

THE EXPERIENCES AND PERCEIVED DIFFERENCES IN WORKING CONDITIONS
AMONG EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS WHO HAVE WORKED IN BOTH FOR-
PROFIT AND NON-PROFIT CHILDCARE CENTRES IN THE GREATER TORONTO
AREA

by
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ABSTRACT

This study examined early childhood educators' perceptions of the differences in working conditions between for-profit and non-profit childcare centres and childcare sectors, in the Greater Toronto Area. Four early childhood educators who have worked in both for-profit and non-profit childcare centres were interviewed. This project was guided by Moss' theory of democratic political practice with the goals of illuminating why early childhood education and care (ECEC) should be a public system and how researchers can ensure that ECEs' experiences and voices are highlighted especially in early childhood practices and policies affecting them. Two themes emerged from the interviews. The first theme reveals variation between the material conditions in the participants' working environments across the two sectors; the second theme exposes non-material factors of working in each sector as an ECE. Interviewed ECEs reported that non-profit childcare centres provide higher quality working conditions than for-profit childcare centres.

Keywords: early childhood education and care, childcare, non-profit, not-for-profit, for-profit, private, commercial, early childhood educators, working condition.

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Introduction

As early childhood education and care (ECEC) moves to the forefront of political discussions and agendas, so too should the needs of its workforce (Moss, 2006). According to the Child Care Human Resources Sector Council (CCHRSC), early childhood educators (ECEs) are the single largest group in the ECEC sector with 170,340 ECEs and early childhood assistants (ECAs) in 2006. 90,185 of these ECEs worked in childcare centres and 47,665 in family home childcare (CCHRSC, 2009). Only five years before that, in 2001, there were 137,000 early childhood educators and assistants (ECEs/ECAs) working in both the regulated and unregulated childcare sector.

Clearly, ECEC is a growing field. CCHRSC (2009) reported a growth in the broader ECEC workforce of 24.9% between 2001 and 2006. Unfortunately in spite of this growth, ECEs remain at the bottom of the labour force hierarchy because they are accorded very little respect (CUPE, 2000). And despite the abundance of studies emerging over the past few years regarding the importance of children's early years and the work that ECEs do, Canadians, policy makers, and politicians continue to "pay lip service only to the value of the work – working conditions and pay levels remain at very low levels" (CUPE, 2000, p.1). The work that ECEs do as professionals continues to be undervalued across Canada.

Examining early childhood educators' (ECEs) views and perceptions of working conditions is important. ECEs' working conditions, such as employee wages and benefits, are factors which contribute to the quality of service provided in childcare centres (Mullis, Cornille, Mullis and Taliano, 2003). Whitebook, Howes, and Phillips (1990) found that wages are the most important predictor of the quality of childcare services provided to children and their families. "A childcare center can become a stronger learning environment for children if... teachers are properly

compensated, trained, satisfied with their job, and in a positive work environment” (Mullis et al., 2003, p. 555).

In Ontario, the largest group of ECE workers are employed in urban areas— 60% of ECEs’ and assistants’ usual place of work is in an urban area (CCHRSC, 2009). In Toronto, there are 925 licensed childcare providers and countless unlicensed providers. These childcare centres are often segregated into what are commonly called sectors which includes the for-profit (private or commercial sector), the non-profit sector, and the municipal sector. Of the 925 licensed childcare centres, 634 are registered as non-profit, 239 are under the commercial auspice, and 52 are municipal (Toronto, 2012).

A childcare centre’s auspice, or a centre’s ownership, and related financial decisions about funding structures and budgeting are major distinguishing factors between for-profit and non-profit childcare centres (Friendly and Prentice, 2009). Full-time ECEs are in the classroom working with children every day; they see firsthand the results that financial decisions made at the administrative level have in the centre, particularly in resulting working conditions. It is paramount then, to listen to ECEs who have had experience in both for-profit and non-profit sectors, and their perceived differences between these sectors.

In an era where for-profit providers and privatized care is rapidly expanding an examination of quality variations between sectors is crucial (Neugebauer, 2006). With the full-day kindergarten program coming into effect in Ontario, childcare centres are struggling with the loss of enrolment of all 4- and 5- year olds. Cash-strapped municipalities may be forced to close centres or cut subsidies. With financial constraints looming over the province, and parents demanding more childcare spaces, municipalities may feel pressured to sell centres in Ontario to owners, investors, and big chain companies. Edleun Group Inc. is a for-profit childcare company

that owns many centres in Canada. In 2010, Edleun began trading on the Toronto Stock Exchange (TSX). With the non-profit childcare market on the verge of collapse (Monsebraaten, 2011), and a resulting potential for an increase in the privatization of childcare in Ontario, it is currently relevant to review the quality of working conditions that for-profit childcare centres provide to their ECE employees compared to non-profit childcare centres.

I am particularly interested in whether the funding structure of a childcare centre and its auspice has an effect on the working conditions provided to ECEs. The purpose of this research is to examine ECEs' perceptions of differences in working conditions between for-profit and non-profit sectors (excluding the municipal sector) in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Therefore, this study will aim to answer the following question: what are the perceived differences in working conditions in for-profit and non-profit childcare centres as directly experienced by ECEs who have worked in both sectors?

