

Revisiting an International Development Project in  
ECEC

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**Canada**

## **Abstract**

### **Revisiting on an International Development Project in ECEC**

Amanda Quance

The Innovative Child Care Practices for Children at Risk was an international development project that took place in the suburbs of José C Paz and Moreno, in the periphery of Buenos Aires, Argentina during the economic crisis of 2001. The project attempted to use Alan Pence's Generative Curriculum Approach in training educators in community child care centres. The project concluded in 2004 and no further assessment was done. This case study is a revisiting of the project, several years after its conclusion, through the documents created, the curriculum texts composed, and interviews with the participants in the project. Through analysis of these, lessons are drawn about the training of adult educators across differences of culture, language and class.

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This thesis is dedicated to Ana Gravina – la madrina

## Table of Contents

List of Tables.....	viii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1     Review of the Literature.....	8
The Social Construction of Childhood in the Minority World.....	8
Key Features of Constructivism.....	10
Quality in the Minority World ECEC Setting.....	15
Educator Training in the Minority World.....	18
Call for International Development in ECEC.....	21
The Generative Curriculum Approach.....	23
The Effectiveness Initiative.....	26
Summary.....	31
Chapter 2     Methodology.....	34
My Role as Educator-Researcher.....	35
Setting and Participants.....	39
Data Collection.....	44
Data Analysis.....	49
Chapter 3     Results.....	56
Chronology of Events.....	56
The ICCP Project.....	56
Overview of the History of Andando and El Encuentro.....	61
Analysis of Interviews.....	63
Impressions.....	63

Different Realities, Cultures, Histories, and ECEC Cultures.....	68
Canadian ‘Take’ .....	83
Argentine ‘Take’ and Where it ‘Took’ Them.....	88
Conclusion.....	97
Analysis of the Canadian and Argentine Texts.....	99
Situating the Canadian Text.....	99
Genre.....	102
Intertextuality.....	103
Discourses.....	106
Situating the Argentine Text.....	108
Genre.....	109
Intertextuality.....	111
Discourses.....	115
Conclusion.....	119
Chapter 4     Conclusions.....	120
Interpretation of Results.....	120
Application of the Generative Curriculum Approach.....	121
Contours of Effectiveness.....	125
Summary.....	130
References.....	132
Appendix A    Journal.....	138
Appendix B    Information Letter.....	150
Appendix C    Consent Forms.....	151

Appendix D Interview Questions.....	154
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## List of Tables

Table 1	Participants, Roles and Locations.....	40
Table 2	Intertextuality of the Third Page of the Argentine Text.....	111

## Introduction to the Study

International development projects in early childhood education and care (ECEC) abound (Weikart, 2000), and projects vary in focus from the establishment of child care programs, the improvement of existing child care programs, feeding programs, and training and professional development of educators. Such projects often collect data, though funding is generally geared towards the project itself, and not to the analysis and dissemination of what is learnt from these projects (Evans, 2008). This was the case in the Innovative Child Care Practices for Children at Risk: Canadians and Argentines Learning Together (ICCP) project.

The ICCP project was conducted between 1999 and 2004, and involved educator training by Canadian and Argentine trainers in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and further training in Ottawa, Canada. The focus of the project was a curriculum for educator training in child centred, play-based, constructivist ECEC practices. Following the project, contact between the Argentine and Canadian partners was lost, and no further assessment or evaluation took place.

Establishing the effectiveness, success or quality of international development projects is necessary for the sake of future projects. For some projects the use of measures for setting quality, or child outcomes are useful (Myers, 2007), in the case of educator training and professional development these do not directly assess the experiences or learning of the project.

This study will contribute to the understanding of how such projects unfold, and how participants experience them. Particular attention will be paid to the implementation

of the ICCP project as an effort in applying the Generative Curriculum Approach (Pence, 1998).

#### *Statement of the Problem*

The Effectiveness Initiative (Zimmerman, 2001) conducted by the Van Leer Foundation set out to determine the characteristics that were shared by successful and longstanding international projects in ECEC. Whether these features of effectiveness are implemented in projects conducted by other international development organizations such as the ICCP project is unknown.

Alan Pence (1998) presents the Generative Curriculum Approach as a way for partners from different cultures to co-create a curriculum for the training of early childhood educators. This approach was developed and used with First Nation communities in Canada. The ICCP project adopted this approach, many aspects of which reflect the contours of effectiveness identified by Zimmerman and his colleagues.

As an example of international development projects in ECEC that focused on the professional development of educators, revisiting the ICCP project can shed light on the implementation of the Generative Curriculum Approach, and the experiences of participants who are often overlooked.

#### *Nature of the study*

The following study is a qualitative revisiting of the ICCP project. It is a case study, the goal of which is not to assess or evaluate the project, but to understand and share the experiences of the participants in the events of the project. Nine interviews were conducted with people who filled different roles in the ICCP project in Argentina, and two interviews were conducted with Canadians who were involved in the project.

Documents that were produced by the project including the curriculum texts, were also collected and analysed to understand the experiences and events of the ICCP project.

### *Research questions*

The research questions that guided this study ask first what were the events of the ICCP project and how did they unfold. The next research question inquires what were the experiences of the participants in the project. Given the focus of the project on ECEC practices, this study considers what differences do participants identify between the ECEC practices in Canada and Argentina, and how such differences were addressed by the project. The final research question asks whether the adult education practices of the project reflect the principles of a constructivist approach to ECEC, and in what way were these practices expressions of the Generative Curriculum Approach, or related to critical pedagogy.

### *Language*

Most of the data collected was in Spanish. Interviews were conducted with participants in their first language, and the curriculum texts were also written in Spanish. The results of this study, being in English, involved translation, which was done by the researcher. I speak Spanish fluently, and though translation towards Spanish would have been too tasking, translation of the interviews and the text were feasible. As McLean (2007) notes, “there is not necessarily any direct compatibility between languages, the translation of the other’s words from the original language is to some extent a creative act on the part of the translator” (p.786). Although there might not be direct or exact translations of particular words and ideas that were communicated to me in Spanish, as a researcher with a background in working with children and studying ECEC I believe that

I have appropriately translated the ideas expressed by the Argentine participants. However, in the process of translation, it is quite likely that I over-rely on the jargon of minority world ECEC, which, given the topic of this case study is particularly unsuitable. Nonetheless, by being aware of the process of translation, and taking a critical perspective perhaps as McLean (2007) suggests “language barriers … can be an opportunity to deconstruct hegemonic terms, if the decisions made by the translator in the translation process are made a visible part of the research” (p. 789). Given the large quantity of data, I have not presented my rationale for the translation of each term. Here now, though I will present some Spanish terms that recurred, and how I have translated them. The following terms, as I have translated them to English, are frequently cited in the analysis of the interviews in the result section.

*centrado en el niño* –this has been translated as ‘child centred’, for the sake of brevity, and because this seems to be a term that was translated from English.

*dirigir* – translated ‘to direct’, and also ‘to directly instruct’. In Spanish the term is used interchangeably with both the connotation ‘direct’ and ‘guide’, though I have consistently translated it as ‘to direct’

*tomar* – translated as ‘take’ this word has a wider connotation in Spanish, and means also to ingest, absorb. Tomar refers to active possession.

*autonomía* – I have translated this to ‘autonomy’ realizing that the Argentinian participants were also referring to independence

*con ganas* – translated here as ‘with enthusiasm’, this a common expression, and could be likened to ‘gung ho’

*aprender jugando* – this I have translated as ‘learning through play’, which changes the meaning somewhat, because a more direct translation would be ‘learning playing’.

*juego* – translated as ‘play’ and ‘game’, depending on the context, and whether a specific game was described

*tranquilo* – translated as ‘calm’, the term has a broader meaning, suggestive to me of peace and tranquility, but the term is much less pretentious or ostentatious than this words are in English. In French a similarly used word is ‘sage’.

*cartonero* – this Spanish word is retained. Derived from *cartón* it refers to people who sort the garbage on Buenos Aires’ downtown street, and collect recyclable materials such as cardboard, glass, plastic and metal.

*complegizar* – translated here as ‘to problematize’ the word would more directly be translated as ‘to complicate’. However, participants described complegizar as being the act of posing questions and enriching children’s play. In Spanish, complegizar is the word used to describe Freire’s term that in English is translated as ‘to problematize’ and for this reason has been translated.

*plantear* – I have either translated this as ‘to propose’ or ‘to engage’, though a literal translation is ‘to plant’. The term was used to describe that which instigated reconsideration and reflection

*realidad* – translated as ‘reality’ the term in Spanish encompasses the idea of context, setting, economic and social circumstances.

*mentor* – this is an English word that though used in some Spanish speaking countries, is not used in Argentina. Instead the term ‘capacitadora’ and for mentoring

'capacitacion' were the terms used by the Argentine participants. While both 'mentor' and 'capaciatadora' can refer to the same person conducting the same activities, the connotation of the words is different. Mentoring suggests to me support from and training from a more knowledgeable and experienced person. Capacitacion suggests to me the giving of tools and capabilities. The Canadian trainers I refer to as trainers because they were never termed capacitadoras by the participants, however, the training was referred to as capacitacion. The term capacitadora is retained, its closest relative I think is pedagogical consultant, though such a term is much more formal than the way that the Argentines used the word.

Though this handful of terms does not cover the multitude of translation decisions that I made, as a researcher I hope that it communicates my general intention to capture the meaning of a term while also communicating the formality or informality of its use.

#### *Significance of the study*

It is the nature of many international development projects to conduct evaluation and assessment at the close of the project, if at all (Simon, 1989; Williams, 2008). This case study as a revisiting of a project four years after the project's completion, is significant in that it considers the lasting experiences and impacts of the project for the participants.

Assessment and evaluation are often conducted in terms of child outcomes or quality of the ECEC setting (Myers, 2007) though it has been suggested that a more useful measure of effectiveness and quality involves a dialogue and reflection (Zimmerman, 2000). This study provides a revisiting of a project that attempted to

engage in such a dialogue for the purpose of curriculum development, and provides insight into the process and the experiences of participants.

By not having a role in the ICCP project, the participants were perhaps freer to communicate their opinions openly and honestly.

### *Summary*

The following case study begins with a review of the literature, which explores ideas about childhood, ECEC and quality in the minority world, and the call for ECEC programs in the majority world.

The methodology sets out my role as a researcher before discussing the setting and participants of the case study, and the process of data collection. The chapter concludes with a description of the analysis of the data.

The results of the fourth chapter are presented in three pieces: the timeline of the ICCP project, the results of the interview analysis and finally the textual analysis.

The conclusions are presented in the fifth and final chapter, along with recommendations for further study.

## Chapter One: Review of the Literature

### *Introduction*

Adult education, like early childhood education, is located within the influence of culture, class, time and experience. The training and professional development of early childhood educators can be a place where these influences are taken into consideration both in terms of early childhood education and care (ECEC) practices and adult education practices. Given the current call for international development work in the area of ECEC, such an approach is all the more relevant.

The following literature review sets out to examine first, the minority<sup>1</sup> world perspective of childhood and ECEC, and the notion of quality. Three central features of constructivist ECEC philosophy will be considered, before turning to educator training in the minority world. The Generative Curriculum Approach will then be considered as an approach to educator training across cultural differences, particularly pertinent in international development projects. The question of assessment and evaluation of such a project follows.

### *The social construction of childhood in the minority world*

Childhood, a time of life that is universally a period of rapid growth and learning, is nonetheless a social construction, neither fixed nor universal in its characteristics (Ariès, 1962; Cunningham, 1995; Kincheloe, 2002). The age at which childhood ends has changed, the economic role of the child has changed, the rights of the child have changed,

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper, the term ‘minority world’ refers to those affluent and dominant nations where the minority of the world’s population lives, including Canada, the United States, and western European nations. In contrast is the ‘majority world’, those nations and people who make up the majority of the world’s population and do not enjoy the benefits of affluence.

all of this over the past century in the minority world alone (Ariès, 1962). Childhood has not only changed over time, but it varies too across cultures (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999).

Emanating from Europe, the minority world view of childhood is informed by theories of child development that see the child as constructing his or her own knowledge; these theories that have taken prominent place in ECEC. Constructivism is based primarily on the writings and research of Piaget, Vygotsky, Erikson, Froebel, and Bronfenbrenner (Hartley, 2000; Hujala, 2002). Constructivism is further informed by what Dahlberg, Moss and Pence term “the project of modernity” (1999, p. 19), which has also helped to shape and define childhood. Ongoing since the Age of Enlightenment, major contributions to this project and the social construction of childhood include Locke’s view of the child who is “to be filled with knowledge, skills, and dominant cultural values (Dahlberg et al, 1999, p. 44). Rousseau’s view of the child’s nature as innocent and in need of an “environment that will provide protection, continuity and security” (Dahlberg et al, 1999, p. 45) has also had an important impact. Developmental psychology has had an even greater influence on the minority world view of childhood with its view of the child as developing in a linear fashion, determined biologically and following general laws and “a standard sequence of biological stages that constitute a path to full realization or a ladder-like progression of maturity” (Dahlberg et al, 1999, p. 46). Current influences on the minority world construction of childhood include the post-modern perspective that considers the above as particular to the culture and context which created it, and not as an objective ‘truth’ (Cannella & Viruru, 2004).

Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (1999) present what they term a social-constructivist perspective, a view that is post-modern, and the child an actor in his or her development.

According to this perspective, development is recognized and problematized as socially constructed and not immutable or objective. This perspective does not reject the modernist and constructivist perspective, but contextualizes it, and demands that as actors in their own social construction, children and educators must make conscious and moral choices as to how these roles will be constructed.

The idea of a child who is developing along a linear path, through developmental stages, constructing understanding of the world through his or her play and interactions with the world, who is innocent needing protection as well as guidance, is particular to the minority world. The goals of the child's development in the minority world are socially agreed upon, and are reflected in the constructivist theory.

#### *Key features of constructivism*

A brief consideration of the main features of a constructivist approach to ECEC follows, and though other philosophies are used in the minority world, this is not only the dominant one, but also has a parallel in the adult education of the Generative Curriculum Approach, which will be discussed later.

Constructivism is based primarily on the works of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, but also Maria Montessori, Jerome Bruner, John Dewey and Uriel Bronfenbrenner. The main pillars of this approach are that understanding and knowledge are actively constructed by the child as he or she interacts and plays with materials, people and the environment in ways that depend upon his or her stage of development (Bedrova & Leong, 1996, 2001; Devries & Zan, 1996; Fosnot, 1996; Pellegrini & Bjorklund, 1998; Shipley, 1998).

*Play.* Caillois (1979) characterizes play as "voluntary, detached from ordinary life, unpredictable, unproductive, imaginative and in accordance with the rules" (p. 18).

Huizinga (1955) characterizes play as being voluntary, as belonging not to the ‘real’ world, as happening within certain time and space limits, and as having rules which hold in the temporary world of play, and finally, that play is not serious, but absorbing the players attention ‘intensely and utterly’ (p. 13).

Vygotsky states that play serves three major purposes: play creates the child’s zone of proximal development; through play children learn to separate thought and action, idea and reality; and finally, in their play children learn self-regulation (Bodrova & Leong, 1996). Indeed, according to Vygotsky, play is the leading activity of childhood, especially in children under the age of five (Bodrova & Leong, 1996).

Piaget’s well-known stages of development are linked to a form of play characteristic of each stage: functional or practice play in the sensori-motor period; symbolic play in the preoperational period; games with rules in the concrete operational period (Pelligrini & Bjorklund, 1998; Shipley, 1998). Piaget’s theory (as presented in texts intended to prepare educators for work in the field of ECEC) describes the construction of knowledge as the process of equilibration as the child assimilates experiences that can be understood within previous mental constructs, or accommodation – change of – constructs when experiences in the world challenge or jar with previous constructs. Piaget (in Shipley, 1998) sees play as assimilation and imitation or dramatic play as accommodation.

Learning through play is a slogan in early childhood education, and a slogan that is derived from the constructivist tradition. In this tradition learning *is* development (Fosnot, 1996, p. 29), and play is the activity that gives space and opportunity for development and its expression.

Bodrova and Leong, who identify themselves as Vygotskian theorists, describe the importance of play in constructivist theory when they state that “play is the activity that is most conducive to development in young children” (2001, p. 15). In addition, they note that play must include features of an imaginary situation, role and rules, which, though true of dramatic play, does not apply to all the types of play described by Piaget. However this highlights the differences between these two founding fathers of constructivism: Piaget emphasizes the value of concrete and physical experiences, while Vygotsky emphasizes the value of social interaction. The value of constructivist theory lies in the complement of the two. Thus, play as interaction with the world of objects and people, is the basis for the construction of knowledge.

*Developmental Appropriateness.* The impact of Bronfenbrenner's theory of development in context also plays an important role in the minority world view of child development. The role of the child's context – family, school, culture and language, have been recognized as relevant in terms of creating ECEC curriculum and practices that are *appropriate* for the child. Development and learning are viewed in constructivism as being inextricably linked to the experiences and interactions between the child and his environment (Glaserfeld, 2005, p. 5). ECEC practices, in application of the theoretical principles of constructivism, strive to establish those developmental outcomes that are relevant to the child (goals that are attainable given the child's developmental level), to the community (Cannella & Kincheloe, 2002), and finally that can be reached through the socialization with the educator and other children, and through interactions with the physical setting. It was previously mentioned that one standard in the minority discourse regarding quality are the DAP guidelines. Developmentally Appropriate Practice is a

term coined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). The DAP guidelines describe practices that are best suited to the developmental needs and abilities of children, but given the above questioning of an objective “quality” that is universal, these guidelines are presented here more as an example of *seeking* appropriate practice, rather than the encapsulation of quality that they are often referred to as.

The DAP guidelines call for hands-on experiences and activities for children in ECEC, between birth and age eight, and in particular for children not yet school-aged, recommend the dedication of large blocks of time to play (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). The guidelines also call for communication between educators and parents, stating that “decisions about developmentally appropriate practice... cannot be made without knowledge of that [cultural] context in relation to knowledge about child development and learning and knowledge of individual children” (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, p. 43). Developmentally appropriate practice stands in contrast with those practices which are inappropriate, not suited to children’s abilities, not respectful of their interests, not tailored to children’s development or the cultural context.

Thus we see appropriate practice in ECEC as being the *search* for a practice that balances the contributions of educators and experts, community, family, and children’s needs, interests and development. To engage in such a search involves an open dialogue regarding not only ECEC practices, but cultural values and the goals that are held for children (Weikart, 2000).

*The role of the constructivist educator.* The role of the educator in constructivist theory is prominent, though contrasts sharply with the didactic and teacher-directed role

traditionally held by educators. Fundamental to constructivism is the child as an active agent in his or her own development and learning, and the child's belonging to a social context (Désautels, Garrison & Fleury, 1998). The educator holds an important role in the sociality of education. Educators are "facilitators, provocateurs, and questioners" who must "turn their classrooms into workshops and structure discussions around big ideas and efficient strategies" (Fosnot, 2005, p. 288). Though learning is not necessarily linear, the horizons that the educator identifies will guide the journey.

Vygotsky's zone of proximal development is an important concept in informing the educator's role. This zone is the distance between the spontaneous concepts or pseudoconcepts that Piaget described as being developed naturally by the child through everyday experiences (Fosnot, 1996), and scientific concepts. These scientific concepts, introduced by the educator, are "more formal abstractions and more logically defined" (Fosnot, 1996, p. 18). Thus the educator must ensure that the formal, scientific concepts, or 'big ideas' are at such a distance from the child's spontaneously constructed concepts that the child will be challenged. This leads to the adaptation to new concepts, for which the educator must be aware of the location of the child's zone of proximal development and be able to sufficiently scaffold the novel thinking that will occur as the child's constructed concepts are challenged, confirmed or elaborated.

The educator's role in constructivist theory includes the responsibility of providing space and time for the exploration of materials. Observation by the educator of children's play, and documentation of their learning and development serve to locate the child's zone of proximal development as well as informing the educator of necessary adaptations of the ECEC setting (Catapano, 2005; Fosnot, 2005).

Having considered the social construction of a minority world childhood, and key features of a constructivist approach to ECEC, I will now present the notion of quality in the minority world ECEC setting.

*Quality in the minority world ECEC setting*

In the minority world, there is no uniform or single approach to ECEC, though the constructivist approach can be seen in the definitions of quality used. Variations exist in the expression of constructivism in ECEC settings in the minority world, just as variation also exists between the different theorists, yet between theories fundamental aspects are not only shared, but have been encapsulated quite pragmatically in the Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) guidelines set out by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). These guidelines in turn are used to describe the best practices to be implemented in ECEC settings, and a number of measures have been designed to, in their own turn, assess these ECEC settings (e.g., Harms, 1998). While it might be argued that such measures are tools of normalization (Hatch & Griesshaber, 2002) the very need for normalization – even globalization - points to the variation that exists across settings, and not all apply a constructivist approach, or do so to different degrees, though the philosophy of constructivism is widely accepted and taught in educator training programs (Jacobs, Howe & Vukelich, 2007).

The concurrent establishment of a constructivist ECEC pedagogy and settings in which this philosophy or approach is expressed, are coupled in the minority world with standards for ECEC that are implemented at either provincial or federal levels, and measures of quality for ECEC. Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (1999) note that ECEC settings and their philosophies are “often seen as neutral phenomena, subject to the

technical application of value-free and universally true knowledge produced through scientific method" (1999, p. 42). While a post-modern perspective questions this apparent neutrality, the search for a scientific and objective standard of quality that distinguishes good from bad practices continues to be sought. For example Maggi, Irwin, Siddiqi, Poureslami, Hertzman & Hertzman (2005) call for "consensus on a single indicator that stood for Early Childhood Development the way life expectancy, GDP, and carbon dioxide emissions stand for mortality, economy and sustainability" (p. 27).

The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) (Harms, Clifford & Cryer, 2005) stands out as a powerful example of such a possible measure. It was developed first as a tool for targeted action by an ECEC setting to improve itself, but has become a widely accepted measure of the quality of such settings (Warash, Markstrom, Lucci, 2005). Like most measures of quality, the ECERS is intended to evaluate a single classroom or child care centre, and not a child care system. Other measures of quality include measures of child outcomes, such academic and social skills or in longitudinal studies indicators such as school drop-out rates (Meyers, 2006; Weikart, 2000). Layzer and Goodson (2006) note that the quest for a way to quantify the idea of quality at the centre or classroom level is more immediately accessible to measurement, such as the ECERS: "At the core of the definition [of quality] are the experiences that promote children's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development" (Layzer & Goodson, 2006, p. 558), though other features not directly tied to development are often included in measures. Generally included in measures are structural characteristics, program characteristics, classroom characteristics, caregiver characteristics, and children's experiences, activities and groups, teacher-caregiver interactions, and children's behaviour and interactions. These characteristics and processes are combined or

maintained separate in different quality measures, resulting in measures that focus either on individual children's experiences (process) or the global setting (characteristics). Ultimately, the worth of such measures lies in the ability to use them easily, and summarize the most information possible, which is perhaps why the ECERS has been so popular as a global measure which combines both structural and process factors to summarize the observations of an ECEC setting.

The quest for a quantifiable, unchanging definition of quality has not been satisfied with the ECERS though, and the source of its failing may not lie in the tool itself, but in this idea of quality. Smith (1996) phrases this succinctly by stating that "none of the research which has been done [in the search for a definition of quality] has generated objective, neutral knowledge independent of political and cultural context" (p. 7). The inherent subjectivity of what quality ECEC is, points again to the very social nature of the construction of childhood, as well as the settings and pedagogy designed for children. As cross-cultural encounters occur at an increasing rate in this era of globalization (Tarabini, 2007), tools for measuring quality in ECEC settings are sought to assess the strengths or failings of settings outside of the minority world. Tobin argues that "attempts to come up with universal, decontextualized, external standards of quality are conceptually flawed, politically dangerous, and often counter-productive" (205, p. 425), which begs the question of how to assess and ensure quality in international projects in the majority world. Before attempting to answer this question though, it is important to consider how educator training, often a feature of measures of quality in minority world ECEC settings, prepares educators for the task of creating and implementing quality, constructivist ECEC programs.

*Educator training in the minority world*

Educator training has long been thought to be linked to the quality of ECEC settings (i.e., Arnett, 1989). A recent meta-analysis of research involving educator training was conducted by Fukking and Lont (2007) and found that “training seems to matter” (p. 305). The meta-analysis focused on professional development training to educators, and not pre-service training. The results of the analysis found that learning gains in the domains of knowledge, attitude and skills, with an aggregated effect size across studies “that amounted to 0.43, 0.65, and 0.40, respectively” (S.E. .10) (Fukking & Lont, 2007, p. 302). The investigators found that the results across the studies, when “taken together, the current empirical evidence demonstrates that specialized training improves the pedagogical competencies of caregivers in childcare, including their professional attitude, knowledge, and skills” (p. 305). These results point to an overall effect of training that is positive, and emphasizes training programs that are specific (i.e., with a set curriculum or focus).

Considering pre-service educator training is a difficult question, as factors such as age and social class are difficult to disentangle from the results of different training programs. An analysis of the educator training programs offered in Canada (where one college was randomly selected from 12 of the 13 provincial and territorial jurisdictions) found that all programs offered courses on child development, and 91.7% offered curriculum or programming courses (Jacobs, Howe & Vukelich, 2007, p. 41). The preparation of educators for work in the field of ECEC involved the explicit and direct instruction of child development and constructivist philosophy, and the presentation of those programs that best exemplify the theory in practice, which Gammage (2007) names ikons, these being Head Start, High Scope (in Quebec, Jouer C'est Magique) and Reggio

Emilia. Other theories presented can include Behaviourists such as B.F. Skinner. It must be retained though, that educators are presented with these theories in their explicit instructions, the question of what influences teacher beliefs, and in turn their practice is as yet unanswered (Fukking & Lont, 2007).

