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The University of San Francisco

EARLY EDUCATION IN CALIFORNIA:  
COMMUNICATIVE ACTION IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

A Dissertation Presented  
to  
The Faculty of the School of Education  
Leadership Studies Department  
Organization and Leadership Program

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Doctor of Education Degree

By  
Yolanda Garcia  
San Francisco, California  
May 2011

## ABSTRACT

A child's early life experiences can determine the trajectory for future learning and life. Research shows that a child at birth develops the capacity for learning, behavior, and success (Shonkoff & Phillips 2000; Kirp 2007; Zigler, Marsland, & Lord 2009). The importance of quality preschool education has become a strategy for educational reform and part of public policy conversations nationally (Goffin & Washington 2007; Stone 2006; U.S. Department of Education 2009). Corporate leaders who value the long-term contributions that quality preschool can make for later life outcomes, and to the future of the work force are also engaged in policy conversations nationally (Barnett 1994, 1995; Goffin & Washington 2007).

This study explores selected early educators active participation in public policy forums, and inquires to what extent this participation influences these educators to pursue their own professional education. The engagement of early educators in state level public forums and professional development activities is considered one of the means to accomplish quality improvement efforts.

More specifically, this document examines the process of engagement of early educators in public policy through public forums, advocacy on their own behalf, and for children and families. Using interpretive participatory research, this study was carried out in a critical hermeneutic tradition. The two research categories listed below provide the boundaries for this inquiry:

1. Communicative Action: in this context includes engagement strategies to provide opportunities for open discourse on quality improvements of preschool services, professional development, and educational attainment.

2. Public sphere: is the process by which policy makers consider the qualifications and abilities of adults who care and are responsibility for the learning and development of others' children in public policy formation.

Conversation partners reflected on how they engaged in communicative action with others to influence public policy for early education, improve the quality of services to children, and the educational attainment of adults working with children and families. As indicated above, exploring communicative action in the public sphere in California served to frame a discourse on improving quality of early education and served as foundational categories for this study. Critical hermeneutic philosopher Jurgen Habermas provides the historical and theoretical framework for this investigation. A critical hermeneutical approach is used in this research to explore the various interpretations shared during research conversations to allow the possibility for meaningful action to take place. As a means to engage adults with the specific early education community of California, this research began in conversation with university faculty, service administrators, and advocates. This study also explores and informs how communicative action and public sphere can contribute to the improvement of the quality of services to children and families and increase the educational attainment of adults working with young children in California.

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's  
dissertation committee and approved by the member of the committee,  
has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of  
Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented  
in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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## CHAPTER ONE: STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE

### Introduction

A child's early life experiences can determine the trajectory for future learning and life. Research shows that a child at birth develops the capacity for learning, behavior, and success (Shonkoff & Phillips 2000; Kirp 2007; Zigler, Marsland, & Lord 2009). The importance of quality preschool education has become a strategy for educational reform and part of public policy conversations nationally (Goffin & Washington 2007; Stone 2006; U. S. Department of Education 2009). High quality preschool is critical to close the achievement gap between children living in poverty, and those who benefit from participation in quality preschool (Whitebook 2003: 5; Garcia & Gonzales 2006; National Association of Latino Elected Officials [NAELO] 2009). Likewise, corporate leaders who value the long-term contributions that quality preschool can make for later life outcomes and to the future of the work force are also engaged in policy conversations nationally (Barnett 1994, 1995; Goffin & Washington 2007).

In California, those involved approach improvement through a combination of administrative changes and increased resources; the details associated with both occur when concerned parties decide on specific action steps through public forums. The California Department of Education (CDE), Child Development Division (CDD), is the primary agency charged with public preschool programs and thus takes responsibility for these public forums. This study explores selected preschool educators' active participation in public policy forums, and inquires to what extent this participation influences these educators to reflect upon and pursue their own professional education.

The engagement of preschool educators in state-level public forums and in professional development activities is considered one of the means to accomplish quality



improvement efforts. Critical hermeneutic theory will be used as the lens with which to view the research that informs this project. The study has the potential to provide new understandings about how communicative action may influence public policy relating to the education and development of young children. The categories for this study are based on Jurgen Habermas' theory of communicative action and the public sphere.

Communicative action in this context includes engagement strategies to provide opportunities for open discourse on quality enhancement of:

- preschool services,
- professional development, and
- educational attainment.

Public sphere in this context is the process by which policy makers consider the qualifications and abilities of adults who care for others' children in public policy formation.

### **Background of the Issue**

California has a history of providing preschool education programs. The state has provided public preschool programs since World War II when the federally funded Lanham Act was created when the large numbers of women entered the workforce in response to a national emergency (Fuller 2007; Kirp 2007; California Department of Education 2007). The federally funded Lanham Act centers closed in 1946 soon after the war ended, but California continued supporting them by providing the funding through the Department of Education, Child Development Division. After more than fifty years, California continues to provide early education services to young children; however, these services reflect a highly diverse system with minimal requirements for the adults

caring for and teaching young children (Bellm & Whitebook 2006; Whitebook, Kipnis, & Bellm 2007; Bellm 2008).

### Qualifications of Adults Working with Young Children

The qualifications of adults working with young children in preschool are minimal and much less stringent than those of elementary education teachers. For example, only six community college course units are required for a California Child Development Permit. (Bellm & Whitebook 2006; California Commission for Teacher Credentialing 2007; Whitebook, Kipnis, & Bellm 2007).

There is wide variability in preschool teacher education requirements and professional development standards, although there are core courses required at the California community colleges (Whitebook, Kipnis, & Bellm 2007; Bellm 2008: 7; Brown 2007). The issues of variability, the minimal community college requirements, and a lack of performance measurement tools raises questions about how to define and assess the contributions preschool educators make to positive child outcomes. The lack of commonly used tools to assess professional development opportunities, preschool educator educational attainment, and the lack of a direct relationship between child outcomes, has led to broad questions about whether the engagement strategies at the public policy level are taking into account the needs of the adults charged with caring for young children.

Efforts have been made to improve preschool education and respond to the growing need for quality services. In a January 2008, in the State of Education address (O'Connell 2008), California Superintendent of Education Jack O'Connell called for increasing the quality of preschool as a means of closing the achievement gap for California's children. As publicly funded preschools work to improve quality, policy

makers consider how to address the qualifications and abilities of the adults who care for young children.

### Licensing of Facilities Sets Minimal Requirements

The processes of licensing a center or home where young children are served and issuing a permit to early educators are administered by two different state agencies—the California Community Care Licensing and the Commission on Teacher Credentialing. Policy makers will consider the qualifications and abilities of adults caring for young children as publicly funded preschools work to improve quality of services (Whitebook, Kipnis, & Bellm 2007; Bellm 2008; California Early Learning Quality Improvement System Advisory Committee 2009). The qualifications of adults working with young children in preschool as indicated above, are less stringent than those of elementary education teachers according to the California Commission on Teaching Credentialing. For example, a preschool teacher needs to complete four community college courses in early education, which is one full-time semester, to obtain a child development permit to work with preschool-age children (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing 2007) while an elementary school teacher must complete a four-year degree and a teaching credential, which is a certification that requires 12-18 months of additional full time study after completion of a four-year degree. A database exists to inform policy makers about the status of licensed facilities, which includes the levels of education of individuals at a site obtained for the license of a facility at the time of licensure application; however, no such database exists for professional development needs of preschool educators, which may reflect skills and knowledge over time, and no correlation has been done to compare their educational levels to quality of services

provided to children (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing 2007; Bellm 2008).

### Child Outcomes and Relationship to Quality

The CDE/CDD defines child outcomes for state-funded preschool programs with the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP). The child outcomes are determined when preschool educators observe individual children using the DRDP. Use of the DRDP is required twice within the school year, in October and March, to document progress made toward developmental milestones. Information collected using the DRDP is submitted to the CDE. Child outcomes defined as developmental milestones are collected; however, they are not analyzed with any other measure of quality. Moreover, the information on children's progress is not transferred to kindergarten when a child is school-entry age; therefore, there is no standardized information on school readiness across the state to inform kindergarten teachers of the achievement of the children entering the class or the quality of services provided in preschool.

### Significance of the Issue

Millions of young children are in preschool programs in the United States. Estimates place more than half of the children under the age of six years in preschool education settings outside their homes (Chang 2004; Hooks, Scott-Little, Marshall, et al. 2006: 399; Chaudhuri & Potepan 2009). More than 40 states have acknowledged the benefits of preschool and offer preschool services in various settings. The movement to increase these services represents reaction to a confluence of research findings across different sciences (Knudsen, Heckman, Cameron, & Shonkoff 2006; Kirp 2007: 7; Zigler, Marsland, & Lord 2009). Despite increases in enrollment and broader support for

preschool, unmet needs and concerns about quality remain (Kirp 2007: 7; Zigler, Marsland, & Lord 2009; Chaudhuri & Potepan 2009).

Many children are placed in poor or mediocre care, which may be more harmful than supportive at this critical stage of development (Barnett & Hustedt 2005; Whitebook, Kipnis, & Bellm 2007; Zigler, Marsland, & Lord 2009: 10). Evidence of preschool quality focuses attention on the preschool workforce and the potential to raise the quality of preschool education by providing professional development activities for those who teach in preschools (Whitebook 2003; Barnett & Coate 2005: 314; Whitebook, Kipnis, & Bellm 2007). Some states offer incentives to preschool programs that meet quality criteria beyond the minimal health and safety licensing requirements (Whitebook & Bellm 1999; Stone 2006: 11; Bellm 2008). Other states are developing and applying more stringent regulations regarding adult-child ratios, classroom, facility, and physical environment, and education of the adults (Barnett & Coate 2005: 315).

In most states, preschool quality is considered within the context of educational levels of the early educators, regulations related to the facility/classroom environment, and the instruction and interaction between educators and children. The most important determinant of quality is the education and professional development of the early educators responsible for the children (Barnett & Masse 2003; Whitebook 2003; Zigler, Marsland, & Lord 2009: 144).

Children who come from families with less economic means have fewer opportunities to attend quality public schools and children who live in poor communities fare worst of all (Shonkoff & Phillips 2000; Chang 2004; Kirp 2007: 10). Considering how early educators improve their effectiveness, and how that affects children's development offers an opportunity to improve the quality of services for all children and

ensure long-term positive effects. There is no federal policy regarding certification for early educators. There are, however, degree requirements set for the federally funded Head Start and Military Child Care Programs. Developmentally appropriate practices created by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) are widely known, accepted, and applied in professional education. The standards are used to define teaching strategies, select materials, and design classroom environments. They are not, however, a means of assessing quality of services or teacher effectiveness (Gronlund 2006: 3-6). Moreover, there are few systems that incorporate leadership as part of professional development.

Early educators who have obtained formal education have learned methods and teaching strategies to handle child behavior appropriately and can develop positive relationships with children and their parents (Goffin & Washington 2007; Bellm 2008: 1). Professional development systems in higher education institutions developed for the field of early childhood education typically homogenize the educator's experiences so that they fit into a prescribed program of study based on existing structures instead of embedding early educators in a context that is oriented towards reaching an understanding based on their life experiences. Programs of study are based on defined practices, beliefs, values, and bodies of knowledge that typically apply a Euro-centric focus (Reyes 2006). The programs of study reflect the interconnectedness with the larger society and the norms that are practiced in the context of preschool education and do not take into account the cultures of the children and families served, which serve a specific function (Benedict 1934; Levi- Strauss 1974; White 1975) within a culture.

Anthropologist Leslie White (1975: 16) wrote, "the environment may hamper the functioning of a system; it may even destroy it". The experiences in programs may bring

a different world view from the early educators' individual life experiences and may be a source of potential conflict between the individual and the dominant ideologies and knowledge as they are built into social institutions that both privilege and exclude some perspectives, voices, authorities, and representations (Reyes 2006: 293). However, these differences are not necessarily aimed at exclusion. Levi-Strauss wrote, "we act and think according to habit, and the extraordinary resistance offered to even minimal departures from custom is due more to inertia than to any conscious desire to maintain usages which have a clear function" (Levi-Strauss 1974: 19).

The United States is comprised of many different and diverse groups. In order to succeed, the educational system needs to reflect a workforce that is culturally and linguistically competent, this need also applies to preschool education (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns 2000; Chang 2004: 3; Garcia & Gonzales 2006). Multiple approaches to meeting the needs of this diverse workforce have been developed. Early educators are challenged to reach a level of professionalism to ensure that norms, practices, and policies draw from, and benefit from the languages, cultures, and backgrounds of the children and families they serve (Chang 2004: 4; California Department of Education, Child Development Division 2009; Chaudhuri & Potepan 2009). Increasingly, policymakers and the public are recognizing the importance of early experiences on children's brain development, success in school, and general well-being (Bellm 2008; Zigler, Marsland, & Lord 2009: xi; Chaudhuri & Potepan 2009). Public policy has not kept up with demographic trends.

### **Summary**

Professionalism in the field of preschool education has evolved over the last century. Awareness of the importance of early childhood has become a part of national

public discourse and preschool education has grown to include such initiatives as the Head Start and the Child Care and Development Block Grant programs (Goffin & Washington 2007: 6; Zigler, Marsland, & Lord 2009: xiii; Chaudhuri & Potepan 2009). Brain development research indicates these services are critical over the life span of all children, and low-income children in particular. However, assessing the relative value of services requires considering whether the professional development of educators helps define quality services. There is significant research that demonstrates that educational levels of early educators have a direct correlation to quality outcomes for children when considering public preschools for low-income children (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2000; Barnett 2003; Whitebook 2003). Quality outcomes in children are interpreted in relation to preparation for kindergarten readiness and include social-emotional, cognitive, and physical development of children when they enter kindergarten and are assessed at third grade (Zigler, Marsland, & Lord 2009: 9, Chaudhuri & Potepan 2009). Quality outcomes in children are also considered predictors of adult productivity later in their lives (Knudsen, Heckman, Cameron et al. 2006).

“There is a serious mismatch between the preparation (and compensation) of the average early childhood professional and the growing expectations of parents and policy makers” (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000: 261). Policy makers face complex and numerous challenges when they consider the development and implementation of professional development strategies. There is a lack of consistent standards and requirements for professional preparation, which has resulted in low levels of education and less engagement in higher education for several reasons. The women that comprise the profession juggle family and work responsibilities and have little access to higher education compared to most professions. Less than one third of the institutions of higher



education offer two- and four-year degree programs in early childhood education (Early & Winton 2001).

The following literature review provides the reader with a context for how preschool services in California have been designed and are provided in everyday life, given the parameters of public policy. The literature review is intended to identify key features of services and the use of research to design public policy. Current literature focuses on the content that should be conveyed to children by early educators rather than on the process that can be used to guide early educators to implement practices (Sheridan et al. 2009). Literature about consensus building and civic engagement is included as it introduces a space to discuss the importance of the relationships between and among the adults that take the responsibility for children's development and learning prior to kindergarten entry. The inclusion of these features of research is to move from the dimensions of an institutional perspective to a redescription for this study in a participatory research approach. The literature review provides a current description of policies and practice with a view for the possible, given research on the value of preschool services for the benefit of young children living in poverty.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

The development of preschool services in California from World War II to the present is explored by reviewing the appropriate literature. The first section describes the public sphere, which in this context includes key public events and significant legislation resulting in designation of state-level agency authority and implementation of services. The legislation sets the foundation for the current system, which is comprised of multiple sectors and agencies. I have provided an overview of preschool quality in relation to teacher preparation and community licensing requirements. The objectives of services, required professional development, working conditions, pay levels for educators, service areas, and sources of funding differ across sectors and agencies (Howes & Whitebook 1991; Bellm & Whitebook 2006; California Community Care Licensing 2009).

The terminology I have used in this research study and that is used in the literature is not consistent. This study uses the term early educator to include all those serving young children from birth through five years of age across agencies and sectors and preschool services and programs to describe the services they provide. One major challenge is the lack of definitional clarity across practice, research, and policy. There seems to be a constant need to clarify what is meant by the terms used to describe the profession. The need to be understood and recognized as a profession is systemic, structural, and ideological (Kagan & Cohen, 1997).

The early education profession and workforce is a topic of public policy discourse because studies relate the level of their education to quality of services and child outcomes. Minimal requirements and low wages result in a revolving door of employment in many preschools; I have reviewed literature about these issues and

consider implications for this research study. In practice, those who accept the responsibility of the development, learning, and care of young children are not engaged and scarcely represented in the discourse about public policy, a problem that is exacerbated by inadequate funding, fragmentation, and lack of consensus (Moss & Pence 1994). There is no consistency across states in funding, regulation, monitoring, or goals for improvement. Because these practices vary, staff mobility is common, as is competition for the highest quality personnel. “Policy and program variation, then wreaks havoc on reaching workforce consistency quality, and stability” (Kagan & Cohen 1997). The failure to engage the professionals most intimately involved in discourse about needed improvements is part of the reason that retention is difficult. The lack of retention is problematic for child outcomes because it affects the stability of relationships available to young children. “The vast number of systemic irregularities with the lack of a consistent, sustained approach to policy investment make it is easy to understand why the ECE teaching workforce is so disjointed and uncoordinated” (Kagan & Cohen 1997). Ultimately, this discourse reflects a concern that young children may be placed in deleterious situations, as viewed by a lack of stability and consistency in preschool homes and centers, which bears a societal liability.