Key Terms and Operational Definitions

An *Early Childhood Educator* (ECE) is a person who has been trained, graduated from, and certified in an early childhood education two year diploma or four year degree program (AECEO, 2012). Currently, an ECE holds primary responsibility for a group of children who are below the compulsory school age (with full day kindergarten this is 3.8 years). As well ECEs work in before and after school-age programs. (Halfon, 2011; Moss, 2007). An ECE is a person who plans and delivers learning and care programs for children in order to promote the well-being and holistic development of children, including infants, toddlers, and pre-school children (Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007).

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) are a variety of institutions that provide education and care for young children. These include: nurseries, schools, kindergarten, pre-

schools, and childcare centres (Moss, 2007). *Childcare Centres* are institutions outside of the home providing education and care to children below compulsory school age, specifically from six weeks to 3.8 years (Moss, 2007; Sumsion, 2006).

Childcare lab schools are generally affiliated with or work in collaboration with a college or university. On-site lab schools have been used to provide a service to the college/university community (Bersani, 1991). These facilities are also viewed as placement sites for the college/university, since they are included as an integral part of the teacher preparation process (Bersani, 1991). Lab schools have been seen as playing a vital role in demonstrating an interconnection between theory, research, and practice in the field of ECEC.

Centre-based childcare consists of for-profit and non-profit/not-for-profit providers. Non-profit organizations do not have a goal of reaping or distributing profits (Mukerjee & Witte, 1993). *Non-profit* centres are operated by parents, a voluntary board of directors, or a non-profit organization. Non-profit centres can be run by a religious organization, community agencies, private schools, colleges/universities, cooperatives, independent providers, as well as public providers (Doherty, Lero, Goelman, LaGrange, and Tougas, 2000; Helburn, 1995; Sosinsky, Lord, & Zigler, 2007). For-profit childcare centres are governed by different goals than the non-profit centres.

For-profit centres are defined as private businesses operated by an individual, a partnership or a corporation (Doherty et al., 2000). For-profit organizations have a duty to generate returns (Sumsion, 2006). The presence of privatization in ECEC demonstrates a *free market approach* whereby the government has little involvement in the delivery of childcare services provided by for-profit centres. Within a free market approach, individuals who are skilled at creating wealth deliver childcare services as an avenue to derive wealth.

Auspice is the “legal status and ownership of a centre” (Whitebook, Howes, and Phillips, 1990). Sometimes auspice is also identified as sub-sectors. Based on a centre’s auspice, patronage may be given to an independent owner or may fall under one of a variety of organizations, ranging from religious or educational institutions to government agencies or corporations (Helburn, 1995).

When it comes to *working conditions*, very few research studies differentiate between the for-profit sectors and non-profit and even fewer studies ask about ECEs’ personal experiences. Therefore, using the key findings from studies which evaluated the quality of working conditions identified in Doherty et al.’s (2000) Canadian ‘You Bet I Care’ study, I have compiled a list of key indicators which will be used in this study to evaluate ECEs’ perceptions of the quality of working conditions in a childcare centre. Thus my definition of the term working conditions will be based on the following indicators: staff qualifications, professional development opportunities, wages, benefits, and turnover. Whitebook, Howes, and Phillips’ (1990) also define ‘adult work environments’ as factors which include aspects of a childcare center’s operation that impinge directly on the quality of the day-to-day demands of working in the center. This definition has been helpful in identifying other indicators that impact on ECEs day-to-day experiences.

Theoretical Orientation

Canadian governments at the federal and provincial/territorial levels are currently following a free market approach in the childcare sphere. This market approach has resulted in the provincial/territorial government providing limited interference, via partial financial support (i.e. subsidies) for families purchasing childcare. At both the federal and provincial/territorial levels,

government actions are saying it is up to the individual or family to find a childcare space that is affordable (Ross, 2010).

In a free market approach parents must prioritize convenience, reliability, and getting a childcare space (Blau, 2001; Morris & Helburn, 2000; Ryan, 2010). Many for-profit childcare centres are taking advantage of the current high demand and limited supply crisis in Ontario and across Canada. With an increase in the corporatization of childcare, owners and investors may be more likely to cut operating costs (Sundell, 2000). These operating costs include ECE wages, benefits, and professional development opportunities, which clearly affect the professional lives and working conditions of ECEs.

Increasingly, scholars in the ECEC field are exploring what is meant by democratic political practice in the early years. Dewey (1939) first explains democracy as “a way of life controlled by a working faith in the possibilities of human nature... [and] faith in the capacity of human beings for intelligent judgment and action if proper conditions are furnished”. More recently, Dahlberg and Moss (2005) envisioned the possibility of institutions for children being understood, first and foremost, as arenas for ethical and political practice. According to Moss (2011), democratic political practice involves “maximizing opportunities for sharing, exchanging and negotiating perspectives and opinions” (p.2). This maximizing of opportunities is also referred to as ‘participatory democracy’ which involves “people directly in matters that affect them” (p.2). I found this notion of ‘democratic political practice’ helpful in framing this study for two reasons. First, it raises the question whether childcare should be viewed as a commodity from which investors and owners may profit, or as a service and ‘right’ of citizenship.

Democracy in the field of early childhood education initiates a critical discussion of the purpose of early childhood institutions in our society. Childcare, for some, is a business, rather

than a right for all. Those who view childcare as a commodity take advantage of the high demand for childcare with the goal of yielding a profit. To do so they may make operating cuts which are in favor of the budget, ignoring among other things, ECEs' working conditions (Moss, 2011). Mahon (2005) addresses the need for a change in the way we view childcare, and that it should be viewed as a citizen's right. According to Carr and Hartner (1996) "any vision of education that takes democracy seriously cannot but be at odds with educational reform which espouse the language and values of market forces and treat education as a commodity to be purchased and consumed" (p. 1). These authors argue that there is a disconnect between democracy in ECEC and childcare as a commodity.