The project of modernity is present in the training of minority world educators. This can be noted in the texts used in training programs, wherein "...speakers and writers use it [the discourse of the early childhood education as a modernist project] without self-knowledge or reflexivity" presenting constructivist ECEC practices as common sense, and taken for granted (Langford, 2008, p. 93). Tobin (2005) points out that texts and training of future educators in ECEC practices that claim to be "good, best, or merely appropriate practice [is] ... deduced from knowledge of child development" (p. 426). However, Tobin finds that "knowing how children develop does not automatically suggest any particular best practice, any particular student/teacher ratio, any particular approach to dealing with misbehaviour, or any particular strategy for serving children of recent immigrants... the study of early development of myelinisation and neural synapses is important work, but it leads in no straightforward way to any particular preschool curriculum or practice" (p. 426).

The second major aspect of educator training in the minority world is field experience, which involves observation of constructivist ECEC practices, planning of activities and application of these. A mentoring relationship with an educator in the field, as well as with a university-based supervisor is established to support the novice. The number and nature of field experiences vary from one ECE training program to the next, but represent an integral form of training through practice and direct experience. Jacobs,

Howe and Vukelich (2007) found that 11 of 12 colleges included field experiences, of which 8 colleges required four such experiences for completion of the program (p. 41).

Perhaps more important than any of these single items however, are the life experiences of the novice educator, who may have lived firsthand the childhood they will reconstruct in the ECEC settings. This is not the case for educators in the majority world who are introduced to the constructivist theory and practices through international development projects.

In seeking a method to implement international development projects in the majority world, constructivist ECEC experts from the minority world must re-think and critically consider the imposition of a minority worldview of childhood and ‘quality’ in ECEC. These projects in the minority world must find an approach to adult education that can at once present and problematize constructivist ECEC philosophy. "If we believe in constructivism as the best pedagogical approach for young children and in the idea that knowledge is most meaningfully acquired when it is constructed rather than received, than why should we not we have the same belief about teachers and parents?" (Tobin, 2005, p. 433). Such a question can as much be posed of training in the minority world as of international development projects in the majority world. To address the question of adult education of early childhood educators in international development projects, let us first consider the call for such development projects.

#### *Call for international development in ECEC*

Enshrined in the United Nations declaration of the Rights of the Child, is the child’s right to ECEC (Education For All, 2006). The importance of ‘quality’ ECEC on academic outcomes, as well as socio-emotional and cognitive development has been well

established in the minority world (e.g., Downer & Pianta, 2006; NICHD, 2004; Peisner-Feinberg, Burchinal, Clifford, Culkin, Howes, Kagan & Yazejian, 2001; Ramey & Ramey, 1994). Neuman (2005) notes that based on research showing the vital importance of ECEC and its impact on brain development, in the 1990's governments of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries placed ECEC high on their policy agendas. This sudden attention was not due to research alone, but also to the imperative for ECEC given the movement of women into the paid workforce. (Kamerman, 2005; Neuman, 2005).

Based on minority world research, international organizations such as the UNESCO, the WHO, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have called for the expansion or establishment of ECEC in the majority world (Maggi, et al. 2005; McCain, Mustard & Shaker, 2007; Tarabini, 2007). At the 1990 World Conference on Education for all, representatives of the international community "agreed to universalize primary education", and expanded these efforts in the year 2000 at meetings in Dakar, Senegal, where six goals were agreed upon with the aim of accomplishing these by 2015, the first goal being the expansion of early childhood care and education (UNESCO). The general sentiment behind such projects can be seen in the following statement: "building on the finding of experimental research into the elements of high-quality early care and education and our knowledge of how children's minds and bodies learn, grow and survive, even under adverse conditions, we can now more confidently design new learning initiatives for use internationally" (Levine, 2005, p.p. 196 – 197).

Along with the call for international development projects in ECEC, is the accountability of projects to donor agencies (be they intergovernmental or non-

governmental organizations), accountability which returns us to the discourse on ‘quality’. For example, measures such as the ECERS, designed and under debate in North America, are currently being applied in Latin American settings, after translation and slight adaptation, despite the differences in priorities between the tool’s priorities and the community’s priorities (e.g., Herrera, Mathiesen, Merino & Recart, 2005). The application of minority world measures of ‘quality’ may lead to the importation of constructivist philosophy at the expense of traditions and practices perhaps better suited to the given majority world context. Pence (1998) points out that the general indicators of quality are “(1) low staff : child ratios, (2) small group size, and (3) professional training” (p. 75), all of which are tied in some way to the funding available for ECEC. Considering the debate that surrounds the modernist notion of ‘quality’ ECEC, as the international community focuses its attention on child care, the ECEC community must guard against the application of the minority world construction of ‘quality’ and its use as a benchmark in other cultural contexts. To do so, analysis and assessment of projects must be executed while respecting the context of ECEC projects in the majority world. Understanding the effectiveness and impact of international ECEC projects has the added complication of language barriers, geographic distance and often limited timeframes, which result in most evaluations taking place during or immediately after the implementation of a project. “Much less frequent is a systematic attempt to measure at some interval after the initial educational experience what impact, if any, it had on either attitude, knowledge or actions” (Simon, 1989, p. 25). The Generative Curriculum Approach and the Effectiveness Initiative stand out as exceptions to the rule, and will now be considered.

#### *The Generative Curriculum Approach*

In the late 1980s, a project was initiated by the Meadow Lake Tribal Council and the Alan Pence and his colleagues at the University of Victoria, located in North Western Canada (Pence, 1998). The approach began as a project between the First Nations community of Meadow Lake as a solution to their need for child care and ECE training that was appropriate to their context as a group historically and presently marginalized in the minority world nation of Canada. The Meadow Lake Tribal Council sought a curriculum that would include content reflective of their cultural traditions, but not in a tokenist fashion. Together with the community, elders, families and the student early childhood educators themselves, members of the University collaborated in the co-construction of a curriculum that would also be recognized as a post-secondary training program. The development of the curriculum did not result in fixed modules to be transferred from the university instructors to the students. “The pedagogical approach [used] is constructionist, and teaching strategies are guided by the principles of active and interactive learning and discovery, necessitating and celebrating dialogue among the various perspectives. Students become actively involved in an ongoing process of articulating, comparing, and sometimes combining these perspectives contributed by members of their own community and by the mainstream university-based curriculum team” (Ball & Pence, 1999, p. 49). The Generative Curriculum Approach involves the synthesis of ECEC practices, creating from the different traditions a novel curriculum for educator training.

The most striking features of the Generative Curriculum Approach can be seen as related to constructivism in ECEC, as well as to Freire’s critical pedagogy – an approach to adult education. For example, in dialogue between students, elders and university

partners, the curriculum content was developed, ideas considered and weighed, and the students returned to the praxis of child care and life in the community with newly generated ideas, informed not only by the content, but also by the dialogue between the partners. The relationship between the university instructors was one of partnership, and the coordinator of this project, Allan Pence, notes that, “those who relate to their own teaching, but not their own learning, are not suitable [as instructors] for this approach” (Dahlberg et al, 1999, p. 176). This comment echoes the Freirian teacher-student who learns and teaches together with the students. What follows is illustrative of some critical pedagogy features: praxis, dialogue and the role of the teacher-student in the example of the cradle board cited by Pence.

The words of elders from the community acted as often as possible for the springboard of discussion, whether this led to the application of a traditional practice or the use of a constructivist practice depended upon the dialogue between students and instructor, and then in time, the usefulness or appropriateness of that practice in the ECEC setting. For example, the cradle boards traditionally used for sleeping babies were brought up in discussion by an elder speaker. Their use by student educators for nap time in the infant room brought the dialogue back to praxis. “Over time the boards’ use and presence varied” as some children slept easily in them, and others did not (Dahlberg et al, 1999, p. 172). The role of the university instructor in this instance was as a learner, learning about the cradle board and its meaning, while also bringing the constructivist notion of appropriateness for the needs of the child (i.e., who might benefit from this or another sleeping arrangement during nap time).

This is not the first instance in which the Generative Curriculum approach has been likened to critical pedagogy, and Pence argues that the two are distinct. He points out that critical pedagogy has a predetermined, emancipatory and revolutionary outcome, while the Generative Curriculum approach emphasizes an emerging outcome, undetermined and in process. Nonetheless, Pence notes that there are “similar terms and concepts” that this approach shares with critical pedagogy (1999, p. 171), though the Generative Curriculum Approach constrains itself to the development of an ECEC curriculum and not the social transformation that Freire advocates.

Pence has led workshops on the Generative Curriculum Model in the Africa Institute and the South East Asia Institute supported by UNICEF in 1997 (Pence, 1998). The Innovative Child Care Practices for Children at Risk: Canadian and Argentine NGOs Learning Together project (ICCP), begun in 1999 in suburbs of Buenos Aires, Argentina, was based on this approach.

A major failing of the information available on the Generative Curriculum approach is the almost romantic tone used to describe it, making pragmatic lessons difficult to discern. The only definitive characteristic that emerges from Pence’s writings on the approach relate to uncertainty and flux, which though valuable ideas, make for impractical recommendations when designing a project, or comparing projects to the model for analysis and comparison. Nevertheless, the Generative Curriculum approach has flourished in Canada, and has been spoken of internationally, and implemented in international development projects. The current demand for ECEC projects in the majority world, which will now be discussed, require that attention be paid to educator training, and the Generative Curriculum Approach stands out as a method to engage in

such international development work without imposing a minority notion of quality.

### *The Effectiveness Initiative*

The Bernard van Leer Foundation has an extensive history of working internationally and in the majority world, in the ECEC field. Given their expertise in funding an area of current interest, they have been consulted by other donor organizations as to what type of ECEC projects would be worthwhile. In answer to such questions, the Effectiveness Initiative (EI) was begun in 1999, as a three-year-long qualitative investigation of ten programs that the Bernard van Leer Foundation had been partner to (by providing funding, infrastructure, employing staff, etc.). The programs were selected based on their longevity and general approbation by the communities in which they are located (Maggi, et al, 2005). A summary of their findings is presented in the publication *Stories We have Lived, Stories We have Learned: About Early Childhood Development Programs* (2004). As a summary of eight projects (two projects decided against submitting reports), this document offers particular insight not only into international development project in ECEC, but includes a method of assessment of these as well.

The document begins by first noting that determining what specific features are effective in such varied settings and programs, these features would likely be “too broad to be applied to individual cases” (Zimmerman, 2004, p. 1), and therefore the EI looked instead to map the contours of particular programs, in a sense describing their effectiveness in context. Qualitative in nature, the understanding of effectiveness is clearly not intended to enter into another debate such as exists around the question of ‘quality’. Rather, each program is discussed in terms of the strengths identified by participants, partners, children and families. The resulting document serves not as a

measurement tool, but points to areas that bear consideration when initiating an ECEC project in the majority world, or when assessing projects that are in place or have concluded.

The EI was conducted by teams, one for each project, consisting of at least one outsider (assumedly an individual from the minority world, though this is not explicitly stated) – who led the EI, and at least one insider – who had experience and knowledge of the program (assumedly an individual from the majority world, in the employ of the given project). The EI teams, together with the project stakeholders, established the focus and agenda of the effectiveness assessment, and carried this out at the location of the international development project. A coordination team based in the Hague dealt with infrastructure needs, and served as a communication pathway between the geographically dispersed EI teams. The teams investigated, and together with the communities assessed projects in Columbia, Honduras, India, Israel, Kenya, Mozambique, Netherlands, Peru, the Philippines, and Portugal (The Netherlands and Mozambique being those projects which did not produce reports).

An analytic framework was developed as the initiation of the EI explorations, and involved establishing each of the projects' timelines, and exploring through dialogue with families, community members, children and staff. The analytic framework explored areas such as program structure (leadership roles, management), institutional behaviour (processes and methods of decision-making and problem-solving, hiring and training of staff), program content, linkages (between projects and individuals, other community agencies or projects), attitudes (towards and about the project), influences on the project (e.g., political and economic context and change), resources, achievements and outcomes

and future plans.

Each EI team utilized enquiring tools including interviews, surveys, workshops, photo analysis, storytelling, observation, focus groups, and webbing of concepts or ideas. Stakeholders (participants, staff, children, families and community members) discussed and helped to analyze the resulting data, and a participant check also helped to ensure that ideas and opinions were not misrepresented.

The contours of the effectiveness of these programs are summarized in *Stories We have Lived, Stories We have Learned* (Zimmerman, 2004) in a set of general statements describing the themes uncovered in the exhaustive and lengthy EI process. The contours were defined as follows:

- a) The platform: the timing of the project, the context in which it was undertaken, and the awareness in the community of what was desired from the project
- b) The donor: a clearly defined relationship between the foundation and other donor agencies and the community, with a common view of desired outcomes informing the project
- c) Personnel: who were willing to work long hours, confronting barriers faced by the community and a willingness on the part of this personnel to engage in open and fair dialogue
- d) Adopting the needs and priorities of the community: having these as the basis for the project rather than externally envisioned goals not relevant to the setting
- e) Culture and traditions taken into account: in particular with regards to parenting traditions around such basic practices as feeding, sleeping and discipline.
- f) Checks and balances, monitoring and evaluation: “problems and progress should

be discussed openly at frequent meetings among stakeholders” (Zimmerman, 2004, p. 180)

- g) Insiders and Outsiders: the roles played by people from within the community and those from the minority world. The findings suggest that, “a model for the use of insiders and outsiders suggests itself [in each project]. If outsiders are resented by a community, then insiders should be encouraged to join the staff in some capacity. If insiders are criticized because they are considered less skilled, then they should be offered more training, and outsiders might be brought in to supervise the technical aspect of their work” (Zimmerman, 2004, 181).
- h) Empowerment: training for community members, and shared responsibility for the life of the project. Empowerment might also be indirect as in the case of providing child care services for participants in training.
- i) Supply of expert assistance: when a need for expert advice is identified by the community, making such expertise available and accessible.
- j) Communication: “open, flexible channels of dialogue” are identified by stakeholders in all of the projects as being integral to their projects effectiveness (Zimmerman, 2004, p. 186).
- k) Advocacy: building on the success of its effectiveness, a project that is widely recognized can put that very effectiveness to use by advocating for policy measures that would have broader implications.
- l) Sustainability: this final contour of effectiveness is not the sustainability of the project in terms of dollars or resources, but rather the training opportunities that create opportunities for community participation, and commitment to the project

on the part of the beneficiaries of that project.

(Zimmerman, 2004, p.p. 175 – 188).

These contours, it bears noting again, are not intended to be used to define a linear scale, or to be used to quickly examine other projects, but instead are the themes emerging from a dialogue about these particular projects, and may serve as guides to understanding other projects or paying particular attention to the importance of involving stakeholders in the process of evaluating ‘quality’. Effectiveness “cannot be defined in terms of a universally accepted truth”, and “is a fluctuating concept” (Zimmerman, 2004, p. 170). These caveats remind us of the discourse on ‘quality’, and recommend the thorough and careful study of international development projects in ECEC as opposed to the simplistic application of a rating scale or measurement tool.

Constructivist philosophy is little mentioned in the document, the EI implemented identifies contours that would hopefully be present in the application of the Generative Curriculum Approach.

The EI is not without its weaknesses. The sponsorship of an assessment of any project by a donor agency is obviously fraught with conflicting interest, and may not have elicited from the participants, staff or families their honest opinions. However, the usefulness of the process of evaluation and reflective dialogue regarding each project appears to have been a valuable experience for all involved, whether the dialogue presented in the final reports reflects the innermost thoughts of all involved does not preclude a continued dialogue after the departure of the EI team and process. A major strength of the EI process is in its scope: the number and variety of international projects, and the longevity of each speaks to the vast experiences summarized in the document.

The usefulness of the EI to other projects lies mainly in the methodology and as a guide to the analysis of other international development projects in the ECEC field.

### *Summary*

The minority world construction of childhood and ‘quality’ ECEC can be valuable, useful and also recognized as a social construction belonging to the context of the minority world. Constructivist philosophy of ECEC is based in this social construction of childhood, and settings are gauged as high- or low-quality using measures that are designed with constructivist principles and a minority orientation at heart. The constructivist philosophy and definitions of ‘quality’ in ECEC settings have been linked to improved academic outcomes and socio-emotional and cognitive development by empirical research in the minority world (e.g., Downer & Pianta, 2006; NICHD, 2004; Peisner-Feinberg et al, 2001; Ramey & Ramey 1994). The increasing importance of ECEC in the minority world, along with the general globalization trends of the era, have led to calls by such international bodies as the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, to call for the creation or expansion of ECEC programs in the minority world. Thus a current focus for international aid and development is in ECEC projects. At this juncture, it is necessary to acknowledge - before imposing - the non-universal nature of the minority worldview of childhood and ‘quality’ ECEC (Dahlberg et al, 1999). Instead, looking to the parallels between constructivist philosophy and critical pedagogy, the development, implementation and assessment of ECEC projects can generate constructions of ECEC that will be suitable, flexible and sustainable through dialogue that bridges the cultural

differences between the minority and majority worlds. The notable examples of such an approach to international development projects in ECEC are the Effectiveness Initiative (Van Leer Foundation) and the Generative Curriculum Approach (Meadow Lake Tribal Council and the University of Victoria) and perhaps the Innovative Child Care Practices for Children at Risk: Canadian and Argentine NGOs Learning Together project (ICCP). Though no assessment has been conducted on this last project, further analysis of these types of projects that explicitly identify their constructivist and critical orientation can lead to a continuing negotiation based on strengths, needs and community traditions. In accepting the instability of uncertainty when arbitrary definitions of ‘quality’ are called into question, new and creative dialogue across cultures can follow. By using a critical lens to assess international development projects that set out to engage in a cross-cultural dialogue, the research and ECEC community can better understand the implications and nuances of such endeavors. The ICCP is such a project, which has yet to be assessed in a formal or public manner, and therefore presents an excellent opportunity for consideration and study. To explore and assess this project the questions that will guide the research will ask first about the process of the project, and how it unfolded. To address the unequal representation of majority world voices in research regarding international development, the phenomenological experiences, of the Argentine participants will be collected and explored. The ways in which the differences in the social constructions of childhood and ECEC practices in Canada and Argentina were addressed, will be a particularly interesting aspect of the project to consider. Finally, using a critical lens, the adult education practices of the ICCP project will be considered, asking the question of whether the adult education practices reflected the constructivist

ECEC content, and whether they reflected the Generative Curriculum Approach.

## Chapter Two: Method

### *Method and Research Questions*

The following describes the method used in this case study which revisits the ICCP project, and as such is an ‘in-depth exploration of a bounded system’ (Creswell, 2005). According to Mitchell “‘Case study’ refers to an observer’s data: that is the documentation of some particular phenomenon or set of events which has been assembled with the explicit end in view of drawing theoretical conclusions from it” (Gomm, Hammersley & Foster, 2000, p. 169). The case study began with specific research questions, which “set the focus of the study, but … case study research is an evolving process” (deMarrais & Laplan, 2004, p. 227), and the original research questions evolved in this process. The research questions then are:

- How did the project “Innovative Child Care Practices for Children at Risk: Canadian and Argentine NGOs Learning Together” (ICCP) unfold?
- What were the experiences of the participants in the ICCP project?
- What differences in ECEC practices between the Canadian and Argentine do educators identify, and how were these differences addressed? During the project? Since the project has ended?
- How did the adult education practices of the project reflect the principles of a constructivist approach to ECEC? In what way were the adult education practices related to critical pedagogy?

The value of a case study lies in the ability to “take us to places most of us would not have the opportunity to go” (Gomm, et al., 2000, p. 61). As the researcher who was able to go to Argentina to conduct this research, I recognize that this case study will be

filtered through my experiences and biases (Gomm et al, 2000), so I will begin by situating myself in a biography.

#### *My Role as Educator-Researcher*

The research that I propose to undertake is closely tied to my changing, dynamic, view of early childhood education and care (Kincheloe & Berry, 2004). To explain this, I will mention my personal history in the field of ECEC.

My mother moved to a new city when I was born, leaving behind a career as an educator, and staying home for almost 10 years, with myself and my younger sisters. I attended a preschool, where my mother was an active board member. Our playroom at home resembled ECEC settings, furnished as it was with open-ended materials and art supplies, and supervised by a parent well versed in constructivist philosophy. These very positive early experiences have surely played a role in my choice of career.

While working towards a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education, I was employed at two child care settings whose senior staff had extraordinary skill in training educators. I was mentored and coached, and engaged in many a lively discussion about practices ranging from conflict resolution to parent involvement. These experiences of being mentored and taught while gaining direct experience on the floor were very meaningful to me. Sometimes I can trace back particular practices and even turns of phrase to the experiences I had in these child care centres. These were centres too, that would rate very highly on the ECERS (Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 2005), and were generally striking examples of the 'quality' I was learning about in my university classes. By bringing to life the theory in practice, and by taking on an active role as educator in

these settings, my commitment and belief in the precepts of ‘quality’ were thoroughly cemented.

The minority world notion of ‘quality’ is one that I consider myself to be intimately familiar with, having had wonderful experiences working in exemplary Canadian child care settings. I also struggled with the implementation of this notion of ‘quality’ in Canadian settings that I found to be less than exemplary. After graduation I spent time working in child care centres that frustrated me because they did not use the practices that I believed so strongly in. It felt in these settings like my work, my day-to-day actions, were clashing with my convictions, or at least out of line with those beliefs, but I did not at this point question the validity of these beliefs about ‘quality’. Even now, I do find the minority world notion of ‘quality’ to be appropriate and useful in North America, though now these are not the untouchable or unchanging universals that I took them for earlier in my career. Though working in lower-‘quality’ Canadian settings did not shake my faith, my experiences travelling certainly did.

In 2002, I spent several months travelling in South America, where my schoolbook Spanish was honed. After returning to Canada, I found myself drawn to any mention of those places I had visited, and those ‘in the neighbourhood’, such as Argentina. So it was that I read about the Canadian Child Care Federation’s Canadian and Argentine NGOs Learning Together project (ICCP) as it was unfolding. This seemed like my dream job come true: a Canadian sensibility of ‘quality’ brought to a country I longed to visit!

Eventually my longing to travel led me instead to Mexico, where I was an English kindergarten teacher. Over the course of my year in Mexico, the sharp contrast between

my notion of ‘quality’ ECEC, and the traditional and didactic practices seemed to blur with time. It would be presumptuous to say that I engaged in a dialogue with my Mexican colleagues regarding our ideals and beliefs about children’s learning and ECEC. This was not explicitly the case. Nonetheless, I certainly learnt a great deal, and above all learnt that my high esteem for play and Developmentally Appropriate Practice were – at best – difficult to implement as a teacher in a Mexican classroom. My experience of culture clash was centered squarely in the classroom, where, over time, I learnt that the children were not being harmed by the teacher-directed practices I had vilified in Canada.

Particular challenges that I faced while working in Mexico included the number of children in my classes, the authority that I wore as a teacher (which I felt uncomfortable with), the relationship with my assistant (who was expected to take instructions from me, in a hierarchical relationship that I was unaccustomed to), the physical arrangement of the classroom (tables and chairs, a carpet and shelves with workbooks and a handful of educational games).

To elaborate a little, the challenge of teaching 26 children was one that forced me to acknowledge the value of discipline. It made me realize that observation and documentation of individual strengths and weaknesses is more than a little challenging with so many children, requiring a great deal of planning, much more than was reasonable on a day to day basis. This is not to say that I was unaware of the children and their learning in my two classes, but it is true that much of the time they were a group, and not individuals.

With regards to the authority I carried as a teacher, I was not used to being so unquestioned by the children, it felt uncomfortable for the children to look so much to me

for direction, and to follow my instructions generally without hesitation. What had I done to earn that deference other than the title I wore? Sometimes I felt like I was playing a role and other times I felt like a fraud, but never did I feel that I truly deserved the kind of respect that the children and parents gave me. This deference was also given by the assistants, who would look to me for instruction. Over the course of a year, they did begin to give me suggestions as well, perhaps simply because I was not terribly decisive in delegating tasks.

Challenges that were less concrete included my sense of distance from the other teachers, the sense of difference from the children and families, though this is not to say we did not develop relationships, only that I often felt like an outsider, given the language and cultural differences that often left me befuddled. The cultural difference in terms of education and ECEC practices was acutely felt when I used open-ended activities, and had to explain to my assistant that she was *not* to direct the children, but to let them experiment. Then again the difference was notable when I would try to get my class to stand for assembly on the patio, where they would respond quickly to a quiet word from their Spanish teacher, but fiddle and squirm when with me. These small examples point to the larger differences that are surprisingly difficult to pin down and explain.

Returning to Canada and embarking on a Master's degree, I came upon the discourse regarding 'quality', which has brought me to many more questions than answers. Chief among these questions is that of how I judge 'quality' - if not along the lines of the minority world definition - and how educators can work across boundaries of culture and language and learn together. Thus this research project sets out in exploration of questions to which I do not pretend to have an answer. Indeed, in considering the

voices of the participants of the ICCP, I hope to continue the dialogue that will inform my practice as an educator.

*Setting and Participants*

The ICCP project took place in two pilot centres belonging to two different networks of community centres in two separate suburbs of the capital city Buenos Aires, Argentina. The pilot centres, along with other centres in the networks, and the offices of the two networks, were the settings for my research and data collection in Argentina. In Canada I met with participants of the project at locations of their choice and convenience in Ottawa.

Below is a chart to identify the roles, organizations and locations of the participants. Names used here, and throughout this document, are pseudonyms only, to protect their confidentiality.