In addition, I considered consensus building and collaborative efforts in light of the latest research findings in the literature that I reviewed. As mentioned above, the adults charged with the development of California’s young children are not adequately engaged in public discourse, literature, and research. My study focuses on research that relates to how preschool educators engage in their own educational planning and attainment, for through that process they make efforts to improve the quality of services

to children in their charge. I have focused on how effective these processes are to engage preschool educators in policy planning and formation.

My intent in presenting this literature review has been to frame the concern that has driven my proposed research topic. I considered literature proposing how to engage in public discourse those who have accepted the charge of caring for and educating very young children, and I did so with the presumption that this topic needed to be informed by an understanding of how these educators have approached their own education and work conditions.

### **California's History of Preschool Services**

California has a long history of providing public preschool services and has enacted regulations and legislation in two ways by proposition placed on the ballot through a vote by the legislature and an open vote by the populace, and through the bill process. The bill process is the most common that is applied. A legislator in the senate or assembly can introduce a bill containing language that can be enacted as a law. Typically, language for a bill is brought to a legislator by a group of constituents, however they can also propose a bill for something they have a personal interest. The Governor can also bring a bill forward for consideration as a law. A bill is introduced in either house of the legislature and is scheduled for hearings from a designated committee such as policy or fiscal, which has oversight for the content of the bill. There is a public comment period on the bill during the public hearing process. If the bill passes through the hearing process, it goes to the house of origin and must be presented to both the assembly and senate for a vote. If the bill is passed in both houses, it goes to the governor for signature and then it becomes a law. Once a bill becomes a law, the designated department of government to which it relates, such as the Department of Education or Social Services

begins the process of implementation. The implementation process may require the promulgation of regulations and or policies (Harper 2001: 17-18).

A relevant example of an issuance of a regulation specifically directed to young children in California was in 1943 as the acknowledgement of the need for services for young children as women entered into the workforce during the war. The War Manpower Commission issued the following directive.

Existing and anticipated requirements for workers in essential activities render necessary the employment of large numbers of women, among such women may be found many mothers of young children. No women responsible for the care of young children should be encouraged or compelled to seek employment which deprives her children of her essential care until after all other sources of labor supply have been exhausted, but if such women are employed, adequate provision for the care of such children will facilitate their employment (California State Department of Education 1943: 1).

This was the first significant policy that set a public agency to protect the general welfare of young children in California. The need for basic policies and an integrated approach for childcare and education services prompted the appointment of the Committee on Children in Wartime. The Committee consisted of the chief executive officers of the state departments of education, public health, and social welfare as well as the state administrator of the Work Projects Administration. The Committee approved a bulletin outlining the childcare and education program and a fund for field representatives to assist counties with implementation throughout California (California State Department of Education 1943). The state of California has provided preschool programs since World War II when the federally funded Lanham Act was passed. The act was created in response to the numbers of women who entered the workforce as the national emergency created a need for their involvement in support of the war effort. Rosie the

Riveter represents a national symbol of the contributions women made to the war effort (Brown 1999; Quivik 2003; Boxer 2007).

California continued this public service to provide support for parents with young children in the workforce. This service for parents took the form of financial support for services in homes and centers in which the state supplemented fees by applying a sliding scale based on the income of families. An important addition to the act was the funding for care of children of migrant farm workers during the harvest seasons (Child Development Policy Institute 2006; California Department of Education 2007). Child development and care outside the home became increasingly common as women gained more opportunities in the workforce (California Department of Education 2004; Bellm, Whitebook, Cohen, & Stevenson 2004; California Department of Education 2007). What began as the response to a national war effort and continued as a social or remedial service for poor and troubled children and families became the norm for all social classes (Hayes, Palmer, & Zaslow 1990).

The development of public services precipitated the need for early educators and the growth of early education as a profession. In the early years of development of services, there were no requirements for early educators because it was to support the war effort. The establishment of child care services for a national crisis prompted opposition for its continuation when the war was over. Early care and education services continued, however it was a low priority and never became part of the public education system. The programs never received adequate funding, staff worked for low compensation and in general, were not supported to become professionals in the education system. These factors contributed to the development of a wide range of quality. (Harper 2001: 22-23).

Significant legislative events took California into a phase of institutionalization in the decade of the seventies with the passage of the Child Development Act in 1972; this legislation resulted in the assignment of the California Department of Education as a single state agency responsible for all preschool service programs. In 1976, the California legislature also mandated strategies for reducing child care costs, ensuring maximum parental flexibility in selecting program services, addressing unmet child care needs, and promoting state-level coordination for child care programs (Warner 1979; California Department of Education 2004). Another major event that influenced the growth of childcare services was the national passage of the Social Security Act Title IV-A in 1962, which established childcare services as support for parents receiving Aid to Families with Dependent children (AFDC) who are required to work or participate in training programs (On the Capitol Doorstep 2000). California treats these funds and services as part of the welfare system and places them for the oversight of the California Department of Social Services (CDSS).

Each of the administering agencies of child care and early education services in California which are the Department of Education (CDE) and the Department of Social Services have different missions and foci for the services. “Multiple funding streams created multiple problems. The goal of the CDSS is to move parents from welfare into the work force, thereby promoting economic self-sufficiency and reducing welfare dependency. The mission of CDE is to enhance the child’s learning” (Harper 2001: 26).

A report was released in 1979 by the Riles Commission and became the foundation for major legislation that influenced early care and education. The Child Care and Development Services Act of 1980 continues today to influence the delivery and

level of service quality. Services were consolidated and institutionalized within the Department of Education.

The one recommendation that was not included in the legislation, however, was any type of quality oversight of the alternative programs in private settings. Priorities for funding, the Standard Reimbursement Rate, and the mandate for comprehensive services are all still in place although funding has never been sufficient to provide these services as originally intended (Harper 2001: 75).

Quality is an issue that has persisted over the years, as the review of regulations and policies indicates. The intent of the legislation is not carried out and it appears it is a result of inadequate funding and adherence to the common knowledge about what children need to develop and thrive (Harper 2001: 80).

The intent of this policy change was to serve more families receiving public subsidies and did not emphasize child outcomes. The change allows parents who qualify for subsidies to use vouchers to select services without any requirements to consider the quality or stability of services (Bellm & Whitebook 2006). The goals of the Child Development Act are to prepare children for school achievement and support parents employed in the workforce. Under the act, children at risk for abuse are given first priority for enrollment, followed by children from low-income families (California Department of Education 2004; California Department of Education 2007). The public mandate continues to present challenges for the provision of services because of a segmented licensing system with different requirements for services based on funding sources.

### **A Bifurcated System of Regulations: Title 5 and Title 22**

The Teacher Preparation and Licensing Act (also known as the Ryan Act) changed the teacher credentialing system to increase flexibility for teacher assignments. The legislation moved the CDE's responsibility for teacher preparation and credentialing



to an independent body called the California Commission for Teacher Credentialing (CCTC), which has been issuing permits to professionals in child development since 1961 (Department of Child & Adolescent Development at San Francisco State University 2009). The California Child Development Permit was modified in 1997 to offer a hierarchy of professional levels, thereby creating a career ladder for the field of early childhood education. However, the Permit Matrix, developed both for individuals and the licensing of centers and homes, has resulted in two systems that are inconsistent. Private and public programs apply different regulations. Title 5 has several expectations for higher educational attainment; Title 22 does not include such requirements. Private programs have the option to choose which requirements to apply, however public programs must meet the Title 5 requirements. Some programs meet both requirements on a voluntary basis.

The Child Development Permit has a “core” of required courses in child and or human development; child, family and community, or child and family relations; and associated programs and curriculum. The permit also requires sixteen general education college units in humanities and or fine arts, social sciences, math and or science, and English language arts. Title 5 also includes requirements for developmentally appropriate curriculum, classroom interaction, family support, and cultural competence. In addition, Title 5 requires program quality and accountability measures that Title 22 does not, such as annual internal assessments and tri-annual external validation of program compliance. Publicly supported preschools have more rigorous standards for quality than private preschools (Howes & Whitebook 1991; Bellm 2008; Community Care Licensing 2009). The lack of consistency and minimal requirements for professional preparation of early educators has resulted in low wages and a general lack of stability for the preschool

workforce. Salaries are not livable wages and early educators with higher educational levels tend to leave community-based organizations to seek employment in elementary schools with higher salaries and benefits (Howes & Whitebook 1991; Bellm & Whitebook 2006; Bellm 2008).

### **The Decline in Early Education Workforce Quality**

In the early 1980s, the educational levels of early educators in the United States dropped substantially (Herzenberg, Price, & Bradley, 2005). A early educator shortage was acknowledged by policy makers, who responded by lowering required qualifications as a means of dealing with the lack of retention and the difficulty of recruiting for preschool positions that are chronically low paying jobs (Howes & Whitebook 1991; Bellm & Whitebook 2006; Bellm 2008).

The Child Care Employment Project of the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) published the first National Child Care Staffing Study in 1998. The study is a comprehensive compilation of early care and preschool workforce demographics, education levels, work quality, salary, and working conditions in the United States. The study established a significant and positive relationship between the quality of services provided to children and the compensation and retention of early educators.

Studies of preschool staffing and program quality inform and influence policy changes in early childhood education. In 1992, Assembly Bill 2879 (Polanco) was passed to require the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) and the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to review the licensing standards for early educators in state-funded programs. The recommendations from the study recognized the need to professionalize the preschool and early childhood education field. As a result of

this work, a revised Child Development Permit Matrix was instituted in 1997 as a means of increasing the level of educational standards. These early studies increased awareness about the need to inform the larger community about the condition of the preschool workforce and more importantly, to connect the lack of retention to child outcomes.

### **Research Influences Public Policy**

Policymakers, parents of young children, and early educators often seek authoritative guidance when considering legislation or administrative regulations, selecting services, or making decisions related to practice (Shonkoff & Phillips 2000). Research has contributed to the policy discourse in the last few decades as scientific gains have resulted in a greater appreciation for early life experiences of children, the interactive influences of genetics and environments, and the central role of relationships between and among the children and adults in their lives (Shonkoff & Phillips 2000; Bowman, Donovan, & Burns 2000; Bushouse 2009).

Researchers have taken a broad approach when studying the benefits of preschool services as they consider generalizable results on larger scale programs that are implemented over time and the effects of these results (Karoly & Bigelow 2005; Barnett & Hustedt 2005; Fuller 2007). One well-known program is the Chicago Child-Parent Centers, studied by Professor Reynolds from the University of Wisconsin (Reynolds 1994; Karoly & Bigelow 2005; Fuller 2007). The study assessed a specific group of children from low and middle-income communities in Chicago (Reynolds 1994; Karoly & Bigelow 2005; Fuller 2007).

Another important set of studies is on the federally funded Head Start program, which has served children from low-income communities since the 1960's. The early studies showed questionable results and fading effects from the time the children entered

elementary school until they progressed through the third grade (McKey, Condelli & Ganson, et al. 1985; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2005). However, more recent studies have found significant benefits in cognitive and social development of three and four year old children (Currie & Thomas 1995; Love, Eliason, Ross, et al. 2005; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2005). Longitudinal studies have contributed to the policy conversations and have produced results that contribute to the understanding of the effects of preschool on different social classes, ethnic groups, and between girls and boys (Currie & Thomas 1995; Magnuson, Ruhm, & Waldfogel 2004; Loeb, Fuller, Kagan, & Carrol 2004). The study by Currie from Columbia University found that African American children participating in Head Start generally go to lower quality public schools than white children (Currie & Thomas 1995; Garces, Thomas, & Currie 2000). Children attending quality preschools and then entering lower quality elementary schools have opposite experiences. The lasting and positive effects of quality preschool are sustained for those children who enter school programs that have strong instructional components (Magnuson, Ruhm & Waldfogel 2004), such as literacy and other content subject matter.

The studies referred to in this section relate to the policy discourse on how public dollars are targeted for children that can benefit most from participating in quality programs, although some refer to the value of universal preschool services for all children. The notion of universal preschool is put into question when considering who benefits from preschool and how they benefit. Studies show that low-income children can perform on par with their middle-income peers if resources are targeted to sustain the gains made in a quality preschool program. However, the prevailing evidence is that middle class children do not benefit as much from preschool as low-income children

(Belsky 2003; Magnuson, Ruhm & Waldfogel 2004; Rumberger & Tran 2006).

Therefore, some researchers have concluded that maximum effectiveness of public dollars for preschool services should be focused on children who are economically disadvantaged or who attend low quality or low performing schools (Belsky 2003; Magnuson, Ruhm & Waldfogel 2004). Scores attained on standardized tests used in the third grade determine low-performing schools in California.

The relationship between universal access and achievement gaps in children's learning and social development is still unclear, according to some researchers, as they attempt to influence public policy. Some researchers posit that the achievement gaps over the long term may widen and exacerbate developmental set backs if government support does not target public resource for preschool services (Westinghouse 1969; Weiss 1998; Fuller 2007). The question remains as to how public investment should be made, given the differing positions of the experts using research.

### **The Early Years: A Significant Period of Human Development**

Advocates attempting to sway public opinion toward early childhood education have used information on the recent neuroimaging technologies and research on brain development. Some brain research has shown that quality educational experiences before age five increase kindergarten readiness and academic achievement later in life (Shonkoff & Phillips 2000; Knudson 2004; Kirp 2007). Environmental factors such as nutrition, cognitive stimulation, exposure to language, and interpersonal interactions change a child's brain structure and also influence brain development throughout life (Shonkoff & Phillips 2000; Bowman, Donovan, Burns 2000; Knudson 2004). The federal government used this research to justify investing in infant and toddler programs for low-income families in 1995 (Heckman 2000; Barnett & Hustedt 2005; Morgan 2006) with programs

like Early Head Start, which include comprehensive child development services, home education, and family support. In 1997, the Board on Children, Youth, and Families, the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, and the National Academy of Sciences convened the Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development. The committee developed scientific research related to child development, with a report titled, *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood* (Shonkoff & Phillips 2000). The report emphasizes the importance of early life experiences, relationships, and social and emotional development for long-term success. Early education can provide these elements of children's development in multiple ways. The report concluded that social interactions, such as those provided in quality early education settings, are central to a child's optimal development. The early development of cognitive and social-emotional skills benefit the child throughout life, as they are the building blocks for the functional competencies that may contribute to a child's success in school and later in the workplace. The report recommended early education policies that improve life outcomes for young children and their families (Shonkoff & Phillips 2000). The gains made by all children in quality preschool programs were not questioned; the discourse became an issue of the investment.

### **Preschool as a Long-term Investment with Economic Returns**

Research has also considered the long-term economic benefits of preschool education (Karoly & Bigelow 2005). For example, findings are converted to cost benefits to show that every dollar invested in preschool services in California can yield two to four dollars in returns on social benefits. James Heckman, a Nobel Prize Professor of Economics from the University of Chicago, developed an equation for human capital. He presents the investment in early childhood education as a solution for securing the

United State's economic future (Heckman 2000; Heckman 2004; Neville-Morgan 2009). Heckman identified economic and social issues in the United States, such as crime, teenage pregnancy, high school dropout, and poor health, and correlated them to low cognitive, social, and emotional skill development at an early age (Heckman 2000; Heckman 2004; Neville-Morgan 2009). He argues that the rate of return in human capital is greatest if investment is made in the early years. Significant returns are estimated during ages four to five and are higher for ages birth to five, which are the most economically efficient developmental period to invest in preschool education (Heckman 2000; Heckman 2004; Neville-Morgan 2009). Heckman reached this conclusion in collaboration with economists, developmental psychologists, sociologists, statisticians and neuroscientists (Heckman 2000; Heckman 2004; Neville-Morgan 2009). Heckman attributes the low investment in early child development as a major source for the declining skill level of the United States workforce. He predicts that investing in early childhood services for at-risk and low-income children would produce a 15-17 percent rate of return by fostering a larger adaptable, educated, and physically healthy workforce (Heckman 2000; Heckman 2004; Neville-Morgan 2009).

Similarly, longitudinal research on the participants of the High/Scope Perry Preschool Study, which started in the 1960s, found that by the time participants were 27 years old, for every dollar invested in their early education, over eight dollars in benefits was gained for participants and society as a whole (Schweinhart, Barnes & Weikart 1993; Schweinhart 2005; Barnett & Hustedt 2005). By the time the participants were 40 years of age, the estimated return for early childhood development was more than 17 dollars for every dollar invested (Schweinhart, Barnes, & Weikart 1993; Heckman 2000, Heckman 2004; Schweinhart 2005). Most of the economic returns were attributed to reductions in

crime, lower rates of high school dropout, and greater rates of employment at higher salaries. Advocates of early childhood education thus gain momentum to present a case that is based both on research on human development and an investment with a high cost-benefit ratio. Armed with research on brain development and cost benefit analysis, California began to build the case for expanding preschool services at the highest levels of education. The next section reveals several initiatives on such expansion of services operated by school districts.