Moss (2011) further argues that "the discourse of markets favors deregulation" (p.1). The growth of for-profit childcare in Australia has led to changes in regulatory requirements in an effort to yield greater financial outcomes. Doherty et al. (2000) found that there was a correlation between provinces, auspices, and regulatory requirements. Provinces that had a higher proportion of commercial centres (for-profit) tended to have lower regulatory standards for staff qualifications in ECEC (Doherty et al., 2000). When the for-profit sector dominates, "operators tend to lobby for lower, more lax regulations that allow higher profitability" (Friendly and Prentice, 2009, p. 118).

The second reason for democratic political practice as a theoretical orientation for this study is that it challenges us as researchers to consider the voices of ECEs who work directly within the program and their participation in setting policies and practices. According to Carr and Hartnett (1996) "in democracy, individuals do not only express personal preferences; they also make public and collective choices related to the common good of their society" (p.1). According to Moss (2011) bringing democratic politics into the centre means citizens, including

ECEs, are actively engaged in “decision-making about the purposes, practices, and the environment of the” (p. 3) centre. Democratic participation is a means by which children and adults can participate with others in shaping decisions affecting themselves. Moss (2011) describes that during the reconstruction of regulations and in the creation of early childhood policies and practices, opportunities for ECEs and policymakers to share, exchange, and negotiate perspectives and opinions should be maximized. However, currently in Canada requirements of shareholders and owners, based on their goal of reaping a profit, appear to take precedence over the perspectives of ECEs.

With the ultimate goal of yielding a profit there is often no reference or consideration to democratic political practice. Cuts to operating costs have an inevitable effect on ECEs, yet their voices are rarely considered in such initiatives. Democratic political practice requires that all voices of children, parents, ECEs, and community members be considered in decisions affecting them; however, this is contrary to a market place approach, where corporatized childcare centres, who are running a business, are required to accommodate the needs of owners and shareholders first (Friendly and Prentice, 2009).

Bringing democracy into childcare centres is a way to remove barriers of injustice that arise from the unrestrained exercise of power by free market forces (Moss, 2011). As a researcher, through this small study I have aimed to ensure that the ECE participants have a voice. Considering the voices of ECEs is imperative since they are the ones working directly within programs and experience firsthand the outcomes of decisions made at an administrative and policy level. Their participation in setting early childhood policies and practices is imperative because of their unique perspectives. ECEs need to gain confidence and value their perspectives as well. Oberhuemer (2005) termed ‘democratic responsibility/professionalism’ as

understanding one's role as a practitioner of democracy. ECEs need to recognize that they "bring an important perspective and a relevant local knowledge to the democratic forum" (Moss, 2007, p.13).

Through this research project I will provide a platform for some ECEs to discuss their perceptions of the working conditions within the context of both sectors. My hope is that these collective voices can be used to inform administrative and policy decisions and be used as a modest contribution to research and the debate on the merits of the non-profit versus the for-profit sector. The following section will give an overview of what research and literature currently reveals about the state of ECEs' working conditions in the two sectors.

Literature Review

This literature review is organized into three sections: childcare funding (for-profit, non-profit, and subsequent auspices), indicators for quality working conditions (staff qualifications, professional development opportunities, wages, benefits and turnover), and differences in working conditions in for-profit and non-profit childcare centres.

Different Ways in Which Childcare is Funded

Based on a childcare centre's sector, there are differences with funding sources and governing structures (Sosinsky, Lord, and Zigler, 2007). Non-profit childcare centres are funded by multiple sources: parent fees, donations, and the varying forms of provincial/territorial financial assistance (i.e. grants, subsidies, etc.). In contrast, the majority of funds for for-profit childcare centres come from parent fees and although some for-profit centres receive provincial-territorial assistance it is a smaller percentage of their revenue. In addition for-profit centers cannot accept charitable contributions (Helburn, 1995).

Childcare corporatization refers to a rapid expansion and an escalation in market share of childcare services owned and/or operated for profit by public companies listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange (TSX) (CUPE, 2012). Childcare corporations have a duty to generate financial returns to shareholders, and in so doing must comply with additional financial constraints, which can be seen in the allocation of childcare centres' budgets (Sumsion, 2006). Doherty, Lero, Goelman, LaGrange, and Tougas (2000) found that in Canada, non-profit and for-profit centres allocated different proportions of their budget to different expenditures — wages (80.0% non-profit and 66.4% for-profit), benefits (10.4% and 5.6% respectively), rent/mortgage (6.0% and 18.1% respectively) and utilities (3.6% and 9.7% respectively). Reaping a profit must be a

motive for for-profit administrators to make their business beneficial for both investors and owners.

Moss (2011) has explained that childcare is changing from being viewed as a service into being viewed as a commodity from which to profit. Non-profit childcare centres in contrast do not view childcare as a commodity. Non-profit organizations cannot reap a benefit or distribute profits from their organizations. Therefore, researchers found that non-profit childcare centres are less likely to cut costs because they lack the profit motive (Cleveland, & Krashinky, 2004; Mukerjee & Witte, 1993; Phillips, 2000).