Table 1

## Participants, Roles and Locations

Municipality, Country	Organization	Centre	Role (during project)	Name
Ottawa, Canada	Canadian Child Care Federation		Project Coordinator	Rachel
Ottawa, Canada	Algonquin College	Algonquin Child Care Centre	Board Member Trainer	Lori
José C. Paz, Argentina	El Encuentro	All	Director	Anabel
José C. Paz, Argentina	El Encuentro	Sol Naciente	Educators	Lorna Cecilia Victoria
José C. Paz, Argentina	El Encuentro	Santa Maria de los Angeles	Educators	Laura Regina Vanina
José C. Paz, Argentina	El Encuentro	<i>El Ceibo</i> (pilot centre)	Coordinator	Miriam
José C. Paz, Argentina	El Encuentro	<i>El Ceibo</i> (pilot centre)	Educator	Nadia
Moreno, Argentina	Andando	All	Director	Sabrina
Moreno, Argentina	Andando	<i>Casita Feliz</i> (pilot centre)	Educator	Irena
Moreno, Argentina	Andando	not known	Educator	Flor
José C. Paz and Moreno, Argentina	El Encuentro and Andando	Casita Feliz El Ceibo	Capacitadora (trainer)	Cristina

In Canada, the project coordinator and 'gatekeeper', was contacted. Flowing from this contact, the 'gatekeeper' in Argentina was made available. All other participants were selected using purposeful maximal variation sampling. The most variation possible was sought in the characteristic of the different role of participants in the ICCP project. The participants were all directly or indirectly involved in the project and almost all of the project roles are represented. Little demographic information about the individuals

was collected, though information was occasionally volunteered by participants – such as Laura who explained that she was trained as a kindergarten teacher.

Moreno and José C. Paz are municipalities in the western periphery of Buenos Aires. Both of these municipalities have high rates of unemployment and poverty. Each of these municipalities has a ‘downtown’ or centre, where a train station is located. Outer neighbourhoods – barrios - are more rural in character. The presence of infrastructure such as electricity, drinking water, sewers, and passable roads are the exception and not the rule in the barrios I visited. The head offices of the networks Andando and El Encuentro are located in the ‘downtown’ area of each municipality, while the child care centres are all in the barrios.

In Buenos Aires, unlike most North American cities, the centre of the city is wealthier than the outlying regions. Historically, “Buenos Aires was a city where the upper classes lived in the city centre, in apartment flats, or on the northern outskirts of the city” (Thullier, 2005, p. 262). Moving west of the city centre, the municipalities, or suburbs surrounding Buenos Aires, the level of affluence decreases. These suburbs of the capital were inhabited first by people moving to the city from rural areas of the country. Thuillier describes the history of the suburbs, including Moreno and José C Paz:

*Buenos Aires' centre, for the quality of its urban life and culture was comparable with the best European cities ... on leaving the city centre for the suburbs, the landscape changes slowly: housing and public spaces are increasingly run-down from the centre to the periphery. Poor immigrants from the rural and Indian provinces of the north-west, who flocked to Buenos Aires in waves from the 1940s to the 1970s, have settled according to the principles of the *loteo popular*, or 'popular housing': poorly equipped plots with on the outskirts of the city, whose owners slowly built their houses themselves or with the help of relatives and neighbours. The development improved little by little, by the lobbying of local associations who fought to get tarmac roads, street lighting, schools and transport and other urban facilities (Clinchovsky et al., 1990). But the political and economic*

*troubles that Argentina has been facing since the mid-1970s blocked this system, and the periphery is still far beyond the City of Buenos Aires in terms of urban amenities. The crisis of December 2001 was the final hit: today half the population of the suburbs of Buenos Aires is living below the poverty level, but even before the crisis of 2001, the rate of poverty was around 30 per cent (INDEC). (Thuillier, 2005, p. 263)*

My experience as a researcher of travelling from the city centre to the suburbs on the commuter train confirmed and echoed this description. Descending from the train I would walk to the office of either El Encuentro or Andando, from where I would travel to the barrios to visit the community child care centres by remis (an unofficial taxi with unfixed rates - the only way to travel to many of the barrios). The roads outside of all of the centres I visited were dirt roads, some ungraded and impassable for cars. The centres were all one-story buildings, usually painted in bright colours, distinguishing them from the neighbouring houses. Animals such as chickens, horses, donkeys and dogs were often seen on or beside the streets. Most of the buildings surrounding the child care centres were small houses, with substantial space between them – contrasting with the crowded downtown of Buenos Aires where housing is quite dense.

During the time of the ICCP project, Argentina experienced a major economic and political crisis. To relate the occurrences of the 2001 crisis, a brief description of some of the events leading up to it are helpful.

In 1983 Argentina returned to democracy following a military dictatorship. At the end of Raúl Alfonsín's term, in 1989, a crisis of hyperinflation led to riots and the president declaring a state of emergency, followed by his resignation. The Menem government that followed Alfonsín's "responded to the 1989 hyperinflationary crisis by launching a radical market-oriented reform program." It eliminated a variety of regulations, price controls, and restrictions on foreign investment, lowered tariff barriers,

and privatized nearly all of the country's state enterprises" (Levitsky & Murillo, 2005, p. 197). Though the economy appeared stable and to be growing in the 1990s, the rosy picture was likely enhanced by privatizations and selling of national assets. A key feature of the reforms that Menem instituted was the pegging of the Argentine peso to the American dollar.

By the late 1990s, the national economy fell into a recession, which worsened and reached a crisis in 2001. In 2001, then president Fernando De la Rua requested assistance from the International Monetary Fund and other foreign investors in the country. Though the IMF "approved an augmentation of financing on the basis of a revamped program, centered on fiscal adjustment and accelerated structural reforms" (Daseking, Ghosh, Lan & Thomas, 2004, p. 35), on the basis of improved growth in the economy, though such growth did not occur. Between November 28<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of 2001, there was a run on the banks, during which time more than \$3.6 billion of private sector deposits were withdrawn, as fears that the peso would be un-pegged from the dollar and quickly devalued (Daseking et al., 2004). On December 1<sup>st</sup> of 2001 in an attempt to control the situation, the government instituted the *corralito*, a set of legislative measures that limited the amount of money that could be withdrawn from banks or removed from the country. These measure were seen as the instigation of the demonstrations and civil unrest that occurred during December of 2001 (Rother, 2002), though the economic crisis in the form of a worsening recession had been ongoing.

Demonstrations in the streets of Argentine cities, particularly Buenos Aires, followed. On December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2001 De la Rua resigned, followed by the two day presidency of Ramon Puerta. On December 23<sup>rd</sup>, the new president "Adolfo Rodriguez

Saa declared the intention to default on government debt" (Daseking, et al, 2004, p. 37).

A week later, on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December, Saa resigned and was replaced by Eduardo Camano, whose presidency also lasted a matter of days. On January 2<sup>nd</sup> of 2002, Eduardo Duhalde was elected president by the congress, and retained that position with the understanding that general elections would occur within the year.

Eventually, the peso was un-peged (the Currency Board dissolved) and a year following its introduction, the *corralito* was lifted.

The recession, followed by the political instability, the insecurity of funds and the middle class's sudden insolvency due to the corralito defined the crisis. For the families and children in the suburbs of Buenos Aires, this crisis meant desperation, and the community child care centres struggled to bring together the funds necessary to continue their services which were all the more needed.

#### *Data Collection*

The data collected consist in the main of interviews, and the participants' responses to open-ended questions derived from the research questions regarding the events of the ICCP project, the experiences of the participants, and differences in ECEC practices and how these were addressed. "Qualitative interviews rely on developing rapport with participants and discussing, in detail, aspects of the particular phenomenon being studied" (DeMarrais & Laplan, 2004, 53). Other data collected were sought to triangulate the information participants provided, and when participants referred to texts, reports or posters. Interviews were conducted in English in Canada, and in Spanish in Argentina. All translation from Spanish to English occurred at the point of analysis, and not before. The collection of each artifact follows, in the order in which my research brought these pieces together.

My first contact with the project involved an article published in the magazine *Interaction* in 2005. This article was provided to me again when I began my research, and conducted a visit to the offices of the CCCF. This visit was also the occasion of an initial interview with Rachel and attended by the current project coordinator who was not directly involved in the project. This interview was extremely open-ended in that the only questions I had prepared were along the lines of ‘what happened?’ and ‘how did it go?’, with some specific questions about the use of the Generative Curriculum Approach. During this visit I was provided with a Spanish and English copy of the Curriculum Guide and the Mentor Guide. There was mention of the many reports that had been submitted to CIDA. Most importantly, I was given the email and telephone number to contact Anabel at El Encuentro in Argentina.

Next I wrote to CIDA and requested whatever documents they had archived regarding this project. I was informed that a copy of the final report would be mailed to me, and this arrived shortly after my return from Argentina.

The bulk of my data collection occurred in Argentina. Like “most researchers” I kept “a diary of the day’s events … most important at this point is reflection” (deMarrais & Laplan, 2004, p. 231). This journal can be found in Appendix A. Given that Argentina is in the southern hemisphere, December is not only a month of holidays, but also summer vacations. The centres that I visited were therefore not operating as they normally would, but were open as summer camps, staffed by educators who were taking rotating vacations.

Traveling to Argentina was facilitated by my ability to speak Spanish fluently. All contact with the Argentine participants was in Spanish, which though not my first language, I was able to speak comfortably and conduct the interviews in the first

language of the participants, without requiring a third person to act as translator.

Arriving in Argentina on December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2007, I contacted Anabel and met with her on Monday, December 17<sup>th</sup>. We spoke informally about my research intentions and what I hoped to do while in Argentina. Based on this conversation, Anabel provided me with a number of documents created by El Encuentro, the most pertinent of these being the Curriculum text created by the Argentine organizations El Encuentro and Andando. Also at this meeting Anabel provided me with several phone numbers and names, and invited me to the bi-monthly meeting of educators from all of the centres in El Encuentro. At this meeting I introduced myself and the purpose of my research and exchanged further phone numbers.

The interviews with the participants provided data regarding firsthand experiences of the ICCP project (Creswell, 2005), addressing the research questions regarding the unfolding of the project events and what experiences the participants had within the project, as well as what differences in Canadian and ECEC practices there were and how such differences were addressed. Additionally, the interviews engaged the participants in a dialogue regarding the project and tried to provide the participants with voice, an opportunity for reflection.

The first of the interviews I conducted in Argentina was a group interview at Sol Naciente centre. Three educators participated after we had talked about my research, looked at the information letter (Appendix B) and they had signed consent forms (Appendix C). The interview took place at a picnic table in the patio of the centre, and an audio recording was attempted. The recording equipment (the microphone of the computer) failed, and I wrote notes of all that I could recall of the hour long conversation. These notes were then read over by one of the educators, and added to based on her

comments.

Sabrina at Andando and I spoke by phone, and she invited me to a bi-monthly meeting of educators from the centres in Andando's network. I went to this meeting on December 27<sup>th</sup>. Here I took photographs and notes from the presentation that Sabrina was giving on the history of Andando and the place of the Canadian project within that history. Further contacts were made and meetings arranged.

The next interview took place at Santa Maria de los Angeles centre. Again, this was a group interview with three educators, and took place seated at a picnic table in the patio. Again, we discussed the purpose of the interview and the consent forms, which were signed, and the interview was audio recorded using a cassette recorder. This procedure was followed in all of the subsequent interviews. I was given a tour of the centre by one of the educators and I took photographs of the different rooms and materials, and notes based on what Laura and Regina said.

On January 3<sup>rd</sup> I went to Casita Feliz with Irena, the coordinator there. This centre was completely closed for the summer due to kitchen renovations. Irena and I sat down on the pillows of the book corner of the play room, and went over the consent forms. This individual interview was followed by photographs of the playroom and the classrooms of the centre.

Also on January 3<sup>rd</sup> an interview took place with Flor at Andando's head office. This was a very brief interview, and did not utilize many of the prepared questions. This interview took place after I explained my research interests to someone at the office while I was waiting to meet with Sabrina, the director of Andando. The casual conversation with the educator led to her commenting on the project, and so I interrupted to request her consent to participate in a recorded interview. This brief interview was interrupted by the

arrival of Sabrina, with whom I then conducted an individual interview.

On January 7<sup>th</sup> I visited El Ceibo, and took a tour of the centre and took photographs. I interviewed Nadia in one of the empty classrooms, because none of the other educators had directly taken part in the project, nor could they all participate given the number of children playing on the patio. The interview began after the consent form had been signed, and was audio recorded using a cassette recorder with low battery (the resulting recording was very low quality, and excluded from analysis due to this).

On January 10<sup>th</sup> I returned to El Ceibo and met with the coordinator Miriam and conducted an individual interview with her. The interview took place again in an empty classroom, adjacent to the patio where busy children were playing.

Also on January 10<sup>th</sup> a formal interview was conducted with Anabel at El Encuentro's offices, in the computer room where there was an airconditioner.

On January 11<sup>th</sup> I met Cristina and her teenage son at Constitucion station, and from there we walked to a small restaurant where we held the interview. Cristina had brought photographs, to which she referred and pointed to at times as we spoke.

All of the interviews in Argentina were conducted using the open-ended questions found in Appendix D, and prompts encouraged more detailed answers. Questions were posed regarding the nature of the project, the sequence of events in which the participants were involved, and the experiences and impressions of the participants. Further questions were asked in some cases, based on information provided by the participant.

Photographs were taken in various centres, at meetings, and scanned from photos taken at the time of the ICCP project. The choice of what to photograph, or what photographs to scan was based on information provided by participants. If an event was highlighted, or if a way of arranging the child care environment was emphasized during

the interview, a photograph of that event or place would be taken.

A final interview took place after my return to Canada with Lori, who was involved with the ICCP project initially as a board member, and then as a trainer in the week-long intensive workshop in Argentina. This interview took place in a meeting room, and was digitally recorded. The questions were much the same as those used in Argentina. The major difference of course being language, as mentioned above all of the interviews in Argentina were conducted in Spanish, while the interviews in Canada were conducted in English.

### *Data Analysis*

*Interview analysis.* There is much debate among qualitative researchers regarding the process of analysis, the place of theory in that process, and the generalizability of conclusions (Creswell, 2005). In my analysis of the interviews, I found myself thinking of the process in the metaphor of quilt making. Each interview stands alone, a shirt or a pair of jeans, but none is broad enough to cover the entirety of the project. To do so, each interview was snipped into smaller pieces. These pieces varied in size, shape and colour, and were pieced together by analysis. In piecing the little bits together, recurring ideas and themes guide the placement. Only once the whole quilt is pieced together can we step back and see the larger pattern, and the interconnections between one idea and the next. The quilt is big enough to cover the ICCP project in its whole, but the little pieces of jeans, are still identifiable, sometimes providing a bright contrast with the white of a t-shirt. Quilting is a creative process, as is interview analysis, and another researcher might piece together a different analysis from this case study. The whole, the quilt, belongs much more to the voices of the participants, which cannot be forced into particular categories or codes that do not fit.

Perhaps with this metaphor I align myself more with Corbin and Strauss' grounded research (1998), though I have not strictly followed their method. In revisiting the project as a whole, and taking the ICCP project itself as the unit of analysis for case study, the research questions helped to guide the analysis, referring me back to the broad questions of how the project unfolded, what were the experiences of the educators in the project, the differences in ECEC Argentine and Canadian practices and how differences were addressed, and how the adult education practices of the ICCP project related to constructivist philosophy and critical pedagogy.

Initial analysis of the interviews took place while I was still in Argentina. After listening to the interviews I wrote down key terms and ideas that occurred often and were emphasized by the participants. Once these terms were listed I returned to some of the participants and asked if the terms were representative of what they had wished to express in the interview. This member checking occurred with only some participants, based on my ability to return to those centres, or contact those participants by email. In total, six Argentine participants – Anabel, Sabrina, Lorna, Laura, Regina and Vanina – provided feedback on the key terms that I selected, and this member checking validated those terms for the more detailed coding that followed.

The audio recordings on cassette were digitized. In one case – Nadia – the interview recorded poorly and was ultimately discarded. Having collected it, “the case study researcher is faced with reams of data. Sorting out the data and making meaning can be likened to solving a mystery” (deMarrais & Laplan, 2004, p. 232).

Next the process of open coding began. Strauss and Corbin describe labelling as the part of an open coding process when “data are broken down into discrete incidents,

ideas, events, and acts and are then given a name that represents or stands for these” (1998, p. 105). This process was facilitated by the use of HypoRESEARCH software, which allow the researcher to highlight segments of the audio files and label these. The naming involved using those key terms that had been verified by the participants, though some further codes emerged as more close and careful analysis took place. The names for codes are often ‘in vivo’ terms. For example, ‘complegizar el juego’, in English ‘problematizing play’, is the term that Cristina used to describe how an educator supports a child’s play through questions and prompts and by expanding on the child’s ideas. The word ‘complegizar’ does not occur in the Spanish dictionary I used, but other educators also used the term to describe the educator’s role when a child is playing. By using the words of the participants to code and label the data, the code retains a vivid image and calls to mind the activity that was being described. Other codes were named “because of the imagery or meaning they evoke when examined comparatively and in context” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 105). This is the case for codes such as ‘hands-on activities’, which connotes concrete activities using physical materials, while the code ‘materials’ refers to toys, paper, paint or other materials used in a child care setting. While going through the interviews, listening and labelling, multiple codes were sometimes applied to the same segment. This was often the case with codes that developed into categories than labels. For example, the category code ‘different realities’ was applied to Sabrina’s comments about the variety of fruits and vegetables that are available in child care centres in Canada but not in Argentina, and also to the quote from the educators at Sol Naciente who commented that they needed to take on a flexibility and accept when children do not come, and that children come to the centre when they can. Though at first

these quotes seem to be referring to different ideas and concepts, within the context of each interview, they are referring to the same idea – the difference between economic conditions of the child care centres as well as the communities in Canada as compared to the centres in Argentina. Thus, the code ‘different realities’ was often applied to not only comments regarding the poverty the educators saw in the children’s lives, but also to the ‘materials’ which were so abundant in Canadian child care centres.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) note three different ways of open coding – line by line, by sentence or paragraph, or the entire document (p.p. 119 -120). For the initial creation of key themes for coding, the entire body of Argentine interviews were used. The application of these codes to segments of the interviews was then done in the equivalent of ‘sentences’, but with the aid of computer software. The division between segments was not based on the length of the audio segment (i.e., coding every 10 seconds of data) but rather the expression of ideas, such as “parent involvement”, a code that could be applied to a lengthy description of a workshop for parents, as well as a comment about speaking informally with parents as they drop their child off at the child care centre.

Since the data was collected using interview questions about a particular project and its unfolding, many of the responses communicated a process. Analysing for process involved taking into consideration all of the stages and events in the project and coding for these. In analysing for process the research question regarding how the events of the project unfolded was answered. Strauss and Corbin note that “process can be the organizing thread or central category of a theory” (1998, p. 179). In this case study, though the events and their order of unfolding were a chronological thread in each of the interviews, it was not usable as the central category, but was useful in terms of answering

the research question of how events unfolded, and in creating a timeline to better understand the experiences of participants.

HypeRESEARCH allows the researcher to annotate the coded segments, which was particularly useful with this data. I annotated quotations, sometimes generally writing verbatim quotes, sometimes elaborating on the dimensions of the code, and on other occasions writing an English translation of the quote. By annotating the codes in this way, further analysis was possible without constantly referring to the audio file, the quality of which was less than ideal.

Having coded the interviews, I was left with approximately 180 codes, many of which were redundant, for example ‘semana intensiva’ was duplicated in an code with the English translation ‘week-long workshop’. These duplicate and unnecessary codes were then recoded before further analysis.

Further analysis of the codes and the categories into which some of these fell involved deciding on a central or core category. Again utilizing Strauss and Corbin’s approach, or grounded theory, a central category “consists of all the products of analysis condensed into a few words that seems to explain “what the research is all about.” (1998, p. 146). Determining such a central category involved considering each code as well as the relationship between each code, in light of the research questions, and in particular the questions of what were the experiences of the participants in the project, what differences between Canadian and Argentine practices did they identify and how were these differences addressed. “Case study researchers examine each case expecting to uncover new and unusual interactions, events, explanations, interpretations, and cause-and-effect connections” (deMarrais & Laplan, 2004, p. 218 - 219). To do so, the

analytical tools of HypeRESEARCH were useful, in particular the frequency reports.

Consideration of the codes together, and whether or not the central category explained or related to most of the codes that emerged from the data and were verified by the participants, validated the usefulness of that central category in explaining the information in a straightforward, comprehensive manner. It was important to me as a researcher not to lose the detail and complexity of the project, and my use of a central category is not intended to reduce the data so much as provide a framework within which to explore the many ideas presented and comment on the relationships and interconnections between these ideas or codes.

*Textual analysis.* Two texts were collected in the process of this research, the Canadian and the Argentine. Both texts were intended to be resources to educators who participated in the ICCP project. Having collected these texts and having heard the participants comment on their usefulness and flaws, it was clear to me as a researcher that a careful consideration of the texts could provide another perspective on the project. Analysis of the texts was conducted using Norman Fairclough's (2003) approach to text analysis, which is part of the larger field of discourse analysis.

In conducting an analysis of the text, first each text was read carefully, with an eye to the context of these texts having been produced for the ICCP project, and as the most tangible artefact of adult education practices within the ICCP project. Analysis of the texts was different from analysis of the interviews in that coding was not done. Coding was not appropriate given the amount of text, and the aim of the analysis. While the interviews were coded and analysed to "identify, develop, and relate the concepts" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 13), the texts were analysed in terms of the genre to which

they belong, the authors' use of intertextuality, discourse and the presence and absence of different voices in the texts. This analysis utilizes discourse theory, and as a researcher I accept that "texts as elements of social events have causal effects – i.e. they bring about changes" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 8).

By considering the changes that texts can effect and looking at texts using a critical lens, the perspective I take as a researcher are not grounded in the data alone, but in the theories and traditions of discourse analysis as well. When I say that I use a critical lens to analyze the texts, I mean in particular that I am considering the texts in terms of the ideologies presented therein, the larger discourses to which the texts belong, as well as the political implications that underlie the authoring of international development project texts for the majority world.

## Chapter Three: Results

### Chronology of Events

#### *Introduction*

Derived from information provided by the participants in the interviews, and from the Project Closing Report (Innovative Child Care Practices: Argentine and Canadian NGOs Learning Together, 2005) submitted to CIDA, the following timelines describe the events and order of the ICCP project. The timeline itself is sparse, and little description is given here, because in the following analysis of the interviews the perceptions and experiences of the participants provide much richer detail regarding the events. Instead of describing the events in detail, the following timeline answers the research question of ‘how did the events of the ICCP project unfold?’.

#### *The ICCP Project*

The original idea for a Canadian project that would help to equip the community child care centres in the periphery of the Buenos Aires came about in the late 1990s when the wife of the Canadian ambassador returned home after a diplomatic posting in Argentina. Barbara F. (who was not a participant in this research) presented a request for funding to the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), who suggested she seek additional partners, and suggested the CCCF, due to the amount of paperwork and accountability required (Rachel).

At the beginning of 1999, the Steering Committee of Canadian partners came together, meeting over the course of the year to develop a proposal. Partners included: the CCCF, Algonquin College, Andrew Fleck Child Care Services, Better Beginnings – Better Futures, Hawthorne Meadows Nursery School Inc., Child Play International, and

the Child Welfare League (Innovative Child Care Practices: Argentine and Canadian NGOs Learning Together, 2005).

In March of 2000, the partners that had been identified by Barbara F. each sent to Canada a representative. These were the coordinators of two networks of community child care centres, and a person acting as liaison from the Universidad de Saramiento. The purpose of this visit was to observe Canadian child care settings and from there identify the project goals (Anabel).

Following the definition of the project goals, the proposal to CIDA was written and submitted. Approval of this proposal was received in July of 2001, at which point job descriptions were drawn up and the first visit to Argentina was planned (Innovative Child Care Practices: Argentine and Canadian NGOs Learning Together, 2005).

In September 2001, Alan Pence made a presentation of the Generative Curriculum Approach to the Steering Committee, which was well received (Innovative Child Care Practices: Argentine and Canadian NGOs Learning Together, 2005). The Steering Committee decided to implement the approach in the ICCP project (O'Grady, 2005).

In October of 2001, Rachel (the Project Coordinator), and Sandi (Executive Director of the CCCF), traveled to Argentina to meet with various government officials (Rachel) and to visit the sites of the project, these being two community child care centres that would be the 'pilot centres'. The decision as to which centres would be selected as pilot centres among the many centres of each network, was based on factors such as the length of time children spent there (full versus half day programs). The selection of pilot centres was guided by the needs of the project, but decided by the Argentine partners (Irena).

During this first visit to Argentina one of the original Argentine partners pulled out of the project due to internal politics within its organization. By early 2002, the other original partner – El Encuentro – was able to replace this partner by recruiting the network Andando de Moreno.

In December 2001, the economic and political crisis in Argentina came to a head. The Canadians involved in the project wanted very much to send money to their partners in Argentina, who were suffering in the midst of this crisis. However, the Steering Committee felt tied by the paperwork requirements of CIDA and the obligation to spend the funding as had been set out and approved. Additional obstacles in terms of the logistics of bringing money into the country when banking institutions were not conducting normal business. By the time CIDA gave approval for a different use of funds, the banks were open again, and the sense of urgency had somewhat abated.

Also back in Canada in December of 2001, the community worker and trainer were hired. In Argentina, the ICCP project hired individuals who were individuals already working within the networks.

The Canadian trainer, referred to in the Project Closing Report (Innovative Child Care Practices: Argentine and Canadian NGOs Learning Together, 2005) as the Canadian Trainer A, relocated to Argentina in July of 2002. Between July and October of 2002 the first training of the Argentine educators in the project took place. Canadian Trainer A's contract was not renewed after the visit to Canada by the Argentine educators. Instead it was decided that in 2003 two new Canadian trainers would be hired to continue the second phase of training (Innovative Child Care Practices: Argentine and Canadian NGOs Learning Together, 2005).

In November of 2002, the trip to Canada by four educators from each pilot centre, along with a representative from each network and the Universidad Saramiento. This three week visit to Ottawa involved visiting many of the child care centres that were on the ICCP Steering Committee, among others. At the child care centres the educators observed, and spoke with the Canadian educators. The Argentines also took part in workshops about art activities and first aid, among other topics (Irena). Social visits with Barbara F. and others involved in the project, as well as visits to tourist sites, rounded out the visit.

In March of 2003, Barbara F.'s visit to Argentina coincided with the commissioning of the furniture and play equipment for the pilot centres. These items were built to support and enhance the child centered, play-based approach. The construction of furniture and materials was done by local artisans, intended to be the community involvement aspect of the ICCP project by supporting local business, and leading to sustainability (i.e., repair and maintenance of the equipment).

