



**Educator perceptions of early learning environments  
as places and spaces for privileging social justice  
in rural areas**

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equal safety social  
diversity equity children  
family community  
individuals justice  
connectedness fairness  
philosophy relationships context  
security access interactions  
resources flexibility care support



## The Research Question

**How do Early Childhood Educators perceive early learning environments as places and spaces for privileging social justice in rural areas?**

1. What aspects of social justice occur in the early childhood services?
2. What are the successes and challenges educators face in engendering social justice in the early childhood services?
3. In what ways do curricular and other programming documents facilitate learning about social justice?
4. What ongoing professional learning about social justice issues, and opportunities to mentor or be mentored, are there for early childhood educators in rural settings?





# Data Analysis

## Initial analysis: Thematic analysis

**PHASE 1:** Becoming familiar with the data

**PHASE 2:** Generating initial codes

**PHASE 3:** Searching for themes

**PHASE 4:** Reviewing themes

**PHASE 5:** Defining and naming themes

**PHASE 6:** Final analysis and write up

(adapted from  
Braun & Clarke, 2006)



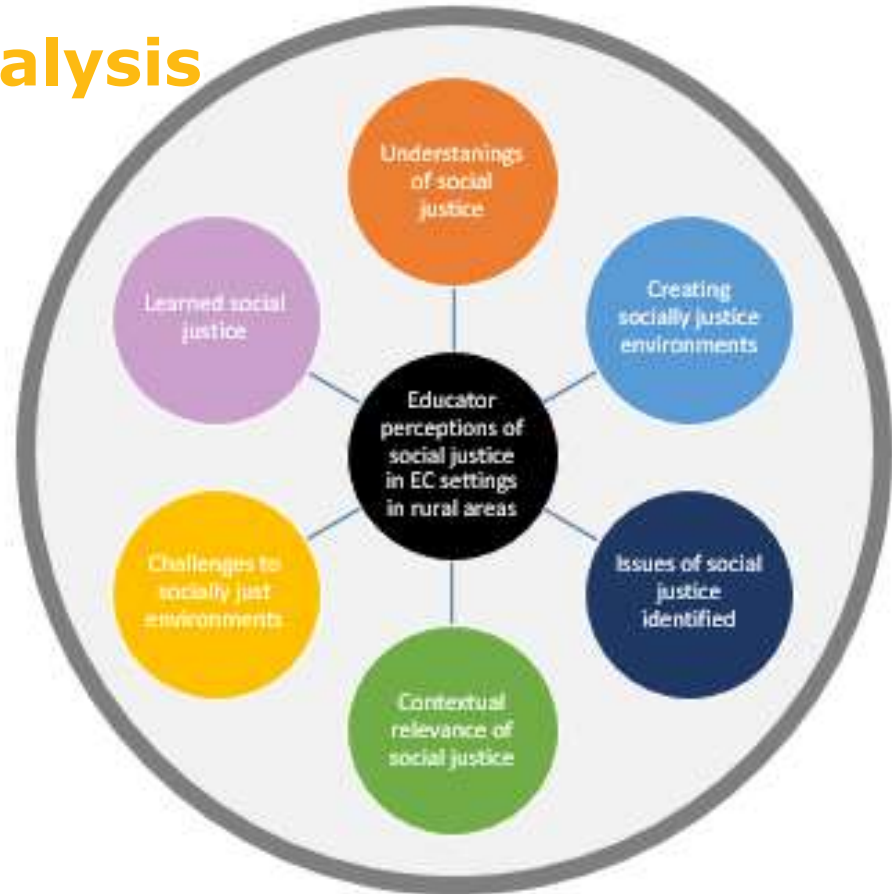
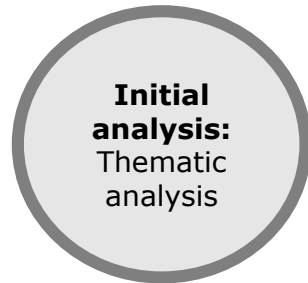
## Analysis for deeper meaning: Place and Space Lens

- the **resources** they use,
- **rules and routines** they introduce,
- the **relationships** they develop that are specific to this place
- the **meaning that forms from stories** about what has happened in this place.