Helburn (1995) found that the ownership structure of a childcare centre, or its auspice, is an important factor which can have an effect on the organization's resource allocation. The owner(s), be it an individual, a partnership or a corporation, decide independently where a centre's funds are to be allotted, based on their motives. It is frequently assumed "that for-profit establishments are organized to maximize profits while non-profit establishments do not have to make a profit and are usually created for other purposes" (Helburn, 1995, p. 18). Helburn's (1995) study revealed that, as opposed to for-profit centres, non-profit centers with extra resources used them to improve quality. When considering Helburn's findings, one may assume that a portion of these extra resources may be put toward improving the quality of ECEs' working conditions (through increased wages, benefits, and compensated professional development opportunities). If the owner's motive is to reap a benefit then extra financial resources will not be put into the program.

Within the for-profit and non-profit sector there are sub-sectors according to a centre's auspice. Sosinsky et al. (2007) found that "providers in each sector may be independent or fall under the auspices of one of a variety of organizations, ranging from religious or educational

institutions to government agencies or corporations” (p.391). Independent owners, also known as ‘mom and pop providers’, account for the majority of for-profit centres, and are seen as small businesses owned and run by individuals and their families. National for-profit chains are mostly owned and operated by large corporations (Friendly and Prentice, 2009).

Indicators for Quality Working Conditions

Research shows that key indicators for quality working conditions are staff qualification, professional development opportunities, ECE wages, benefits, and turnover (Helburn, 1995; Sosinsky et al., 2007).

Staff qualifications.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2001) states that, “quality early childhood education and care depends on strong staff training” (p. 21), pointing out a direct correlation between an ECE’s years of training, and the resulting quality of a classroom. ECEs in non-profit centres had significantly higher levels of education in comparison with ECEs from for-profit centres (Doherty et al., 2000; Sosinsky et al., 2007). In the non-profit sector, 10.0% of teaching staff lacked any relevant education, 14.5% had a minimum of one course lasting one year or less, and 58.8% reported having at least a two- or three-year credential. Among the ECEs who worked in commercial centres, 16.1% had no relevant education, 26.5% reported only having taken a course that lasted a year or less, and 42.7% had a two- or-three year credential. Doherty et al. (2000) also found that whereas “16.9% of directors in the non-profit sector lacked any ECE education 20.1% in the commercial sector were lacking these credentials” (p.36).

Sosinsky et al. (2007) found that ECEs in non-profit, non-church centres reported higher levels of education a for-profit independent centres. However, ECEs in non-profit church-affiliated and for-profit chains had the same level of education compared with each other and other auspices. Sosinsky's et al. (2007)'s method of identifying the auspice of the childcare centres allowed them to show differences between ownerships rather than generalizing simply between for-profit or non-profit centres.

Professional development opportunities.

Mullis, Cornille, Mullis, and Taliano (2003) found that non-profit childcare centres offered and provided for in-service training, educational expenses, and membership in professional organizations. Similar to the older but still relevant findings of Kagan, Sobol, and Quarnstrom (1987) who found fewer participants from the for-profit centres reported being allowed to attend classes and seminars than those from non-profit centres. These researchers also found that “the employer paid the entire cost of such education for all the ‘not for profit’ employees [whereas] the profit respondents indicated that their employer did not pay for such development” (p.179).

Wages.

Multiple studies have found that ECEs receive higher wages in non-profit childcare centres (Cleveland & Krashinsky, 2004; Doherty et al., 2000; Mukerjee & Witte, 1993; Mullis, Cornille, Mullis, and Taliano, 2003; Nuttal, 1991; Sosinsky et al., 2007; Whitebook, Howes, and Phillips, 1990). Doherty's et al.'s (2000) study found that whereas the mean hourly wage for full-time ECEs was \$12.21 an hour in non-profit centres, ECEs in for-profit centres earned \$8.64. Sosinsky's et al. (2007) study found that ECEs working in a non-profit and non-church childcare centre reported significantly higher wages compared with educators in all other auspices. Mullis

et al., (2003) found that starting wages for ECEs, ECAs, and substitute ECEs were significantly higher in non-profit centres than in for-profit centres. Starting wages for ECEs was \$6.10 in for-profit childcare centres and \$7.60 in non-profit childcare centres. Mukerjee and Witte (1993) found that non-profits paid significantly higher wages to ECEs than for-profits.

Although Cleveland and Krashinsky (2004) found that non-profit programs pay their employees higher wages, they note that their data sample was not large enough to draw sweeping conclusions. Whitebook's et al. (1990) study found when interviewing directors and ECEs that not only were wages higher in non-profit centres, but particularly in non-profit church affiliated centres than staff under other auspices. Since these researchers consciously segregated the centres' according to their auspice, they were able to report detailed findings in their conclusions.

In Doherty's et al. (2000) study, the authors drew attention to the fact that wages should be considered, analysed, and interpreted within the context of external factors. For example, childcare salaries will be lower in provinces/territories where the salary level is lower across all occupations. This study also noted that some provinces/territories may specifically provide financial assistance to non-profit childcare centres but not to commercial childcare centres (i.e. subsidies) (Doherty et al., 2000). These external factors may impact a centre's revenue, budgets, and expenditures, despite their auspice.

Benefits.

Each type of childcare centre offers varying benefits which has been identified by researchers to include: preparation time, paid coffee breaks, paid lunch breaks, parental leave, sick days, pension plan and extended health care etc. (Doherty et al., 2000). However, in general, non-profit employees receive more benefits (Whitebook, et al., 1990). Mullis' et al. (2003) research study involved surveying directors who reported that for-profit centres were more likely to provide

paid breaks and free lunches than did non-profit centres. However, non-profit centres more often provided cost of living increases and paid planning time than were offered at for-profit centres.