Part of the decision to hire two Canadian Trainers for the second training phase was a division and separation of tasks. It was decided that one trainer would take on a more administrative role, while the other trainer would act as a mentor working directly with the educators (Innovative Child Care Practices: Argentine and Canadian NGOs Learning Together, 2005). After hiring for these positions in the spring of 2003, and following training and preparation in Canada, the two new Canadian trainers relocated to Buenos Aires in mid-July of 2003. At the beginning of August Rachel – as Project Coordinator - and Lori - as a representative of the Steering Committee - traveled to Buenos Aires to “facilitate the transition of Trainers A and B to the site” (Innovative

Child Care Practices: Argentine and Canadian NGOs Learning Together, 2005, p. 25). In September of 2008, a month and a half after the trainers arrived, there was a gun fired outside of El Ceibo, one of the pilot centres, when Trainer A was at the centre. Following this incident the two Canadian Trainers terminated their contracts and returned to Canada.

Argentine trainers, who were employed by the networks, were then hired by the ICCP project to replace the Canadian trainers. The Argentine trainers or “capacitadoras” traveled to Canada in December of 2003 for three weeks of training. Upon their return to Argentina, training and on-the-floor mentoring took place from April to August of 2004. The training given by the “capacitadoras” in the pilot centres involved six units that were based on the Learning Through Play Curriculum Guide Draft (Appendix of the Closing Report, Innovative Child Care Practices: Argentine and Canadian NGOs Learning Together, 2005)

In April of 2004, Rachel and Lori – as Canadian trainers - traveled to Argentina, though their luggage did not travel with them. Rachel and Lori conducted a week-long intensive workshop for all interested educators in the two networks of Andando and El Encuentro (all other ICCP activities were limited to the two pilot centres). Rachel and Lori conducted the workshop based in part on the Learning Through Play Curriculum Guide draft.

In the summer of 2004 several boxes of the Learning Through Play Toolkit (Kealey, Lamarre O’Gorman & Mulligan, 2004), consisting of the Curriculum Guide along with the Mentor’s Guide and CD about equipment construction, were sent to Argentina, concluding the Canadian involvement in the ICCP.

### *Overview of the History of Andando and El Encuentro*

This overview is a summary and translation of the information provided at a meeting of Andando educators, led by Sabrina, and is filled out by information provided by Anabel in her interview.

Beginning in the early 1980s, and then much more quickly following the economic crisis of 1989, community child care centres were opened. The purpose of the centres was to (a) address the basic nutrition needs of the children and adults of the economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and (b) to offer a decent space for the care of children whose mothers worked and had nowhere to leave their children. Thus, the original spaces were called *ollas* (pots), *comedores* (feeding centres), *guarderías* (daycares) and *jardin maternal* (kindergarten). At this point, the aims of the centres, reflected in their names, were to care for, *contener* (contain) and feed the children. The word *contencion* had been used up to this point to label and identify the work that the educators were doing with the children in the centres. This term was called into question, in the year 2000, given the connotation of *contencion* being of restraining, holding back and preventing damage. The centres were seeking a new and different way to work with the children, and this term seemed to epitomize what they found insufficient in what they had been doing up to that point.

So it was that first El Encuentro and then in 2002 Andando joined the ICCP project, and the educators took part in the project which involved a new approach to working with the children in a child-centred, play based way. Before the ICCP project, there was no approach or philosophy identified by the centres other than providing

*contencion.* The educators working in the community child care centres did not necessarily have any formal training or education.

The adaptation of this approach and the change in the way that the centres work continued within the ICCP project into 2004. In 2004 Andando took part in the LEKOTEK project, and beginning in 2001 El Encuentro had been engaged in the process of defining their PEC (Programa Educativa Comunitaria), and through these activities continued and deepened the networks' philosophy and understanding of idea of play as valuable, and the method they would use to support children's learning.

From 2005 to 2007, the idea of social transformation brought the political entitlement of children to the right to play. El Encuentro joined a broad coalition called "Movimiento de la ciudadanía de los chicos del pueblo" (Movement for the citizenship of the children of our communities). Between 2005 and 2007, as the centres continued to use play-based practice, they also began to engage in political actions and marches, calling attention to children's rights, and in particular the right to play.

## Analysis of the Interviews

### *Introduction*

The central category emerged after listening to the interviews, coding and then reconsidering the ideas that recurred frequently or which stood out. This central category I understand as the following ‘phrase’ that explains much of what was expressed in the interviews. The project made many impressions on the participants – first impressions, strong impressions, and beyond these impression, participants spoke of the differences between Canadian and Argentine realities, histories, cultures and the differences in ECEC cultures. Finally, there was a Canadian ‘take’<sup>2</sup> on the project, and then what the Argentines ‘took’ from the project, and where that ‘took’ them. In elaborating on this core category I hope to bring to it some of the complexity that exists in the information, opinions and ideas that the participants shared with me.

### *Impressions*

The saying goes that you never have a second chance to make a good first impression, and that these impressions are lasting was attested to by the comments participants made about their initial reactions to the ICCP project. At first, many seemed intimidated or daunted by the scope of the project, as well as the work and effort it would entail for the educators. Laura’s initial view of the idea of the project was that it was “very complicated”, and went on to say that there were “many things, many things, and

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<sup>2</sup> \* The appropriate word in Spanish for ‘take’ is ‘tomar’, translated as “take, seize; accept; have; drink, eat; impound; touch; understand; draw; reduce; live on” (translated at <http://www.spanishdict.com>)

you didn't know if you could commit or meet the expectations of this project, at first [we began] with fear". The project was seen at first as involving a great deal of work and change for the educators who were encouraged in their participation by the coordinators.

"It was a very participatory project. Telling and explaining about the idea, but putting forward what I thought would be beneficial, to see that they [the educators] would take it on, because there was fear" noted Sabrina. For some, the origin of this fear lay in the prosperity they could see in Canada, or in the materials and videos that came from Canada. In reaction, there was both fear and some educators expressed a sense of shame at their own conditions and centres. Lorna's words expressed this well: "when I saw the video for the first time I thought 'how ugly my centre is in contrast', but then I thought 'what can I take from this?'" Cristina also shared this reaction, saying "it can make you anxious and it is (noxious) to see all that we don't have". First impressions were not all negative though, and other participants noted the features of Canada and the ICCP project that they found appealing. Sabrina said that the project was "very important" and a "surprise", and the idea of the project enchanting. Anabel found the presence of infrastructure supporting the Canadian child care centres wonderful. Irena noted that what she saw at first was that "I know it's another world, they [the Canadian educators] have a different energy, more calm". As can be noted from these comments, the first contact with the project varied depending on the role the participant had in the project.

For some the first contact with the project involved travel. The first trip was by Argentine coordinators to Canada. Rachel explained this trip saying "the Argentines came up here during our proposal development, which was helpful, however it probably would have been more helpful if they could have come here and we could have gone

there, if we could have had a two-way visit” to begin the project. Anabel, who came to Canada for this visit, talked about how they went about defining the aims of the project. “Three or four days we went to day care centres, every day, every day, we identified most with a couple of centres that … were supposedly for the poorest of you [Canadians], which beside ours were very rich. There some of the problems and questions were similar to ours”. This echoes the reaction that some educators had, to the striking difference in wealth, making it hard to identify what could be shared by the project. Nonetheless, seeing beyond these differences, the coordinators were able to see what to use to create the pedagogical proposal. Anabel said that they, the Argentine coordinators were “surprised by the skill and liveliness of the Canadian children had when playing “we could see them relaxed, content, and very free in the space”. This impression became part of how the project goals were defined.

When the Argentine educators traveled to Canada, they also spent a great deal of time visiting and observing child care centres. Miriam described the trip generally as, “a positive experience, very positive because it was about observing”. Sabrina highlighted these visits as what most pleased her. The educators were visiting a different country and culture as well as different child care centres. Rachel noted that for some “they had never left their barrio, let alone Buenos Aires, and a 17 hour flight to Canada – and they came here in the winter! Oh my, wouldn’t do that again!” Irena noted that it was an important experience “to travel, have a good time, know, learn, and it was a month, missing family, a ton of things”, and she also said that they “felt anxious, about where [they] were going and what was awaiting [them]”. Perhaps most intimidating was the difference in resources and wealth “the impact of the first world was excessive for our reality, and

there was too much attention paid to the economic resources, down to the stuff people threw away on the streets” Ana said. To summarize then, the visits to the centres and the trip on the whole was very positive, but the shock of traveling so far, leaving family and familiarity behind, was accentuated by the wealth they saw in Canada.

When Rachel, along with the executive director of CCCF at the time traveled to Argentina for the first time, they also encountered a different way of doing things, in terms of the planning and getting the project started. This trip did not involve visits to the child care centres, so much as visits with government officials. Rachel said of these encounters that they ‘in some ways felt, kind of, I wouldn’t say a waste of time, but I didn’t really know what it would get us’. This trip was also marred by the difficulty of an original Argentine partner pulling out of the project. For the Canadians then, this first trip was complicated by the difference in bureaucratic culture, that left them unimpressed.

When the ICCP project began in earnest, it was with a general sense that it would be a difficult process, from both the perspective of the Argentines and the Canadians. For the Canadians, this was from a perspective of planning a project, while for the Argentines the prospect of major change in practices without the attendant resources that Canadian child care centres have, was daunting. Laura said that “at the beginning it was like ‘wow’, a major change, because we had worked in a really different way than the project proposed”. Sabrina said that they worried about the educators, especially ones that were new to the centre “we were scared because it was difficult, but it wasn’t, it [the ICCP project] went quite well”. And though in the end it turned out ‘quite well’ the initial trepidation, inspired by first impressions both good and bad, left a lasting impression. Irena expressed this well, saying that “I was surprised/scared, at the beginning … like

Canada, the first world, and all of the experiences that we have here, and how would we do it? this exchange? And how they worked over there, could it be transposed here. I was happy, but shocked, because I wondered ‘how will it be?’ a project so big, enormous, a huge jump all at once, but where to?”

The project also left strong impressions not only at the beginning. The week-long intensive workshop was often commented on. It was “a hit”, “excellent”. Educators at Sol Naciente who took part in the workshop spoke of the hands-on activities and games, and of the enthusiasm that Rachel and Lori brought to the workshop, and which they carried into their centre. Rachel, who led the workshop said that “it turned out to be very successful” and she attributed this to the activities and that “they really enjoyed our style, and our manner, because at that point we had nothing to lose, and literally we had the same clothes on every day. We just did the best we could”. Participants in the workshop were from various centres, not only the two pilot centres. Miriam found that for those who had been to Canada and worked in the pilot centres, it was a way of synthesizing the project, “and for the other girls who didn’t travel, it was to see it all on a big screen, all at once”. Several people commented on the hands-on activities, and how the workshop was based on practice, and Sabrina noted that there was respect given to the educators and their experiences. This workshop was fondly recalled, and had many ripples, even educators who had not been talked to me about how they had heard of it, and the ideas that were brought back from it, including Laura who has not been to the workshop but spoke about it.

A strong impression was made by the Canadian mentors who went to Argentina after the educators trip to Canada. The Argentines described what they expected “the

mentors came from over there to accompany us in the process a bit, so that we could put it [child centred, play-based approach] into practice" (Miriam). "The idea was that they would be in the classroom when the educator was working, instead of giving workshops, that they be in the place in practice" explained Irena, "that was what we needed, not so much reading, but to see it, to see theory in practice, I could live it, live the theory in practice. But" Irena concludes "those people didn't last long." Though they did not stay long in Argentina or with the ICCP project, the impression that these mentors left behind was that they were never comfortable. Anabel elaborated on this, saying "it was a disaster, these two people, I believe they never felt comfortable, they looked very apprehensive, they never accepted a glass of water, they were always disinfecting their hands". Irena thought that "they did not integrate here, it was as if it cost them a lot to understand the [economic] difference here", while Rachel thought that "what had happened was they didn't connect with the educators."

Unstated in all of the interviews, but that I as a Canadian visitor and researcher felt throughout, was that the Argentine educators did not wish to give me a bad impression of their experience with the project. Perhaps another researcher would have heard more from the educators about difficulties with the ICCP project, or perhaps if I had not been a guest in the centres I would have heard more negative comments. Whether I wanted to or not, by being Canadian and by asking about the 'Canadian project' I represented the minority world.

#### *Different Realities, Cultures, Histories, and ECEC Cultures*

*Reality.* All but one of the Argentine participants mentioned the "different" realities of Canada and their communities in Argentina. This expression of 'realities'

embodied the economic wealth of Canada, the resources that the child care centres in Canada have, the government funding, regulation, involvement and recognition in child care and in children's lives in Canada, and the economic and social conditions of the children and families in Canada, in contrast and in comparison with the other side of the coin – the Argentine 'reality'. I asked if there was a clash, and the participants told me "it's not so much a clash, but that they are two completely different realities"

The participants tried to explain to me the Argentine reality, telling me about the lives of the children in their community, the children who attended the centres. At Sol Naciente the educators explained that many of the parents are *cartoneros*, and that the children arrive at the centre late or not at all because their parents take trains into the city to collect and sort garbage, leaving the barrio at 4 in the afternoon and not returning until the small hours of the morning. Miriam at El Ciebo spoke of children who are left alone in their homes when their mothers who work away from home 'con cama' (with a bed). Miriam said "what is grave is when children are left alone, abandoned, what is worse is when they go out into the streets and take the trains".

Irena also explained that since the late 1990s, and especially since 2000, there has been a lot of unemployment. Cristina observed that "if parents don't work and go to the communal kitchen to eat, and they can't find a job, and they feel bad, and they start to drink, get drunk, and that starts the cycle of violence and mistreatment."

I was often told of the problem of children dropping out of school very early. When asked why, Miriam thought that there are "two reasons: that school doesn't offer any incentive to want or like to go to school .... and the other is the deterioration of the situation of families, and the need for parents to go out to look for work or for *cartones*

and the children go out, to work or to beg, and so they leave school.” The poverty of the community was not limited to the children – the educators belong to this community too, and their wages reflect the lack of resources and funding available. Irena told me that the wages at Casita Feliz are higher than at other centres. Educators make 300 pesos each month (approximately 100 Canadian dollars), making the job “a work of love, without a decent or honourable salary” (Irena).

The amount of money that the project involved was difficult to understand for the Argentine participants “who are accustomed to just surviving every month”, Sabrina went on to explain that the educator wages “depend on the country and the province, they depend on a country and a province where children don’t matter”. Government funding for the centres arrives in the form of monthly subsidies, or grants. Miriam explained that the government “gave us a subsidy, but we had to do this and that and the other, from building the centre, to putting the personnel, and they put the schedule and the activities. So many hours of activities with breakfast, snack and lunch, and activities for the children. And they [the government] gave us the economic resources, but we have to cover the cost of maintaining the building, the staff, and children that aren’t covered by the number of grants provided”. The funding of salaries for the educators who staff the centres, providing activities and meals, was seen as another difference from Canada, where they saw better ratios and found that the educators had better salaries.

The attention given by the government to children, their rights and lives, was seen by the Argentine participants as very different from Canada. At Sol Naciente, they thought that the difference in class between Argentina resulted in the differences they saw between the child care centres in the two countries: “they can do so much because

they have the money, the materials, the toys, and they are recognized by the state.”

Participants commented that the Argentine state leaves the children “abandoned” “forgotten” (Miriam), that “children are not a priority, that nobody cares if they live or eat” (Sabrina). The involvement of the Canadian government in children’s lives in child care had a strong impact on Anabel because it was “a big contrast with Argentina, that is very unprotective of its population.” Rachel, who met with many government officials in Buenos Aires, found these meetings different because she is “used to going to meetings here [in Canada] with government officials and hoping that they’ll help us, as opposed to just staying out of [the] way”.

Government involvement was also seen as linked to the economic conditions of the different countries, Anabel said that “the economic situation [in Argentina] is so abysmally different that the rights that are realized in this reality are different from [the Canadian] economic reality.” Thus, the state in Argentina does not protect children’s rights, or fund child care, and this is partly because of the economic situation in the country. Anabel mused that “perhaps if there was work, if everyone had work, wonderful. That was something amazing in Canada, that child care is the right of the population” because child care is needed for parents to work.

The difference in government involvement, and consequent difference in available resources, was seen by participants to impact directly on the child care practices. Sabrina noted that “with good salaries, everything planned and controlled, all is well” and the child-centred approach possible to implement. This is not to suggest that Canadian child care is funded to the level that Canadian educators would like – though there is a contrast between Argentine and Canadian realities, seeing this contrast through

the perspective of the Argentine participants perhaps paints a more striking contrast. It is important though that the Argentine educators identified economics as tied to the child care they provide. Cristina said that “the economic is fundamental”. Sabrina talked about children’s behaviour as seen in Canada compared to Argentina, and how “the children [in Canada] did not fight over a ball, they would not get worked up over things. But also, when you have enough for every child, and resources to vary the toys, there is no motivation to fight. Here you have two toys for many, and they go mad for it!” Rachel reflected on the extent of structured and teacher-directed practices in Argentina saying “sometimes they need that structure, and maybe our [Canadian] children don’t need as much, because they [Argentine children] don’t have that anywhere else.” For example, a teacher organizing and directing activity was needed “during the crisis, when there wasn’t enough food, [and] lunch time was a disaster, as opposed to Canada where lunch is a calm and tranquil time.” The economic conditions of the community result in different needs in terms of child care practices.

*Culture.* Other differences that were often remarked upon by the participants were cultural differences. Child care practices, like child rearing practices, are not economically determined alone, but are also shaped by the culture to which they belong (Tobin, 2005). Cultural differences that participants highlighted included child care practices, but also linked these to the different cultures. Cultural differences were also pointed to as creating difficulties in the process of the ICCP project. Salient aspects included language, the importance of belonging to a group or community, versus the importance of autonomy, approaches to problem solving and decision making, and attitudes towards figures of authority. All of the Argentine participants spoke Spanish,

and Anabel spoke English as well. The Canadian participants in my research spoke English, and Lori spoke some Spanish as well “but she had never trained in Spanish” (Rachel) and did not know all of the child care terminology that she would have liked to have (Lori). All of the three Canadian trainers spoke Spanish, “so there wasn’t a language issue” (Rachel). When the Argentine educators and later the Argentine *capacitadoras* traveled to Canada, they noted that it complicated their interactions. Cristina noted that even when a translator was available “I wasn’t going to ask her every little thing”.

Miriam found that much was communicated without language “even though the majority of us did not know the language, and had never studied another language, it was hard ... But all the same, catching things, capturing the gestures of the children, their looks.” The relationships that developed during the project depended then to some degree on the ability to communicate across cultures. Rachel supposed that “Really I guess Anabel was my connection, because she was the one who spoke English ... Eva my counterpart (Argentine associated with Saramiento University) only spoke French and Spanish so we were both working in French which is both of our second language, which added to the complication of the project.” Eva acted as a liaison to the University, and helped to coordinate the events of the project. The language of planning then was English and French, and the language of the visits to Canada was English, while the language of training and of the texts that were created was Spanish.

The cultural practices of meeting and discussing in an informal way to reflect as a group emerged as a typical Argentine practice, and such meetings were referred to often by participants. These contrasted with the project meetings of the Canadian project which were not seen as helpful, instead characterized as “thousands of meetings for every little

thing, telephone conferences, cables, every detail we had to consult and talk and lots of things like that" (Sabrina). Part of decision making and reflection is an approach to problem-solving. In Argentina, participants told me that the typical method to solving major problems is to "fix it together with wire" (Miriam). This expression, a common turn of phrase, carries the connotation of finding temporary (wire) solutions that do not address the root or cause of a problem. Though the Argentine participants commented on this as a norm in their culture, their awareness was part of a desire to go about problem-solving differently.

Other aspects of culture difference were reflected in the different attitudes towards autonomy and belonging to a group. Repeatedly, the emphasis on children's autonomy and independence of children in Canada was brought up by the Argentine participants. Sabrina noted that autonomy for the child was "great, but we need to relate that to solidarity". They found that the emphasis on independence contrasted with their traditional way of caring for children. Overall, Anabel described the mores of her country as "overprotective, oppressive, bossy, ordering (*mandona*), awful! (laughing) and at the same time, super permissive". These she linked to populism and the political culture of Argentina, as well as the traditional child care practices.

In terms of attitudes towards figures of authority, this is reflected both in the *mandona* treatment of children, and in anecdotes that were told to me about the project. That adults boss and direct children is both the norm and respectful outcomes or responses from the children are expected. This is the case in the education system as well as in the family, where the authority of the adult is predicated on the child. Rachel noted this also in the educators reaction to a police officer who was at a potluck during the

educators visit to Canada. Rachel found that the educators “cowered” and were “worried” and wanted to let him ahead in the line, which Rachel responded to by saying “he can go to the back of the line like everybody else!” This kind of respect for figures of authority can be seen also in the uniforms that the educators and primary school teachers of Argentina traditionally wear. This uniform consists of aprons called *delantales*, which the children are also expected to wear. The educators at all of the centres I visited no longer used these *delantales*, and explained to me that they had given up using them due to the Canadian project. At Sol Naciente I asked them why they had stopped wearing these and the educators said “why? because they create a difference between the educator and the child, and also between the child and his or her family.” This difference was also articulated as a difference in status or position: “from our experience, what we had, what we had learned in our own lives was that the educator is up there (raising hand) and the children are here (lowering hand), and that the children are the ones who obey, learn, and listen” (Miriam).

*History.* Before turning to the differences in ECEC practices or culture, I will discuss the different histories of the centres that was discussed earlier in the chronology of events, and which the participants highlighted as contributing to different ECEC practices. Differences in history relate to both the economic and social realities of the communities, as well as the culture in which these histories unfold. “The Canadian project inserted itself into a much larger history, of 15 years or more” (Anabel) the original centres of El Encuentro, for example began first due to the hyperinflation crisis of the 1980s (Cristina). Anabel talked about how the objectives of the centres was first to care for children while their parents worked, and then “from 1990 on, the centres that

were started were in response to that crisis, and many began as communal kitchens, and as we grouped ourselves into a network and our view became more complex, we added activities with the children.” It is important to note that the two “motors”, as Anabel called them, driving the establishment of the centres were almost contradictory: on the one hand to care for children while their parents worked, and on the other to feed the children when their parents were without work or money to be able to feed their children. This points to the emergence of the centres based on the community’s needs.

The government program which was mentioned above, providing funding for food, has been in place for over 20 years (Anabel), however, “since the last crisis, each month the funding is less sufficient” (Miriam). To buffer themselves from these crisis, the community centres and communal kitchens of José C. Paz came together to form a network. El Encuentro then, was created in 1990, “because of the economic crisis that was destroying everything we had created” (Anabel). By creating a communal pool of their funding as a network the centres are now better able to “deal with unreliable funding” (Miriam). I noted that the importance of belonging to a collective is reflected in the child care practices as well as the structure of the network, to which Anabel responded “exactly, because if we don’t do this, help each other, look to each other, then we are fried”.

In adding educational activities to the basic feeding and custodial care, the centres were responding to another need as well – that the children in the community were not succeeding or staying enrolled in school. Not only that, “our expectations grew ... if we are caring for children, we are educators” (Cristina). There was a conscious decision in the Andando network to move away from the tradition of providing

*contencion.* By incorporating educational activities, and by reconsidering the role of the educator, a shift away from nutritional and custodial care, which is also reflected in the term the educators use to name themselves. In Spanish “*mamas cuidadoras, a mamas educadoras, aeducadores comunitarias*”, which translates as “mother caretakers, to mother educators, to community educators” (Irena). Irena talked about this evolution in terms, without denigrating the origins of the centres whatsoever, saying “we were women who had not studied a ton, nor were we very prepared. We were brave and strong women and mothers”

The centres then, emerged from the needs of the community, and what little government funding they receive is to provide basic nutrition. The centres came together as networks in each of the two communities – Andando in Moreno and El Encuentro in José C. Paz, to share resources. As networks, the centres were able to survive the economic crises that plague Argentina’s history. As the activities of the centres have changed, an aspect of their definition has been what they are *not*. “There are public schools and private schools, there are municipal and state kindergartens, we are none of these. We are community centres, that arose from a history similar to the parochial tradition of giving food to children and asking only to be able to feed them. Then we arrived to (preparing) children for education, and we had ‘capacitadores’ (trainers) to begin this” (Miriam). In 2001 the PEC (Programa Educativa Comunitaria) began, after the ICCP had already been designed, and this program continues, with a child-centred, play based approach a central axis (Anabel and Irena).

The history of Canadian child care shares some features with the history of Argentine community child care, but also differs substantially. Canadian child care

centres first emerged as custodial care for children of working, and typically poor mothers. Such centres became important when women were needed in the workforce during the second world war, at which point the federal and provincial governments subsidized the costs of operating such centres. Alongside the development of such child care centres were the child care centres associated with the psychology departments of universities. As settings for the study of child development, the centres associated with universities were influenced by the research that took place there.

The further development of child care centres beyond these origins was driven by the movement of women into the workforce. Women have entered the workforce for a number of reasons, but in sharp contrast to Argentina, there are employment opportunities. As Anabel alluded to above, the need for child care by women who have paid employment in the market is justification for government involvement, and is seen virtually as a right of the gainfully employed voter. This has translated into funding for child care, which is nonetheless mostly a cost which parents pay. The capital costs of beginning a child care centre are subsidized in some provinces by the provincial government. Levels of government subsidy for child care vary from province to province, as do regulations and licensing requirements.

The child care centres that the Argentine educators visited were all within the city of Ottawa, Ontario. The Ontario provincial government and the Ottawa municipal government both contribute to the funding of these centres, and subsidies are provided to families based on need. The Ontario Day Nurseries Act is considered to be a rigorous set of basic regulations that must be met by child care centres. The history of this piece of legislation could be seen as another window into the development of child care in the

province. The differences worth noting are that while community needs might have driven the creation of child care services in Ontario, governments have met those needs by providing the infrastructure necessary, though it can – and is – argued that there is not enough support or funding for child care. The histories of individual centres may include an aspect of meeting the nutritional needs of a particular community, or the custodial needs of a group of people (i.e., working mothers) as in Argentina, though the level of government involvement, funding and regulation marks the departure and some of the differences.