(Green, 2006; Green & Turner, 2017)

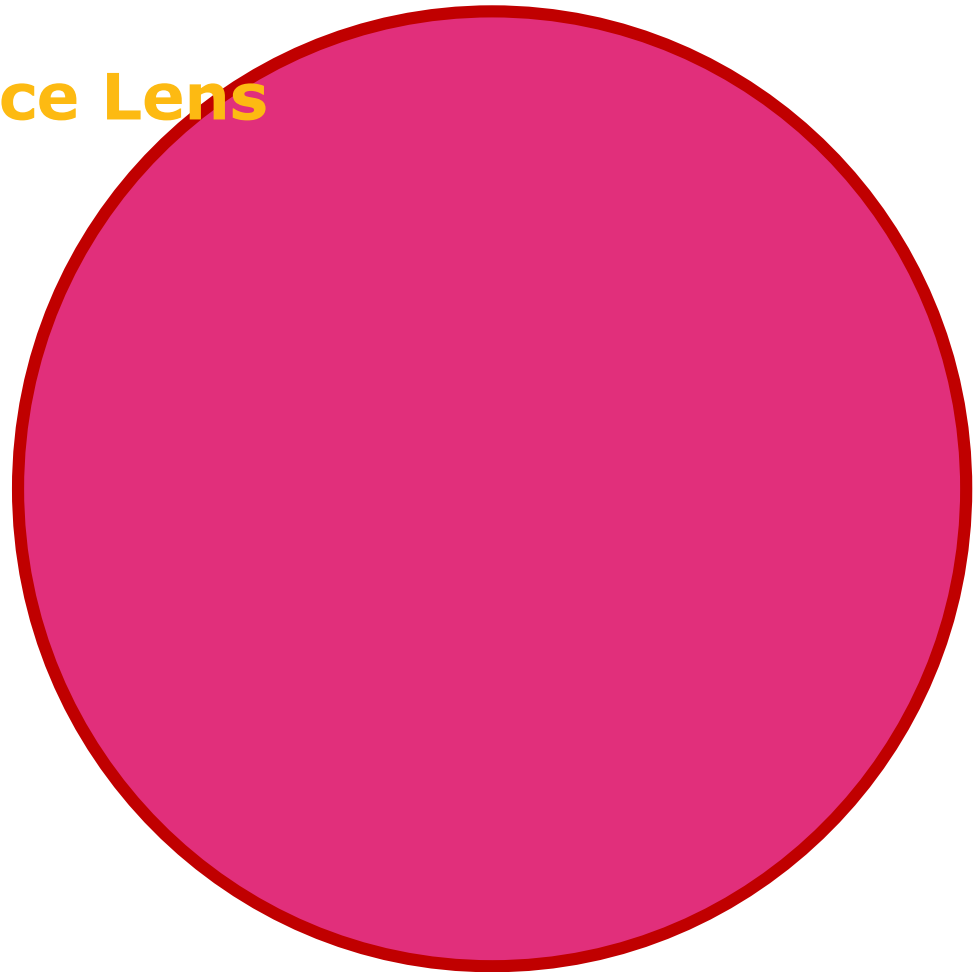
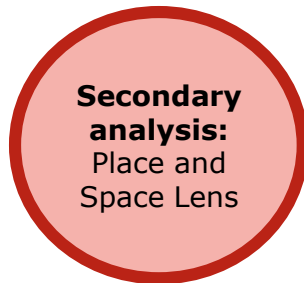
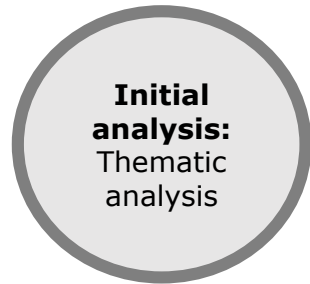