### **Consensus Building, Collaboration, and Civic Engagement**

Preschool education has been viewed as an intervention measure and as support in the welfare-to-work initiatives for parents with young children dependent on public aid. More recently, however, there is growing consensus about the contributions preschool services can make closing the achievement gap as an important part of school reform (California Department of Education 1998; Child Development Policy Institute 2006; Fuller 2007). The notion of systemic change was further encouraged by a number of blue ribbon panels appointed by the California State Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin in 1998, so that the public elementary schools could expand preschool services. The panels recommended changes and included making preschool a greater part of the public school community. The work of these panels signaled the increased interest in aligning preschool to the kindergarten and elementary school system (California Department of Education 1998). The panels considered learning objectives, cognitive assessments of children, professional development, and curricular standards.

A second master plan and blueprint was developed in 2002, funded by the First 5 California Commission, and for the first time, included infants and toddlers as essential to the preschool and intervention agenda (California First 5 Children and Families



Commission 2002; Fuller 2007). The report was titled “Recommendations of the School Readiness Working Group for the New Master Plan for Education, Building Blocks 2, no. 1” (California First 5 Children and Families Commission 2002). In the same time period, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation funded the California School Boards Association to make the value of early childhood education known to its members. In addition, the California Teachers Association funded legal staff and an organizer to work on a preschool initiative (California Teachers Association 2003; Fuller 2007). The investment in the discourse on public preschool provided opportunities to reach new understanding on existing requirements such as licensing regulations, and the need to increase professional and educational levels of early educators. New efforts reveal a significant shift in policy development with the sponsorship of a ballot initiative.

### **Proposition 10 – The California Children and Families Act**

Policy events in the 1990’s resulted in new funds for services for young children and their families. Most noteworthy was the development of Proposition 10, which established the Children and Families Act at the state and county levels.

In 1997, actor Rob Reiner began the “I Am Your Child” public-awareness campaign to nationally prioritize the welfare of young children. The public-awareness campaign garnered popular support from organizations such as the American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, California Teachers Association, and the California Nurses Association. The campaign resulted in the passage of Proposition 10 in 1998. Proposition 10 added a 50-cent tax on every pack of cigarettes sold in the state. The revenue funded state and local commissions to establish a quality comprehensive early care and education system for children birth to five years of age (California First 5 Children and Families Commission 2002; Fuller 2007; Attorney General of California

2009). In January 1999, Proposition 10 established the California Children and Families Commission (now named First 5 California) and 58 individual county commissions were subsequently created to address local needs of young children and their families. The mission of First 5 California addresses the child and focuses on school readiness, nutrition, and physical health (California First 5 Children and Families Commission 2002; Garcia & Hertz 2006). The notion of developing effective strategies to apply these funds presented a new challenge at the state and local levels. As local communities receive funding to support community forums and engage service providers about the needs of children and families, new community dynamics are formed and fomented as limited resources must be distributed for the expansion of services, or as new services are designed.

### **An Example of Preschool Expansion: Los Angeles County**

California is known for its diverse demography and colorful politics (Fuller 2007) and Los Angeles County provides an example of communicative action strategies in preschool public discourse and policy. Expansion of preschool services was underway in Los Angeles in early 2000, using Proposition 10 revenues throughout the county (First 5 California Children and Families Commission 2002; Kirp 2007; Fuller 2007). Los Angeles County's preschool expansion drew the attention of Bruce Fuller, a professor of Educational Policy from the University of California at Berkeley, who studied the development of policy related to this expansion and unearthed "evidence of a new cultural war" between players with differing ideas and positions about preschool services. He explored Los Angeles County in the context of efforts to pass universal preschool legislation and described pluralists' politics (Fuller 2007). Those engaged in discourse ranged from those who believe all children should receive preschool services as a public

benefit to those who felt that not all children benefit from preschool. He discussed the process and politics of preschool education in the context of a situation in which two of every five children enter kindergarten without proficiency in English (Fuller 2007; Atkins 2009). He noted that this challenge arises within political climates that vary region by region and yet affect the public policy about the issue, writing:

Regions like Los Angeles and San Francisco have their own political cultures, different institutional histories when it comes to childcare, and seasoned advocates from various professional and ethnic communities. Differing conditions have led to differing ways of framing the problem and variations in the local timing of early education reforms (Fuller 2007:140).

He focused on Los Angeles because it is the most populated metropolitan area in the country. The demographics are important as it is home to 9.5 million people, of which 45 percent are of Latino origin, a number that doubled between 1980 and 2004 (Suro & Singer 2002). In addition, Los Angeles experienced a rise in the poverty rates from 11 percent in 1970 to 18 percent in 2000 (McConville & Ong 2003). In this environment, both state and federal government agencies charged with public preschool services have “vigorously pressed [their] own ideas and institutional preferences, extending Head Start preschools as well as child care vouchers into Latino communities” (Fuller 2007: 228). When questioned about his research on the preferences of Latino families with regard to preschool services, Fuller (2007: 228) criticized the way this expansion occurred. He wrote, “policy strategies were founded on assumptions about parents’ capacity and resources to make wise decisions on raising their children.” He noted that these policies “continue to manifest the intensifying struggle over what groups and individuals hold authority over child rearing—the battle now being waged by parents, experts, advocates, and early educators when it comes to universal preschool” (Fuller 2007: 228).

Systems and services have been developed in a piecemeal way without engaging parents and early educators (Bellm & Whitebook 2006; Kirp 2007, Fuller 2007). The aim of government policies in California education, including preschool education, has been to a large degree to assimilate individuals and groups that are different, to ensure that all people share a language and behavior that reflects a social commitment to be a part of a larger nation (Fuller 2007: 227-270). The critical question for the early childhood field and early educators, Fuller postulated, is whether they should, “act to advance forms of knowledge, language, and social behavior that are valued by reformers,” yet feel foreign to them as parents, early educators, and their local communities (Fuller 2007: 227-270).

Los Angeles is instructive in the process of establishing agreements for preschool expansion efforts funded by First 5 California and First 5 Los Angeles County (Rivera 2004; Hill-Scott 2006; Fuller 2007). The players who were instrumental in the Proposition 10 initiative focused attention on supporting the development of a plan for each county in which the challenge was to engage a “number of perspectives and groups and people” in the planning process. Los Angeles Times reporter Carla Rivera indicates that the process involved uniting “an often fractious assortment of community leaders, child care advocates, educators, and parents to complete the project” (Rivera 2004; Fuller 2007). A number of policy questions were broached in the planning process, such as should a large-scale institution such as Los Angeles Unified School District administer the program and narrow the instructional mission? Should the initiative be more broadly defined to engage parents and serve to unite neighborhoods? How should quality benchmarks be set? How should elements of quality such as teacher educational levels, curriculum and guidelines, and adult-child ratios be considered?

The final product called for a diverse and mixed delivery system, building on what existed, but not creating a school-based model (Hill-Scott 2006; Fuller 2007; Kirp 2007). The predominant view was that parents needed choices given work schedules, which is consistent with past policy motivations that focus on work-family issues and not on child outcomes. A school-based model was just not adequate to meet the diverse needs that exist in young children's programs and preschool services (California Educator 2001; California First 5 Children and Families Commission 2002; Los Angeles Child Care Planning Council 2004).

In a small study conducted by Whitebook and colleagues in Alameda County in 2004, researchers attempted to collect information on license-exempt home care—the situations in which family or friends care for young children without regulations and are supported with public vouchers. The sample was small due to resistance to participate because of concerns of immigration status, language, and culture. It was suggested that license-exempt home caregivers were not willing to participate because the study was connected with government or regulatory agencies (Hayes, Palmer, & Zaslow 1990).

### **Consensus Building for Proposition 82: A Movement for Universal Preschool**

In 2005, advocates of universal preschool held a conference in California to plan a state-by-state campaign. Pre-K Now, an advocacy organization funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts, worked with coalitions to build support for the campaign (Hill-Scott 2006; Kirp 2007; Fuller 2007). California was a major target for a national universal preschool campaign. Approximately one out of every eight preschool-aged children (three to four years) in the United States lives in California (Kirp 2007).

Rob Reiner launched the Preschool for All campaign in California, which became known as Proposition 82. The purpose was to ensure that every child in California had

access to preschool services. The initiative used the science of brain research as the rationale for preschool services for three and four year old children in public schools only, instead of proposing to build on the array of community-based and private preschool homes and centers (Fuller 2007; Kirp 2007; Kang & King-Brock 2009). He enlisted the California Teachers Association to present a proposal for universal preschool services to be operated by local school districts and county offices of education (Fuller 2007; Attorney General of California 2009). Proposition 82 would have required a 1.7 percent tax increase for individuals earning more than \$400,000 per year and married couples earning more than \$800,000 per year to provide a free and voluntary preschool system for all three and four year old children. The act proposed tax revenues collected for four years to total an estimated \$2.3 billion dollars. The proposal was put on the June 2006 primary election ballot. The act would have required early educators to earn baccalaureate degrees and or special-education credentials and to be paid at equal level to K-12 teachers. Higher education costs for early childhood educators would have been supplemented by funding from the proposition (Child Development Policy Institute 2006; Fuller 2007; Atkins 2009).

The approach proposed by Proposition 82 was considered monolithic, as it would have given county offices of education and school districts the authority to either administer preschool services or contract with community-based organizations for the services. Union membership would have been increased with a mandate that preschool staff become school district employees. Private preschools that depend on parent fees feared going out of business (Pardington 2003; Hill-Scott 2006; Attorney General of California 2009). A number of key business lobbies began a campaign against Proposition 82, including the state Chamber of Commerce. Also, the California Council

of Churches and the National Council for La Raza opposed the measure because they sponsor community-based organizations that served children and feared that such services would not be included in the initiative if it passed, which would cause them to lose their place in the community. They also expressed fear that the schools mandated under this proposal would not serve the cultural and linguistic needs of all families (Pardington 2003; Coleman 2004; Fuller, Livas & Bridges 2005).

Although California's Proposition 82 had nearly a 66 percent approval rating in January 2006 (Oshyn & Newland 2006; Fuller 2007; Kirp 2007), support fell drastically by the time of the election. The No on Proposition 82 campaign representatives argued that universal preschool was not a solution to bridge the achievement gap. They argued that it would aggravate the teacher shortage and detract from K-12 funding during a state budget crisis. Professor Fuller himself became a major opponent of Proposition 82, advancing the notion that public funds for early childhood should be used for improving existing programs, not building a new public preschool system. Fuller further argued that a majority of young children in California were already in preschool and universal services would therefore mostly benefit the middle-class (Fuller 2007). The No on Proposition 82 campaign also publicized findings from the Reason Foundation, which predicted that a universal preschool system would destroy the private option for preschool for minorities, creating a government monopoly of early childhood care and preschool education for the majority (Bushouse 2009).

The dialogue that arose from the opposition to this Proposition and its ultimate failure made it evident that Rob Reiner had started the initiative without consulting important groups of stakeholders (Kirp 2007; Fuller 2007; Bushouse 2009). The unsuccessful campaign for universal preschool revealed that deep divisions continued to

exist within the early childhood education field on topics such as workforce wages, conditions, and educational requirements. Advocates did not build consensus on key issues, such as whether public preschool should serve all children or focus on those who may be at risk for school failure. Some worried that funding a universal preschool system would take away resources from the already under funded K-12 public school system. Although the proposal for a state preschool system was defeated, the measure helped raise awareness and visibility of preschool issues (Hill-Scott 2006; Kirp 2007; Fuller 2007).

As recently as 2009, the Governor's Committee on Education Excellence, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Speaker of the State Assembly, and President pro tempore of the California Senate together commissioned RAND, a non-profit research corporation, to develop comprehensive statewide evaluations of early childhood education programs in California. The reports are used to inform ways in which the state legislature could most effectively and efficiently expand and reform preschool education (RAND 2009). The RAND research team produced a series of four preschool studies, which found that the majority of children entering school did not possess basic literacy and social skills to learn and succeed in elementary school (Cannon & Karoly, 2006). According to the report, the differences in delays in school readiness between children who attended preschool and those who did not were apparent on the first day of kindergarten and continued to be shown throughout elementary school (Cannon & Karoly 2006). RAND's evaluations of preschool programs in other states also showed that quality preschool programs for children ages three to four improved school readiness scores at kindergarten entry (Karoly 2009). In center-based quality preschool programs less than 50 percent of three- and four-year olds from low-income families are served,



and only 15 percent of children and families considered to be at risk are served by high quality programs (Karoly et al 2008).

The California Preschool Studies demonstrate that there continues to be a great need for early care and preschool services. The biggest “readiness gaps” were found in children from low-income homes, those from ethnic or racial minority groups, and those with English-language-learner backgrounds (Cannon & Karoly 2006). At the national level, however, “the literature does not adequately address the issue of cultural and linguistic competence for early childhood educators” (Daniel & Friedman, 2005). Several reviews called for professional development strategies to improve cultural and linguistic competence to improve services for this growing need.

Strategies to improve teacher preparation in cultural and linguistic competence cited by Daniel and Friedman (2005) include increasing university and college faculty knowledge and willingness to adapt and respond to the diversity in early childhood education, requiring practice and internships in diverse settings, integrating issues of diversity into course content, and requiring Teachers of English to speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) courses for teachers.

### **Summary**

Quality services in this study are based on a societal expectation that children participating in public preschool services will be prepared and ready for kindergarten by having developed in domains of social-emotional, cognitive and physical development to effectively participate in public elementary school (Kirp 2007; Fuller 2007; Goffin & Washington 2009). The indicators of quality discussed in the review of literature of this study are those that appear in the research such as licensing regulations, minimal educational requirements for early educators, child ratios, group sizes, and access to

family support services (Shonkoff & Phillips 2000). Child outcomes and school readiness are inextricably tied to adult child relationships and are the primary means through which experiences affect the child (Pianta 2006). Efforts to strengthen the early education workforce start with an understanding of who the members of this workforce are, and what their needs are as professionals in practice. The field of early childhood education is characterized by low compensation, lack of stability or retention, and decreasing levels of education (Whitebook, Sakai, Gerber, & Howes 2001; Bellm & Whitebook 2006). However, the research relates to policy questions about the type of service, content of services, and the amount of investment in the professional development to make a difference in the lives of children. Virtually no research has been done on representation in public policy efforts, or in the engagement of early educators in their own professional growth and development.

The review of literature served to motivate the researcher to consider how the conversations about preschool quality at the state level engage early educators. The professional development of early educators has been found to be the greatest indicator of quality services, however no research exists on the efficacy of the open forums and civic engagement activities. The review of literature also revealed that celebrities, unions, and researchers are the primary actors in public policy, not those that are responsible for children, however, early educators are being called on to increase their educational levels and improve quality of services. The findings prompted the researcher to apply Jurgen Habermas' theory of communicative action and public sphere to gain new insights and reach new understandings of the engagement of early educators in their own education and professional development, as efforts to improve the quality of services to preschool children are ultimately, their responsibility. The next part of this study includes a

discussion about the research questions selected, the protocol consistent with critical hermeneutic participatory research, and also a discussion of a pilot study that contributed to this dissertation.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH THEORY AND PROTOCOL**

### **Introduction**

The critical hermeneutic participatory research process developed by Herda (1999) is used for this inquiry. In this process, the conversations between the participants and researcher are a collaborative process consistent with participatory research. The conversations resulted in data that emerged from meaningful dialogue focused on the research topic (Herda 1999: 90). The categories of communicative action and public sphere provided the guiding questions for the interactive conversations to engage those responsible for the development and care of young children in the development of public policy. The intent was to bring “to light our prejudices and fuse our present horizons of understanding with new understandings from histories of others” (Herda 1999: 90). As a result of this research, the researcher is in a better position to offer policy recommendations with others about preschool services in California.

### **Research Categories: Communicative Action and Public Sphere**

The research categories reflect the researcher’s interest in how public policies for preschool services are developed and who is engaged in such endeavors. The categories served to place “direction and boundaries on the inquiry” (Herda 1999: 102). These categories are used to describe and discuss the work of the researcher. Herda (1999: 102) speaks of Heidegger’s work to describe the importance of the categories, noting that they serve as parameters for the research project, guide the conversations, and serve as themes for the discussion and analysis of data (Herda 1999: 103).

The definition of Habermas’ political philosophy served this study as public policies relevant to preschool services are legally mandated. Preschool services in California are comprised of diverse sectors and regulated by legislation. The regulation of

common life and the use of language as the medium to interpret its application are considered in this study.