Difference can also be seen in the training and continuing professionalisation of educators. In their training educators are directly taught practices that are based on both cultural norms, research and – in general – constructivist theory. The influence of developmental psychology, discussed in the review of the literature, has also informed the practices of educators, both due to the historical purpose and location of some of the early child care centres. The use of hands-on activities and training in placements or stages is also a typical feature of educator preparation in Canada, whereas in Argentina training is more formal (Rachel).

*ECEC culture.* The following analysis directly addresses the research question of what were the differences in ECEC practices. The practices seen in any typical Canadian or Argentine (community) child care centre are informed, shaped, influenced and constructed by the reality, culture, and history of child care. It is not surprising then that many differences were identified by the participants, given the above discussion of the different factors that contribute to such practices. I refer to these practices as the culture of ECEC because of my own experiences working in Mexico and Canada. In Mexico, I

found that while I was prepared for and expected there to be differences in language and social practices, I encountered differences and had a sort of ‘culture shock’ within the walls of the school. Not a sub-culture or a counter culture, the culture that each ECEC practice contributes to is not necessarily a part of the overtly expressed or easily identified culture of a given community or country. As experts in their field, the educators who participated in this research were able to identify these practices, and as a body, the term ‘culture’ seems appropriate. Though at this juncture we are focusing on differences identified before and during the project, there are many more shared features of these cultures, the most fundamental being that child care in both Canada and Argentina provides safe, healthy and caring places for children though this may look different.

‘Difference in ECEC culture’ was the third most frequent code applied to the 10 interviews coded, an indication of the importance of these differences to the participants. This is perhaps to be expected considering the questions I posed (‘How did the project (change, fit, clash) with what **you** believe about children and ECEC?’). However, given that the ICCP project was about the use of child centred, play-based approach, the crux of the project was a change in ECEC culture, and differences between Canadian and Argentine ECEC cultures that participants point to is perhaps indicative of what was emphasized in the project as well as what stood out in their observations.

The participants often remarked on the role and place of the educator. Anabel found it remarkable that in Canada “you have to look for the educator – you come into a room, and you look and find the educator and the children all sitting down.” Sabrina observed that the Canadian educators were “at the height of the children, in children’s

line of vision”, whereas in Argentina “we are very much about the chair, there [in Canada, we saw educators] sitting on the floor, putting out objects that the children like and choose, and can recognize” (Irena). In Argentina, Cristina commented on seeing more interaction between educator and child, while in Canada she found the educator and children “seemed very quiet”.

Miriam saw the role of the educator in Canada as being “to observe, see, help, collaborate”, while the traditional role of the educator in Argentina was more about planning and directing activities. Rachel opined that “the teaching that they were doing (before the ICCP project) was very teacher-directed”. The Argentine participants commented on this style not in terms of the role of the teacher, but emphasizing the activities and number of children. “Before, there would be 25 children working on the reading and writing, all at the same time, looking at the letter ‘A’ for example” (Laura). Large groups, of up to 30 children with one educator (Miriam) would all work together on the same activity, led by the educator. Sabrina said of Argentina that “all of the children have to cut at the same time, and glue, and all inside, and all outside at the same time, and no! In Canada, we saw that maybe one child was reading, and another playing with playdough, and everything was fine, there were no problems”. Anabel recalled being asked by a Canadian visitor to one of the centres “but do all of the children want to glue little papers at the same time together?” to which she responded “but we have spent years teaching that everyone glues at the same time, what do you mean now no? (laughing)”.

The role of the educator was also different in terms of conflicts between the children. Irena commented that “here if the children fought, we would despair and say ‘no, no, no’ and separate the children quickly, and it drove us crazy” as compared to

Canada where “the children learn and resolve their own problems, if it’s something small”. The role of the educator in Argentina as organizer and “coordinator” (Sabrina) included providing materials and objects to the children “we were used to doing everything for them, finding materials, putting them out at the moment they would be used” (Miriam), setting the table and serving the children (Santa Maria de los Angeles). In Canada, participants saw many more materials within children’s reach, and also much more autonomy and independence in the children’s activity.

The planning of activities in Canada was seen as “based on the child’s development, while we [in Argentina] use a curriculum” (Cristina). Miriam saw that in Canada “planning does not have to be a structured thing, with particular activities for reading and writing, that children can learn this through their play.” The educators at Santa Maria de los Angeles found that the individualized planning in Canada was possible there because of the small groups. Irena found that the idea of learning through play to be “the most salient” feature of Canadian ECEC culture. In Argentina, Rachel found the teacher-directed activities that were used to teach basic skills to be characteristic of the ECEC culture.

The environment as an expression of ECEC culture was also very different. In Argentina Miriam noted the resemblance of the classrooms to school classrooms. Cristina commented on the influence of private child care centres (as in, not community child care centres), and the use of “plastic” which she found “artificial”. In Canada the participants saw the settings as calm and with materials and toys within children’s reach, activity centres and play areas, and decorations made by children or natural objects that created a comfortable ambience.

In summary, the participants highlighted differences in ECEC culture in terms of the role of the educator, the activities of the children, and the environment. In Canada, the educator was seen as quiet, with less teacher-child verbal communication, while the educator was physically at the children's level, and a witness to their play and who problematized that play. Activities that were based on play in Canada were seen to be based on children's development, done in small groups, and children were independent in choosing their materials. The environment was seen as calm and with many materials and toys at the children's reach. In Argentina the educator's role was seen as directing, serving and directly teaching the children. In large groups the children engaged in school readiness activities, for which the educator planned based on a curriculum (possibly themes). The environment was arranged similar to a school classroom, with tables and chairs and the educator had access to stored materials and toys.

The many differences that can be noted between Argentina and Canada, and in particular the differences identified by the participants are relevant to this case study not because they separate the participants from each country, but rather because these differences in the Generative Curriculum Approach are meant to come together and coalesce into a new theory. This turns my attention to the next piece of the central category for the analysis of these interviews - the Canadian 'take' on the project, and then what the Argentines 'took' from the project, and where that 'took' them.

#### *Canadian 'Take'*

Given that only two participants in this research represent the Canadian perspective, it might seem that the Canadian 'take' cannot be fully represented, however

the project was guided by the Canadians and the unfolding of events of the ICCP project can also be seen to represent the Canadian 'take'.

The CCCF began the project, and starting with the initial visit by Argentine coordinators to Canada, the Generative Curriculum Approach employed. Rachel explained this approach saying "we were encouraging a Generative Curriculum Approach ... they would take the best of what they were doing and we'd take the best of what we're doing in Canada and it would merge up together and form something unique for their community and then afterwards it would kind of seed backwards from that." The best of what 'we're doing in Canada' was identified by the Argentine coordinators along with Rachel as a constructivist approach, articulated as a child centred, play based approach. Rachel explained what was hoped the Argentine educators would adopt in their practice in quite concrete terms: "what we were trying to encourage them to do was actually get down on the floor and play with the children, which they had never really done, it was very foreign to them ... To get them to understand that this was actually helping the children to learn if you sat beside them and played blocks or if you sat beside them with the cars and did things, and that was really wonderful to see".

In order for these practices to be adopted by the educators, the features, or events of the project were decided on. These were, briefly, mentoring by a Canadian, a visit to Canada and observation of child care centres, workshops and a text or guide. These events were decided upon by the advisory committee in Canada, when the CIDA proposal was written. Rachel and Lori elaborated on the Canadian intentions regarding each of these, and how they perceived these events to have been realized.

The role of the Canadian trainer or mentor was to "essentially do a sort of a mentoring thing, with the educators there, but do training sessions as well, formal training sessions, but also work in the environments as well ... working side by side not really teaching but having teachable moments and taking advantage of those teachable moments as they occur during the day" (Rachel). Lori talked about how the mentor ought to "work with where they are already, and then build up. Rather than taking what we deem as being the way - and the only way - and just imposing it on the people there". However the Canadian mentor, as mentioned above, did not work out. The Argentine partners found this first phase of training "good, good - but we did not wish to repeat it" and when asked why Anabel explained that "because there were some things that we did not agree with. Too much intervention, advancing opinions that did not correspond to the role, to the project, generating conflicts". The Canadian perception of why this was the case was that "although it was well thought out and planned and in our proposal and everything, we had to go back to CIDA and say that it just wasn't working, the exchange of knowledge wasn't happening as much as we wanted it to".

The solution that responded to the difficulty with the first mentor was to hire two Canadian mentors, with different roles: one would be responsible for the paperwork, and the other would do "the mentoring and working side by side with the educators" (Rachel). The hiring of these people was seen to have been a misstep by CCCF, which Rachel reflected that it may have had to do with the organization's "little experience as far as an international project goes". Lori thought that the two mentors had difficulty in the project because "of their expectations as Canadians ... they'd never seen that kind of poverty and I think it was like a kind of culture shock for them" These were the mentors

who left a strong impression with the Argentine participants of being ‘uncomfortable’. Rachel was able to perceive the impression they were giving as well and said that “looking back I don’t know that … they were quite the right fit … what had happened was they didn’t connect with the educators”. Though Lori and Rachel traveled to Argentina “to try to mediate a little bit, but because clear it wasn’t going to work unfortunately. But we all felt even though we were going through these hurdles, that you don’t give up.” Before the organizations were able to decide how to continue the mentoring, an incident in the community (a shot fired near a centre) resulted in the Canadian mentors terminating their own contracts.

In response to this incident, and to the overall failure of the Canadian mentors in Argentina, there was “brainstorming and coming up with a solution, we [Rachel and Lori] ended up, [going] down there as trainers” (Rachel). This training session was much shorter, and was the significant and oft referred to week-long intensive workshop – the ‘semana intensiva’. Rachel described the workshop as follows: “all sorts of hands on activities, because that’s really what they wanted to do. And it was a hugely successful training opportunity which we didn’t - we were just hoping for the best, hoping that it would be even moderately successful, but it turned out to be very successful.”

Lori brought with her many photographs to show both the interaction between the child and educator and “to show how we set up an environment that is very child centred, but without saying ‘look at all that we have’.” In using many hands-on activities and encouraging the educators to play, the aim was to provide experiences for the Argentine educators “to feel ‘this feels fun to play and do and make’” (Lori), as it was hoped the children would experience such activities. A professional translator was hired for this

workshop, though Lori noted that she herself would “ask questions, and always there was dialogue happening, and they participated a lot”. Both Rachel and Lori commented on their lost luggage, which carried all of the training materials they had intended to use in the week-long intensive workshop. To deal with their lack of materials, they improvised, and related this to the normal or typical use of resources by the Argentine educators. Lori thought to herself “isn’t this interesting, because this is what these women do, to be resilient too, and I thought this is perfect!”

Another part of the project was the purchasing of materials for the pilot centres. Materials were decided upon based on their usefulness in the Argentine environment and climate (Rachel). Toys and furniture were then built by people in the community in Argentina. This was the community involvement aspect of the project. "You had to work with the community, that was a big part of it, and trying to bring the parents in ... and even when we looked at building the furniture and toy materials we looked at how can we employ people in the community so that you can sustain that" (Lori).

The Canadian text, composed of the Curriculum Guide and the Mentor Guide was the final feature of the ICCP project for the Canadians involved with the project. The Canadian text was intended as both a tool for educators to mentor other educators, and the possible beginning of a curriculum for the training of educators in a formal setting. Lori explained that the original conception of the Curriculum Guide “was that the mentor [Canadian mentor/trainer] on the project to be able to actually implement that, in groups, teaching it”. However, given the difficulties with the mentors who went to Argentina, and the time constraints in terms of funding, the role of the Canadian text changed. “we wanted to look at ways that it could work, but more at a mentoring capacity so [that the

Argentine educators who took part in the project] would be able to pass on the information. So you're not looking at a formal, it's not a formal education program, but if you look back in the history of ECE that's where some of the early early days of training came from was this kind of thing [Curriculum Guide]. So who knows, this might be a kind of beginning, hopefully, that's what [the liaison with Saramiento University] wanted to see, was that there be a formal training for women or men working with young children". Following on the week-long intensive workshop, the text utilized the "songs ad learning games, and .... at the end of the day what we wanted to come up with from the process ... was to create some material that you could pass to your colleague if they were coming to work at the child care centre" (Rachel).

Canadian hopes for the continuation of the ICCP project in Argentina included the continued mentoring of educators in a child centred, play-based approach, as well as the application of this constructivist approach. Lori reflected saying "I wonder [what they have done] hoping that in some way, shape or form, they were able to do a little bit". Rachel hoped that the educators would adopt such practices as well, and like Lori who expressed a similar view, did not hope that the teacher directed teaching be completely eliminated from the Argentine centres, "because that's not a bad thing, I just don't want to see them doing that eight hour a day".

#### *Argentine 'Take' and Where it 'Took' Them*

The words of the Argentine participants as they described the ICCP project, and what they took from it would probably satisfy the Canadian hopes of the application of a constructivist approach; they indicate what aspects of this approach were valuable to the participants, and applicable in their centres, across the differences in realities, histories

and cultures. “The project consisted of child-centred, play based approach, which for us on the one hand was very novel, and on the other, it was also what we were looking for, something like that – because we did not want the be a replication of school” (Miriam). Aspects of the child-centred approach were more appropriate than others, and often the participants said that they took what was possible or feasible, which was coded using the *in vivo* term “tomar lo posible”. Irena said that “of what we learned, to take what would serve us and implement it. That was something, knowing that we could not do everything, but our culture and our customs bring different things.” In taking what was feasible, it was the Argentine participants who generated a synthesis or blending of the Canadian approach and their own. When asked if the idea of the Generative Curriculum Approach was intended to create this synthesis, Sabrina replied “this was our task/homework in reality.”

The learning environment was the scene of much of what the participants ‘took’ and synthesized. At Santa Maria de los Angeles this resulted in the educators working together and looking at how to set up each room, to see what everyone can do to help, what to add, what to take away, deciding if the activity centres are adequate, with the aim of together implementing a child-centred approach.

At Casita Feliz, this process was tangible in the playroom. When I arrived at Casita Feliz to interview her, Irena led me to this room, and knowing that the centre had been a pilot centre, I assumed that the room had been designed with intervention and support by the Canadians in the project. Over the course of our conversation, it was revealed that the playroom had only come into being in the spring of 2007 – a full three years after the project had ended. The room was divided into areas, separated by shelves

with materials within children's reach. There was a store set up for dramatic play, nearby a sensory table and a low counter. A house area was arranged, with clothes hanging nearby. A reading area with pillows and beanbags was separated off from the more active play spaces by bookshelves. Irena explained that as the only educator still at Casita Feliz who had been to Canada, she engaged in the design of the playroom, but all of the educators participated, hoping to create a room that all of the different groups could have access to, to better share the limited materials. Irena waited until the room was complete before telling the educators "this looks like a Canadian child care centre", the educators had not realized that they were creating such a space, nor had it been their aim. This playroom for me exemplifies the synthesis that the educators did, a process that did not end with the official close to the project.

For Cristina as an Argentine mentor, this process of bridging was facilitated by "photos of Canada to show what to work on and to communicate, because when you first return the ideas get kind of stuck, because you're talking about a different reality that you don't have around you anymore". Cristina displayed some of the photos that she used, pointing to a table made of a large cable spool. She said "I use a lot here, because what's that photo made of?" but recycled materials.

"Every centre took from what they learned" Irena explained, "from the training, from what we saw for ourselves, and every centre brought to life in their space something of the project." In Sol Naciente, the educators pointed to their sensory table that they built themselves out of recycled wood. "With the little that we have, we have done so much!" the educators exclaimed in unison.

The classroom, as the site of application for what the Argentine participants ‘took’ reflected their own reality, by using recycled and natural materials (Cristina and Miriam), and a changed role for the child. The walls decorated with children’s work and materials and toys within the children’s reach reflect a child-centred philosophy. “there should be more things made by the children than the educator, that the children can see that their work is important and is worth a lot” (Laura). Regarding the accessibility of materials, Irena said “a setting that has things within children’s reach is a setting that children can appropriate”.

Other changes, that express this synthesis include the giving up of ‘delantales’ at Sol Naciente and El Ceibo. In terms of planning, the ‘aranita’ of webbing ideas continues to be used, and in terms of planning, Miriam mentioned the importance of observing, and enriching and *complejistar*<sup>3</sup> or problematizing the children’s play, and taking it as a base for planning. Another change can be seen to express the idea of development linked to ages and stages. Whereas before the children of all ages were grouped together at Casita Feliz and El Ceibo, after the project the younger children were separated from the older children. Older children (5 years old) are prepared for school, though Cristina noted that “the centres still work on some basic skills, but without going far beyond where the children are.” At Santa Maria de los Angeles Laura mused that “it seems so far away, that time when all the children would work on one sheet of paper.”

Giving the children choice and opportunities to play were mentioned repeatedly, as was the importance and value of play for children. “Hopscotch, wading pool, water,

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<sup>3</sup> the word *complejistar* is not found in the Spanish dictionary, as a term it seems to capture the idea of ‘scaffolding’ in that the children are challenged by the educator to complicate and expand their play. The term is the same as the Spanish translations of Friere’s term that in English is translated at ‘problematize’

earth, all of these things. Not necessarily playing with the best doll, but playing with our culture, our things, and play, play, play" (Irena). Miriam commented on preparation for school: "we also have to do this part, and how can we integrate this, that the child learn, but through play". Learning through play stood out as important across all participants, "Something that served and that we all took from the project is that all children must play. That this is a stage of their life that cannot be missed, they need to play, and we must not lose the play that we had when we were children."

The opportunity to play and the freedom to choose play proceeds from both the autonomy seen and encouraged in Canada, and the value and importance of play. At El Ceibo this meant not only a shift towards play, but a shift away from the workbooks that had been used, now the choice to work in their *cuadernito* is a free choice, Miriam explained.

At Santa Maria de los Angeles, the children choose the activity centre that they want, and when to do the 'central activity', but all children must do the 'central activity' at some point in the day. The role of the educator and child have changed, the participants at Santa Maria de los Angeles told that "since the Canadian project, now it is the child who directs, who chooses when to do the activity, who chooses to do nothing, if that's what he wants to do." The child as able to direct his own activities and not be directed by the educator was an important and often mentioned idea from the ICCP project.

The child as protagonist was novel for the educators at Sol Naciente "before we were the protagonists", but through engaging in the week-long intensive workshop and the Argentine text, this changed (Lorna). The child as protagonist and active in his own play and in turn learning, reflects a change in how the child is viewed. At Santa Maria de

los Angeles, they phrased their view of the child eloquently: “the child is a thinking being, who thinks, decides and has rights”.

It has been mentioned above, that the different cultures hold different outlooks on the value of autonomy. As the view of the child and play were modified by the educators, the role of the child in the child care centres changed as well. The attitude of the participants on autonomy represents another location of synthesis by the Argentine participants of Canadian and Argentine approaches. Regarding the autonomy that was encouraged in Canada, Anabel reflected that the culture of Argentina overprotects. “Do you know what overprotection is?” Anabel asked me, and then explained that “it devalues and cancels the person.” Sabrina thought that “above all in poor communities, they over-overprotect. So the child has no autonomy and is always being told what can *not* be done.” The purpose or justification for the ‘overprotection’ that translates also as teacher-directed practices, lies in the insecurity and danger that surrounds the children’s lives. Later in the interview, Sabrina mentioned the difference between the responsibility and autonomy that are encouraged in Canada, and said that “we have to find a synthesis between the care that we must give to these children, because they are, we all are, at risk, but engendering autonomy.” Cristina, on the same topic, believed “that there is a balance, or a place in between the two” that the educators have to find, and in their interviews the participants left me with the impression that this balance is constantly reflected on, and reconsidered in terms of the children’s participation in the centres.

At Santa Maria de los Angeles the children have taken on responsibilities as well as autonomy in their choice of activity. Whereas before “we [the educators] served them,

setting up the cups, setting the table, serving the children, now no, now they each go and get their place setting ... go to the kitchen to fetch things" (Laura).

Over time, changes have taken place in the centres that were touched by the project. At El Ceibo they have "little by little, tried to make smaller groups" (Miriam), a concrete example of incremental changes over time. Sabrina found that the child-centred, play based approach "is a process that has emerged over the years in different places." While the Canadian mentors were "dismayed" according to Rachel about the lack of change in the daily activities in the centres, many changes are now attributed by the educators to their participation in the project. These changes, from how the environment is arranged, to the use of play for learning and the role of the educator, developed over time, and express a synthesis of the Canadian approach with the Argentine culture of ECEC.

To communicate the reasons and motivations for these changes, the educators at Sol Naciente held a workshop of their own. They invited the parents to come to the centre, and arranged a number of the new activities and toys outside on their patio, spreading out a carpet for the parents to play with their children. "Going around with their child, seeing and trying all of the toys, then talking about what they saw, and how their child learns this way – playing" (Gabriela). At El Ceibo the parents were also invited to "parent meetings, and conversations to explain the learning through play approach ... we went along explaining this to the parents in meetings, and when they drop off their child" (Miriam). Irena found that in the role of director, she had to relate to the parents, in the same way that she had related to the children in the role of educator.

The importance of involving parents in the changes was not limited to showing them the advantages of learning through play, though with this approach the educators found parents more involved in the centres than previously, and the centres more open to the community (Laura).

The key to understanding the change in parent involvement, changes in the child care centres, changes in the role of the educator's role and the view of the child, is perhaps the most interesting part of the synthesis that the Argentine participants developed. "We began to discover, which the Canadian project brought a lot to, along with the process of developing our PEC (Programa Educativa Comunitaria), along with Paolo Friere, [these] brought to our perspective, a repositioning the role of the adult. Our model of education is very tied to our model of the family, and the model of school. There, the child is seen as an object, and the great change that we are in the midst of, and which is not complete, is understanding the child as a subject. A subject as much in their words and needs as in their manner of expressing their emotions. We are on the road as well, with the marches, that the child is a political subject. It's a very revolutionary thing, that the child can, and has right to express himself publicly, not only in the domestic realm, but has the right to go into the streets and say 'I want my parents to have jobs!'"

(Anabel)

Thus, if children have the right to play, and the autonomy to direct their activities and learning, then they are subjects, not objects, they are the protagonists, and not the educator. In the Argentine reality not only the right to play, but other rights enshrined in the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child such as the right to safety, health and nutrition, are not realized. "We can recite the rights from memory, but it's just a paper on

the wall, or a t-shirt from UNICEF, but reality passes by the wayside” (Anabel). In order to make these rights a reality, the community child care centres continue to fill the gap in services that the government has left, and they lobby the government for better funding not only for their centres, but for the creation and upholding of legislation that would protect children and their rights. The marches which Anabel mentioned were commented on by others as well. They were held in April of 2006 and 2007, and took place in the Plaza de Mayo downtown Buenos Aires. Children from the centres, and other centres belonging to the movement “Movimiento de la ciudadanía de los chicos del pueblo” (Movement for the citizenship of the children of our communities) not only led the march, but made up the majority of marchers. Parents involvement in the centres is not only with their child’s play, but advocating and ‘fighting for these rights’ (Anabel).

Thus, the Argentine participants have chosen to “begin with the reality and then problematize, not the reverse”, that is to say, they have not dwelt on the differences in wealth and means between their centres and the Canadian ones. The participants, beginning from their reality have found what they could implement of a child-centred, learning through play approach, and they have changed the role and place of the educator. Beginning with their reality, and problematizing the absence of children’s rights, the Argentine participants have engaged the parents and the children in the political activity to make these rights real. They spoke of the autonomy and responsibility that was given to children in the Canadian centres, and what the Argentine participants added to this not only the notion of a collective and community, but the involvement of these in the political struggle to establish rights in their reality, in their neighbourhoods.

In their proposal the ICCP included a piece about community involvement, which translated as the building of toys within the community, as noted above. In terms of greater community involvement being encouraged by the ICCP project, Anabel found that though it was initially part of the project, as was a piece on children's rights, "the way it was thought of, it would not have had much result, it needed another time, another moment. The same people who were trying to do the (pedagogical) project, they could not do everything" (Anabel). Ultimately, the ICCP was "very centred on what happens with the children, and without the view that we were, and are continuing to construct, which is... about social transformation" (Anabel).

The ICCP project then, was not seen as an exchange, but a transfer. The Argentine participants however, were not passive receivers though, and it was the educators who adapted and blended and 'took' what was useful of the Canadian approach as it related to ECEC. Miriam noted that "for us, in reality, it was us who received, above all because the proposal for the project came from there, the funding came from there, the trainers came from there, and we, what we did was try to insert our experience" (Miriam).

### *Conclusion*

The ICCP made an impression on all of the participants, some positive, some negative. Participants spoke of differences between the realities, history, culture, and ECEC cultures of Argentina and Canada. The Canadian take on what the project would do and what the Argentine community child care centres needed, was implemented in the project: pilot centres, mentoring, a week-long intensive workshop and a text to train educators. The Argentine 'take' involved the synthesizing or blending of the Canadian approach and application of what was feasible in their centres, and their reality. Their

understanding of the child as a subject as opposed to an object led them to see the child as a political subject, with unrecognized rights. This led the participants to parent involvement in advocacy and political action, this is where their 'take' 'took' them.

Through the interview analysis I have addressed the research questions regarding the experiences of the participants, and what differences in ECEC practices exist between Canada and Argentina, and how these differences were approached. The adult education practices of the ICCP project, as experienced by the participants have been brought forward, and the following analysis of the two texts produced by the project will consider these as concrete instances of adult education.