When it came to full-time ECEs Mullis et al. (2003) reported that:

The benefits that were more likely to be offered by for-profit centers included, four to nine paid holidays per year (62.5% versus 45.5%), six or fewer vacation days per year (58.3% versus 30.4%), and free childcare (44.2% versus 27.3%). The benefits that non-profit centers offered to permanent teachers more often included fully paid health insurance (14.4% versus 3.3%), paid sick leave of less than 1 day per month (46% versus 26.7%), and ten or more paid holidays per year (39.6% versus 18.3%). Only 36.6% of for-profit and 40.1% of non-profit centres offered any paid health insurance. Less than one-half (45%) of for-profit centers offered paid sick leave, whereas 72.7% of non-profit centers did. (p.553)

Turnover.

Turnover refers to the process/movement of a ECEs who leave their job and quit voluntarily.

Turnover rates were significantly higher in for-profit centres (Mullis et al., 2003; Nuttall, 1991; Sosinsky et al., 2007; Whiteboook et al.,1990). Sosinsky et al. (2007) found that annual turnover rates were significantly higher in for-profit chain centres than in all other auspices. In Mullis' et al. (2003) research study, mentioned above, directors reported that for-profit centres had more full-time as well as part-time ECEs leave their employment.

Differences in Working Conditions in For-profit and Non-profit Childcare Centres

Researchers have suggested that a centre's auspice, variations in clientele, funding sources, regulatory accountability, governing and administrative structures may have an effect on program quality and working conditions (Friesen, 1995; Kagan et al., 1987; Morris & Helburn, 2000). Helburn's (1995) findings suggest that it is difficult to associate any given level of quality with a sector overall; rather, levels of quality may be more clearly aligned with auspice. Sosinsky et al., (2007) who not only looked at the comparison between childcare centers by sectors (for-profit/non-profit) but also by auspices (for-profit: independent/chain, non-profit: church/nonchurch), specifically found that the quality of care provided was higher in non-profit,

non-religiously affiliated centres, intermediate in non-profit religiously affiliated and for-profit independent centres, and lower in for-profit chains, although differences were not found on every indicator.

Most studies have found that non-profit centres provided better wages, better benefits, more professional development opportunities and thus have a lower turnover (Cleveland & Krashinsky, 2004; Doherty et al.; Mukerjee & Witte, 1993; Mullis et al., 2003; Doherty, 2000; Phillips, 1992; Sosinsky et al., 2007). It's imperative to note that the majority of these studies used questionnaires and quantitative methods. Depending on the study's purpose, these methods yield restricting data. Therefore, if a participant would like to elaborate or give justification for an answer in a questionnaire there is often no allowance for this additional information. Closed-ended questions provided in a questionnaire can at times limit participants' answers. Therefore, the data derived from Doherty et al. (2000) along with other studies which used questionnaires and surveys, while very valuable, failed to capture participants' feelings, experiences, and stories.

Although there are many studies whose findings distinguish between the working conditions provided by a for-profit childcare centre, compared to a non-profit centre, there is one study which found that the two sectors are similar. In Cornille, Mullis, Mullis, and Shriner's (2006) study where the experiences and perceptions of ECEs in both sectors were examined, the researchers found similar working conditions in both sectors. They described that all ECEs involved in their study faced similar work difficulties, wanted an increase in their salary, reported high levels of job satisfaction, and held similar educational backgrounds. In conclusion, the researchers explained that "when teachers working in for-profit centers are compared with

their non-profit counterparts, differences appear to be the exception rather than the rule” (Cornille et al., 2006, p. 640).

However, Cornille et al.’s (2006) study sent out questionnaires which failed to allow ECEs to expand on their perceptions. Researchers may have chosen to use a quantitative approach to yield more participants; nevertheless, the researchers’ choice to use a quantitative approach negated their research purpose, which was to “access ECEs’ perceptions, experiences and issues” (Cornille et al., 2006, p.635). The questionnaires yielded limited data in regards to ECEs’ perceptions. For my study, I chose instead to conduct a qualitative research study, which allowed me to elaborate on questions and to describe in detail how participants interpret their experiences. I made this choice despite the limitation of a small sample size.

The subjective nature of terms used in a questionnaire may bring the reliability and validity of one’s study, and the data it yields, into question. For example, although ECEs from both for-profit and non-profit childcare centres reported similar levels of satisfaction regarding their positions, the questionnaire distributed did not ask ECEs to elaborate on the criteria they used to evaluate how satisfied they were in their job. The researchers also acknowledged that “the distinction between somewhat satisfied and satisfied may be subjectively defined” (Cornille et al., 2006, p.368). When using a quantitative method all terms must be clearly defined, and operationalized. While attempting to capture participants’ perspectives and experiences, researchers must be cautious when using a quantitative method since it can narrowly capture that there is no difference between ECEs’ satisfaction level.

In Doherty et al, (2000) and Whitebook and Sakai, (2003), among other studies, it is important to note that participants and centres studied were from different locations (i.e. provinces, states, etc.) which may mean different legislations and restrictions for for-profit

centres (Friendly and Prentice, 2009). Since researchers failed to identify the differences, or similarities, in legislations between counties, this can be considered a major factor which may have skewed the results of the questionnaire. Therefore, in my study a requirement for participation will be that all eligible participants have worked in the same jurisdiction, so that it is evident that the same laws, regulations, and restrictions have been mandated for all for-profit centres and non-profit centres that ECEs worked in.