The skills and stability of the early educators are critical factors that influence the education of young children (Chang 2004). In California, as in the United States, the majority of young children spend a substantial amount of time in public spaces, in this case, non-parental care before they enter kindergarten (Overturf 2005). The attention on the professional development of those who care for young children is based on increased awareness of the influence that early care and education make on the development of young children.

Habermas (1998: xvi) describes, “pluralistic societies’ deliberations and decisions concerning what values and ideals of the good should be politically implemented must take place within a constitutional framework that guarantees individual liberty and the right of minorities to dissent from the values of the majority culture and to cultivate their distinctive identities”. He also wrote that each community must realize a culture that reflects shared traditions and historical experiences.

In preschool education, the notion of “parents as the child’s first teacher” is practiced. Early educators are asked to develop partnerships with parents to ensure continuity with the home environment. Early educators bring home traditions into the classroom to enhance the richness of the learning experience for the children in their care by learning and understanding the traditions and practices of the family. Communicative action is embedded in public policy in both California preschool programs, and the Head Start program that is federally funded (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services 2005; California Department of Education 2007). The intent is to build on the strengths of the family, support cohesion of families within communities which points to

improvement of physical and mental well being of the child with the goal of offsetting some of the adverse consequences of poverty (Garcia & Gonzales 2006). The early educators often represent the families in their community; however, public policy does not include their engagement in their own professional development about how to integrate families of diverse cultures and backgrounds.

When family issues are considered in policy formation in California for preschool services, they raise discourse related to cultural and societal questions. Habermas describes this process of deliberative democracy by questioning the values and traditions of groups within an already constituted society. Family issues and needs are considered a part of the private sphere. However, as more adults not related by family or traditions care for children, and are in part responsible for their development and learning, the challenges are considered in both public and private spheres. Habermas (1991: 224) wrote that the relationship is inseparable, “status in both the public and private spheres (of civil society and family) was guaranteed in a negative fashion on the basis of a confidence that the public sphere and the market would function in the anticipated way as long as the autonomy of private people was assured in both spheres”.

The respect and consideration for all persons sets the terms for public domains, the notions of common good and value, are inseparable from cultural traditions and historical experiences that can only be dealt within the context of already constructed communities. As we interpret the practice in preschool settings, we begin to understand how public policy ought to engage those that are responsible to improve quality services for children in private and public services.

Communicative action in the public sphere is a concept that addresses the achievement of new understandings through the use of language. Habermas (1984: 75)

postulated, “[t]he concept of reaching an understanding suggests a rationality-motivated agreement among participants that is measured against criticizable validity claims”. The claims are propositional truth, normative rightness and subjective truthfulness, which, according to Habermas, characterize categories of knowledge embodied in symbolic expressions (1984: 75-76). The world that communicative actors “take up in raising validity claims” in the public sphere is the context for this study about preschool education in California. As Habermas (1990: 135) wrote, this topic comprises “a lifeworld, that not only forms the context for the process of reaching an understanding but also furnishes resources for it”.

The interpretative process is one in which participants engage in communication as they together assess required action. I gathered data about how stories of those in communicative action are expressed in the public sphere and how they raise the level of discourse, the potential for increased meaning in communication, and the resolve of social issues inherent in preschool services in California.

The goal of the public process is to reach consensus; processes should be open and transparent, the range of themes and issues determine the “need for consensual understanding that must be met through the activity of interpretation” (Habermas 1990: 135). Using critical hermeneutic theory as the lens with which to view the research that informed this project has the potential to provide a new understanding about how communicative action, and about how it influences public policy relating to the education of young children and their families.

### **Research Questions**

The research data unfolded through conversation that framed guiding questions and my analysis of the data was informed by critical hermeneutic theory that supported

the research categories. The play of dialogue with the topic represented the force of the better argument; this is informed by research questions, which served as guidelines for the conversations and are included below.

#### Communicative Action

1. What stories can you share about your leadership role in preschool education in California?
2. How often have your ideas been solicited and turned into actions? Please provide me with some examples.
3. What stories can you share about your own preschool education?
4. Where and when do you find the most opportunity to provide suggestions for curriculum development?

#### Public Sphere

1. What stories would you share about your experiences in public policy formation pertaining to preschool services?
2. Which is better for children in preschool education, public or private sector services? Why?

The questions above served to guide the conversations. The researcher did not anticipate any specific answers; rather the questions themselves were designed to add richness to the dialogical process and were asked in a sequence, which depended on the flow of the conversation.

The questions were modified depending on the background and experiences of the research participant. The critical hermeneutic participatory research is an interaction with others in a collaborative effort. The researcher aimed for new understandings about the research topic and understands that often the deepest insights arise in conversations.



### **Data Collection**

Data were collected from May to November 2010 within a prescribed process that included conducting research conversations, transcribing the research conversations, and reviewing the transcribed text for accuracy (Herda 1999: 97-98). I sent a letter of invitation (Appendix A) to a group of potential participants (Appendix B) who have knowledge and experience with preschool services and public policy in California. I chose conversation participants with knowledge and interests in the inquiry of public policy of preschool services (Herda 1999: 97). Permission from the participant to record and transcribe was secured prior to having the conversations (Appendix C). The researcher transcribed the conversations into a working text and presented it to each participant to review and make any corrections, additions, or adjustments. From the review by the participant, the researcher was informed of any material that the participants did not want to disclose. In addition to the transcriptions of the research conversations, the researcher kept a journal to collect observations and thoughts about the data collected (Herda 1999: 98). The process of creating a journal became part of the overall data collection. Ideas, insights, thoughts, observation materials and documents that add to, or bring new meaning and understanding on preschool services in California are included.

### **Data Analysis**

I transcribed the conversations into a text to allow distancing for the interpretation of the data. The researcher appropriated meaning from the text (Herda 1999: 86). The critical hermeneutic theory used for composing the research questions provided for the analysis of the data. The researcher sought to arrive at new understandings and followed several stages listed below (Herda 1999: 98-99).

- Transcribed the data into a text to work with it as such.
- Reviewed the text to determine which sections reflect critical hermeneutic concepts.
- Selected categories reflective of the themes based on research categories and considered those that are relevant to the critical hermeneutic theory.
- Interpreted the sections that pertain to critical hermeneutic theory.
- Discussed the findings of the research that may merit further investigation.

After reflecting on the conversations, the researcher anticipated unveiling new understandings about the topic and considered how to think about communicative action and public space.

### **Entrée to Research Site**

I conducted my research in the State of California. I began to gain entrée to the research sites in Spring 2010. I contacted colleagues in practice and policy research in California in three geographical areas to gather a broad and varied perspective when engaging in conversations. The three geographical areas are the San Francisco Bay Area, and the cities of Los Angeles and Sacramento.

### **Introduction to Research Conversation Participants**

The research participants are all preschool educators, advocates and lobbyists, and community college and university faculty who have volunteered to participate in conversations about this subject. The advocates and lobbyists came from Sacramento and Los Angeles, however, I attempted to have even representation from all categories of participants. I focused on professionals who work in early childhood education in various sectors and at different levels. The researcher has known most of these professionals over a period of time in various advocacy groups, in work projects in different

communities, or through engagement in public policy work at the state level. I anticipated including up to ten research participants and have been successful in this endeavor to complete this study.

In addition to having conversations with participants, I attended public policy forums sponsored by the Child Development Policy Institute (CDPI). Two forums are held annually in October and May. The CDPI hires an experienced lobbyist who was invited to participate in conversation with the researcher. Input from the lobbyist added more in-depth, broader understanding to the research conversations and provided increased insights into communicative action related to representation and engagement in the public sphere of preschool education.

The individuals invited to have conversations also added insight and new understanding in reflection with the researcher. As Herda wrote, “To partake in an act of hermeneutic field-based research is a reflection of approval.” Thus, the researcher expected to gain greater understanding in the categories and research questions (1999: 92) on the role of communicative action in the public sphere.

### **Biographies of Conversation Participants**

Each of the participants dedicated more than an hour for the conversation. They provided thoughtful and often personal experiences. The guiding questions provided a sequence and flow for the conversation and the analysis of the data in Chapter Four is only an overview of the important reflections shared in conversations. I have organized the following biographical sketches to present the depth and breadth of the knowledge, experience, and passion of the conversation participants. I have presented them in alphabetical order, not in order of importance, nor in the sequence of time that the

conversations were held. The summaries of conversations and transcriptions are included in the appendices.

### Celia Ayala

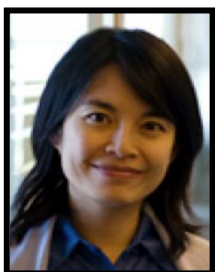


Ms. Celia Ayala has worked for 31 years as a teacher, administrator, and advocate for the children of Southern California. She is currently the Executive Director of Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP). Her responsibilities include overseeing the organization's day-to-day operations including programs that help preschools improve their classrooms and services to children and their families, fund preschool classroom construction and upgrades, and create incentives and educational opportunities to attract and retain early educators.

Prior to joining LAUP, she served as the Assistant Superintendent, Division of Children & Family Services, at the Riverside County Office of Education (RCOE). In her role as Assistant Superintendent, she managed all early childhood education programs and activities within the division, including the County's Head Start program. Prior to joining the RCOE, she was the Director for Curriculum, Instruction and Educational Technologies with the Pasadena Unified School District and was also a principal at James Madison Elementary School. Dr. Ayala also served nine years as a director with the Los Angeles County Department of Education's Division of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

Ms. Ayala holds a doctorate in Education from the University of Southern California. She received a Master of Arts in education from California State University, Los Angeles, and a Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology and Spanish from the University of Southern California.

### Sandy Baba



Ms. Sandy Baba is a Professional Development Manager for the WestEd Center for Child and Family Studies (CCFS), E3 Institute where she provides leadership in early childhood education. A WestEd staff member since 2003, Ms. Baba is a certified trainer for the CCFS Program for Infant/Toddler Care. Baba supports programs in areas of family and community partnerships, fiscal development, universal health and safety precautions, program management, facilities development, and transportation. She develops strategies to help early childhood education (ECE) practitioners and the public, heighten their awareness of issues regarding children and families. She conducts research and product development for a number of CCFS projects, including Young Readers, Future Leaders Early Literacy Initiative, Arts Enrichment Initiative, and Santa Clara County Partnership for School Readiness, and Santa Clara County Power of Preschool (PoP). Ms. Baba's leadership work in PoP is a research-based and data-driven project. In 2008, she led to Santa Clara County serving 800 children who may have been exposed to high-risk factors. She leads the design and implementation of a Quality Enhancement Support Team (QuEST) to individualize professional development needs for the various PoP sites.

Ms. Baba has served on the Board of the California Association for the Education of Young Children. She has experience developing English and Chinese language early literacy curriculum for early childhood programs and language schools in the United States and overseas. She also is a community liaison for the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Diversity and Equity forum, which brings early educators together for conversations on related topics. In 2008, Baba led a group of early childhood experts worldwide, to establish the NAEYC Asian Interest Forum, to guide

conversations on early childhood issues that relate to children and families of Asian, Asian American, and Pacific Islander descent.

Ms. Baba received an undergraduate degree in Asian studies from the University of California, Davis, and a Masters in Arts in education—with an emphasis in early childhood education—from San Francisco State University.

### Timothy Fitzharris

Mr. Timothy Fitzharris is the Legislative Advocate for the Child Development Policy Institute (CDPI), the California Child Development Administrators Association (CCDAA), and the Professional Association for Childhood Education (PACE). He has lobbied for children’s issues in Sacramento for 39 years and is responsible for more than 100 successful bills and appropriations.



Mr. Fitzharris has been a full time, legislative committee consultant for the California Assembly, and the executive director of two statewide organizations – the California Probation, Parole and Correctional Association and the California Association of Services for Children – for 11 and 14 years, respectively. For the past fourteen years, he has written the respected political reports, *The CDPI Bulletin* and *Capitol Plus*, which have a readership of over 8,000 professionals throughout California. He has served on the boards of directors of the Child Welfare League of America and the National Association of Homes and Services for Children. For six years, he was a commissioner on the Sacramento County Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Commission.

He holds an undergraduate degree in Sociology from the University of California, Davis, a Master of Public Administration degree from the University of San Francisco,

and Ph.D. in Criminology from the University of California, Berkeley. He is a Certified Association Executive (CAE) and a Certified Management Consultant (CMC).

Sandra Gutierrez

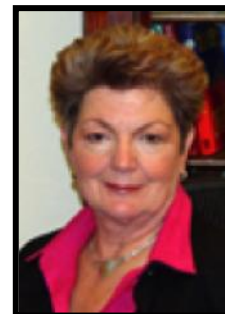
Ms. Sandra Gutierrez is National Director of Abriendo Puertas-Families in Schools, the nation's first evidence-based, comprehensive training program for Latino parents with children from birth to five years of age. She has more than 30 years experience developing social service programs and managing legal, children's advocacy, and community service organizations.



Prior to her work creating Abriendo Puertas, Ms. Gutierrez developed a series of educational programs to support children and families involved in the child welfare system for Parents Action for Children. Her multifaceted career has included serving as the founder and director of the first Central American Refugee Program in the United States. She created health education programs for migrant farm workers and designed campaigns to promote the rights of immigrants, the benefits of preschool programs, and increase the availability of high quality early education services in neighborhoods with the least access of these services. In addition, for seven years, Ms. Gutierrez served as a founding member and State Commissioner for First 5 California where she established the Advisory Committee on Equity. She holds a Juris Doctorate degree.

Giuliana Halasz

Ms. Giuliana Halasz is the President of the Professional Association for Childhood Education Alternative Payment Program (PACEAPP) based in San Francisco where she has expanded a \$1.5 million to more than \$27.5 million program. PACEAPP is a statewide not-for-profit member association comprised of private early educators. She is also the President of Human Services Management Corporation in San Francisco, where she oversees strategic planning and administers contracts. Ms. Halasz is an advocate for children and works with the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) where she serves as a California State Leader, member of the Western Region Steering Committee as well as an active member on the National Public Policy Advisory Committee and on the Committee on Standards of Excellence for Child Care, Development, and Education Services.



Ms. Halasz is the vice-president of the Foundation for Early Education and a partner in San Mateo County Preschool for All. She serves as co-chair of the San Mateo Child Care Partnership Council's Funding and Advocacy Committee, and is a member of the Council of Latino Executives, the National Association of Social Workers, and the National Network for Social Work Managers.

Ms. Halasz has published numerous articles and given speeches at conferences and workshops. She has taught courses at several colleges and has consulted on mental health and community development including leadership development in the Latino community and children services field. She has been a counselor and liaison coordinator for the special needs community, and planned for the United Way and the Health System Agency. Ms. Halasz is fluent in English, Spanish, and Italian. She holds a Masters in



Social Work from San Diego State University (SDSU) and a Bachelor's in Sociology from Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, Caracas, Venezuela (UCAB).

Raymond Hernandez

Mr. Raymond Hernandez is the Executive Director of the School for Early



Education at the University of Southern California. Mr. Hernandez has more than 29 years of experience in the field of Early Childhood Education and has held key positions in several nonprofit organizations throughout California operating programs

such as Head Start, Early Head Start, General Child Care, Migrant Child Care, and State Preschool.

He has served as President and Secretary of the California Head Start Association, Secretary of the Region IX Head Start Association, and as an advisory committee member for the Head Start-State Collaboration. He is a member in local organizations such as the County of Los Angeles Child Care Planning Committee, the Los Angeles Junior Chamber of Commerce, and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Mr. Hernandez is currently serving as a board member to the Child Development Policy Institute, California Head Start Association (CHSA) and the Foundation for Early Education. He also serves as the CHSA Cluster representative for Head Start/Early Head Start in Los Angeles County and is a Board Member of Prevent Hate, which promotes community empowerment and intergroup relations through activities and alliances that advance coexistence and defends human rights.

Mr. Hernandez completed his undergraduate work at California State Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo and his Masters of Science in Education Administration at

the University of Southern California. In addition, he was awarded a Riordon Volunteer Leadership Development Fellowship in 1997.

Ernesto Saldana

Mr. Ernesto Saldana is the Field Director for Preschool California, a nonprofit



advocacy organization working to increase access to high-quality preschool for all of California's children. He develops and executes preschool advocacy strategies across the state in collaboration with other individuals representing many and diverse organizations.

Previously Mr. Saldana served as executive director for Public Allies Los Angeles; deputy director of constituency services and director of communications at the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund; and he currently serves on the Liberty Hill Foundation's Fund for a New Los Angeles Community Funding Board.

He earned a bachelor's degree in political science from California State University, Fullerton and holds a law degree from Whittier Law School. Born and raised in Santa Ana, California, Mr. Saldana is a second-generation Latino born of farm worker parents.

