that have yet to be explored in related studies of child care subsidy research. First it is important to highlight that the majority of studies related to child care subsidy receipt are specifically formulated from the professional’s perspective. The studies are thus utilized as a means to test whether or not employment rates are being met. This means that although child care subsidies are subject to changes in parental employment, parents have little to no ‘voice’ in this space of inquiry, considering child care policies directly affect themselves and their families. To further this line of inquiry, one must ask, especially as a social worker, why the notion of ‘parents’ seems to be an all-encompassing word to describe “all” families. Considering that a very large majority of lower income families are single parent led and many of these are headed by women. Also, it is important to consider that childcare subsidy policies date back to promoting mother’s employment during war time efforts. This means that the child care subsidy policies have not only neglected the voice of parents, but have also managed to lump the ‘voice’ of mothers within this word of ‘parents.’ Regardless the distinction (between professionals or parents), the voice of the professionals continues to predominate research in this field.

Given the above analysis it may also be relevant for future related research and the researchers conducting such research to further include other ‘voices’ in their studies. Researchers need to question what their results may mean for those who are being directly

affected by their studies and as such need to closely involve those being affected. In this case in point, it would mean that researchers begin to include, as Katz (1993) defines them the four perspectives in child care research (as is discussed at length in the literature review). I would also like to go farther and share that although “parents” is highlighted as one of the four perspectives, researchers would benefit from further distinguishing what it means to be “parents,” as the use of the term “parents” could mean many things. “Parents” are no longer simply defined as the “nuclear” family, but rather consist of many new definitions, ie: same-sex couples, grandparents, single parents, etc. Therefore further research pertaining to child(ren)’s development, such as child care subsidy and child care quality *need* to include more encompassing perspectives.

I would also like to bring attention to the very limited research which relates directly to my research question and share that even Herbst & Tekin’s 2010 study write “researchers have neglected the question whether child care subsidies have implications for child development.” This means that child care policies have affected children’s child care quality and stability in care arrangements for generations, albeit, perhaps *indirectly*, (as this has not been the focus for child care subsidy policies). There still exists, however, little to no research which asks whether or not child care subsidy receipt affects children’s development. This means that there is a significant need for further research which asks this question as to whether child care subsidy receipt affects children’s development. Even more alarming is the severe neglect of qualitative research in this area of inquiry, as qualitative research allows one to attend to the individual stories of the participants (Creswell, 2007).

Aside from the research implications listed above, it is also necessary to note research implications that relate more closely to this study’s limitations. As is apparent, the research study focused on a very specific population of women. When analyzed it was noted that three out of

the four women involved identified themselves as minorities as well as professionals. Therefore, though the results of this study suggested that the mothers involved do perceive that lack of child care subsidies affect their child(ren)'s development, this overarching theme may or may not be applicable to the lives of non-minority women, or women who do not possess professional training in child development. A fact which does need to be taken into consideration in light of this research since minorities are faced with more stigma, less opportunities, more discrimination and lower income standards in comparison to non-minorities (Statistics Canada, 2004). And that those women who possess child development training may be reflecting a more 'professional' perspective, a case in point with Martha and Sally's narrative. The mothers in this study each shared they felt a lack of community, and believed that community was an important factor in their support systems. It may be necessary to examine whether the findings are generalizable to non-minority mothers who believe that lack of child care subsidies is affecting their child's development.

### *Conclusion*

In this study, I attempted to gain insight into the experiences of four women, primarily by attending to how four Canadian mothers story their experiences of their child(ren)'s development when they lack child care subsidies. I first outlined the conceptual basis for the study by first providing an overview of my social locations within this realm of inquiry. I then provided an overview of literature related to the general child care subsidy research. I also discussed the qualitative nature of this study, and explained my rationale for creating and implementing the study in a narrative fashion. I also explained my reasoning for paying specific attention to the voice of mothers. Finally through analysing the women's narrative I gained insight into the stories of these four women, and their thoughts in relation to the topic being addressed. Through



cross sectional analysis I highlighted four common themes across the women's narratives and discussed these themes in relation to possible practical implications for social workers working with a similar population. I also highlighted the findings of my study in relation to the findings in relevant literature, and highlighted the missing voice of women. Some themes that were invoked in the results of this research included the positive effects the women felt in being supported by a "community." The very significant effect that the "struggle" to secure child care had on the women's lives and their child(ren)'s development. As well as how feelings of "guilt" were underlying characteristics throughout the women's narratives. I also discussed the theme of "change" and how changes beyond the women's control affected their ability to care for their child(ren). I then drew attention to the significant lack of research, especially of qualitative design in the area of child care subsidy and child development. My hope is that future research seeks to further understand the relationships between child care subsidy receipt and child development outcomes.