Summary

Studies that compare the quality of working conditions between for-profit and non-profit centres provide insight into the dynamics of a childcare centre's funding structure and its impact on a centre's ability to provide quality working conditions for their employees (Friendly and Prentice, 2009). There has been a debate on whether or not there is even a relationship between a centre's auspice and funding structure and the resulting working conditions provided to ECEs. (Helburn, 1995; Sosinsky et al., 2007). It has been shown by many studies using quality indicators that there are variations in working conditions for ECEs. Most of the research confirms that non-profit childcare provides ECEs with better working conditions.

Doherty's et al. (2000) is one of the few Canadian studies and was first compiled in 2000. My small-scale study will investigate whether improvements in working conditions have been made since 2000. Moreover, ECEs' perspectives and experiences of the working conditions between sectors is a view often neglected in the debate between for-profit and non-profit childcare centres. Highlighting ECEs' perceptions may produce data that is unique.

Methodology

Approach, Strategy and Rational

As members of the childcare community ECEs' voices should be heard and considered when decisions are made affecting them. ECEs work in a childcare centre on a daily basis and as a result, can bring an important perspective and a relevant local knowledge to the discussion around childcare practice and policy (Moss, 2007). ECEs, employers, and policymakers should be exchanging their perspectives and opinions based on their own individual knowledge and experience. This study aims to draw from the knowledge and experiences of ECEs. To explore ECEs' perceptions of working conditions in both for-profit and non-profit childcare this study was designed with a methodological approach that allowed me to obtain information about ECEs' lived experiences. Where Doherty et al. (2000) looked at working conditions using a broad quantitative approach, this study looked at individual experiences and perspectives of ECEs to gain a more in-depth, personal point of view and understanding.

As noted above, a majority of studies examined in the literature review used quantitative methods as their approach and questionnaires as their data collection tool; this study will be different. Whereas, a quantitative research goes for breadth, "by gathering a variety of information on which to build knowledge, which typically results in generalizable... outcomes"; a qualitative research study tends to focus more on details, giving the ability "to gain a deep understanding of a specific phenomena/experience with a limited number of participants" (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011, p.153). This study used a qualitative approach; as a result, the purpose was to gain a deeper and richer understanding of each participant and their experiences (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Because of this research approach, findings focused on human subjectivity and the meanings that these ECEs placed on their working conditions and

experiences in both childcare sectors. Patterns and themes were drawn from participants' responses (Check and Schutt, 2012).

Through the literature review, common themes were identified as indicators associated with ECEs' working conditions. Comparisons were made between data collected from the interviews and indicators drawn out from the literature review, in an attempt to identify similarities among participating ECEs (Neuman and Robson, 2012). I attempted to show connections among reported micro-level situations and larger social forces with the purpose of informing social action (Neuman and Robson, 2012).

An interview tool was devised for data collection. Interviews were used to draw out each educator's perceived differences between sectors, based on their experiences. Interview questions were devised to allow for in-depth information to be obtained from participants. A semi-structured interview was used since a structured, closed-ended set of questions would fail to adequately highlight the experiences and perceived differences in working conditions of ECEs (Check and Schutt, 2012). Additional probes were included to guide participants' answers to the indicators used in the definition for 'working conditions' in this study. With the use of probes, this semi-structured guideline allowed me to focus participants' answers around the topic of this study's interest (Mukherji and Albon, 2010).

Sample

The criteria for participants in this study were determined by the research question (Marshall, 1996). Participants were selected based on the following criteria. They must: a) have graduated and obtained an ECE diploma, b) have worked as an ECE in both for-profit and non-profit childcare centres in the GTA, and c) have access to a personal e-mail account, since communication between the participant and the principal investigator (me) will include this

method. Four participants were selected who met the above criteria. This small sample size is sufficient to build a preliminary understanding of perceived differences between working conditions in the for-profit and non-profit childcare sector. Very detailed studies often involve a small sample size (Marshall, 1996). “The number of people interviewed in a study employing qualitative interviewing... is usually dictated by the time and resources available” (Neuman and Robson, 2012); therefore, due to these aforementioned limitations four participants were chosen to be interviewed.

Recruitment.

All participants were purposely targeted based on their knowledge and prior experiences. A convenience sampling method was used to select my first participant. This participant was selected based on my knowledge of her past work in the early childhood field. The other participants were recruited through a snowball sampling strategy (Neuman and Robson, 2012). A snowball sample was the most effective strategy due to the hard-to-identify nature of this population (Check and Schutt, 2012). A snowball recruitment method was also the least costly both in regards to time and money. I provided my contact information along with a brief description of this study to colleagues of mine in the masters program (see Appendix A). I then asked my colleagues to pass on the information to people they know who matched the selection requirements. Colleagues were instructed to notify potential participants to correspond with only the principal researcher (me) in regards to this study.

After participants received my contact information (see Appendix A) and had demonstrated their interest in the study by contacting me, participants were sent a recruitment e-mail (see Appendix B) which asked them to verify that they match the selection criteria. An attachment to the recruitment e-mail (see Appendix B) included a consent agreement reiterating

the details of the study, highlighting the procedures of the study and what was to be asked of them, along with all potential risks and benefits of the study (see Appendix D). The consent agreement also included confidentiality procedures, the expected time commitment of the participant, and the principal investigator's e-mail and telephone number. Participants were asked to read the consent agreement and to contact the principal investigator with any questions or concerns prior to the interview and participants were asked to verify whether or not they wanted to continue on as a participant, if so they were asked to select a time and location that they could meet for the interview.