Ana Trujillo

Ms. Ana Trujillo is the Director, Head Start Program Early Learning Services Department at the Santa Clara County Office of Education. The Early Learning Services Department incorporates the Head Start Preschool Program for Santa Clara and San Benito



Counties, as well as the state funded program. It currently serves approximately 2,800 children in over 100 classrooms. She oversees a budget of \$26 million and manages 200 staff members.

Although most of her experience was gained through the Santa Clara County Office of Education's Children's Services Department, she also served the San Benito County Office of Education as a Parent Education Coordinator for 7 years.

She earned a Master of Arts Degree in Special Education from Santa Clara University, an undergraduate degree in Social Science from San Jose State University, and an Associate's Degree in Early Childhood Development from Gavilan College. She also completed the Johnson & Johnson Management Fellows Program at UCLA.

#### Marcy Whitebook

Ms. Marcy Whitebook is the founder, director and senior researcher, the Study of Child Care Employment, Institute of Industrial Relations, University of California at Berkeley. Her research focuses on issues of employment in settings for young children with specific attention to its relationship to children's development and learning, and appropriate and accessible professional preparation for the early childhood workforce. She has served as project director for several large-scale child care studies, including the landmark 1989 *National Child Care Staffing Study*, which first brought public attention to the low wages and high turnover of early educators and they are responsibility for child outcomes despite the lack of compensation and education. She co-developed the Early Childhood Mentor Program in California, now operating in more than 90 colleges throughout the state, and has helped design several policy initiatives such as CARES (Comprehensive Approaches to Raising Educational



Standards) in California, a program to encourage the professional development of the early care and education workforce. During the Clinton Administration, she was appointed to the Presidential Child Care Work Group in the Department of the Treasury and represented the U.S. Department of Labor at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) International Conference on Female-dominated Occupations. She was appointed to the California P-16 Council in 2005.

Ms Whitebook worked as an infant-toddler and preschool for many years. She earned a Bachelor's Degree in Religious Studies and Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education from the University of California at Berkeley, and a Ph.D. in Development Studies in Education from the University of California at Los Angeles.

Her latest book is *By a Thread: How Centers Hold Onto Teachers; How Teachers Build Lasting Careers*. Her areas of expertise include teacher and program quality, and teacher preparation programs.

#### Marlene Zepeda

Ms. Marlene Zepeda is a Professor at the College of Health and Human Services, California State University at Los Angeles. Her research interest focuses on parent-child



interaction in Latino populations and early childhood education. She has conducted research on language exchanges in early infancy, attachment across Mexican-American groups, and parental goals for child rearing. Ms. Zepeda is currently involved with the development of early learning foundations for English language learners in California and in issues related to the education and training of the early childhood workforce.

Ms. Zepeda began her career at California State University Los Angeles in 1990 in the Interdisciplinary Child Development program, which became the Department of Child and Family Studies. Los Angeles County Office of Child Care's Policy Council and East Los Angeles College honored her contributions to workforce development for early childhood educators. She is a past recipient of California State University Los Angeles Distinguished Woman Award and a recipient of the Distinguished Faculty Alumna Award.

She worked for the San Fernando Valley Child Guidance clinic and soon moved to California State University, Bakersfield where she began as an assistant professor with a joint appointment in Education and Child Development. Throughout her tenure, Ms. Zepeda has sustained her scholarly focus on Spanish-speaking children and families and early childhood education. Ms. Zepeda has participated in a number of activities in California to promote the education and professional development of early childhood personnel. She has been a member of the County of Los Angeles Child Care Planning Committee and has served on a number of important advisory committees. She is the first author of "Bridging Cultures in Early Care and Education", a 2006 publication. Ms. Zepeda consults widely about issues relevant to child-care, preschool education and the development of young Latino children.

Ms. Zepeda earned an undergraduate degree in Child Development from California State University, Los Angeles and also earned an elementary teaching credential. She worked for the Los Angeles Unified School District as a preschool, kindergarten, and first grade teacher. She earned a Master of Arts degree and a Ph.D. in Developmental Studies from University of California at Los Angeles.

### **Timeline**

I carried out conversations with participants beginning June 2010, which required special trips to Los Angeles and Sacramento. I transcribed the conversations to reflect on the text that is revealed as I engaged in conversations with others. The conversations and this line of inquiry were complete by August 2010. I plan to finish my dissertation in March 2011.

### **The Research Pilot Project**

I carried out a pilot study to assess the appropriateness of the categories and research questions. I offered a description of my pilot project and included background information about my conversation partner in the sections that follow. I analyzed the data I collected and included observations made as a part of the conversation. The pilot project helped me gain confidence about my research approach and contributed to the work I continued for my dissertation.

### **Background of Conversation Participant**

Ms. Giuliana Halasz is the President of the Professional Association for Childhood Education Alternative Payment Program (PACEAPP) in San Francisco. PACEAPP is a statewide not-for-profit member association comprised of private preschool educators. She is also President of Human Services Management Corporation, which is a for-profit service organization that provides financial and human services to private providers of preschool services statewide.

Ms. Halasz also serves on committees of the Child Welfare League of America. She is a social worker and has devoted the last forty years to advocacy and services for young children and their families. I met Ms. Halasz at the Child Development Policy Institute Forum in Sacramento in 2007. She interacts with a wide range of individuals in

preschool education, including legislators and their staff members. She invited me to serve on the board of the Institute for Family Development International (IFDI). In 2007, IFDI provided financial support to the Global Interfaith AIDS Alliance to purchase land in Malawi, Africa and support the building of a child development center for orphans with AIDS.

As we conversed, I found that she was discouraged from providing leadership in statewide initiatives. She was very vocal about her disappointment and shared that she felt she was denied a role because she is a Latina. She is an immigrant born in Rome, Italy and raised in Venezuela and San Francisco, California. We engaged in conversations about leadership and representation and discussed her experiences with public policy and preschool education.

### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

The presentation and analysis are the result of data I collected from my research conversation with Ms. Halasz. The complete conversation is presented in this text in Appendix E. I analyzed our conversation using the research categories of communicative action and public sphere.

The description of the policy context for preschool education in California is consistent with what Jurgen Habermas referred to as the life world. Habermas (1990: 135) wrote,

... communicative action can be understood as a circular process in which the actor is two things in one: an initiator who masters situations through actions for which he is accountable and a product of the traditions surrounding him, of groups whose cohesion is based on solidarity to which he belongs, and of processes of socialization in which he is reared.

Communicative action was considered in this study to gain new insights as to who is engaged in public policy in preschool services, how those serving children are

represented, and what ethical actions can be considered in light of the present discourse. Ultimately, policy represents actions taken that give form and structure to preschool services. Ricoeur wrote, “Actions have agents who do and may do things, which are taken as their work or their deed. As a result, these agents can be held responsible for certain consequences of their actions” (1984: 55).

### Public Sphere

The goal of the public process is to reach consensus, and although the processes are open and transparent, the range of themes and issues determine the “need for consensual understanding that must be met through the activity of interpretation” (Habermas 1990: 135). The concern is how the life world is defined, by whom, and whether the agents are competent to interpret the processes essential to improve the quality of preschool services.

Ms. Halasz shared her experiences as a leader in state-level advocacy for young children’s services. She described suffering pain and humiliation as the result of having an accent and being stereotyped by her colleagues. She revealed that providing leadership in the public sphere was not welcoming, or open to her.

### Communicative Action

When demographics are considered and conversations are interpreted, they include the dynamics of diversity and the variations that range from race, ethnicity, language, and family compositions (National Association for the Education of Young Children 2009; Brown 2009; Chang 2004). Important to the conversations are the questions about who and what determines program quality, where and how to increase the supply of program services, and the quality of such services. Habermas’ principle of



communicative action is characterized by validity claims of shared trust, truthfulness, and rightfulness.

Ricoeur describes the practical field as, “the intervention of historical agents in the course of physical events and offer favorable or unfavorable occasions for their action” (1984: 55). My conversation partner revealed her cultural expectations and values as she made statements expressing her feelings. Habermas (1990: 68) wrote about the description of culture, “needs and wants are interpreted in the light of cultural values. Since cultural values are always components of intersubjectivity, shared traditions, the revision of values used to interpret needs and wants cannot be a matter for individuals to handle monologically”. Ms. Halasz shared that she “was always very assertive and being a Hispanic woman, this was not traditional.” I interpreted this to reinforce that in this public sphere she did not feel welcome. She further stated, “many considered me an outsider and the messages they transmitted were clear, as if they wanted to put me in my place. The expectation was that I be shy, retreat, be observant, and ask permission to express my expertise.” The conversation revealed that there might be opportunities to engage in communicative action in public processes related to preschool services in California that have not been revealed.

I found out through this study that my categories are appropriate for this inquiry. Moreover, my questions helped bring out the potential issues for further inquiry. From my experience with my conversation participant, I learned the power of personal stories. I know to provide both time and space for my conversation participants to tell their individual stories.

### **Background of the Researcher**

I have been involved in the field of early childhood education for forty years. I have two master's degrees, one in child welfare and public policy and one in education administration. I direct an Institute for Excellence in Early Education in Santa Clara County, which pertains to the Center for Child and Family Studies of WestEd. WestEd is a national educational evaluation, service, and research organization based in San Francisco, California. Prior to joining WestEd, I directed a children's services department at a county office of education responsible for providing public preschool services to 3,000 young children and families in Santa Clara and San Benito Counties in California. I have also worked in early childhood education in Illinois, and as a public policy fellow in Washington D. C. I currently serve on the board of the National Association for the Education of Young Children and on the Child Development Policy Institute Board in California. I served on the National Academy of Science, Research Council's Committees on Integrating the Science of Early Child Development and Mathematics in Early Childhood Learning Path to Equity and Access.

I was drawn to critical hermeneutic participatory research because it offers a consistent ethos with my practice as I have always included parents and family members in decision-making processes about their children at the local community level. In addition to the local levels, some participants represent public policy venues at the state level.

### **Summary**

Exploring communicative action in the public sphere related to preschool services in California has shown that discourse could be a medium for improving quality.

Habermas wrote, "as practical discourse, what is at issue is not whether propositions are

true, evaluations appropriate, constructions well formed, or expressive utterances truthful, but whether actions and the norms governing them are right” (Habermas 1990: 37).

The research conversation revealed that in the public sphere the actions and norms pose concerns about whether they are right given the ethnic and racial diversity of children in California. Latino children make up more than half of the child population under the age of five years and without the strong foundation available in quality preschool, they may not have the same opportunities as other children, especially children from families with low incomes (Atkins 2009). Moreover, two thirds of Latino and African American four year olds live in areas that do not have enough preschool spaces, compared to other groups of middle-income four year olds. Access and availability are important to consider as programs and policies have not kept pace with changing demographic trends (Chang 2004; Garcia & Gonzales 2006; Atkins 2009; National Association Latino Elected Officials 2009).

When considering the engagement of preschool educators in California in public policy conversations, my conversation participants raised validity claims related to what is rightfulness. Who speaks for the majority of children most in need? Are the norms and actions determined in the public sphere right, if “others” are not included in communicative action?

The professional development of adults charged with the care of young children in preschool settings is considered a key determinant of quality services; therefore, professional development activities may serve as critical predictors of how and what services are provided. The intent of this study was to discover insights and reach new understandings about how representation is provided at forums sponsored by public agencies to determine how to improve quality services for young children in preschool.

The level of engagement in policy formation and resource development is essential as quality is considered in relation to the type and relevancy of professional development activities.

## CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

### Introduction

The intent of this chapter is to review the critical theory of Jurgen Habermas to develop an understanding of communicative action and the public sphere within the context of preschool services in California, consider the place of poverty in relation to public policies concerning women and children. This is an exploration; I do not purport to offer a comprehensive critique of Habermas' theories, or their application. I have found, however, the theories relevant and within this analysis they provide a new understanding about public policy. I found it important to consider specific topics related to communicative action and the public sphere. As a result of my inquiry into communicative action and public sphere, several sub themes such as social integration, rationalization, and the lifeworld became essential for my research about how preschool services as they relate to economic and social policies that influence the lives of women and children. Public sphere is the forum and, or space generated in communicative action and, as such, relates to the sub theme of lifeworld that connects them through language, symbols and translations of code. The sub themes of social integration and rationalization bring forth the types of communicative action oriented in mutual understanding. In the following sections each sub theme will be described further as they relate and connect to each category, and interconnect both categories.

As a researcher in critical hermeneutics with a history of working with women and their young children, I have deepened my understanding of Habermas' theories and applied them to my specific interests and practice, which includes the educational attainment of the women providing preschool services and the relationship of educational

attainment to the level of quality of services for young children in California. My interest in engaging with others in public policy analysis has been to deepen by my inquiry of communicative action and public sphere. The conversation participants represent the vast geographical span of the state from Los Angeles, the San Francisco Bay Area and Sacramento. The conversation participants are diverse in their roles and job functions such as administrators of direct services, faculty at colleges and universities, and advocates working with legislators and other policy groups. Several of these participants also play a role at the national level in policy and in the public sphere.

The policies in Chapter Two are considered to be social evolution in the context of the sociocultural norms established by the state of California for the design and delivery of preschool services. Preschool policy is reviewed in light of both legislative and administrative interplay in relation to the state departments charged with engagement of the interested individuals in the public sphere. Consistent with Habermas' theory of communicative action for this study, the lifeworld and public systems are described as two levels of differentiation of society. Habermas wrote of the importance of "decoupling of system and the lifeworld. The mechanisms of the functional integration are increasingly detached from the lifeworld structures responsible for social integration" (1984: xxx).

In this study, quality of life issues relate to the lack of quality services for children in preschool environments that may even be harmful to their development as a result of minimal safety regulations and low educational requirements for the adults charged with their care. Also, the conversation participants consistently identified the lack of integration, inclusion, and representation of specific groups in public policy processes. These groups included children of immigrants, dual-language learners, and working

families not able to make enough to move out of poverty. Habermas discussed the lack of social integration of marginalized groups as a problem in society related to legitimation creating a social crisis that shifts from the political and economic to the cultural sphere. He further developed the premise that the state has to deal with contradictory demands of the general welfare of society and the promotion of private interests. In order to maintain a balance of social or common good, a two-sided rationalization is needed, according to Habermas. Rationalization requires that it occur both at the system and lifeworld levels, and a balance between both is necessary for the maintenance of the social and the common good (Habermas 1989: 24). The guiding questions for this study provide the conversation participants with an opportunity to consider this balance of private interests and the general welfare of society. The guiding questions also provided the data from which the concept of the communicative action in preschool services in California was analyzed. The participants provided data that revealed communicative competence of preschool as the lifeworld, made claims related to the public sphere, and also identified the sub themes of social integration and rationalization. The analysis of language is the means of communication as the participants share their perspectives, desires, and intentions related to their actions, make claims concerning the validity of their truths in relation to their objective world, and the rightness of their claims in relation to the shared norms and values of preschool policy.

In the next few sections, communicative action and public sphere are presented as categories for the data analysis, and the sub themes of the lifeworld, social integration and rationalization are discussed with examples provided by the conversation participants themselves, in their voice, to apply the theories of Jurgen Habermas to preschool services in California.

### Public Sphere

The public sphere is the domain of social life that is open to all citizens and is where public opinion can be formed. The discussions related to the public sphere in this study are specific to preschool services regulated by the state of California. The task of caring for young children and the responsibility for their learning and development is viewed as a public role, and defined as providing for the common good. Regulations are passed in California with the goal of determining the level of quality and delivery of services. The educational backgrounds of the adults working with young children are regulated as well as aspects of the environment and facility that impact the health and safety of children and adults. In addition, adult-to-child ratios are established, which serve to gauge the level of quality and amount of learning and development of the children. Habermas wrote (1989: 231) of regulations:

regulations concerning the publicness of state-related activities, as, for instance, the public accessibility required of legal proceedings, are also connected with this function of public opinion. To the public sphere as a sphere mediating between state and society, a society, a sphere in which the public as a vehicle of public opinion is formed.

Furthermore, “the political public sphere can fulfill its function ... only insofar as it develops out of the communication taking place among those who are potentially affected” (Habermas 1996: 365). At a societal level, legal rules are also represented in the lifeworld as symbols and competencies acquired by legal socialization. Habermas (1996: 81) wrote:

... law includes all communication oriented by law, such that legal rules refer reflexively to the function of social integration directly fulfilled in the process of institutionalization. The language of the law can serve as a transformer in the society-wide communication circulating between system and the lifeworld.



Habermas specified that social formations be differentiated by an organizational principle or institutional core; the idea is to give access “to sociocultural processes centered on legitimation, identity formation, or social solidarity” (Habermas 1989: 14). He further wrote (Habermas 1989: 15) that when there is a system crisis...

... it cannot account for its resolution in the form of institutional-normative change or the creation of a new type of social integration. When individuals are faced with an institutional crisis, they cannot draw on the scientific-technical knowledge ... but entails changes in norms of justice, social roles, and personal identities. The transformation of modes of social integration may be conceptualized, at the highest level of abstraction, as an analytically autonomous process involving the development of moral-practical knowledge.