## Analysis of the Canadian and Argentine Texts

### *Introduction*

Text analysis is a detailed and careful consideration of a text, and is only a part of discourse analysis. The value of analyzing a text lies in the uncovering of meaning, values, beliefs or relations that the author intentionally or unintentionally, explicitly or implicitly puts forward in the text. Such analysis considers the text very carefully, weighing not only the information conveyed therein, but the very ordering of clauses in sentences. Such a detailed analysis of the two texts produced by the ICCP project is not possible for two reasons. First, I am not an expert in text or discourse analysis, and hope only to look at the project from a different angle, to add to the perspectives presented in the interviews. Secondly, only a limited analysis is possible because these texts are both written in Spanish my second language, and I am sure to miss many of the subtleties that others (such as the intended audience of the texts) would quickly notice. For these reasons, the following analysis of the two texts is limited, and is not as thorough as it might be if conducted by another researcher who is an expert in discourse analysis. That said, such a limited analysis is still very worthwhile in the context of this thesis because of the place these two texts hold in the ICCP project, the differences between the two texts, and above all, because of the comments made by the interview participants regarding the texts.

This analysis will begin by first situating the Canadian text, the authors and how they present their audience, and the purpose of the text. This leads into to the consideration of genre. Following on this, the use of intertextuality and assumptions in the text will move the analysis towards the discourses of the text. An analysis of the

Argentine text follows, and differences in each of the aforementioned dimensions will be considered. Finally, the conclusion of this analysis will return to the questions raised by comments that interview participants made.

#### *Situating the Canadian text*

If social events are the interactions between actors that are mediated by social practices (Fairclough, 2003), ECEC culture as well as Argentine and Canadian Culture as being networks of social practices, then the text itself is a social event within the ICCP project. Rachel commented on bringing a draft of the text to guide the ‘semana intensiva’ workshop, and the completion of the text being filled out by the experiences of that workshop (Rachel, personal communication, 2007), which are other social event included or embodied in the text as well.

The Canadian text, entitled *Learning through Play*, is contained in two booklets, the Curriculum Guide (Mulligan, 2004) and Mentor’s Guide (Kealey & Lamarre O’Gorman, 2004). For the purpose of this analysis, the two booklets will be considered as pieces of a whole, referred to as the Canadian text. This text, as mentioned, was created following the ‘semana intensiva’ workshop, and authored in part by the two Canadian workshop facilitators, Rachel and Lori, and other staff members at the CCCF (Mulligan). These authors then are Canadian trained early childhood educators, at least two of whom spent time in Argentina. The intended audience for the text are noted in the text as being “*educadores locales de nivel inicial trabajando en pares, facilitaran la presentacion de este moodul*” (Mulligan; 2004, p. 5) (translation)<sup>3</sup> “local educators at the preschool level

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<sup>4</sup> The Canadian text was written in English, translated by S&C Translations and then sent to Argentina. The translation was identified by Anabel (personal communication, 2007) as imperfect, and for this reason, I have translated the quotes presented here, as well as

[who] will work in pairs to facilitate the presentation of this unit". These preschool educators are identified in the text as having a familiarity with the child-centred, play based or constructivist, or Canadian approach. This is more explicitly stated in the Mentor's Guide, where the authors note that the reader is "a person with experience who shares her knowledge and skills with a person with less experience ... the mentors of Learning through Play are educators who have studied the method and employed it in their classrooms" (Lamarre O'Gorman & Keally, 2004, p. 9). Thus it is clear that the authors of the Canadian text are experts, while the readers, herein referred to as educators, are people who have 'studied' the Canadian approach.

The setting up of difference between expert (author), the educator (referred to as mentor and facilitator in the text) and the novice (the less skilled or experienced educator), creates a distinction and distance between the author and educator that is confusing for me as researcher. The distinctions are more pronounced when I realize that both the educator and novice are the same Argentine educators who took part in the ICCP project. Ultimately the social event that this text *is* characterized by the difference between the educator and author, the author who is an expert, an authority with more knowledge, information and power. This difference and elevation of the author to the status of expert is furthered by the identity of the authors as Canadians, belonging to the minority world, writing to people in the majority world. As Dagron notes, this is typical of international development texts; "for too long, knowledge in development has been perceived as a one-way commodity ... Knowledge was a privilege belonging to countries that had 'achieved' development." (2006, p. 593).

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the quotations from the Argentine text, rather than referring to the original English of the Canadian text, though it was referred to at times for clarification of meaning.

*Genre*

As mentioned, there are two booklets in the Canadian text, both of which are ‘instruction manuals’. The Curriculum Guide is a step-by-step instruction manual describing how to conduct a week-long workshop on the constructivist approach. The Mentor’s Guide is an instruction manual detailing how to set up a classroom, schedule and play activities according to a constructivist approach.

The Curriculum Guide step-by-step instructions that are detailed and include what information to present and in what order, the audience handouts to distribute for each topic, what questions to pose to prompt discussion, and how to respond to questions the audience might pose. For example, Activity number 4 on p. 26 (Mulligan, 2004, p. 26) instructs the educator to introduce Developmentally Appropriate Practice. The objectives of the activity are stated as being “to summarize the essential components of DAP and to encourage a critical appreciation of DAP. Next, the educator is to distribute a handout of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) position statement on DAP. The educator is instructed to tell the workshop participants that the NAEYC is an American organization and that “this Position Paper is widely read and applied by educators in all of North America and the ideas therein have been used to define Northamerican child-centred ‘quality’ child care” (Mulligan, 2004, p. 27). The handout follows, which the educator is instructed to read aloud, pausing to give examples, explanation and to clarify any technical terms. Next the educator is instructed to ask the participants if it is worthwhile to adopt and apply DAP practices, “Or should they [the workshop participants] create their own method and their own way of defining ‘quality’ child-centred child care? Give each person in the group a turn to express their

ideas" (Mulligan, 2004, p. 27). This example shows the instructions, the clearly laid out steps that the educator is meant to follow. Each activity in all of the modules presented in the text are laid out in this clear and instructive way, oddly reminding me as a researcher of a unit guide provided to teachers in elementary schools.

When considering the genre of a text Fairclough suggests that "Habermas's distinction (1984) between communicative and strategic action, is .... relevant to the commonly assumed relationship between genres and social purposes or goals" (2003, p. 68). At first glance, the Canadian text is more strategic than communicative – it instructs the educator in how to conduct a workshop and provides the material (handouts, information) needed. However, the text is also communicative in that the educator who reads the text is also being informed by it. The explicit purpose is clearly to have educators conduct workshops on the child-centred, play-based approach, while the implicit intention, perhaps the higher aim is to convince the educators of the value of such an approach. Convincing the educator to adopt a child-centred, play-based approach is much more complex than simply conducting a workshop on the topic. Adopting the child-centred, play-based approach involves a major shift in beliefs about children, play and learning. Thus, we see in the text a mixing of strategic and communicative action. Other strategies used are seen in the use of intertextuality.

### *Intertextuality*

The Canadian text uses intertextuality a great deal. Intertextuality is "the presence of actual elements of other texts within a text – quotations" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 38). Quotations can serve several purposes, and in the Canadian text this is the case. Quotations can be used to give voice to difference, to open a dialogue. Quotations can

also be considered in terms of whether more than one perspective is presented, or if other voices are lacking. In the case of the Canadian text, quotations are presented as handouts and offer information, which is to be given by the educator to workshop participants. Such handouts may be a way of preventing a misinterpretation of the child-centred, play-based approach by the educator who is meant to present the material. These handouts may also be useful to the educator who in presenting a workshop, and might allow the educator to be critical of the material she is presenting.

The example above of the DAP handout is one illustration of quotation. Another is in the criteria for exclusion (Mulligan, 2004, p. 42). This handout is a summary of the recommendations by the American Academy of Pediatrics regarding when to exclude children from group child care to control and prevent illness. The authority of medicine and science are used to legitimize the recommendations, bolstering the authors instructions about hand washing and hygiene practices. The relevance of such recommendations are questionable in the context of the Argentine child care centres, given that running water is not always available, and the meals provided by the centres are often the most reliable source of food for the children, and exclusion from the centre would mean missing that one solid meal of the day (Miriam, personal communication, 2008).

All direct quotations in the Canadian text are in these handouts, while a great deal of paraphrased information also references other sources. This is most notable in the chapter entitled “Supporting children’s play” and the activity therein of “fundamental theories” (Mulligan, 2004, p. 58). Here the author summarizes the aspects of Freud, and Piaget’s theories in relation to play and development. Next in the text come summaries of

Parten's (1932) and Smilansky's (1968) research. The use of this intertextuality suggests that the author is justifying a child-centred, play-based approach by citing 'science' and sources that have been accepted by academics of the minority world. This use of intertextuality to legitimize the adoption of a constructivist approach to child care points again to the communicative action of the text. The Canadian text, like other recent Canadian ECEC training texts "represent a particular discursive shift because they employ a greater use of scientific discourses to fuel and intensify the modernist project" (Langford, 2008, p. 85). Further, the use of quotations that note widespread use of the constructivist approach, as noted above in the introduction of DAP, and again when the ECERS is discussed (Mulligan, 2004, p. 31) legitimize the message of constructivism by calling to mind the wealth and advantages of the minority world.

What of the voices that are not represented in quotations? The sources that are quoted belong all to the minority world, and to experts there. The instructions for what an educator is to say in the workshop are prescriptions, not quotations of what these educators said during the ICCP project. Lacking throughout is any representation of Argentine voices, despite these educators being the intended audience of the Canadian text, and therefore actors in this social event, and the chain of events that make up the ICCP project.

Also notably lacking in the quotations are references to the material means that facilitate the constructivist, child-centred, play based approach in Canada. Here I am referring to the government funding and parent fees that finance child care in Canada, as well as the government regulations and licensing requirements that child care centres

must adhere to. Governments are social actors in Canadian and Argentine child care, but their voices are not represented in the Canadian text either.

### *Discourses*

Fairclough describes discourse “as (a)representing some particular part of the world, and (b) representing it from a particular perspective” (2003, p. 129). The parts of the world represented in the Canadian text are “Canada” (in quotations because in fact what is presented is a collage that is intended to present the best practices of ECEC in Canada and the United States – or the minority world - and is not a single particular place or child care centre). Indirectly represented are the specific community centres that participated in the ICCP project, where these practices are to be implemented. The Argentine centres are only indirectly represented through the posing of questions to be asked and answered in the workshop. The perspective from which the constructivist, minority world ECEC practices are presented is quite positive, for example the introduction of these practices in a workshop is as follows: “Present [to the educators attending the workshop] the child-centred, play based approach as a way to achieve the goals and objectives of the child care centres” (Mulligan, 2004, p. 7).

This positive portrayal is further buttressed by assumptions and authority from the discourses of science and modernity. This is done by the use of intertextuality and assumptions, as when scientific evidence is cited as supporting the use of constructivist practices as introduced in the following quote: “There is a large body of literature, including theories and research, that educators have absorbed, about the many benefits of play. Early childhood educators base their work on this literature” (Mulligan, 2004, p. 57). The discourse of constructivist ECEC practices is at once presented very concretely

and abstractly. For example, the social actors and the social processes that are concretely presented in the following: “when the child has calmed down, speak to him in private. Children do not all have the same needs, but you can help them to express their emotions (“you must be pretty angry”) so that they learn to distinguish between emotions and action (“It’s okay to be angry, but not to throw chairs”). (Mulligan, 2004, p. 21). In this example the specific actions, speech and behaviour of the social actor the educator are explicitly described, and the discourse of constructivist practices presented in real or tangible terms. At other points in the CAN text the social actors and processes are presented more abstractly, as in the discussion of ‘quality’: “To begin with, recognize that the concept of quality is culturally determined and varies from one community to the next. There is no definition of quality that all early childhood settings can accept as valid throughout the world, although there may be overlap between different perspectives. Furthermore, there are local differences that influence the weight of different elements considered indicators of quality” (Mulligan, 2004, p. 31).

Other discourses that can be noted in the CAN text include the discourse of individual rights, in particular children’s rights internationally. Again this discourse is seen through intertextuality with the presentation of the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child. Here the text emphasizes the ways in which the interactions between the educator and the child can realize these rights. An example of this can be noted in the instructions for the educator presenting the chapter of the workshop on “Guiding Children’s Behaviour”. The educator is instructed to “Indicate [to the workshop participants] that this article [Article 19(1) regarding the right to be free from physical or mental abuse, negligence or mistreatment] has implications for the methods used by

adults to guide children's behaviour. The guidance methods cannot include the use of physical or mental violence .... ask participants to take a moment to reflect individually about their own conduct in relations to the norms expressed in Article 19(1)" (Mulligan, 2004, p. 13). In this example we can discern not only the discourse of rights, but the discourse of the individual – individual practices, individual reflections, the child as an individual with personal rights.

To summarize, the Canadian text is part of the larger discourse of constructivist, minority world ECEC practices, through which strands of the discourses of quality and science and individualism run. The presentation of social actors varies, moving from the abstract or simply unmentioned international organizations and agencies and governments, to the concrete examples of the educator and child. This concludes the analysis of the Canadian text, and the analysis of the Argentine text follows.

#### *Situating the Argentine text*

After the conclusion of the ICCP project, several boxes of copies of the Canadian text were sent to the Argentina. The Argentine partners found the Learning Through Play Toolkit (Kealey, Lamarre O'Gorman & Mulligan, 2004) inappropriate and set about creating their own text (Anabel). The resulting text was for educators in the centres to use on a day-to-day basis. The main author, Patricia Martin (who was not available to participate in an interview), was one of the Argentine *capacitadoras* who traveled to Canada for a three week training session, and who along with two other *capacitadoras* facilitated the final stage of training with the educators in the two pilot centres. The Argentine text continues to be used not only in the pilot centres but in all of the child care centres of both Andando and El Encuentro that I visited. When the educators spoke about

the text, they spoke positively and noted that it supported their use of a child-centred, play based approach. It was noted that the text was made available to new educators to familiarize them with the approach (Laura).

The author of the Argentine text, is a *capacitadora* to both of the networks, holding this role before, during and after the project was completed. The role of the *capacitadora* translates as a pedagogical consultant, a role that exists in some but not all Canadian child care centres. The author holds a role of expert within the community of the Argentine child care centres, as a person who can assist and train educators, providing them with resources to better work with the children. By traveling to Canada and receiving training there in the constructivist approach, the author expanded her expertise. The Argentine text, like the Canadian text, is offered from the perspective of an expert.

As Fairclough notes “all texts are addressed, have particular addressees and readers in view, and assume and anticipate differences between ‘author and addressee’” (2003, p. 42). The audience in the Argentine text is understood or presented as being unfamiliar with the child-centred play based approach. This is understood in the first subtitle of the first page: “Why use a program that is child-centered and play based?” (Martin, 2006, p. 3). As opposed to the Canadian text, which presents the same information, but for the indirect audience of the educator attending a workshop, the argument for such an approach is presented by the author directly to the educator, the reader.

#### *Genre*

The Argentine text, like the Canadian text is an instruction manual. Unlike the detailed, step-by-step instructions of the Canadian Curriculum Guide, the Argentine text

is a more general guide, providing illustrative and concrete examples and suggestions, unhampered by instructions regarding the direction of a workshop. Like the Canadian text, the Argentine text is overtly strategic, intending to affect the practices used by the educators. For example, in the chapter regarding setting up the environment the author begins by describing a child at play, selecting his or her activities, then explaining that “for this to be possible, it is necessary to establish distinct play areas. The child can then choose where to play and move to another area when finished” (Martin, 2006, p. 7). Here we see the desired outcome – a child engaging in free play, and the strategic action to arrive at the outcome – setting up distinct play areas. Like the Canadian text, the Argentine text communicates to the reader a constructivist approach, the Argentine text makes explicit its aim of convincing educators to apply this approach in their classroom.

As a guide to applying a constructivist approach, the Argentine text is quite tailored to the specific communities of José C Paz and Moreno. Features such as dialect, reference to *cartoneros*, and lists of materials that are either inexpensive or recycled (i.e. pieces of hose cut to 2 cm lengths for water or sand play (Martin, 2006, p. 20) characterize the text as local.

The text is presented in a visually appealing way, with images, text boxes, bullet points, and a background of varying shades of pale green. In terms of genre, by making the text attractive, with images and blank space interspersed with the text, as guide this text is more appealing and accessible to an audience more unfamiliar with written texts or instruction manuals. As commented by Anabel, the educators have varying levels of formal education, and additional complications such as the prohibitive cost of eyeglasses

make reading a formal, densely written, and book-like text unappealing for the intended audience.

### *Intertextuality*

Throughout the Argentine text few quotations are found, although the text paraphrases the Canadian text extensively. To compare the Argentine and Canadian texts and point out only the differences would be false. Though the contrasts might be striking they are all the more so because the two texts share so much in common. Indeed, the Argentine text is very much based on the Canadian text, phrased and pieced together differently. To illustrate this I will use the third page of the Argentine text to trace back the pieces to their origin in both a handout and other places in the Canadian text. The line by line analysis is presented below (*Table 2*).

Table 2

## Intertextuality of the third page of the Argentine Text

Argentine text	Canadian text	Interpretive remarks
1) "Why use a program that is child centred and play based?" (Martin, 2006, p. 3)	"Why do early childhood educators use programs that are child centred and play based?" (Mulligan, 2004, p. 9)	The Argentine text poses the question directly to the educators, while the Canadian text suggests in its phrasing that it refers to minority world educators
2) "The most important reason is that children learn when they are playing" (Martin, 2006, p. 3)	"Children learn most when they are playing" (Kealey & Lamarre O'Gorman, 2004, p. 8)	The word 'most' refers to a scale, or continuum, and places play at one extreme, the Argentine text does not compare play to other learning activities.
3) "when children play they: - explore the playthings they experiment - they figure things out for themselves - nurture their creativity and ability to solve"	- "Children learn when they play. They explore the playthings. They experiment. They figure things out for themselves. - Play nurtures children's creativity and their ability to solve problems" (Mulligan, 2004, p. 9)	The phrases of the Canadian text are broken into more bullets and in so doing the phrases are shortened, and the text more spread out on the page
4) "they realize learning that prepares them for school. Through play it is possible to begin to recognize letters, words and numbers"	"The benefits derived from play prepare the children for primary school better than formal classes designed to teach the alphabet, to count or to write"	The Canadian text is more formal, and sets up a contrast between teacher directed and child centered learning, which the Argentine text does not.
5) "they develop strength and coordination"	"Play is healthy. Play helps the child develop strength and coordination." (Mulligan, 2004, p. 9)	This and the following several lines show the Canadian text using "play" as the subject, while the Argentine text uses "the children"
6) "they develop their emotions in a positive way and are able to express their feelings"	"Play is beneficial for the emotional health of the child and provides a medium for expression" (Mulligan, 2004, p. 9)	
7) "they stimulate the development of their brain and nervous system"	"Play stimulates the healthy development of the child's brain" (Mulligan, 2004, p. 9)	

Argentine text	Canadian text	Interpretive remarks
8) "Above all, through play children learn how to interact with others and feel good about themselves"	"Play provides the context in which caring adults teach children how to behave, how to treat others, and the social conventions of the community" (Mulligan, 2004, p. 9)	
9) "Through play children acquire competence and skills that help them feel good about themselves."	"Play allows children to acquire competence and skills that help them feel good about themselves." (Mulligan, 2004, p. 9)	
10) "They learn to take turns and cooperate	"Children learn essential social skills when they play. They learn to take turns, to share, to cooperate. They develop friendships with their peers. Good interpersonal skills are essential to children's lifelong success."	The Argentine text breaks up the longer bullet point of the Canadian text into two points.
11) "They develop friendships with the other children. Being able to relate well with others is essential to success throughout their lives"	(Mulligan, 2004, p. 9)	
12) "They acquire respect for themselves and how to treat others with respect"	"Children develop self-respect and learn to treat others with respect in the context of play." (Mulligan, 2004, p. 9)	
13) "Article 31: States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts." Convention on the Rights of the Child, United Nations. In the Republic of Argentina this convention is constitutional.	"Children have the right to play. The Convention on the Rights of the Child specifies that play is a right. Article 31 (1) says: "States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts." (Mulligan, 2004, p. 57)	

Argentine text	Canadian text	Interpretive remarks
14) "In the Republic of Argentina this convention is constitutional."		The Argentine text emphasizes the government as a social actor with regards to children's rights, while the Canadian text places emphasis on the educators, and does not comment on the role of the state.
15) "During play adults can teach children how to behave, how to treat others, and how to live with others in the way that the community believes best."	"Play environments produce natural opportunities for early childhood educators to teach young children these attitudes." (Mulligan, 2004, p. 9)	
16) "Play is a source of happiness for children. They have fun. They enjoy themselves."	play is a source of happiness for children. They have fun. They enjoy themselves.	
17) "Article 19: Countries that have ratified the Convention have agreed adopt means and procedures legislative, administrative, social and educational, to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parents, legal guardians or any other person who has the care of the child." Convention on the Rights of the Child, United Nations	"Read aloud and clarify the meaning of Article 19 (1). Countries that have ratified the Convention have agreed adopt legislative, administrative, social and educational, to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parents, legal guardians or any other person who has the care of the child." (Mulligan, 2004, p. 13)	

Argentine text	Canadian text	Interpretive remarks
18) "In the Republic of Argentina this convention is constitutional."		The repetition of this phrase a second time in the Argentine text further emphasizes the government as a social actor with regards to children's rights, while the Canadian text places emphasis on the educators.

This line by line analysis reveals the intertextuality that is present throughout the Argentine text - the re-wording of material and ideas presented in the Canadian text. Slight differences stand out, such as the grammatical subject, in lines 3 to 12 of the chart above: the Argentine employs 'the children' as subject, the Canadian text 'play'. Nonetheless, the source most often quoted in the Argentine text, directly or paraphrased, is the Canadian Learning Through Play Toolkit (Kealey, Lamarre O'Gorman & Mulligan, 2004).

### *Discourses*

The discourse of a constructivist approach to FCEC runs through the Argentine text, beginning with the title through to the suggestions of how to equip a classroom and arrange it as an environment for learning through play. The difference between the presentation of a constructivist discourse here and in the Canadian text is the level of abstraction used by the author. While the Canadian text represents the social actors both concretely and abstractly, the Argentine text maintains a concrete representation level.

An example of this can be seen in the following quote:

"What does the educator do[in the dramatic play area]?

-puts out the materials, periodically incorporating some new elements and taking away others

- the educator can participate in the play, taking on roles or following suggestions”  
(Martin, 2006, p. 23)

The description of the educator’s actions is present in each section describing activity centres. Each section sets out first how to set up the area, possible activities, the educator’s role, followed by suggestions for rules to implement in the area. This structure, repeated for eleven different areas, makes up almost half of the Argentine text. The discourse of learning through play and constructivism are thus presented in the definite and specific ECEC practices, and concrete representation of the educator and child.

Other discourses present in the Argentine text include, as does the Canadian text, the discourse of rights. The same articles of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the child that are emphasized in the Canadian text are presented in the Argentine text. Absent from the Argentine text is the use of scientific research, rating scales such as the ECERS (Harms, Clifford & Cryer, 2005) or the CIS (Arnett, 1989), or theories of child development. While in the Canadian text these are used to bolster the argument for constructivist practices, the Argentine text seems to take the audience more into account. Fairclough notes that “different discourses are different perspectives on the world, and they are associated with the different relations people have to the world, which in turn depends on their positions in the world, their social and personal identities, and the social relationships in which they stand to other people” (2003, p. 124). Thus we see that the Argentine text evidences an absence of the science and modernity discourses that the

Canadian text emphasizes – these are relevant to the Canadian perspective and the relationship of Canadian ECEC to academia, and not relevant to the social relationships of the Argentine educators.

The Argentine text presents other discourses, in particular that of social transformation that begins with the reality of poverty in the community. This discourse is evidenced in the following quote regarding guiding children's behaviour: "We remember that even the families don't have all of the solutions. The lack of employment, the lack of an adequate health care system, the insecurity, etc., these are factors that we cannot instantly resolve, neither us [the educators] nor they [the families]" (Martin, 2006, p. 68). Meetings with the parents for the purpose of "joint reflection" regarding children's behaviour is suggested as a method for addressing problems, an expression of the social transformation discourse that seeks opportunity for collective dialogue. Another example of discourse is in the conclusion of the text, which identifies the particular aspects of the constructivist discourse that have been incorporated with their (the community child care centres') discourse of social transformation:

*We learnt in Canada about the importance of supporting the child's protagonism and autonomy, and of giving them opportunities to make choices and the responsibility that making choices implies. We are recreating the place of the educator, assuming a role of - how to put it? coordinator, problematizer, and enricher of the children's activities.*

*We have integrated the Canadian approach with our own, and the enormous value that we place on community building, the importance of organization, and the quest to transform our reality that is so unjust to our children.*

(Martin, 2006, p. 70)

### *Conclusion*

The Canadian and Argentine texts are vivid examples of the congruence and incongruence of Canadian and Argentine ‘takes’ on the ICCP project. Although there are differences, there are clear similarities too. The Canadian text belongs to a tradition of ECEC training texts (Langford, 2008) and expresses the discourse of constructivism within the larger discourse of science and modernity. The Argentine text, incorporates a discourse of social transformation, and is more concretely situated in the communities of Buenos Aires’ suburbs.

This analysis of the texts is relevant not only because they represent the Canadian and Argentine perspectives on the ICCP project, but also because the participants referred to the texts. For some participants, such as the educators at Sta Ma de los Angeles, their contact with the ICCP project was only through the Argentine text and what the centre’s coordinator related to them regarding the week-long intensive workshop. For other participants, such as Rachel and Lori, the Canadian text was the culmination and an important product for the project. For these reasons, the two texts have been considered in more detail than a brief description of their contents.

Particular comments about the text point to the usefulness of one over the other by the Argentine educators. Anabel’s comments on the Canadian text were that it had “small letters, too much text, and did not consider who the readers are, that they have little formal education, and the material ought to be more attractive, more colorful”. Her comments, as the only Argentine participant who had seen the Canadian text illustrate her “super-frustration”, and point to a breakdown in communications. “We did not understand each other, and the integration of the two cultures at come point, clashed. The

project continued to be what they had come from Canadian thinking, and ours was not seen". Certainly, this was not what the Canadian participants thought about the text that they sent down, which they had hopes would be implemented not only in the networks of Andando and El Encuentro but in the university as well (Rachel).