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## Appendices

### *Appendix A – Recruitment Poster*

## THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



### **School of Social Work**

2080 West Mall

Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z2

Tel: (604) 822-2255 Fax: (604) 822-8656

[www.socialwork.ubc.ca](http://www.socialwork.ubc.ca)

### **Mothers Experience of Mothering in a receding Welfare State**

I am a Master of Social Work student at the University of British Columbia's School of Social Work. As part of my thesis, I will be studying mothers' experience of mothering with regards to their perceived lags in their children's development when subsidized child care is not available.

You are eligible to participate in the study if you:

- Identify as a mother who has difficulty securing subsidized child care and believe this has affected your child's development
- Are 19 years of age or older
- Are a fluent English speaker
- Are willing to commit to a 60 minute interview
- Are willing to commit up to an additional 60 minutes, following the interview, to provide feedback on transcripts and on the way your story is represented in the study

A \$10 Save-on-Foods gift certificate and childcare will be offered in appreciation of your participation.

The study is being supervised by Dr. Richard Vedan, Associate Professor at the UBC School of Social Work (phone: 604-xxx-xxx).

If you're interested, please contact:

Sophia Philion-Hunter, MSW student

Tel: 604-xxx-xxx

E-mail: [slphilion@xxxx.com](mailto:slphilion@xxxx.com)

## *Appendix B – Consent Form*



The University of British Columbia

Office of Research Services

Suite 102, 6190 Agronomy Road

Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z3

Phone: (604) 827-5112, Fax: (604) 822-5093

### **Consent Form: To Mothers**

#### **Mothers Experience of Mothering in a receding Welfare State**

##### **Principal Investigator:**

Richard Vedan PhD, RSW

Associate Professor  
School of Social Work  
University of British Columbia  
tel: (604) xxx-xxxx  
fax: (604) xxx-xxxx

##### **Co-Investigator:**

Sophia Phillion-Hunter, BSW

Masters of Social Work: Candidate  
School of Social Work

##### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this study is to give voice to mothers' experience of mothering with regards to their perceived lags in their children's development when subsidized child care is not available.

You are being invited to take part in this research study because you are a mother who has had difficulty in securing subsidized child care and believe this may have affected your child's development.

##### **Study Procedures:**

If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked for approximately two hours of your time to participate in an interview and a follow up interview. The interviews will be held at Kiwassa Neighbourhood house, or the University of British Columbia, depending on your comfort.

All interviews will be audio recorded and all data will be destroyed after the study is complete. No names will be attached to the interviews, and only those directly involved in the study will have access to the audio recordings.

##### **Potential Risks:**

There are no perceived risks for participating in this interview.

**Potential Benefits:**

This study offers a chance for you to share your experiences of mothering in a receding welfare state and to give voice to your experiences.

If you would like the results of the study there will be an option to have the findings mailed to you.

**Confidentiality:**

All documents and audio recordings will be identified only by code number and will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. You will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study. The computer used for the study will be kept secure with a password and all audio recordings will be destroyed once the study is complete. The principal investigator and the co-investigator (as listed above) will be the only two who have access to any information that may connect your identity to the interviews.

**Remuneration/Compensation:**

There will be a \$10 food voucher remuneration.

**Contact for information about the study:**

If you have any questions or desire further information, with respect to this study, you may contact Richard Vedan or Sophia Phillion-Hunter by the contact information listed above.

**Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects:**

If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail to [RSIL@ors.ubc.ca](mailto:RSIL@ors.ubc.ca) or toll free 1-877-822-8598.

**Consent:**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy to further services from Kiwassa Neighbourhood House.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

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Participant Signature

Date

---

Printed Name of the Participant

Please include your address if you would like the results mailed to you