I reflect on the “impotence of ought” in which Habermas delineated John Rawls’ work of normative discourse. An idea of a “well ordered society” is set according to a scheme that deserves the rationally motivated assent of all citizens because it can be grounded in justice as fairness (Habermas 1996: 57). This is the process to establish a social contract model, which is the model Ms. Sandra Gutierrez described, which was established for all the public contracts for the Children and Families Commission at the state level. Ms. Gutierrez served on the California Children and Families Commission when it was first formed in 1998, and agreements were being made related to priorities for funding, areas of services and setting state level strategies for the relationships with counties. The model she describes is still an essential principle applied for all the contracts issued by California First 5, which is now the public agency that is overseen by the California Children and Families Commission and represents the arrangements between two parties in purposive-rational situations, and “hence can be accepted as right or just in the normative sense” (Habermas 1996: 58). Counties must describe how they apply the Equity Principles of California First 5 to receive funding. Ms. Gutierrez

currently directs a national project for Latino families to help them transition their young children from preschool into the public schools sponsored by Families In Schools, a not for profit community organization based in Los Angeles and funded by foundations and corporations. She no longer serves on the commission, however recounts this as an important example of her contribution to the public sphere and public policy.

Habermas wrote that social integration is the development of normative knowledge that is the “pacesetter” for social evolution (Habermas 1989: 15). Important to the process of rationalization embodied in the institutional and cultural orders of society, public policy is the lifeworld in question. Considering the process by which rationalization in communication is formed, one can view it as a process intended to advance and promote critical self-reflection as a part of a comprehensive critical theory of society.

In conversations for this study, I reached new understandings, specifically from Mr. Tim Fitzharris, as he offered an example of “sitting in a press box” and asking questions not considered by early educators and the implications for practice. He provided a view of the “big picture”. Habermas wrote of the importance of communicative action in terms of the role of the interpreter. I consider Habermas’ description consistent with Mr. Fitzharris’ role as a lobbyist. Mr. Fitzharris has provided information to statewide preschool professional associations for several decades and is well known and respected by the legislative and educational communities. He is a trained criminologist and understands the importance of intervention and prevention services. His perspectives are considered as a real advocate since he does not work in the field of preschool education. Habermas wrote, “the interpreter does not have to give meaning to what he thinks he observes; rather, he has to explicate the given meaning of

objectivations that can be understood only from within the context of the communication process” (Habermas 1990: 28). The individuals in the professional preschool associations are engaged in communicative processes building support for legislative actions. Mr. Fitzharris acts as an analyst, advisor, and as a lobbyist at the state level. He is clear about his roles as he stated, “My work with the different councils involves planting ideas”. Habermas wrote of the problem of symbolic expressions as seeped in value judgments in fact-finding discourse. I consider the role of Mr. Fitzharris as framing conceptually the everyday experiences of leaders in preschool education. Habermas described problems in value judgments made in everyday life. “Difficulties arise because the theoretical framework for an empirical analysis of everyday behavior has to be conceptually integrated with the frame of reference within which participants themselves interpret their everyday lives” (Habermas 1990: 27).

The processes established for public input is to engage early educators as they interpret professional development, educational attainment, and the quality of services and engage with others in communicative action to reach agreement. “The actors seek to reach an understanding about the action situation and their plans of action in order to coordinate actions by way of agreement” (Habermas 1984: 86). Regarding the concept of interpretation in language, Habermas (1989: 7) wrote:

... arises from the symbolic and meaningful nature of social reality. Individuals assign meaning to their action; these meanings are public or intersubjective; they are lodged in language, daily practices, institutional roles, norms, laws and worldviews; they are, finally, constitutive of social life.

Cultural meanings must be related to political and economic conditions that are best considered within and by social structural analysis that focuses on resource distribution, institutional roles, and power relations. Mr. Fitzharris speaks of a particular

piece of legislation as serving to bridge information from preschool to the public school system and is concerned about the continuity of care, and therefore, consistent with the social space in which children live and learn. The public sphere is the space generated in communicative action, Habermas (1996: 360) wrote:

The public sphere distinguishes itself through a communicative structure that is related to a third feature of communicative action: it refers neither to the functions nor to the contents of everyday communication but to the social space generated in communicative action.

The public sphere is reproduced through communicative action for everyday communicative practice. The public sphere is connected to the lifeworld and communicative action as an actor-world relation serves the three types of action oriented to mutual understanding, integration, and socialization (Habermas 1996: 80).

### **Lifeworld**

Habermas wrote of the lifeworld as a substitute that is constituted through ordinary language that enables translations of the codes and allows for communicative contact between the system and the lifeworld. The components of the lifeworld include “culture, society, and personality structures that differentiate themselves only within the boundaries of a multifunctional language but remain intertwined with one another through this medium” (Habermas 1996: 55). However, Habermas was clear that the lifeworld is not a large organization, an association, union, or a collective. Mr. Ernesto Saldana drives this example forth as he participates in the lifeworld as an attorney with background experiences in advocacy organizations, prior to working with Preschool California. He worked with elected officials in the Los Angeles area and was recruited to work with this advocacy organization, he stated, “Whatever public policy is, for me, it is

to work in diverse communities”. He combines the components of the lifeworld as described by Habermas, personality, culture and society.

The lifeworld has a horizon that shifts with the themes, is a segment of the context of relevance, and is articulated through goals and plans of action. The contexts are concentrically ordered and diffused with space and time as social distance grows (Habermas 1989: 168). Ms. Marcy Whitebook expressed concerns about the lifeworld as a leader and researcher on early childhood workforce issues, she stated,

We don’t do enough about how we work in a world that basically does not value what we do. People create policy and it is not immutable. People who had power, who played politics in a certain way, and who had certain interests, created it and those interests oftentimes have been divergent from interests of the people who work in the field and who really know more about children. We are not preparing people to work in a very complex political world.

Ms. Whitebook is nationally known as she has devoted her life to contributing to the knowledge base with her research on the workforce in preschool education. She is the founder and director of the important Center for the Study of Child Care Employment at the Industrial Relations Center, University of California at Berkeley. Habermas (1984: 341) wrote of action oriented to reaching an understanding as rationalization structures the knowledge system.

... if we differentiate rationally regulated action into action oriented to reaching understanding and action oriented to success can we conceive the communicative rationalization of every day action and the formation of subsystems of purposive-rational economic and administrative action as complementary developments. Both reflect, it is true, the institutional embodiment of rationality complexes; but in other respects they are counteracting tendencies.

The limited segments of a lifeworld brought into the horizon of a situation constitute a context of action oriented to mutual understanding and only then can they serve as “knowledge”. Therefore the lifeworld is a reservoir of knowledge “taken-for-

granted” as participants draw upon the cooperative processes of interpretation and it becomes relevant to a situation (Habermas 1989: 176). The knowledge comprising the contexts of relevance and the lifeworld is represented by culturally transmitted and linguistically organized interpretive patterns, which are therefore, “interconnected of meaning holding between a given communicative utterance, the immediate context and its connotative horizon of meanings” (Habermas 1989: 176). Mr. Saldana spoke with clarity about the meaning, context and the interconnectness, when he stated, “Sometimes we’re on the inside as well as the outside. It is hard to be in these roles. I think what we’re able to do is go to a conversation, bring pieces that we think are critical to the conversation, but always be able to listen and incorporate what our partners see”.

The lifeworld is related to how a person acting with an orientation to reach mutual understanding based on common definitions of situations ties everyday concepts for the narrative presentation of historical and sociological conditions. Habermas conceived of society as a system and a lifeworld. Habermas (1989: 169) further wrote,

For those involved, the action situation is the center of their lifeworld; it has a moveable horizon because it points to the complexity of the lifeworld. In a certain sense, the lifeworld to which participants in communication belong is always present, but only in such a way that it forms the background for an actual scene.

Stories told by Ms. Celia Ayala began with her sense of self, her lifeworld, as it was constituted by and reflective of her experiences. She expressed beliefs of a solitary acting subject as Habermas described an intentional actor who participates in “a language community is represented by numerous individual acts ... which are oriented to the expectation of gaining understanding from others for an intended meaning” (Habermas 1984: 280). Ms. Ayala is currently the Executive Director of Los Angeles Universal Preschool. She brings to this position a wealth of experience as an educator serving as a

principal in elementary education, providing resources to teachers, and also as an assistant superintendent in Riverside County. Ms. Ayala spoke of a particular situation working with migrant farm workers and stated, “It gave me a glimpse of what to do and what not to do”. In analyzing Max Weber’s theory of social action, Habermas made the distinction of the theory of consciousness as the “beliefs and intentions of an acting subject taken to begin in isolation”, which is fundamental for the “purposive activity of a solitary acting subject” (Habermas 1984: 279).

This is an example of this “purposive activity”, Marlene Zepeda, who is recognized for her work in professional development in preschool education in California, served as chair of the Child Development Department at the California State University at Los Angeles, and reveals in her conversation concerns about the lack of public engagement in the development of professional resources and policy documents developed by the California State Department of Education, Child Development Division. She insisted that she be engaged with others in the process of developing resources for the professional development of preschool educators dealing with dual language learners.

### **Communicative Action**

The concept of communicative action is the interaction between at least two individuals capable of both speech and action who by verbal or extra verbal means establish a relationship. In their relationship, they seek to reach an understanding about a situation, plan an action, and coordinate their action(s) by making an agreement. The achievement of understanding in language is a mechanism for coordinating action. In the process of communication, interpretation is when the definition of a situation is negotiated and consensus occurs. The actors use a reference system as an interpretive

framework in which they work out their common situation definitions within space and time. The three types of language modes in this theory include objective, social, and subjective. Thus, what appears to the speaker is objective, normative, or subjective. Communication is embedded in various relations at the same time and action relies on a cooperative process of interpretation relating to something simultaneously (Habermas 1989: 166). This interactive context is where communicative action is embedded and presupposes agreement on claims made by the participating individuals about themselves and their world.

Mr. Ray Hernandez provides an example of this as the director of services for young children at the University of Southern California and member of a state level advocacy group, called the Child Development Policy Institute (CDPI). He uses communicative action to take up a relationship to the lifeworld of preschool education. It is important to reinforce that Habermas separates speech acts that are oriented to reach an understanding from those that are incorporated into strategic action. Mr. Hernandez stated, “ Providing services directly makes a difference for me. I feel that when I’m speaking, people say...he is a service provider, and understands what we’re talking about, and so if I was just doing public policy work...people would say, what kind of credibility do you have?” Habermas describes this type of action as “oriented to agreement about certain claims and that some level of consensus is a condition of social reproduction” (1989: 17). He assessed all human action to involve language, and therefore, raise validity claims that can be accepted or contested. The experience of reaching mutual understanding in communication that is free of coercion is the basis of the Habermas’ idea of rationality. Habermas’ notion of reaching an understanding through communication for validity claims is supported by evidence and argument for



social action. Moreover, Habermas (1989: 170) described the opportunity to raise validity claims within the normative context of the speaker.

Each validity claim entails a specific relation between the self and the world; for example, truth claims presupposes a relation between the self and the objective world about which true statements are possible. Normative claims involve a relation of the self to a social world of normatively regulated action.

In the following Figure A., Habermas made the distinction in the types of linguistically mediated actions.

**Figure A. Pure Types of Linguistically Mediated Interactions**

		FORMAL-PRAGMATIC FEATURES					
		Characteristic Speech Acts	Functions of Speech	Action Orientations	Basic Attitudes	Validity Claims	World Relations
TYPES OF ACTION	Strategic Action	Perlocutions Imperatives	Influencing one's opposite number	Oriented to success	Objectivating	(Effectiveness)	Objective world
	Conversation	Constatives	Representation of states of affairs	Oriented to reaching understanding	Objectivating	Truth	Objective world
	Normatively Regulated Action	Regulatives	Establishment of interpersonal relations	Oriented to reaching understanding	Norm-conformative	Rightness	Social world
	Dramaturgical Action	Expressives	Self-representation	Oriented to reaching understanding	Expressive	Truthfulness	Subjective world

The process of communicative action, the idea of rationality, expression of validity claims for interpretation and social integration are considered in regard to the development of social action or policy. The notion of communicative rationality is an effort to defend both cognitive truths and normative claims as comprehensive notions of reason. Habermas wrote of the interpreted needs and the manner in which norms are established (Habermas 1989: 146).

A norm is ideally valid means that it deserves the assent of all those affected because it regulates problems of action in their common interest. That a norm is de facto established means by contrast that the validity claim with which it appears is recognized by those affected, and this intersubjective recognition grounds the social force or currency of the norm.

In addition, Habermas stressed that communicative action can only be conceptualized when the reason of force in it is acknowledged. This notion is important for Habermas' theory of communicative action that is inseparable from promoting a democratic social order. Habermas (1984: 341) wrote:

From the conceptual perspective of action oriented to reaching understanding, rationalization appears first as a restructuring of the lifeworld, as a process that exerts an influence on everyday communication by way of differentiation of knowledge systems, and that thus affects the forms of cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization.

The actor relationship is comprised of three components of communicative action that take up the practical relations to objective, subjective, and social worlds.

Communicative action depends on a cooperative process of interpretation between at least two actors when they thematically include one of the three components of speech and use a reference system as a framework to work on common situation definitions.

Habermas (1989: 167) wrote of the importance of the situation definitions.

The background of a communicative utterance is thus formed by situation definitions that, as measured against the actual need for mutual understanding have to overlap to a sufficient extent. The continual process of definition and redefinition involves correlating contents to worlds-according to what counts in a given instance as a consensually interpreted element of the objective world, as an intersubjectively recognized normative component of the social world, or as a private element of a subjective world to which someone has privileged access.

The definitions of situations include temporal and spatial elements of the normative framework and therefore, they can shift with the themes that are relevant at the point in time and space. What is relevant for a defining situation and its participants is the center of the lifeworld and is recognized as knowledge. The participants take what is defined as the situation. Habermas wrote, "the lifeworld appears as a taken-for-granted, of unshaken convictions that participants in communication draw upon in a cooperative

process of interpretation” (Habermas 1989: 170). The lifeworld is culturally transmitted and linguistically organized and interpreted through the language as knowledge.

The theme, which is mutually defined through communication, is the mark of a situation from the lifeworld of the participants, their needs, and plans for action. “Coming to an understanding means that participants in communication reach an agreement concerning the validity of an utterance; agreement is the intersubjective recognition of the validity claim the speaker raises for it” (Habermas 1989: 166). A rule of communicative action is that when there is a dissent of a validity claim, a participant acknowledges and makes this known. The concept of “always already” is familiar to the participants as everyday life situations are practiced through communicative action and composed of a cultural stock of their knowledge. Habermas referred to Piaget’s theory, which is useful for the conceptualizing of development that extends to worldviews as a whole, and that is to different dimensions of world-understanding simultaneously (Habermas 1984: 68). The participants in the process of reaching understanding draw on cultural traditions and also continue them, as they coordinate their tasks they function to maintain their membership in a social group by participating in interactions. The practice of communicative action in the process of situation definition is the construction of narratives about how one identifies and describes states and events and together organizes interactions in social spaces and historical times. Participants use the narrative form to describe everyday concepts of the lifeworld as a cognitive reference system.

The functional aspects of mutual understanding are served by communicative action to transmit and renew cultural knowledge by coordinating action and serving social integration. The aspect of socialization by communicative action contributes to the forming of personal identities; this is done by the continuation of valid knowledge and

the stabilization of the group participants as responsible actors. An example is when Ms. Sandy Baba relates as an actor through expressions to something in the world. To the extent that a formal reference system is differentiated, one can form a concept of the world, which opens interpretive and situation definitions. This process of socialization is the reproduction that connects new to existing situations in dimensions of social space within a historical time. Ms. Baba stated that her interests in the public sphere relate to the “tools”, or as Habermas’ wrote, “instrumentation” that sets the scientific rationality in the application for the social cultural tradition. Ms. Baba is concerned about the tools that are developed and used with, and on children who do not speak the English language or may bring a different cultural perspective. She stated, “We are working to ensure that California is moving toward an appropriate kindergarten assessment tool that is inclusive as well as culturally and developmentally appropriate”. Habermas wrote of scientific rationality as belonging to a “complex of cognitive-instrumental rationality” that goes beyond the context of particular cultures when claiming validity (Habermas 1984: 64). This process of “learning from” other cultures is linked to the concept of wisdom. As a leader in preschool education in California, Ms. Baba has applied her worldview, and with others is engaged in communicative action to influence practices and policies. In other words, this is the cultural tradition of integrated groups over time. This is the importance of the lifeworld; it is the cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization as structural components of the lifeworld, which are culture, society, and the person. As situations are defined, memberships to groups and coherence are essential elements of socialization. Habermas (1989: 176) wrote:

The socialization of the members of a lifeworld ensures that newly arising situations are connected up with existing situations in the world in the dimension of historical time: it secures for succeeding generations the acquisition of

generalized competencies for action and sees to it that individual life histories are in harmony with collective forms of life.