In terms of the adult education practices of the ICCP project, the Argentine response to the Canadian texts is illustrative of the different 'takes' on the project. The Canadian text is at once overly directive (such as the step-by-step instructions for conducting a workshop) and overly abstract. The Argentine text implements the synthesis of practices, by integrating the information presented in the Canadian text with local information, presented in a directive, concrete and more personal and locally relevant way. While the Generative Curriculum Approach is intended to be the co-creating of a curriculum, the text provide a striking example of how this did not occur in every instance in the project.

## Chapter Four: Conclusions

### *Introduction*

International development projects in ECEC abound, and it is the aim and hope of the minority world NGOs to conduct projects that are of quality - that will be effective. This case study has not considered the project in terms of child outcomes, or in terms of setting characteristics or quality. Instead, since the ICCP project focused on the professional development and training of educators, this case study has focused on the events of the project, the experiences of the educators, and their perspective on differences in ECEC practices. This qualitative revisiting of the ICCP project has answered the research questions of how the project unfolded, and what the experiences of the educators were in that project. Analysis of the two curriculum texts that were created at the close of the project provides further insight, as both are events of the project, and examples of perspectives on it.

### *Interpretation of Results*

The events of the ICCP project involved changes and adjustments to the planned events. Understanding the story of the project in a chronological way helps to understand the comments and experiences that the participants brought forward in the interviews. The fact of adjustment to the original plans of the project also point to flexibility and adaptability on the part of people coordinating the project.

Based on the analysis of the interviews, it was clear that the project made many impressions on the participants: first impressions and strong impressions. Participants spoke often of differences between Canada and Argentina, differences in realities, histories, culture and in ECEC cultures. Despite difficulties, the participants also spoke of

what they took from the project, and what child care practices they found were possible to apply in their centres, and how in particular their view of children as active and protagonists, led them to involve parents and together with children and families lobby and demonstrate for children's rights. The Canadian participants spoke of their understanding of how the project went, and in particular about the Generative Curriculum Approach and their attempt to apply it.

The curriculum texts produced by the Canadian and Argentine partners at the close of the project provided interesting insight, and the textual analysis brought forward the shared features of the texts - most prominently the shared content and message – along with the differences. The two curriculum texts presented a constructivist approach to ECEC, and communicated the same child centred, play-based practices. Differences can be noted in how the audience was addressed, the presence of intertextuality and above all in the differences in discourse.

Interpretation of these results attempted to bring back together the pieces of the project, without losing the complexity that has been elaborated in the analysis, in order to draw conclusions about the research questions.

#### *Application of the Generative Curriculum Approach*

As the ICCP project began, the Generative Curriculum Approach was selected as a way to create a curriculum that would be used to train the educators involved in the project. The co-creation of a curriculum began with the coordinators of two community child care centres and a liaison from Sarmiento University, together with the Canadian project coordinator, deciding on the project goals during the first visit to Canada, and based on observations of Canadian child care. However, the project proposal was

composed, albeit based on these goals, by the Canadians alone. This moment in the project is one of several instances when the Generative Curriculum Approach was not applied. Other instances are the first two phases of educator training, and the creation of the Canadian curriculum text. The Generative Curriculum Approach is reflected in other instances and events of the project, such as the visit to Canada by the Argentine educators, the third phase of training by the *capacitadoras*, and the week-long intensive workshops, and the creation and use of the Argentine curriculum text.

In the review of the literature similarities between Allan Pence's Generative Curriculum Approach and Paolo Friere's critical pedagogy were mentioned, and the research question of how the adult education practices of the ICCP project were related to both critical pedagogy and constructivist ECEC practices, emerged. Throughout the interviews the Argentine participants spoke about what they took from the ICCP project and their experiences of the project, and based on the analysis of these interviews, it appears that the Generative Curriculum Approach was not implemented to the extent that the Canadians and the ICCP Steering Committee had hoped. The synthesis of ECEC practices occurred, but was done by the Argentine educators themselves, not through or during the ICCP project as was intended. Though not the intention of the ICCP, it can be noted that the educators were active, and if the ICCP project did not empower them, the educators were empowered themselves and able to make a successful synthesis, and apply their 'take' in their community child care centres.

The focus of the Generative Curriculum Approach is on the content of an ECEC training program, and the development of such a curriculum through collaboration across cultures (Ball & Pence, 1999), and as mentioned in the literature review, the most

prominent feature of the process is the flexibility and flux of decision making. The ICCP project was able to adjust and change when faced with major obstacles such as the incompatibility of the Canadian trainers. With regards to the aspects of the Generative Curriculum highlighted in the literature review – dialogue, practical application of theory (praxis), and a partnership and equal relationship between organizations – I will now consider the ICCP project.

Lori found that there was a lot of dialogue during the week-long intensive workshop, and the Argentine participants commented on how the hands-on activities and enthusiasm of the trainers motivated their participation. While the workshop stands out as an example of dialogue, there emerged from the interviews little reference to other instances of open exchange and dialogue, regarding the content of the educator training and text or regarding the constructivist ECEC practices themselves.

The ICCP project did involve many opportunities for application in practice the ideas being presented through the training. The week-long intensive workshop was brought up often as an occasion of active participation, but the Argentine participants also spoke about the myriad of ways they implemented constructivist practices in their classrooms. The Argentine *capacitadoras* used not only workshops and conversation in the third phase of educator training, but also worked alongside the educators, returning to practice the constructivist ideas and ECEC practices.

The last feature of the Generative Curriculum Approach that was highlighted in the literature review for its parallel to the role of the constructivist educator and the Freirian teacher-student, is the relationship of partnership between the different organizations. In the case of the ICCP project, evidence of such an egalitarian

relationship did not emerge in the comments of the participants. Rather, Argentine participants commented instead on the decision making, funding, and training as having come from Canada, while the Argentines did not think that they necessarily brought anything to the ICCP project. I asked the participants what they thought the Canadian participants had learned from project, and this question was considered novel and entertaining - though the Canadian participants noted that they learnt much, the Argentine perception was that the learning was unidirectional. While the Argentine organizations were referred to in the Closing Report (Innovative Child Care Practices: Argentine and Canadian NGOs Learning Together, 2005) as partners, and representatives were involved in many meetings, the decision making and control of the project's unfolding and funding rested more with the Canadian partners. In these ways, the ICCP project did not reposition the relationship between minority and majority worlds, nor the relationship between academic, formal and recognized ECEC practices and informal, traditional ECEC practices.

Perhaps a fuller implementation of the Generative Curriculum Approach was hampered by the difficulties and incompatibility of the Canadian Trainers, or perhaps because the ICCP project proposal was developed before the ICCP Steering Committee decided to use the approach based on Allan Pence's presentation. Whatever the case, there were particular examples of how the ICCP project did not implement the Generative Curriculum Approach in its adult education practices, these being the Canadian text which was created without consultation with the Argentine partners, much less taking into consideration the Argentine ECEC practices - and the roles taken on by the Canadian mentors – which did not engage in the partnership or sharing of knowledge

which is the instructor's role within the Generative Curriculum Approach (Dahlberg et al., 1999). On the other hand, the week-long intensive workshop was seen as much more respectful of the ECEC culture of the Argentine community child care centres, and involved hands-on activities, dialogue between the Argentine educators and the Canadians who led the workshop, and much of what was discussed in the workshop the educators were able to bring back to the reality of their classrooms. The conclusion that can be drawn from the adult education practices of the ICCP project and their relationship to the Generative Curriculum Approach are that application of the Generative Curriculum Approach was variable and inconsistent, as reflected by the comments of both the Argentine and Canadian participants.

#### *Contours of Effectiveness*

In my review of the literature on International Development the Effectiveness Initiative figured prominently, and although the contours of effectiveness identified by Zimmerman were not alone in guiding this revisiting of the ICCP project, they provide a useful structure for an overview in conclusion.

The platform of the ICCP project, its timing, the context in which the project was undertaken and the community's awareness of the project, added to the effectiveness of the project. Because the ICCP project was underway at a time of crisis, there were more obstacles to the easy unrolling of funding and activities, but these activities and funding were all the more important and valuable to the communities because of the crisis. The focus of the participating educators was perhaps elsewhere, as food and money became scarce and security uncertain. However, their commitment to the project was perhaps

stronger given the very necessary funding that the ICCP project was able to provide the community child care centres.

Regarding funding, which Zimmerman notes is best when there is a common view of desired outcomes and a clearly defined relationship between the donor and the community (2004), the ICCP project evinced such clarity. Control of funding and definition of the project goals was perhaps more directed at CIDA requirements, and the Generative Curriculum Approach was perhaps not implemented as fully as was hoped, but there were no challenges mentioned regarding this contour of effectiveness by the participants, other than the amount of paperwork required.

The personnel hired by the ICCP project present the importance of this aspect of effectiveness. The first conception of the trainers in the project as Canadian mentors who would work alongside the educators, providing workshops and training in practice, would have perhaps unfolded differently if the fit between the individuals hired and the community had been better. The ICCP project met this challenge by hiring the traditional ‘capacitadoras, a solution which will be further discussed in the ‘insider – outsider’ contour. The personnel hired by the project, other than the exception of the Canadian trainers, were hardworking and dedicated, meeting the obstacles such as lost luggage with plucky determination.

The adoption of the community’s needs and priorities for the project, rather than “externally envisioned goals not relevant to the setting”(Zimmerman, 2004, p. 180) ought to be the case when using the Generative Curriculum Approach. However, the economic and political crisis combined with the unsuitability of the Canadian trainers, resulted in the Argentine partners feeling that the project had to be adapted to suit their reality in

order to meet their needs. Within the ICCP project, the role of the Canadian trainers was adapted, and with regards to other aspects of the project, the Argentine partners were able to make the adaptations necessary before the broad implementation of the child-centred, play-based approach.

Zimmerman notes that projects such as the ICCP which introduce “approaches that represent innovations in a community should be applied in such a way so as to incorporate cultural and traditional practices as much as possible” (2004, p. 179). This contour of the EI echoes the ideals of the Generative Curriculum Approach. The Canadian participants commented mainly on the use of teacher-directed practices, and though Rachel discussed the value of these approaches, references to other aspects of the culture of ECEC were not mentioned by the Canadian participants, or reflected in the Canadian text. The Argentine participants in turn, noted the contrast between their own practices and the constructivist ECEC practices, and overall spoke of taking from the constructivist practices what was feasible to apply in their settings, with the limitations and constraints imposed by their economic reality, but adding to these practices aspects of their culture, such as the importance of belonging to a collective and community. Ultimately, the Argentine participants found that the synthesis of ECEC practices was done by themselves, and not by the ICCP project as it was unfolding. However, this synthesis, done by the Argentine participants, was likely all the more meaningful, and a display of the strength and empowerment of the Argentine partners.

The contour of frequent checks and balances, monitoring and evaluation, and habitual discussion about difficulties and progress seems to have been fulfilled by the Steering Committee of the ICCP. Meetings were often held, though meetings with the

participating educators were not mentioned. Meetings seemed to evaluate and monitor based not on the experiences of the Argentine educators, but instead centered on fulfilling the requirements for funding from CIDA regarding the administration of the project. The meetings that El Encuentro and Andando conduct (and have always conducted) on a bi-monthly basis with a representative educator seem to be the sort of meeting that could have been the location for reflection on the ICCP's progress and problems, though the ICCP did not become involved in these meetings. Nonetheless, the Steering Committee meetings addressed the challenges and obstacles that came up over the course of the project, and as such were effective checks and balances for the project process.

One of the contours of effectiveness identified by the EI was the use of insiders and outsiders for project roles, based on the receptiveness of the community. The vivid example of insiders and outsiders in the ICCP project has already been mentioned, but bears repeating. While the first two phases of educator training by Canadian Trainers were not successful, and the Argentine participants did not wish to repeat such experiences, a solution was finally found with the combination of the Argentine *capacitadoras* along with the week-long intensive workshop conducted by Canadians. The solution involved an everyday role of expert and trainer being taken on by the insiders who were the traditional pedagogical consultants, as well as outsiders taking on a temporary role of expert in the workshop. Though the ICCP struggled with the roles of insiders and outsiders, this last solution was successful and effective, based on the comments of the participants.

The EI identified empowerment of the community through training, as a contour of effectiveness. Given that the aim of the ICCP project was the training and professional

development of Argentine educators, this contour was already in evidence from the project's outset. Rather than transferring goods or funds from the minority to the majority world, the project began from the position that through training the educators in Argentina could themselves mentor and support other educators in the constructivist approach to ECEC. This links also to the next contour regarding expert assistance, which given the nature of the ICCP project as a project about training and professional development involved the constant availability of experts.

Zimmerman notes that "open, flexible channels of dialogue" were identified as key by stakeholders in all of the projects that were found to be effective (2004, p. 186). Dialogue in the ICCP project between the Canadian and Argentine participants can be noted at various points, including the development of the project's focus and goals. The change in the trainers, and shape that the training took, are examples of the dialogue that must have taken place within the ICCP project. However, the composition of the Canadian text, and the lack of an Argentine perspective there, point to a breakdown in the channels of communication, though this may have been due to the ending of the project. In speaking to the participants about their experiences of the project, only the Canadian participants spoke of the Generative Curriculum Approach, suggesting that this aspect of the ICCP project was not the subject of dialogue, despite a central feature of the approach being dialogue.

Finally, the contours of advocacy and sustainability were identified by the Effectiveness Initiative. The ICCP project was not involved in advocacy work, and the sustainability of the project was tied to the local construction of materials and continued use of the Canadian text. Revisiting the location of the ICCP project several years after

the conclusion of the project showed these to be aspects of the project that were not sustained. However, the child-centered, play based approach has been sustained within the participating networks of community child care centres, and advocacy for children's rights, and better funding for these community child care centres, have been linked to the ideas and experiences of participants in the ICCP project. This continuation of the ICCP project can be seen as a contour of its effectiveness, despite it being an unintended outcome.

### *Summary*

In sum, the project was effective, and valued by the Argentine community. Its sustainability lies in the adoption and ownership by the Argentine organizations and the educators themselves of the ideas of the project. This may have been due to their openness to the project, and their desire to find a new way to work with the children. Further, the sustainability of the project lies in the sustainability of the networks Andando and El Encuentro and their traditional and continued involvement in the political activism and lobbying for children, their rights, and funding for organizations such as themselves.

The events of the project utilized to some extent the Generative Curriculum Approach, and these aspects were commented on positively by the participants, both Canadian and Argentine. The project in being centered on ECEC practices, failed to take into consideration the economic, social and political context of the Argentine participants and communities. This can be noted not only in the unsuccessful training phases involving Canadian trainers, but in the Canadian text as well. Nonetheless, the Argentine partners, community child care networks, were able themselves to problematize the constructivist, child centred, play based approach. This is seen in the adoption of ECEC

practices that were feasible and possible in the child care centres, and in the parent involvement and in the political activism that the Argentine participants linked to their view of children as active subjects, not as objects, in their play, learning and in society.

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## Appendix A

### Journal

December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2007

I went out to meet with Anabel at El Encuentro this morning. Taking the metro and then the train took a bit over an hour from downtown Buenos Aires. Getting off the train in José C Paz I felt comfortable and safe, but there is a striking difference between this suburb\neighborhood\town, and the capital – the streets are unpaved and the buildings smaller. Shops line the main street on which El Encuentro is located, though these are pharmacies, candy and clothing shops not geared at a tourist market – this is not an area tourists visit. There are no street signs, but by asking a few people I was quickly on my way.

El Encuentro is a network of 19 centres, all of which are located in José C Paz, but outside of the centre of what is basically a town. The barrios surround this central area where shops and the train station are. El Encuentro centres offer a number of different community services; child care and youth centres as well as feeding centres. The office or administration building and the people who work there act as a hub and work closely with all of the centres.

I knocked on the window of the open door, and was greeted by Anabel, who gave me a kiss and took me around to meet all of the staff. If I'm ever quizzed on all the names I'll have a problem... but there were 5 other people going about their jobs, working on the computers or discussing with pen and paper at hand.

Anabel and I settled ourselves at a large table in the main room and she got right to the point, asking me what my aim is in coming to El Encuentro. I introduced myself as an educator, having worked in Mexico, where I saw major differences and realized that there is more than one way to work with children, and that my education had not considered other options, but presented the Canadian approach as the best, scientifically proven, etc. How I went back to school because I wanted explore this more and was led back to the project, which I had learned about while working in a child care centre in Montreal as a member of CCCF. Then I talked about my research and what I'm looking for: what happened, what was good/bad and people's experience as part of it. Anabel interjected to establish that I was not planning to *evaluate* the results of the project, and I assured her that this was not my aim. At this point Anabel began telling me about the project. I will summarize what she mentioned, though I didn't record the conversation. Anabel was pleased when I mentioned that I would like to have her formal consent as well as permission to record on another occasion when we can go over these topics again. I record the notes here, not sure if this is ethically appropriate. At this point, I am considering these communications to be a process, and not a product of my research. As such I think it's worthwhile for me to reflect on what Anabel told me about, and will summarize what she said not as an artifact but as information that I have access to but not authorization to *use*.

The project between the CCCF and El Encuentro and Andando was concentrated in only 2 centres, one belonging to each of the Argentinian organizations. Therefore, sharing the ideas as well as the materials with all of the other centres was difficult. The curriculum book which was published by the CCCF was badly translated, too formal, had

too much text and was not accessible, nor useful on a day-to-day basis, and most of all didn't take into consideration the Argentinian approach\tradition\context. The Canadian approach places a great deal of importance on the individual, independence and autonomy, while the Argentinian approach is more collective, and the collective and being part of a group is particularly important for the children in these centres, in these neighborhoods. Also, since there are problems and a lack of school and kindergartens, the child care centres are replacing these, and are for this reason more academically and literacy oriented. Since El Encuentro and Andando had some funds left (not sure where from?) they created their own document. (Anabel then went to find me a copy)

Personnel from Canada were discussed, and a contrast noted between the Canadian mentors/trainers and the Canadian project coordinators.

Anabel suggested that I look into the context of the country during the project and currently to understand the project better. This includes the political/economic crisis, the current difficulty with finding work and the cost of food, the historical context of the neighborhood, the cuts to education funding, the strikes by teachers, all of which have or have had an impact of how the project worked out.

Of the 19 centres in El Encuentro, only one participated fully in the project, but all participated in the week of intensive workshops, which was good and a positive experience. Different centres took different pieces of the Canadian approach and applied them.

The project was too tied down in terms of how things could be done (perhaps due to CIDA requirements). Money was used for some other things, but the lack of flexibility was a problem.

Andando had a pilot site as well, and also a number of different centres. It is a much younger organization than El Encuentro, and is linked to the Catholic church. The current bishop gives a lot of freedom, but the church is generally formal and conservative. Merlo Caritas (original participant org.) dropped out of the project in 2000 because of a new bishop's concerns that CCCF would introduce – in relation to health/hygiene themes of contraception.

When Anabel went to Canada the first time, they went to different centres to see what was what, and what they might want to gain from the project. Struck by entering child care settings, and having to *look* for the educator, the Argentines decided that *that* was what they wanted, in essence.

We also spoke about the logistics of how I will see the different centres and meet with the educators.

Finally, Anabel told me about two negative experiences that El Encuentro has had with students doing research. The first student wrote harshly about the program, included information and data that she had no permission to use, and did not consult with El Encuentro before submitting. Another student was simply not heard from again, despite having agreed to bring her writings back to El Encuentro before submitting. I told Anabel that part of my methodology includes member checking of interviews, which she thought was a good idea.

As we spoke, Anabel and I drank mate passing the gourd back and forth (she teased me about not being used to pouring out, a custom I'm new to). After deciding that I ought to come back on Wednesday, we exchanged some phone numbers and I headed out, to take the train back downtown.

December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2007

Meeting at El Encuentro of educators and coordinators from each of the 19 centres

I came in while Anabel was speaking with a mother and child. Anabel greeted me and told me to head into the meeting room. There I took a seat and met E., P., M., M., G., R. and others as they arrived. As someone enters the room they do a tour of kissing each person before taking a seat. R. offered me mate and I informally introduced myself. First I said that I'm studying the "proyecto Canadiense" as it is referred to here, and that I am an educator. At this last point I got lots of smiles – G. asked for clarification "en que trabajas?" (what is your job?) and I explained "antes, y otra vez cuando acoabo mis estudios, mi trabajo es en guarderias" (before, and again when I'm finished my studies, my work is in day care) – more smiles and nods. I had my knitting with me, and since we were waiting for others I knit a bit, and we spoke casually of the weather here compared to Canada, and then they spoke of an incident in one of the centres (a child who ran away, but was found rather quickly. Everyone expressed concern).

Anabel came in and explained that she could not stay for the meeting. She then introduced me, explaining my research intentions. She suggested that I exchange information with the various centres to set up a schedule of visits. In particular she highlighted my interest in those centres which had implemented ideas from the "proyecto Canadiense", such as El Ceibo, Sol Naciente, Nuestro Futuro, and Santa Maria de los Angeles (Sta Ma de los Angeles). She emphasized that letting me come to visit or being interviewed by me was completely voluntary – at this she glanced at me while I nodded and affirmed "no hay ningun compromiso" (there is absolutely no commitment). Phone numbers were then exchanged, and Anabel commented that there would be no reason for me to stay for the meeting, as it would have nothing to do with me or my project. That said, phone numbers having been exchanged, I did a round of kisses goodbye and headed out the door as their meeting began.

In retrospect, it would have been a good idea to bring the information letters to distribute at each of the centres. That way the educators could have read them at their own pace and leisure. When I go next I'll bring a bunch extra for that reason.

Abel has also given me Sabrina's phone number. Sabrina is the coordinator of Andando, the other network/organization that was part of the project. Since Sabrina had an exam yesterday, Anabel suggested I not call until later today. At Andando they also hold meetings on Wednesdays, and Anabel has already spoken to Sabrina about me.

Anabel is proving to be a very key person in all of this, sort of the centre of the web of contacts I am building. She is kind and helpful with me, putting me at ease with smiles and pats on my arm. She is also able to supply me with the appropriate word when I fumble in Spanish. Her English is better than my Spanish, but she seems content to speak to me in Spanish, which is so helpful, giving me practice with the vocabulary I need to use with the educators.

On the whole, I feel positive about it all, and very warmly welcomed. I am glad to have a month to do this data collection though, because all of the logistics seem to move a little slowly.

Oh! The news of the day at El Encuentro: the cheque from the provincial government arrived – late – about which everyone was very pleased. This is the funding that they need to keep the centres going.

December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2007

Sol Naciente

This morning I took the train out to El Encuentro, which is in the ‘downtown’ of José C Paz, and from there a remis (kind of taxi) out to Sol Naciente. The remis tumbled down along first paved, then badly paved, then dirt roads. Houses look small, but have lots of space between them. The occasional car and bus rattle past, and even a couple of horses (I was surprised at this!). The driver commented on the lack of running water or sewers (there are ditches by the road where refuse flows), saying that when Nestor Kichner (previous president of Argentina, and husband of the new president) was campaigning, he came to José C Paz 5 times, but that the situation has if anything worsened since his term. After about a half an hour I was dropped off at Sol Naciente.

Sol Naciente is a community child care centre, with 3 age groups: 3s, 4s and 5 year olds. During the summer the groups merge and school age children come for a day camp. There are two buildings, one on either side of the street, the one on the south divided into three different rooms, with a large yard surrounded by a wire fence. On the north side is the building that houses the kitchen and other classrooms that I did not see. There is a shaded cement patio on the side of this building, with a cement wall topped with broken glass and barbed wire. A picnic table in the shade is where I sat down with Lorna, Cecilia, and Victoria for the interview. Victoria’s 4 month old daughter was also present, passing from one educator to another and smiling and cooing all the while.

After chatting for a few minutes about my experience as an educator, and the reason that I am in Argentina for this research, I gave each of the educators the information letter. Next I gave them each a copy of the consent letter, and we talked about what consent would imply and that at any time they might revoke that consent and I would be neither offended or upset. Around this time B. the coordinator came by and asked if it would be possible for me to make her a copy of my notes from the interview. I replied that I would be happy to make her a copy of the interview itself on my computer, since I would be recording – with permission from the educators. They all seemed to think this was a good idea (and so did I, little did I realize that my computer however did not agree!).

So the interview began, and truth be told it was not so much an interview as a conversation between the educators as they reminded each other of various topics, prompting one another to tell about this or that. Towards the end, I took a look at the questions I had prepared and realized that they had covered most of what I had hoped to ask, and all I had to do was listen! (felt almost lazy!).

Unfortunately, as Victoria and Lorna crossed over to join the children and Cecilia left for El Encuentro, I took a listen to the recording and heard nothing but white noise. I was so frustrated and angry and at a loss as to what to do. About an hour of interview and nothing but shhhhhhshhhhssss. I was grateful that no one passing could understand my mumbled English curses. I struggled a bit, saved the file in different formats, etc. but

in the end decided that I had better write down all that I could remember as quickly as possible. This I did, and then I went across to join the educators and children playing in the yard.

A race was under way, children carrying full cups of water from one large buckets to two buckets at the foot of the path. Victoria was encouraging them, laughing with them and pointing out techniques that worked (i.e., when you walk slowly you spill less). I sat down on a tire and was quickly surrounded by younger children keen to know who I was, where I was from, and how to say this or that in English. The children talked to me about themselves, about their families, and so on. I feel that I ought to respect their confidence in me by not sharing all that they told me about, but the picture they painted for me of their lives is dramatically different from the lives of any other children I have worked with. Later Lorna told me that many of the parents work as 'cartoneros' and the children go with them into the city to sort and collect garbage. There is a special train that has stripped cars for the transportation of collected materials that heads into Buenos Aires at 4pm, returning at 2am. In the city I have seen people sorting through the bags left on the side of the road, filling large bags and wheelbarrows, even trucks with the sorted refuse.