# Thematic Analysis





# Space & Place Lens





## Educator understandings of social justice

*"...Um I'm not really sure to be honest because I don't really know a lot about it – it's just what we do..."*

*"...as I said I really don't know as much as I should about social justice really..."*

*"...it's just – you know talking about fairness. I mean, is that the right answer?"*

*"...Yeah I don't know I feel like it's something that you do not really something that you know but something that you do..."*

*"...Um I don't know that we actually intentionally teach it so to speak but whether we just kind of make sure that our interactions and the language that we're using and stuff like that, that we're just really encouraging that social justice, and just everyone's family's different, your experiences are different and that's acceptable and ok. Um and really just being kind to other people because you never know what their experiences are at home or you know the difficulties that they are having...Yeah and probably not so much intentionally but just in our everyday interactions..."*



Understandings of  
social justice





## Creating a socially just environment

*"...We try – um we probably try our hardest to make sure we are um – with our inclusion support – that we are not just including – 'cause we don't have a lot of cultural inclusion but making sure we are catering to all family kind of lifestyles, home environments and kind of things like that..."*

*"...It's not just their cultural – but their family context as well. How we make sure we're kind of being open to all and just having full access"*

*"we try and network with a lot of our community services, our police, our medical, um to try to make sure we are helping those – and because we're a smaller town those – it probably is easier – so we can have the local police come in you know once a month just to get to know the kids, the families..."*



Creating socially just environments




## Issues of social justice identified

"...And most of the farmers at the moment have been **drought** stricken for a few years so they're pretty **poor** right now too...so I think a lot of people are really suffering a bit – a bit more than they previously have been

"...so we do have a lot of families where **one parent is away a lot...**"

"...we have one child who likes to **dress up as a little girl** so – and his parents they just – no way – they don't agree with it. So that's a matter for discussion – amongst us with the staff and how can we support him – and keep his family happy

"...I guess the thing that we've always been saying is that there are um actually certain people – but it's most of the community – have that um **ideology about childcare**. That it's for working parents and have the – if you're not working then you shouldn't – that you should be at home working with your um – parenting your children not sending them to care and not seeing the relevance of the educational aspects of it..."




Issues of social justice identified



## Learned social justice

*"...social justice...it's about participation and rights of people....we're brought up with a knowledge that you have to share everything and so we talk a lot about in our conversations well is it actually fair if someone comes and asks for something, do you have to give it to them straight away? ...is that fair for you or is that just fair for them...everyone has a right to something but there's a time and place for it so even at our kindy it's as simple as if they want something they'll walk over go 'oh Vicki can I please have that bike once you've finished it?'...they'll walk away with the trust knowing that once you're finished with that bike you'll come find them wherever they are and I guess we've build up a lot of work about that because I guess that's probably my belief that people shouldn't have to give up what they want just because someone else wants to use it so I guess that probably stems into a big thing in our area because like with the 44 families losing their farms to the – to the mines like for you know like buying them out but they really had no choice about giving up their farms too – so I guess it probably is a strong issue in our area I guess..."*



Contextual relevance  
of social justice



## Further wonderings

- What other frameworks might be helpful in analysing the data?
- What is the role of curriculum, policy and other guiding documents in teaching and learning social justice with young children?
- Where and how is social justice taught in early childhood initial teacher education courses?
- If we re-consider social justice learning in terms of 'everyday life' in a place, and as the 'whole experience of being there', what does that mean for the professional learning of educators focused on social justice?
- Scope for a larger project?





## References

- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2). pp. 77-101.
- Green, N. C. (2006). Everyday life in distance education: One family's homeschooling experience. *Distance Education*, 12(3), 1-9.
- Green, N. C. & Turner, M. (2017). Creating children's spaces, Children co-creating place. *Journal of Childhood Studies* 42(3), 27-39.



**Thank you for your time and attention**

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