Setting

Participants were asked to propose a convenient time and location to meet for the interview process. Participants were asked to select an environment which is private, quiet, and conducive for conversation (e.g. library or a quiet coffee shop). Participants were instructed to not select their home environment since an interviewee may become preoccupied or lack privacy (Neuman and Robson, 2012). Participation in this study was voluntary, based on this and in an effort to limit the cost to participants (time as well as money) participants were given the choice of location and time. This was done in an effort to increase the likelihood that participants followed through with the interview process. As a result, the settings varied according to individual participants.

Data Collection Tool

A semi-structured interview guide was used as the data collection tool in this study (see Appendix A). As the researcher I facilitated a conversation style interview with full-time ECEs in an effort to achieve a degree of partnership and to create a comfortable open atmosphere where interviewees felt free to talk.

The interview guide was designed to uncover individual experiences, and draw out the ECEs' perceptions of their working conditions. I chose to include specific questions based on my theoretical framework, democratic political practice. Moss (2011) advocates for the inclusion of ECEs in shaping decisions affecting themselves; therefore, questions such as: a) "in which sector did you feel more of a sense of participation" and b) "as an ECE have you ever felt as if you played a role in decision-making," were questions included in the interview guide to draw out data that are relevant to both the research question and this study's theoretical framework.

According to Neuman and Robson (2008) reliability can be improved by using a pilot version of an interview guide; therefore, a pilot test was implemented to eliminate potential limitations. Developing more than one version of my interview guide and trying it out before applying the final version took more time and effort but also sifted out any errors, or unclear questions (Neuman and Robson, 2008). In an effort to minimize limitations in my data collection tool I had other researchers read my interview guide, critique it, and make suggestions.

Data Collection Process

I met with each participant at their selected location and time. All participants were required to give informed consent prior to the commencement of the interview process. Participants were required to read the consent agreement and ask questions for clarity. All details of the study were included in the consent agreement to inform participants of what was going to happen during the interview process (Check and Schutt, 2012). Once participants understood what the research procedure involved they were required to sign the consent agreement. Each participant was informed that they had the choice to withdraw at any time, including after they had signed the consent form. Once participants had signed, the interview process began.

Recording began and each interview started with warm-up background questions laid out in the interview guide (see Appendix A). At first, participants were asked warm-up questions, in regards to their childcare background and experience. The warm-up questions consisted of non-threatening questions that the interviewee could answer easily at the beginning of the interview. Warm-up questions were included in an effort to put the interviewee at ease (Mukherji and Albon, 2010). Second, the interview guide outlined broad questions in an effort to explore the ECEs' perceptions of their experiences in both sectors. Third, probes in the form of direct questions were asked. These probes asked questions associated with the indicators of quality working conditions identified in literature. Probes were included in the interview guide in an effort to prompt interviewees on commenting on specific topics and ideas they may not have considered (Mukherji and Albon, 2009).

Because the aim of my research study is to obtain an understanding of interviewees' experiences, an attempt was made to create "an interpersonal exchange between the interviewer and the participant. This method relies on the interviewer contributing something of themselves" (Fontana and Frey, 2000, as cited in Mukherji and Albon, 2009, p.133). As a result, during the warm-up section of the interview guide I made a conscious effort to establish rapport with each participant explaining my background and past experiences as an ECE. However, to minimize bias I did not identify in which sector I worked, for-profit or non-profit. For example, when a participant D (Diana) discussed the wages she received, I added a comment related to one of my experiences when I said, "there was a centre down here and they are paying \$11 an hour. I thought it was illegal! I was shocked!" The participant followed up my comment with an additional example adding to the data I collected in regard to wages.

Due to Helburn (1995) and Cornille, Mullis, Mullis, and Shriner's (2006) study, which found a centre's auspice to be a relevant factor on the discussion of quality and working condition between for-profit and non-profit childcare centres, this study asked participants to specify the auspice of the childcare centres they were employed in. Therefore, an auspice question was included as a warm-up question.

The warm-up questions led into broader questions about each ECE participant's experience. The interviews concluded with an all-encompassing summary question. The interview process was set up in this format with the purpose of both putting participants at ease with non-threatening questions at the beginning, and by using a few straightforward questions at the end (Mukherji and Albon, 2010, p. 153).

As the interviewer I remained flexible throughout the interview process. Participants were probed for further details, which varied according to interview situations and on the responses given by individual participants. Therefore, the interview schedule was used as a guide, rather than rigidly adhered to so that participants were able to speak freely, following a natural conversation style. Probes were used as needed (Mukherji and Albon, 2009). I was ready to ask elaborating questions where clarification was needed. For example, when Diana was asked about her rationale for leaving a for-profit childcare centre, she mentioned that it was not necessarily the working conditions but then continued on to explain how she was not happy with management and the lack of support. I realized a useful probing question would be to ask her to explain why. Through her answer it was discovered that indeed her reason for leaving related to the working conditions. Finally, each interview concluded with an all-encompassing closing question which had to do with both sectors.

Upon the completion of the interview process participants were welcomed to contact me if they had any concerns. If they had chosen to have a follow-up summary report e-mailed to them, they were reminded that it would be e-mailed to them upon the completion of the study, at approximately the end of September, 2012.

