

The peculiar family business of family child care: Policy and regulation affecting emotional labour in caregiving ^[1]

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Excerpt from dissertation abstract

In Ontario, Canada's licensed family child care system, there is a dissonance between expectations embedded in state-licensed family child care regulation and policy, and the lived experience of regulated family child care providers. Gender, social class and more recently, race/ethnicity intersect to exacerbate complicated working conditions for the care providers leading to poor recognition and financial compensation from both parents and the state. I have combined an analysis of the historical development of the care model with my own qualitative investigation of the everyday experience of 11 regulated care providers in Toronto, their material circumstances and the emotional labour they invest in caring for young children. Detailing the historical development of the system shows that the core elements of the contemporary care model can be traced through its child welfare lineage dating from 19th century child saving, and from foster care to family child care, which remains largely unchanged since the inception of regulation in 1978. The elements I have examined are the role of the mandatory home visitor in relation to the care provider and their occupational segregation; the bureaucratic expectations of the state as implemented in a private domain; and the social construction of the care provider as someone who requires surveillance to provide quality care for children, particularly because of her vulnerable location as a low-income, self-employed worker. I have identified these elements for discussion to support a case for change in the contemporary care model. Poor recognition and compensation have been compounded by the deeply entrenched funding model dependent on child care fee subsidies to parents. This circular challenge of an outdated funding model supporting outdated gendered assumptions about a care model is at the heart of the puzzle to solve for jurisdictions that have foisted self-employment on regulated care providers working in their own homes. I conclude with policy and research recommendations for licensed family child care agencies and the Ontario government.

Region: Ontario ^[4]

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