Habermas further speculated, that if culture provides sufficient valid knowledge for mutual understanding in a lifeworld, cultural reproduction consists in “legitimations for existing institutions, on the one hand, and socialization patterns for the acquisition of generalized competences for action” (Habermas 1989: 177). This is the central stock of knowledge incorporated into the normative reality. Habermas concluded that the further the processes and structures of the lifeworld become differentiated, the more interaction contexts come under conditions of rationally motivated understanding, which is the formation of consensus “that rests in the end on the authority of the better argument” (Habermas 1989: 181). Mr. Fitzharris is eloquent as he provides the differentiation of the lifeworld and can provide the ‘authority of the better argument’ that Habermas speaks of above. Mr. Fitzharris stated,

As a lobbyist, my work with the different councils...is to provide political advice. We can consider all the societal issues such as crime, teen pregnancy, school drop out rates...foster care, special education, probation and I know we need to work at the front end [of a child’s life], I remember...the connection between early education and the prison system and how effective it is, it can head off the achievement gap, graduation gaps, welfare dependency and crime engagement.

The structural differentiation of the lifeworld corresponds to the reproduction processes that include specialized tasks for cultural transmission and social integration in which child rearing, development, and education are examples of tasks that are carried out or executed professionally. What “binds individuals to one another and secures the integration of society is a web of communicative actions that thrives only in the light of cultural traditions, and not in systemic mechanisms that are out of the reach of a member’s institutive knowledge”. This process is what Habermas calls the fiction of

society, as we cannot suppose that actors are autonomous or independent of culture and that communication is transparent. These fictions do not allow for the validity claims on the stock base of knowledge to be criticized and explained on the intentions and decisions of those involved. Ms. Ayala stated, “I have credibility when I speak”, and acknowledged the influences of others. As an actor in the lifeworld of preschool education in the public sphere, she stated, “ I consider the policies that are relevant ... pros and cons, and alert policy makers to the possibilities”. Ms. Ayala has contact with policy makers that influence the lifeworld through instrumental action. Habermas (Habermas 1984: 69) wrote that this “interaction with other persons opens the way to growing constructively into the socially recognized system of moral norms”. When asked about the purpose of her work, Ms. Ayala responded, “One’s present thoughts determine one’s future”. This statement brings to mind Habermas’ (1984: xxiii) notion of ego identity.

... that centers around the ability to realize oneself under conditions of communicatively share intersubjectivity. The moment universality requires that actors maintain reflective relation to their own affective and practical natures that is that they act in a self-critical attitude.

### **Social Integration and Rationalization**

Those who have sought to engage and participate in the public sphere use the concept of communicative action as they provide their perspectives as speakers to officials, which in this study, and according to Habermas, are the hearers. The participants have sought consensus and measure it against truth, rightness, and sincerity and the fit or misfit between the speech act and the three worlds that Habermas outlined as the objective, social, and the subjective. Ms. Whitebook spoke of the social in an intersubjective manner. However she also included the objective, when she stated, “We

don't have robust, honest discussion about these issues. The level of political discourse is really scary to me—it is sort of non-existent". Rationalization of the lifeworld makes possible an integration of systems; however, in his theory of communicative action, Habermas (Habermas 1984: 343), acknowledged that it "enters into competition with the integration principle of reaching understanding, and under certain conditions has a disintegrative effect on the lifeworld". Stories shared by Ms. Whitebook reflected work toward social integration with those in preschool education and in social systems generally. She explained, "I have been working with others around compensation and helping people to finance their education. I did the research and understand the problems". This is the "purposive-rational action" Habermas described. He wrote that this action is "concerned with everyday practice in lifeworld contexts and must, therefore, take into account all forms of interaction". He acknowledged that society, community, and culture couldn't be detached from the economic and political subsystems (Habermas 1984: 5).

In conversation with Ms. Ana Trujillo, she acknowledged the contributions parents make and values "bringing in the culture, the language, and just having a place at the table to make sure that it happens". This statement is critical as Ms. Trujillo is the director of the federal Head Start program for the Santa Clara County Office of Education mandated to serve children living below the federal poverty guidelines. Federal regulations require that parents be engaged in making policy decisions within the frame of national policy. In Santa Clara County, the majority of the children served by this program speak a language other than English in the home, mostly Spanish, Vietnamese and Cambodian. Habermas (Habermas 1989: 57) wrote, "the grammar of ordinary language governs not only the connection of symbols by also the interweaving of

linguistic elements, action patterns, and expressions”. It is evident in the commitment and affiliation to her work that these patterns and expressions are connected in Ms. Trujillo’s actions. Habermas (Habermas 1989: 44) wrote, “goals and functional utility are not independent variables. They are reciprocal interaction within the scope of decision-making”.

Also, in the conversation, Ms. Trujillo speaks of herself as an immigrant child and difficulty she experienced when she came to this country at the age of ten. She had to depend on others to help her in school until she was able to command the English language. The lifeworld constitutes language and culture as participants moving within their language experience something objective, subjective, or normative. Habermas wrote that language remains “at the backs” of the participants and of culture as transmitted in language. He wrote, “For the semantic capacity of a language has to be adequate to the complexity of the stored up cultural contents, the patterns of interpretation, valuation, and expression” (Habermas 1989: 170). Communicative actions as “always already” moving however, are limited and changed by the structural transformation of society. In a practical analysis, the aim is to shape the lifeworld. Habermas (Habermas 1984: 75) emphasized, “our understanding of the world proves to be the most important dimension of the development of worldviews”. This is about the actor in the world and relations presupposed by the connections that are the social action and the actor-world relations established in the theories of action (Habermas 1984: 76). He further wrote, “worldviews are constitutive not only for processes of reaching understanding but for the social integration and the socialization of individuals as well” (Habermas 1984: 64).



It is the concept of social integration that is of interest to the researcher in conversation with Ms. Baba as she described having “mentors I have met on the way are folks of color because they really have the personal and professional experience of serving the community”. Ms. Baba is a manager in the organization WestEd for an innovative program called the Power of Preschool, in Santa Clara County where she provides resources to school districts, community organizations and home based services to enhance the level of quality of services to preschool children. She is also engaged in monitoring and evaluation, as the project is a state demonstration. She is recognized as having keen financial and programmatic skills in the delivery of multiple funding streams, which require complex management skills. As a young woman and emerging leader, she has a particular sense of appreciation for the support provided by other women who are also immigrants. Ms. Baba was raised in Hong Kong and came to this country as an adolescent.

The process of reaching understanding is set against a background of culturally fixed preunderstanding of the context and only the knowledge applied or made use of is put to the test. According to Habermas, “... only those analytical theories of meaning are instructive that start from the structure of linguistic expressions than from the speakers’ intentions” (Habermas 1984: 275). Furthermore, in order to analyze meanings, a definition of the situation establishes an order that includes the three worlds of objective, social, and subjective, and thus brings the problem of interpretation and requires the two external worlds of the actors to engage in communication to establish “their” lifeworlds. This is an external situation that provides for the context of the communication. Both speakers and hearers understand the meanings of sentences when they know that the conditions are true (Habermas 1984: 276). Accordingly, Habermas recognized that

stability and absence of ambiguity are the exception in everyday practice of communicative action (Habermas 1984: 100).

Language is the medium of communication as individuals pursue their interests, express their feelings, and come to understanding with others to coordinate their actions. Habermas (Habermas 1984: 101) distinguished the communicative model of action from action with communication.

Concepts of social action are distinguished, however, according to how they specify the coordination among goal-directed actions of different participants: as the interlacing of egocentric calculations of utility (thereby the degree of conflict and cooperation varies with the given interest positions); as a socially integrating agreement about values and norms instilled through cultural tradition and socialization; as a consensual relation between players and their publics; or as reaching understanding in the sense of a cooperative process of interpretation.

Habermas focused on the cultural underpinnings of society that bring concerns about institutional order and problems related to maintaining a democratic public realm. Social rationalization is the form for problems of legitimation, social integration, and democratization. In the next section, a discussion about the distinction between social systems and the theory of communicative action provides an analysis of the public policy that pertain to children in early education and the women who take the responsibility for their care and development in social settings that do not adequately recognize or integrate their voice. The lack of recognition or social integration relates to the denial of civil rights and manifests in not being able to participate in the shaping of the public will. The need for self-assertion was referred to by the conversation participants and relates to the indignation from an inability to contribute to advances in the rule of law and of rights. (Greisch 2010: 107).

### **Communicative Action and Implications for Public Policy**

The theory of communicative action demands that obstacles to communication be removed for a better functioning of the social system and the creation of conditions for discussion and resolution of practical issues (Thompson & Held 1982: 6) or what Habermas calls “purposive-rational action”. Habermas’ inquiry into the public sphere led him to conclude that this is where “matters of general interest can be discussed, where differences of opinion can be settled by rational argumentation” (Thompson et al 1982: 4), and which is the formation and the disintegration of social life.

Philosopher John Rawls described a “well ordered society” as one that is regulated by public perception of justice, which is mutually recognized, a fair system of cooperation, and an effective system of regulation (Rawls 2001: 10). In this context, the implications brought forward by Habermas as social integration must be considered in light of how this recognition, cooperation, and regulation are applied in society. This is a fundamental notion about unity and a basic structure providing a social framework. “Justice as fairness hopes to extend the idea of a fair agreement to the basic structure itself”, and Rawls acknowledged this is the point of difficulty for any conception of justice (Rawls 2001: 10). When taking into account the care and development of young children, the need of those involved should be the focus of the welfare or social programs in the United States to meet the basic requirements of justice. However, in the Ethics of Care, Virginia Held (Held 2006: 41) wrote,

It seems to me that justice and care as values each involve associated clusters of moral considerations, and these considerations are different. Actual practices should usually incorporate both care and justice but with appropriately different priorities. For instance, the practice of child care employees in a child care center should have as its highest priority the safeguarding and appropriate development of children, including meeting their emotional as well as physical and educational needs. Justice should not be absent.

The question then becomes, how are agreements reached in society? Habermas described the process of reaching understanding and agreement. “These relations are sustained at the level of language and governed by the rules of communicative action; they crystallize around an institutional core which secures a specific form of social integration” (Thompson et al 1982: 10) and ultimately a "pacemaker" of social evolution. Habermas wrote that communicative action in the public sphere provides for the guarantee of solutions to “social problems that threaten integration”. He further posited, “Politics must indeed be able to communicate via the medium of the law, with all of the other legitimately ordered spheres of action, however these may be structured and steered” (Habermas 1998: 252). Early education has grown as a subject of public interest-its institutionalization can be a force for good; however some of the fundamental issues inherent in the growth about the spheres of action to define the practice, expertise, and management have been framed in a technical format about what works. The competing values and experiences raised by the conversation participants contest concepts and therefore, present alternative sets of options. Public policy formation by social institutions removes processes away from those that can raise contestability, into a field of consensual rationality, which involves the application of experts. What is confounding in early education in California and nationally is that there exists a patchwork of regulations administered by states, and a few federal programs, however no policy exists for the profession. The National Association for the Education of Young Children has a set of standards that are voluntary. In *Ethics and Politics in Early Childhood Education*, Dahlberg and Moss (Dahlberg & Moss 2005: 127) apply Rose’s theory about government structures when they state, “Experts, in turn, apply ‘technologies of government’, in

particular numbers which ‘appear to depoliticize whole areas of political judgment, the apparent objectivity of numbers and those manipulate them [helping] reconfigure the respective boundaries of the political and the technical’.

The principles of justice of social institutions within a basic structure as defined by Rawls (Rawls 2001:11) as three levels, “... moving from the inside outward: first, local justice (applying directly to institutions and associations); second, domestic justice (principles applying to the basic structure of society); and finally, global justice (principles applying to international law)”. Social policies are considered as they are constructed, and are a means to build a political conception and a way to think about justice. This view is about practical political possibilities “allowed by the laws and tendencies of the social world” (Rawls 2001: 9). Rawls further wrote, “one should not assume in advance that principles that are reasonable and just for the basic structure are also reasonable and just for institutions, associations, and social practices generally” (Rawls 2001: 11). Precisely because principles and values shape public policies, preschool services are determined by a range of related policies and the practices comprised of the elements such as types of service provision, workforce requirements, content, and regulations about safety and health. These policies and regulations are the mechanisms of government, the blueprints for delivery and behind [them] “lie the ideas of how society is and should be, the bundles of theories, tradition, values, understandings and rationalities which shape and justify action” (Dahlberg & Moss 2005: 129).

The importance and relevance of Habermas’ critical theory merits discussion about its application to, and in consideration for, the framing of aspects of everyday life to further view the social world Rawls described. In consideration for the importance of Rawls notion of justice and its application to the individuals that clearly are not part of

the conversations related to their own lifeworld, the ethic of justice is taken in a utilitarian approach, however it requires the abstract and universal principles to which individuals could agree. In the Ethics of Care, Held (Held2006: 63) wrote of Rawls' Theory of Justice,

It sees justice as the most important basis on which to judge the acceptability of political and social arrangements. It insists on respecting persons through recognition of their rights and provides moral constants within which individuals may pursue their interests. It seeks fair distribution of positions of differential power and of the benefits of economic activity.

Social and political situations are considered in this context as policies, given that it is primarily women who care for the development of children and the lack of access to education means the young children in their care do not benefit from high-quality services. This social world defined by poverty is the focus of studies and attempts at framing of policies by the United Nations. A recent study found that the denial of human rights creates unjust conditions. The report stated, "If poverty is to be seen as the denial of human rights, it should be recognized that women among the poor suffer doubly for the denial of their human rights—first on account of gender inequality, second on account of poverty" (Moghadam 2005: 1). These policies can be viewed as the expansion of the political terrain, in other words, more of the same. In *Postmodern Revisionings of the Political* (1994), Yeatman delineates core assumptions and values of modern democratic politics that can be contested and have relevance to preschool services. The politics of epistemology first raises questions of objective knowledge on which truth claims can be built, as knowledge is "enmeshed with power". Some of the conversation participants in this study identified that some of the knowledge applied in early education should be open for contestation, and can be the stimulus for discussion and their value is in part, the ability to generate and further ideas and argumentation. Secondly, another core

assumption is that of the politics of representation, which concerns the question of whose perspectives have legitimacy. Yeatman (1994: 30) wrote,

Central to this politics is the two fold strategic question: whose representations prevail? Who has authority to represent reality? To put the question differently: who must be silenced in order that these representations prevail? Whose voice is deprived of authority so that they may prevail?

The politics of representation, and the argumentation of such is that of the potential to open public spaces where issues can be raised. The importance is that in so doing, the “politics of difference refuses to any group a privileged position of objectivity” (Yeatman 1994: 30) on any subject. No individual or group has views which merit representation over those of others; what is possible is that differently positioned groups or individuals come together to offer different perspectives.

### **Conclusion**

The growth of female-headed households, research on the social influences of child development, and persistence of poverty over time have led to research on the potential to create new life possibilities for young children. My purpose was to deepen the understanding of how this attention and research influences women and children’s lives in the specific domain of educational attainment and achievement. When early educators have access to education, they are given the opportunity to enhance future life choices and opportunities for the children in their charge. The developing child is influenced by poverty, which can manifest as illiteracy, a short life expectancy, and a lack of material resources (Moghadam 2005: 4). Throughout this study, preschool services have been considered in light of connected forces such as the dominant discourses in public policy of cost benefits, increasing human potential, and the institutionalization of regulations. Another essential element has been the notion of social

justice and policies that have been applied that perpetuate injustices. Although there are various meanings of justice and interpretations from different perspectives, this researcher has framed the presentation as one in which relations with others is at the core. A respect for otherness is where the notion of justice is applied in this study; it is a response to a situation in which the other is in need or is suffering, that responsibility is demanded. Preschool services for young children in need, and access to educational attainment for those adults who take the responsibility for their care and development, is considered a means to alleviate the suffering of poverty and injustice. One issue that surfaces time and again in the literature is the distribution of material resources and social position. Preschool opportunities for children in this country are considered a means to achieve a level of social justice as social institutions have the potential to address distributive justice and solutions to the alleviation of poverty. Early education is viewed as contributing to maternal employment, however structural and power forces and relationships remain unequal despite the growth in services, therefore the notion of distributive justice has several dimensions. Fraser (Fraser 1997: 11) suggests distinguishing between material redistribution and recognition of differences. She argues that the struggle for recognition “is fast becoming the paradigmatic form of political conflict in the late twentieth century”.



## **CHAPTER FIVE: POLICY INFLUENCES THE LEWORLD OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN: FINDINGS, SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS**

### **Introduction**

Profound changes over the past decades have dramatically altered the landscape for early education policy and the practice of service delivery. The research in several disciplines including health care and education have led to major advances that influence whether children get a promising or worrisome start in life.