As they began to set the table for lunch I took a peak inside the centre. The furniture has all been stored against the walls, along with the toys and books. Pictures on the walls show children eating around a table, smiling at the camera. As I was wandering Lorna came to find me, telling me that the children were waiting for me to join them for lunch! I sat down at the table with the school-age children. I was passed a plate of rice with peas and carrots, and then Lorena came around the table with cut up milanesa (breaded beef). Seeing that there was not enough and feeling uncomfortable about eating any of the food at all, I said that I didn't eat meat and would pass. The children said grace and began to eat and talk and it was all quite lively. There were about 20 children around this table (and perhaps 15 at the younger children's table), Lorna sitting at one end, myself at the other. After the children finished they brought their plates over to Lorna and scraped any remains into a bowl. Then they gave Lorna and myself a kiss and headed for the gate, leaving one by one or with their siblings or cousins. There were still children eating at the table of younger children, and Victoria needed to check on her baby, so I took a seat with the children there. A tussle over chairs between a couple of the children threatened, so I did the easiest and began telling a story. They all helped with the sound effects, and guessed at possible endings, and applauded when the story ended (that was a first! I was very flattered!).

The children then tidied up and left – only 2 parents came to collect their children at the gate, the rest left on their own.

Lorna and I sat down again at the larger table and I went over my notes with her, and Victoria who came by as well. Though this was not the member checking I had envisioned, it did give me a chance to ascertain that I had written down the gist of the interview. I called a remis and we went over to sit at the picnic table where the interview had taken place.

One of those happy moments that will stand out in my memory: holding Victoria's daughter J. while Victoria and Lorna talk about the children's plans for their summer vacation: the games they want to play the little pool they want to set up. The sun hot and the shade comfortable. Feeling welcomed and included.

27/12/07

Notes from meeting Andando

I arrived – late! Got lost on the subway, then when I was on the train it just stopped, randomly between stations! I guess this is why living in the provincias (suburbs) instead of downtown would be useful.... I spend at least an hour – usually 2 – in transit in each direction. But I was warned away by enough people, including Anabel, and I was only able to find a room to rent for a short time downtown.... eh bien!

The meeting at Andando had been going for a while when I arrived, but when I did Sabrina -- coordinator of Andando – was going over the history of the orientation/philosophy of the organization, focusing on the Canadian project. I think that this was meant to be an introduction to (of) me to the educators.

Around the table were about 20 women, one from each of the 18 centres and 2 from Casita Feliz (Irena and D.). Sabrina went over the notes she had taped to the wall (I took photos of this display) beginning with the opening of the first centres and the initial focus of alimentation (as opposed to nutrition). In 2000 a discussion of the purpose of the community centres led to three words to encapsulate what they were working on with the children, the main term being “contencion”, the word meaning to contain, detain or restrain. Lujan discussed the term saying “esa palabra es fea, tiene que ver con el inmovilizacion del nino” giving examples of other uses of the word: detaining a river with a dam, detaining blood from a wound with a bandage. At this point the Canadian project began and the Canadian approach was adopted and adapted for the reality of the centres. The notion of education through play was introduced, something Sabrina noted was especially novel because the focus had not previously been education at all. Beginning in 2005 a new focus on the rights of children emerged, in particular the right to play. Following and flowing from this came the marching (demonstrating) and making public this right to play.

At this point Sabrina gave me the floor, and I introduced myself first as an educator who usually works in child care. Then I said that having returned to my studies I was doing my ‘investigacion’ for my thesis about the Canadian project. I said that I was interested in the process and the experience of the project, as well as the cultural encounter – that Canada and Argentina are quite different (Sabrina interjected that Canada is first world and Argentina eighth – laughing- I responded that there is that, but there are also different cultures of education as well as different views of ‘the child’ to which she nodded and agreed). Then I explained that I would like to come and visit them (the educators) and talk with them individually or in groups, about the project, and that I would like to visit the centres and observe them, if they would let me. At this point Lujan pointed out Irena and D. from Casita Feliz, and we arranged to meet the next Friday, while I will meet with Sabrina on Thursday. I gave everyone my phone number so that they can call to arrange a meeting with me if they like.

Sabrina then said it was time to get back to the meeting and that I was welcome to stay if I liked. I took a seat outside of the circle around the large table as an educator spoke about some of the obstacles faced at her centre over the course of the year: staff and staff family’s health problems. Then another educator from a different centre spoke about a conflict that went unresolved for a long time between herself and a coworker.

Eventually they sat down and talked, but ultimately the other left. The conflict seemed to involve buying cups and plates when these weren't needed, meaning that there wasn't money for food. She was in tears at some points talking about the personality difficulty and the resulting financial strain and problems in the centre. Sabrina commented that her openness and honesty could only help to improve the situation. The educator noted that both she and the other educator were very strong and opinionated people, but that once things were out in the open there was a major change. She talked about a Christmas event that all but 2 of 26 parents (mother and father) attended. Another educator spoke of the difficulty of being coordinator, and why she had stepped down – that educators didn't take responsibility for problems and expected the coordinator to resolve financial difficulties. As an educator again she now acts as a mediator or interpreter between the coordinator and the other educators. Another educator spoke of how she still and often asks herself "what am I doing here?". She spoke of being one of ten children and that her parents didn't really attend to her, and that she sees this in the children at the centre. That with 32 children and two or three educators, there are too many moments when she is frustrated, and unpleasant to the children and her colleagues. She spoke of how hard it is to get so little pay when 'hay una hora de entrar, pero no hay hora de salida' (there is fixed beginning to every day, but the end is not fixed). Then she spoke of a mother who was sleeping with her kids in the plaza, of how most live in a room of 4 meters by 4 meters, with a bed, no light, no water, no gas. And how she, as an educator wanted to quit, but she'll be staying next year, and the year after, because how can she leave? And she said that she needs to love these kids because they need that care so much. She had me crying too. The educator's 3 year old daughter called her away asking for help in the bathroom. At this point I left the meeting, saying I wished we had this practice of a reflective forum in child care in Canada.

2/01/08

Notes from Santa Maria de los Angeles

I came to Santa Maria de los Angeles because this centre took many ideas from the Canadian project, without having been a pilot centre – much like Sol Naciente. The centre is part of the El Encuentro red (red means net or network) and is located in a barrio (suburb) of José C Paz. Like all of the barrios I have been to visit, the roads are dirt, and virtually impassable by car. Houses have yards and often chickens can be seen within. The occasional horse can be seen pulling a carts along the street, though things are generally quite, and there are few people out. Sewers are not the rule, and the ditches beside the road are foul smelling and looking because of this. The centres themselves are easy to spot because they are often painted in bright colours, their names in filigreed lettering of primary colours.

When I arrive at Santa Maria de los Angeles three educators are there, all wearing aprons (delentales), and four children sit at a low table eating breakfast. The educators are setting up toys, bringing out small chairs from one of the classrooms. They ask me to excuse the disorder, and explain that it is summer camp now, and not the regular year, and that they will spend the day outside and not in the classroom as they would otherwise. I sit down at a picnic table on the tiled patio in the shade of the building with

the three educators, and give them the consent forms, and tell them what I am looking for and why. Maté is passed around. Laura having been at the centre since the time of the Canadian project, took the lead in answering the interview questions I posed.

As the interview unfolded more children arrived, and Laura would leave the table and return, depending on the children. Early on in the interview, the children having finished eating, were invited to play in the different centres set up on the patio in the shade. Materials were taken out of the three year old class, other classrooms where closed for cleaning and reorganization over the summer. Some cars and trains were placed in a bin on the floor, and a kitchen set up for dramatic play. Additionally, the yard itself held a slide and climber for play.

Once the interview was done, Laura invited me to come and see the classrooms. I asked verbal permission to take photos, explaining that I had not brought the consent forms with me, but would want them to sign them if they let me take photos. This was fine with Laura and Regina too. On the whole I find the consent forms to be a little challenging – they break the rhythm of conversation, and the educators seem a little thrown off and unaccustomed to them. I explain the purpose and put a lot of emphasis on the voluntary nature of the interviews, and that even after the interview they can decide not to participate. The purpose being to learn about the project, which I do find useful, because I'm often introduced as ‘the Canadian student who is looking at how the Canadian project has been continued’ which of course is interesting to me too, though my primary interest in the experience of the project itself.

In the case of Santa María de los Angeles, this is especially interesting, since none of the educators participated in the project directly. The coordinator of the centre – Marina – took part in the week-long intensive workshop, and then gave two, hour and a half long workshops to the educators in her centre. I asked Laura what these workshops consisted of, and she said they were pretty much a conversation, and a retelling of events. The curriculum book (Argentine edition) was photocopied for each educator, and is provided to new educators starting at the centre. I asked if the coordinator also provided follow up or mentoring when the educators were with the kids, and this developed into a conversation about practice and theory. Having again covered all of the relevant topics without very much questioning on my part, I turned off the taperecorder. A tour of the classrooms led first by Laura (her 5s class) Regina (her 3s class) and then Laura again (the 4s). At this point there were about 15 children and I asked if it was okay if I hung out with the children for a bit. They laughed and said of course. I sat down on the floor with two girls playing with trucks, and we played first with the trucks, and then I read “Goodnight Gorilla” to them, then they to me. Another three children came to join us, and we read the story many times, before playing a game like ring-around the rosy (“a la ronda de San Miguel ...”) I called a remis and left before lunch (hoping to avoid eating their food – why do I feel guilty about that, when they are so hospitable and generous? because I feel like I'm rich when they offer to share, and I don't feel like I'm different when I don't eat with them? At the same time, when I do eat with them I feel so welcomed and at ease...) I also have an appointment with Anabel for an interview at 2 pm, here at El Encuentro where I am waiting for her, going over my notes.

January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008

Notes from Andando and Casita Feliz

What a day! It's after 7pm now, and the sun is still up and it's still quite hot. I had a bit of a late start this morning, and wasn't out the door until 8:30 or so. I arrived in Moreno at Andando around 11am. Sabrina was heading out to the bank, and there was lots of movement – people coming to pick up and drop off and sign papers, etc. Sabrina told me that Irena from Casita Feliz would be by shortly, so I stuck around, writing down the posted notes from last week's meeting.

Irena did come by, and she and I and two of her grandchildren and her husband drove to Casita Feliz. Along the way Irena sang songs to the children on her lap "yo voy de paseo" "peep peep peep" "en un caro feo" "peep peep peep" "pero no me importa" "peep peep peep" "porque llevo torta" "peep peep peep".

At Casita Feliz, Andando's pilot centre in the Canadian project, Irena and I got out and she showed me into the sala de juego (playroom) apologizing all the while for the mess (over the summer they put most of the toys away and do whatever repairs and cleaning they can while there are no children).

The playroom is impressive. It is very much a room I would imagine myself working in, applying the constructivist philosophy I was trained in, and in contrast to the rooms which have 'corners' or activity centres but are still rather bare in comparison. I figured at first that this room was the focal point of the Canadian project, and was surprised to learn later on that it was only set up last year (around March of 2007). The shelves to separate areas from each other, the bean bags and pillows in the book corner, the fabric draped across the ceiling, - it was all so familiar, and Irena's comments about setting it up were quite illuminating. She did not tell her co-workers that what they were designing was a space like she had seen in Canada, instead they all collaborated to design a space for play based on the Canadian project, but more so their adaptation of it. At the end, when the room was set up, she told them "this looks like a Canadian child care centre" and she spoke the truth.

We settled ourselves on the carpet in the book corner and talked for about an hour. Then she showed me some photos, and gave me a gift. She explained that every year they make something different, to give to the families, and any visitors. This year they made a card game with photos of the children and educators included. The game fits into a wooden box, built by the youth at El Encuentro. Irena gave me another set to bring to Barbara F., wife of a Canadian diplomat who got the whole project started.

Next Irena gave me a tour of the centre – three classrooms and a patio, another building with a room for the youth and a small room where the children who spend the whole day take their nap.

A remis came to collect me and deliver me to Andando to meet with Sabrina. Sabrina was heading out on a quick errand, so I talked to Flor. Since she had participated in the week of workshops I asked permission to interview her, to which she readily agreed.

Sabrina back, I wrapped up my interview with Flor. Sabrina poured out some cool soda water and offered me ham and cheese migas sandwiches (crustless, thin white bread).

Interviewing Sabrina was a very interesting process, especially given the interview with Irena only a few hours before. Their views contradicted only slightly, but point to the variability of experiences in something such as this project. Sabrina brought out her notes from the trip to Canada and offered me photos to borrow and copy. She also called Gabi, one of the "capacitadoras" who went to Canada, and with whom I set up an interview.

Tomorrow (Friday, January 4<sup>th</sup>) Sabrina and Irena are going to La Plata to petition the provincial government for better funding. I wished her luck and strength before I left.

I've been thinking about the end of my conversation with Anabel yesterday. She asked what I thought of the centres etc. but we got onto the topic of traveling, and I said that I like who I am more when I am away from Canada. She asked why, and I thought about it, and decided on language (I have to think long and hard before I can speak, which prevents a lot of stupidity...) and culture – I am more conscious and aware of what I do, and how and why, when it is not the norm, when what I do and who I am is not the norm. I am more reflective when away. Wondering how to bring this home with me too...

January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2008  
Notes from El Ceibo

El Ceibo was El Encuentro's pilot centre, and it was here that in 2003 (?) just outside of the centre, shots were fired during the theft of a motorcycle/bicycle. Today it's rather hard to imagine such an occurrence, everything seems hot and sleepy, a small town feel to go with the dirt roads that are impassable to cars. The backyard facing the patio and yard of El Ceibo holds a rooster in its overgrown grass, who sings until noon or so. When I arrive at about 10:30, there are about 20 children between 1 and 8 years old, playing outside. Miriam, the coordinator gives me a tour of the three classrooms, the infant room is soon to be renovated to expand the kitchen and office – the furniture is piled and hard to distinguish from the encroaching cookware.

Miriam is helpful, but clearly has other things to do, and when I suggest that I hang out with the children and educators, she quickly pulls out a box of bills to sort through.

Four toddlers playing with cornmeal let me enter their play, while older children are engaged in a game of musical chairs under a tree. An educator takes turns with the children starting and stopping the music – the game lasts at least an hour. An educator comes and adds some water to the corn meal that is spilling out of the sensory table and a two-year-old becomes very intent on the getting and pouring of more water. An older child (eight years old) brings over a jug filled with water, helping me to pour water into the younger child's cup. I ask questions about the consistency, about being able to hold water in our hands, etc. The other educators observe me as I play with the children, moving to and fro, getting materials, buckets of water, etc. I ask if there are any paintbrushes and these are quickly brought out. I begin to paint using water on the wall of

the storeroom, and soon all the children are painting and making handprints. Quickly the cups from the cornmeal become a tool for throwing water at the wall, and then at each other and the educators end up soaked and laughing as well. Somehow I've not got very wet – thanks to the “pero la señora no” (but not the lady) from the educators. When the buckets are empty the boys take turns showing me all of their tricks on the playground. Eventually I excuse myself when I see Miriam preparing to leave. She explains that she runs a group for women (against violence, who live in violent situations, not exactly sure). She suggests I return on Friday and interview Nadia today.

Nadia and I step into an empty room for this interview after the children have eaten their lunch. Having finished the interview, Nadia invites me to eat with the educators. Children come and sit with us, or engage in games and play around the patio – they have a great deal of liberty, entering and exiting the building as they wish, though the educators move to prevent accidents, or to speak to fighting children. Over lunch, Miriam's daughter explains the family of eleven that she married into, and that her son has an aunt the same age as he. Her 23-month old daughter sits on her knee throughout, speaking and eating and leaning into her mother for the occasional cuddle. I arrange with M. to interview her on Friday as well. Friday is looking to be a rather busy day!

I call a remis and Nadia walks me to the corner as the last of the children leave. The remis drops me at the train station in time for the 3:30 train, upon which I sit, sweating, but loving the 30° plus temperature.

January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2008

Notes from Sol Naciente, El Ceibo, Santa María de los Angeles and El Encuentro

Well I finally got an early start! I made it to Sol Naciente for 9:30 and joined the educators in the kitchen as they tallied up receipts to account for spending (having finally received funding for November). We sat and drank mate and spoke about the weather, Cecilia's infected tooth – recently pulled, and the coordinator B.'s vacation to Uruguay (so I wasn't able to interview her). Then as the children arrived I joined them in the playroom. The educators left them mostly to their own devices, busy as they were filling the large wading pool with water (they filled the pool since it's Friday, and this way no one can steal the pool itself, since it will be too heavy to carry and too much hassle to drain). There were only about 10 children today, many not coming because of vacations, though more generally arrive later on, for lunch. As I played with the children two older girls came up to me shyly, and presented me with a poster that reads “!Gracias! por venir Amanda S.N.” I was charmed by the gesture. After hanging out with the kids for about an hour, I called a remis. One little boy asked when I would come back and where did I live. When I told him about taking a plane back to Canada he told me he had been there before. He explained that he had taken a colectivo (bus) a long long way, and didn't I remember seeing him there? in Canada? He said that he waved at me. Gave me a good chuckle, and though I didn't challenge the veracity of his story, I said I did remember seeing him before at the centre.

The remis (taxi) arrived and there were well wishes all around and I headed off to El Ceibo. The coordinator Miriam met me at the entrance and we settled down for an

interview. She took her time answering the questions I asked , and at times seemed uncomfortable, fiddling with a pen etc., but she warmed up and by the end had lots of smiles and comments, joking that she had talked too much. I called another remis, and Nadia who I had interviewed on Monday walked me to the closest street wide enough and graded enough for cars to pass. We talked about her family and mine, and adult children who don't move out – all of her children and her one granddaughter live with her, aged 25 to 12 years (the granddaughter is 5). The remis arrived, more hugs goodbye.

Next I went to Santa Maria de los Angeles, where I asked the educators to sign a photo consent form (they decided to all sign, since they feel that all have a say about the different rooms). Then I went over my preliminary codes with them, and they approved of these, didn't find anything lacking, or that any were unrepresentative.

Next I headed back to El Encuentro, where I found Anabel sitting at a computer working away. She turned down the music and asked how my morning went, and how I felt about the whole experience. I told her about my overall sense of impression and inspiration – that they do so much with so little funding and have such care for each other, the children and the families. She smiled in a wise sort of way. I asked about how to send money if people I speak to would like to, and she suggested email and telephone and fax, and that bank info could be provided this way. I asked what I and other Canadians could do to act in solidarity and support, and she suggested petitioning the minister responsible for their funding, and gave me his name (Daniel Arroyo). I asked how the meeting with the minister had gone last week and she said that it was positive, but words are just words, and action is needed. She noted that if funding is not more reliable they will literally have to suspend services, and are ready to march to take action to prevent that. Anabel looked around to find a copy of the children's march in 2007, but none was to be found. She asked me to please show the Argentine book to Rachel and the folks at CCCF, and I assured her that I would. I asked if I could email her my preliminary coding for member checking and she said there was no need, but to please send the final version. When I explained that I wanted her input and insight in the analysis she assured me that she would be happy to do so over email. I told her "sos la santa de mi tesis" (you're the saint of my thesis!) and she laughed and said "la madrina tal vez – me lo dedicas entonces!" (the godmother perhaps, well you can dedicate it to me then!) I laughed and said I would. Sad to go, happy to have met these amazing, strong, resourceful and kind – so kind – and generous women.

I got back on the train at around 3pm and came back into the city. I feel like the stories they have told me about the Canadian project are important, but more important to me and to them (I think) are the stories of their reality, and how they are working – together – to change and transform that reality.

## Appendix B

### Information Letter

To the participants of Innovative Child Care Practices for Children at Risk: Canadian and Argentine NGOs Learning Together,

I am a student at Concordia University, Montreal, Canada, in the Master of Arts, Child Study program. For the purpose of my thesis, under the supervision of Dr. Harriet Petrakos, I am conducting a qualitative study of the Innovative Child Care Practices for Children at Risk: Canadian and Argentine NGOs Learning Together.

It is my hope to consider the perspectives of all possible participants: Canadian and Argentine organizers, mentors, and educators. Through interviews, observation and analysis of photos I hope to gather information about how the project unfolded, as well as the personal experiences, you, as participants, had with this project. Towards this end, the interview process will involve open-ended questions, regarding the process of the project, what participants feel was worthwhile, useful or not, and the differences between Canadian and Argentine approaches to early childhood education and care. After an initial analysis of the interviews, participants will be asked to verify the themes and ideas that the researcher has identified.

The research process will hopefully provide an opportunity for reflection and learning for the participants, and a chance to revisit the project and consider the consequences it had for your community, organization and yourself as an early childhood educator.

It is the explicit aim of this research to consider with a critical lens the professional development of early childhood educators in international development projects such as Innovative Child Care Practices for Children at Risk: Canadian and Argentine NGOs Learning Together. Therefore, the experiences of the participants - as opposed to the current or previous practices - are the focus of this research.

Though the findings of this research may be published or presented at academic conferences, it will first and foremost be conducted to fulfill the requirements of my master's thesis. This will be available to any participant upon request.

Thank you for your time and consideration.  
Amanda Quance

## Appendix C

## Consent Forms

**CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

This is to state that I agree to participate in a program of research being conducted by **Amanda Quance**, M.A Child Study student in the Department of Education, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada.

**A. PURPOSE**

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is to provide information about my experiences as an educator in the project International Development in Early Childhood Education: critical examination of the Innovative Child Care Practices for Children at Risk: Canadian and Argentine NGOs Learning Together project. The information I provide about my experiences will be analyzed to understand how the project was conducted, as well as to gain insight into professional development projects that work across cultural differences.

**B. PROCEDURE**

I have been informed that the procedure is the following:

The researcher will interview me individually or in a group (based on my preference) and we will discuss the process of the Innovative Child Care Practices for Children at Risk: Canadian and Argentine NGOs Learning Together project, and my experiences with this project. The researcher will record this interview. The interview will last approximately 45 minutes. The researcher will summarize the interview, and at a later date ask me to verify her impression of my statements.

The researcher will also come to the classroom and observe the setting. She will look at the materials available to the children, the set up of the classroom, and may ask about a typical day with the children. The researcher may ask to observe me and my teaching behaviours in the classroom when I am working. Consent for this will be solicited verbally, and I can refuse without repercussion, and continue to participate in the study.

**C. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION**

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences.
- I understand that my participation in this study is CONFIDENTIAL (i.e., the researcher will know, but will not disclose my identity).
- I understand that the data from this study may be published.

**I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT.  
I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.**

NAME (please print)

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SIGNATURE

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TELEPHONE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

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EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

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ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

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I DO NOT consent to participate in this study.

*If you wish at any time to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher,  
Amanda Quance, at (514)495-2536, by email at [a\\_quance@education.concordia.ca](mailto:a_quance@education.concordia.ca), or  
by mail at Amanda Quance, 5809 St Urbain, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2T 2X4.*

*If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please  
contact Adela Reid, Research Ethics and Compliance Officer, Concordia University, at  
(514) 848-2424 ext. 7481 or by email at [AdelaReid@Concordia.ca](mailto:AdelaReid@Concordia.ca).*

## **PHOTO CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

This is to state that I agree to participate in a program of research being conducted by Amanda Quance M.A Child Study student in the Department of Education, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada.

### **A. PURPOSE**

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is to provide information about my experiences as an educator in the project International Development in Early Childhood Education: critical examination of the Innovative Child Care Practices for Children at Risk: Canadian and Argentine NGOs Learning Together project. The information I provide about my experiences will be analyzed to understand how the project was conducted, as well as to gain insight into professional development projects that work across cultural differences.

### **B. PROCEDURES**

*I have been informed that the procedure is the following:*

1. Digital photographs will be taken of the classroom to provide the research team with information about the arrangement of the environment.

### **C. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION**

- My participation is voluntary
- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time without negative consequences.
- I understand that my participation in this study is CONFIDENTIAL (i.e., the researchers will know my identity, but will not disclose it).
- I understand that the data from this study may be published.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

- YES, the research team may analyze photographs of my classroom as part of the research project.
- YES, the research team may publicly share photographs of my classroom at conferences or in published material.

NAME (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Adela Reid, Research Ethics and Compliance Officer, Concordia University, at (514) 848-2424 ext.7481 or by email at [Adela.Reid@Concordia.ca](mailto:Adela.Reid@Concordia.ca)

## Appendix D

### Interview Questions

*Interview questions for Argentine participants*

Can you explain how the project unfolded?

- the order/timing of the events
- which ones you were involved in
- what stands out in your memories?

Can you tell me about your experience with this project?

How did you feel about this project?

How do you feel about this project?

Can you describe what (and how) you or the centre gained from the project?

Please describe ECEC in Argentina to me

- the role of a typical educator in Argentina
- the purpose/goal of child care

Please describe your role as an educator

- tell me about your personal philosophy of ECEC
- How do you see young children? What should they be learning in ECEC?

How did the project (change, fit, clash) with what **you** believe about children and ECEC?

How has the project been continued?

*Interview Questions for Argentine Participants in Spanish*

Me podes describir como pasó y como fue el proyecto?

- los eventos y su orden
- en que ó cuales participabas?
- que fueron las ideas salientes ó actividades de que te recordás más?

Contáme un poco sobre tu experiencia con el proyecto

-como te sentías?

-y ahora?

Contáme que tomaron (y como) del proyecto

-vos como educadora?

-el centro?

Describáme por favor lo que es educación (infantil/prescolar) acá  
 -que el rol de la educadora?  
 -que es el gol de educación?

Por favor, describame como ves tu rol como educadora  
 -tu filosofía personal  
 -tu mirada del niño? que debría aprender al jardín?

Contame, por favor, como cambió o como se mezcló, o como se chocó el proyecto Canadiense con lo que pensás vos (sobre educación/niñez)

Como se ha continuado el proyecto?

*Interview protocol for Canadian participants*

Can you explain how the project unfolded?

- the order/timing of the events
- which ones you were involved in
- what stands out in your memories?

Can you tell me about your experience with this project?

How did you feel about this project?

How do you feel about this project?

Can you describe what (and how) you gained from your involvement in the project?

Please describe your personal philosophy of ECEC

- How do you see young children? What should they be learning in ECEC?

How did your philosophy of ECEC compare with what you experienced in Argentina?

How did the project (change, fit, clash) with what you believe about children and ECEC?

What would you have done differently, if you were to re-do the project?