The following summary and conclusion for this study take a historical view of how women and young children's lives have been influenced by public policy, how the concept of justice and fairness; or lack thereof, is embedded in the current landscape for public law and regulations that govern public preschool services. The review and analysis provided in prior chapters take Jurgen Habermas' theory of communicative action and the public sphere to understand how a selected and representative group of individuals working to provide leadership for public policy in preschool services view the challenges and issues concerning their personal, professional and societal role in this sphere.

The following section reveals some of the difficulties and challenges that are presented for the development of responsive policies to elevate the educational attainment of the women caring for the learning and development of young children. The change in family structures, the numbers of families living below the federal poverty guidelines, and the lack of support for women and children all contribute to the understanding of how policy evolved over time.

The literature review presented in Chapter Two of this study begins with a review of policy after World War II, however, what follows starts with the last four decades, as significant social changes have more recently been considered relevant in the research.

### **Summary of Preschool Policy: A National View**

In the 1970's in the United States, family structures were dramatically changing. Female heads of households were growing and the term feminization of poverty became a means of describing this phenomenon (Pearce 1978). Moreover, the high rate of poverty among female heads of households increased, consistent with the growing numbers of children who were poor. By the 1980's, almost half of all poor in the United States lived in families headed by women. Preschool education is a field primarily comprised of women, a large percentage of them are living in poverty as a result of the lack of access to education, and the result has been chronic low wages.

The increase of young children and women living in poverty is ultimately linked to the economic and social policies of a society. Public policies in this context are considered in light of Habermas' theory, as he wrote, "... the ability to assume its proper function determines whether the exercise of domination and power persists as a negative constant, as it were, of history—or whether as a historical category itself, it is open to substantive change" (Habermas 1991: 250). Welfare reform in the United States is one such example of major legislative and policy change that has resulted in social costs of poverty (United Nations Development Programme 1995: 41). As the negative constant of history, Habermas' theories of communicative action and public sphere and the sub themes of lifeworld, social integration and rationalization are considered in this study.

## **Findings**

I found in conversation with others, and in the analysis of the data, that they revealed concerns about social isolation, marginalization, and the lack of support for early educators in public policy formation in California. Four of the ten conversation participants are immigrants; a few others are first generation whose parents were immigrants. In the protocols, these participants expressed clearly and concisely the notion that processes related to the formation of policy and delivery of services do not sufficiently or effectively take into account the diversity of cultures and languages that young children bring to programs. This representative group of participants included administrators of direct services, university faculty, and advocates working at the local, state, and national levels. They all expressed serious concerns that this society is not developing policy that is using the knowledge gained from research to make the difference for thousands of children that may benefit from participating in preschool and early childhood development services.

The intergenerational transmission of poverty from mothers to daughters is seen in the literature as characteristic of households headed by women who have had children at an early age, do not complete a secondary education, experience difficulty in the labor market, and lack affordable child care and preschool education, which would in turn, enable them to hold employment and afford quality early childhood services. As equal citizens, women have the same rights as men; however, the persistence of poverty among women and children raises the question of how to establish such equality in society.

Rawls (Rawls 2001: 11) posited:

... to establish equality between men and women in sharing the work of society, in preserving its culture and in reproducing itself overtime, special provisions are needed in family law (and no doubt elsewhere) so that the burden of bearing,

raising, and educating children does not fall more heavily on women, thereby undermining their fair equality of opportunity.

Habermas developed the theory of the public sphere as he traced the emergence of forums in the eighteenth century when social reproduction was dependent on institutions and was considered to “anticipate and articulate the interests of the community” (Thompson et al 1982: 4). Habermas described these policies and structures as social institutions. He wrote that persons become individualized through socialization and what is required is the consistent actualization of the system of rights (Habermas 1998: 208). The politics of equality follows a pattern that is described as dialectic of de jure and de facto equality. Habermas (Habermas 1998: 208) wrote:

Equality under the law grants freedoms of choice and action that can be realized differently and thus do not promote actual quality in life circumstances or positions of power. The factual prerequisites for the equal opportunity to make use of equally distributed legal competence must certainly be fulfilled if the normative meaning of legal equality is not to turn into its opposite.

The goal of economic and social policies was to guarantee women equal opportunities to compete for jobs, social standing, education, and political power. There was an assumption that the basic structure of social institutions addressed all of its citizens; however, it is clear that social welfare policies were needed to protect a sector that represents women in society. In the Ethics of Care, Held (Held 2006: 65) suggested a feminist point of view related to the plight of women with children,

Practices to ensure bringing up children in the best possible ways should perhaps have the highest priority of all, along with education. What a change from recent years that might be, where in the United States most parents are left to scrounge as best they can for the few expensive places available for adequate child care, and may children grow up deeply deprived while social programs of all kinds are sacrificed in the race for global economic and military dominance.

Habermas wrote of this need for specific policies, “Social welfare policies, especially in the areas of social, labor, and family law, responded to this with social regulations regarding pregnancy, motherhood, and the social burdens of divorce” (Habermas 1998: 209). These, he posited, have become the objects of criticism as they have contributed to the over representation of women in low wage brackets such as in those in early education and child welfare and those enduring the deleterious influences of poverty. Economists and policy analysts contended that structural factors negatively influence the behavior of adults and their children when the welfare state provides perverse incentives that reward single-mother households and joblessness among men (Wilson 1996). Habermas wrote of in the domain of law, “... social-welfare paternalism is precisely that, because legislation and adjudication are oriented to traditional patterns of interpretation and thus serve only to strengthen existing gender stereotypes” (Habermas 1998: 209). People’s lives are influenced by social regulations and structured by social institutions. Habermas (Habermas 1998: 210) furthers this notion when he wrote:

Individual rights that are supposed to guarantee women the autonomy to shape their private lives cannot even be appropriately formulated unless those affected articulate and justify in public discussion what is relevant to equality or unequal treatment in typical cases. Safeguarding the private autonomy of citizens with equal rights must go hand in hand with activating their autonomy as citizens of the nation.

The societal issues of women and children are not considered minority issues according to Habermas; they are those of the dominant culture that exclude equal rights. Gender specific differences in life circumstances and experiences do not receive sufficient consideration and due recognition; therefore, women and their children’s needs cannot be adequately articulated (Habermas 1998: 211). The interpretation of gender-

specific interests “changes the relationship between the sexes and the collective identity of women, thereby, directly affecting men’s understanding of themselves as well” (Habermas: 1998: 211).

### **Implications**

In 2000, the United States poverty rate was about 13 percent and the majority of the poor were women and children (Witte 2004). By 2006, nearly 18 percent (17.4 percent) lived below the poverty threshold (Magnuson et al 2009: 153).

#### **Implication:**

Children from low-income households experience lower-quality home environments than their advantaged peers and are less likely to attend preschool or other learning experiences that enhance their development. These differences explain some of poverty’s effects on children’s education achievement (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn 2000).

#### **Recommendation:**

Social welfare mechanisms are needed to address the enhancement of entitlements and to alleviate poverty and positively influence the life chances of women and children. The poverty-inducing nature of the economic policies and their dire effects on women and children provide an opportunity for the application of the theories of public sphere and communicative action; however, the lifeworld, social integration and rationalization must also be considered.

#### **Implication:**

The lifeworld for women and children living in poverty is comprised of experiences where the values and institutions of a society deem them to be marginalized and not integrated, which threaten their very society. That is, “the consensual foundations

of normative structures are so much impaired that the society becomes anomic” (Thompson et al 1982: 188).

**Recommendation:**

Social integration must first be achieved if communicative action in the formation of public policies is to be realized. If all persons of a society must be recognized as members of ethical communities integrated around different conceptions of good, the ethical and “political integration of citizens ensures loyalty to the common political culture. The latter is rooted in an interpretation of constitutional principles from the perspective of the nation’s historical experience. To this extent, the interpretation cannot be ethically neutral” (Habermas 1998: 225).

**Summary of Implications**

When taking into account the history of paternalistic policies practiced against women and children, it is particularly alarming when referring to the validity claims of everyday life and the cultural traditions that may be used to sort out the questions of truth, justice, or societal inequities. There is a long history of attempts to remedy social situations that comprise a lifeworld that is denigrating to groups and to society. As noted earlier, this is not a minority issue; indeed it is reflective of the dominant culture. Habermas acknowledged that “social systems are not wholly comprised of such lifeworld contexts reproduced through communicative action; only to the degree that they are, does the rational internal structure of the mechanism of reaching understanding also affect society” (Thompson et al 1982: 235).

In the book “Habermas: Critical Debates”, editors Thompson and Held analyzed Habermas’ theory as too general and acknowledged that there may be a lack of consensus about norms, values, and beliefs. Held wrote that a “dual consciousness” is often

expressed in everyday life and events. This dual consciousness reflects divisions between the “rich and poor, the rulers and ruled” and many institutions and processes are perceived as “natural, the way things have been and always will be, the language used to express and account for immediate needs and their frustration often reveals a marked penetration of ideology or dominant interpretative systems” (Thompson et al 1982: 189).

Women and children are more vulnerable to exploitative conditions. Women earn less money and work more than men in similar work situations and their capacity to lift themselves out of poverty is affected by cultural, legal, and economic constraints. Habermas’ concepts are complex, however from the theory of action, he distinguished the institutionalization of behavioral patterns of the organization within the division of labor and of the elements of one another. This distinction is a combination of communicative and instrumental action (Thompson et al 1982: 268) as the material exchange processes are analyzed as functional interconnections and self-regulation systems. The life conditions of those living in poverty are exacerbated by economic policies and the unequal distribution of resources, creating the lack of human rights for women and children, which could serve as essential ingredients for their struggle against poverty.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

The implications of the findings for further research are extensive. The following highlight some topics that were revealed by this study and may bring attention to the importance of communicative action in policy formation of early education.

Topic: Languages and cultures of children, families, and early educators are diverse.

The range and variety of languages and cultural diversity that children, families, and early educators represent should serve as the foundation to view the formation of policy consistent with the science of child development.



Topic: Data can inform policy formation.

Not enough is known about the women that comprise the early education profession who take the responsibility for the care and development of young children. There is no consistent or timely gathering of data to inform policy formation.

Topic: Early educators' voices are needed to inform policy makers.

Reaching understanding in the realm of the public sphere is not as inclusive as one may assume. The conversation participants expressed that they play a role in public policy processes as they engage with professional associations and as individuals; this engagement has not come with feelings of inclusion or being valued. The civic engagement processes currently applied include focus groups, stakeholder meetings, and public comment and hearings by state public entities responsible for public services in California. These processes can be assessed for effectiveness and inclusivity of early educators.

Topic: The early education profession needs societal recognition.

Participants took an assertive stance with public policy processes to voice their opinion. Many still believed that others critical to the discourse for policy development are not included. The profession is presented with special challenges because it has not yet received or achieved societal recognition, albeit individuals passionately work to provide high-quality learning environments for young children.

**Summary**

Consistent with Habermas' notion of the lifeworld, communicative action is the same medium through which the symbolic structures are reproduced and the instrumental actions take place that intervene in the material lifeworld. The material exchange process can be analyzed as functional interconnections. Habermas posited, "What stands behind

validity claims in communicative action are reasons as a security reserve, rather than sanctions or gratifications, force, or money, with which one can influence the choice situation of another in strategic action” (Thompson et al 1982: 270). Therefore, the communicative action in the context of the early education services in California is a “practice of everyday life ... immersed in a sea of cultural taken-for-grantedness that is of consensual certainties” (Thompson et al 1982: 272).

Poverty and the influences and concerns about its causes have deep roots in the United States. Economic growth after World War II spurred efforts to eradicate poverty for young children and their families, but social and economic policies have exacerbated its influences. Today, it is still a topic of politics, or as Habermas’ would have it, in the public sphere; however, without social integration, communicative action cannot be actualized in public policy or realized by society. In a postmodern context, poverty predates the development of economic strategies to deal with it and social interventions to alleviate its influences.

Interventions aimed directly at women and children have the potential to serve as a policy lever for enhancing the life chances of children through educational attainment, however this social transformation will require a replacement of what is thought of as knowledge of the ways people think and behave at almost all levels, of institutions, culture, and society. Consistent with feminist thought, Held thought a better solution to these issues would be to, “seek an ordering of society along cooperative lines that foster mutual trust and caring. As an ideal, a democratic political system may seek to treat citizens equally” (Held 2006: 152).

The research relating to child development and preschool services in California is complex; however, it also reflects both research and policy opportunities that can bring

cost benefits to society and a level of social integration of both women and children by casting a light on the deleterious influences of poverty and inequity. The notion of justice was discussed throughout this study as a means to address the social inequities of children living in poverty and also the lack of access to quality preschool services, how is justice served as it relates to young children that do not have a voice in the public sphere? How are women marginalized or alienated to the point that their voices are not valued in the public sphere related to their own education?

Policies depend on social institutions, which also provide public spheres or spaces which serve as forums to which the public has access, where individuals encounter others and find meanings and issues that they can identify with, communicate about with others, and can take action, if appropriate. If preschools are constituted and constructed as public spaces, open to all that have a need, they can be one of the spaces where communicative action can be exercised. This ideal situation is what Habermas espoused as deliberative democracy, as the possibility of rational consensus arrived at through free, unconstrained public deliberation between free and equal citizens. How can preschool settings contribute to this deliberative process for early educators and parents? This is another potential subject for research.

Critics of Habermas' posit that he does take into account those that see conflict, different interests, and alterity as viable processes to reach agreement (Dahlberg & Moss 2005: 152); these areas also present areas for future research. However, in this study, the processes to reach agreement certainly offer a lens by which to broaden the view of social integration, rationalization and lifeworld, sub themes of communicative action in the public sphere and frame the policies of early education in California and the United States.

It has been written by social scientists that no single policy response will be sufficient to break the link between poverty and child outcomes (Magnuson & Votruba-Drzal 2009). However, alleviating childhood poverty can contribute to improving the life outcomes of thousands of children by engaging the women who take the responsibility for their care, development, and learning in communicative action as a means of reaching agreements on public policy for the provision of high-quality preschool services.

### **Personal Statement**

The summary reviews the purpose of the study, findings of the data analysis, and the implications for further research. Also, it ties my previous educational pursuits in education, child welfare, and public policy and a few decades of work in early childhood education and family support services.

I have had a commitment to understand the formation of public policy pertaining to young children and families for a few decades. I have worked directly on public policy at the national level as a Ford fellow placed in the U.S. Health and Human Services Department. In this position I tracked legislative markups for child welfare bills, studied public policy in graduate school at the University of Chicago, and connected these activities to the practice of providing preschool education services in local communities.

My professional and personal interests have included supporting educational attainment and quality of resources for the adults—primarily women—responsible for the development and education of young children in California. My interests have increased through the analysis of research that reveals several significant concepts. First, the significance of a child's relationships and how environments influence and mitigate negative factors for positive life outcomes. Second, that caring and intentional adults contribute to the development of children. Finally, that experienced and knowledgeable

early educators can create powerful learning contexts for children. In California however, the quality services are minimal at best, due to the lack of supportive policies for early education.

I entered the doctoral program at the University of San Francisco, School of Education, Organizational Development and Leadership with the intention of focusing on how early educators use reflective practice, develop skills to improve their practice, enhance preschool experiences to improve child outcomes, and ultimately, participate in forums related to public policy that influence their profession. The engagement of early educators in state level forums, and professional development activities is considered a means to accomplish quality improvement efforts. I found this approach narrow and insufficient to contribute to public policy in California. I turned to critical hermeneutics to develop a broader lens to understand how making agreements within the concepts of justice in the public sphere can be applied to early education services. I have had the opportunity to engage in the study of critical hermeneutics with the guidance of my advisor, Ellen Herda. I became immersed in Jurgen Habermas' theory of communicative action, which contributed to my understanding of how individuals act with others to make agreements on actions in the public sphere, and how these theories may relate to the social development of young children. I selected two theoretical categories developed by Jurgen Habermas, communicative action and public sphere. In addition, as I analyzed the data through conversations with selected participants engaged in policy formation, there were several sub themes that were revealed from this analysis. The most prominent sub themes that emerged are: lifeworld, social integration, and rationalization.

I began this study with an interest in how those charged with professional development of early educators participate in the policy arena. I found a consensus from

my conversation participants that there is little engagement; moreover, there is little interplay between public policy, their experiences, or voices. I continue to be intrigued by the complexities of how understanding is reached and agreements are made in the public sphere that influence the lives of thousands of early educators and families with young children.

This study has revealed that little is understood about the process of communicative action in the public sphere, even though the awareness of the value of the investment in intervention and prevention services provided in preschool settings seemingly has evolved in the public sphere. There does not exist a body of knowledge related to the importance of making agreements by reaching understanding with others in the profession. Further research can contribute to the intentionality of those working with children and has the potential to open new possibilities for children and families, and ultimately for the common good. I will continue to seek to understand how to engage those adults responsible for preschool services, and affirm my interest and dedication to contribute to the public sphere regarding early education and preschool services for young children in California.

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