Data Organization

I began transcribing interviews as soon as possible after the interview so that I would have a better chance of deciphering audio material that may be difficult to understand. According to Neuman and Robson (2012) “when the interview is ‘fresh’ in the researcher’s mind, it is more likely that he or she will have a clearer recollection of the interview and be able to fill in gaps where sound quality might be compromised” (p.256). All interviews were transcribed in full as opposed to selective transcription, since “fully transcribed interviews are the best means of ensuring that our findings are dependable and trustworthy” (Neuman and Robson, 2012, p.256).

Data were then separated by participants, case commonalities, backgrounds, and sectors. Questions are labeled with A and B distinguishers. A is linked to any questions specific to the for-profit childcare sector; whereas, B is linked to any questions specific to the non-profit childcare sector. Therefore, after the data had been separated by participants the raw data were subsequently separated according to the two sectors. The data were organized like this since my research question looked for distinguishing variations in working conditions between sectors with data organization, coding, and analysis guided by the research question (Neuman and Robson, 2012).

Data Analysis

The data analysis was guided by its theoretical framework, democratic participation (Jacelon and O'Dell, 2005). To analyse the data collected from the interviews with my participants, I chose to follow Neuman and Robson's (2012) three phases to qualitatively analyzing data. Neuman and Robson's three phases allowed me to discover common themes among these four ECEs' diverse experiences in both for-profit and non-profit childcare centres. As a result, I was able to begin the process of discovering a collective standpoint between my participants in regards to their individual perceptions of the difference between working conditions in each sector.

Phase 1 – open coding.

Data were first organized by arranging the raw data and condensing them into preliminary conceptual categories (themes, concepts, and similar features). During the open coding I created my first codes according to the working condition indicators which emerged from the literature review. I then continued to find new emerging themes that had been discussed by multiple participants throughout the interview. The concepts and themes with the most evidence were considered the strongest. From these codes I wrote out a preliminary list of concepts or labels and highlighted each one with individually brightly coloured markers and highlighters. Throughout this process I was consciously open to creating new themes, collapsing themes, and to changing initial codes in subsequent analysis, demonstrating understanding that initial indicators are not firm and may change multiple times through the analysis process (Neuman and Robson, 2012).

Phase 2 – axial coding.

During a second read-through of my data I organized the codes, developed links among them, and discovered analytical categories. In this phase I focused more on the initial codes created in ‘open coding’ rather than on the data. My primary task in this phase was to create, review and examine initial codes in an effort to create linkages between similar sets. I also noted any additional codes or new ideas that had emerged during this phase. During this phase I looked to see if: a) any existing concepts could be divided into subcategories, b) any categories could be organized into a causal sequence (Neuman and Robson, 2012). I then examined some themes in further depth to potentially drop some themes, because such choices can “reinforce the connections between evidence and concepts” (Neuman and Robson, 2012, p.319). As I consolidated codes I looked for evidence in many places for core themes which would build a dense web of support for the themes I drew out of the data. “This is analogous to the idea of multiple indicators described with regard to reliability and measuring variables. The connection between a theme and data is strengthened by multiple instances of empirical evidence” (Neuman and Robson, 2012, p.319).

Phase 3 – selective coding.

In this last phase I drew out a resulting core theme around which the remaining codes fit. In order to make sense of the relationship among the codes, I made concept maps of them. My concept maps visually illustrated the themes’ relationship with each other. At the centre of the concept map I placed the main theme which I saw feeding into all the other themes. I used my concept map to develop statements (or propositions) on how the concepts worked together (Neuman and Robson, 2012).

Researcher's Bias

My professional experience as a supply ECE at a non-profit college-affiliated childcare lab school has given me the opportunity to hear the complaints made by ECEs in the lunch room. As an ECE myself I have also experienced firsthand why some full-time ECEs are unhappy. Through my studies I was taught about the difference between for-profit and non-profit childcare centres in a light which favoured the non-profit childcare sector. My past experiences and who I am as a researcher in this study are relevant to note and understand since in qualitative research the researcher is the instrument of data analysis (Jacelon and O'Dell, 2005). Through this qualitative approach I tried to remain conscious and sensitive to the subjective role I played as the researcher (Check and Schutt, 2012). My previous experience as an ECE in a non-profit childcare centre and my preference toward the non-profit childcare sector will inevitably have an influence on this research study; however, the utmost attempt will be made to highlight and focus my findings on the participants and their experiences in regards to working conditions in both sectors. In an attempt to accomplish this objectivity, an analytical memo was kept.

Limitations

Limitations with sample size.

This study's purpose is not to generalize, but rather to explore deeply the views of the four ECE participants. Few participants allowed for deeper analysis of their experiences and perceptions. The number of participants chosen for this research study was limited due to time constraints and to the qualitative nature of this study; the aim was for depth and precision of the perception of each ECE. Due to the limited number of participants this study is only able to provide an understanding of reported ECEs' perspectives of working conditions in the for-profit and non-profit sectors of childcare centres. The goal is not to generalize in qualitative research. As a

result, I cannot and will not make any broad or sweeping generalized claims because these ECEs are reporting on their individualized perceptions of their own personal experiences.

Limitations regarding recruitment.

It is important to highlight that the snowball method demonstrated a few limitations. Potential participants were limited to people that I had direct access to through my colleagues. My recruitment method could be argued to yield “poor quality data and lack intellectual credibility” (Marshall, 1996, p.523). However, it is important to state that a qualitative approach to research cannot be generalized to a population and the aim of this study is to highlight the experiences and perceptions of the ECEs involved; therefore, any data yielded from their reported responses in their interview is considered quality data (Neuman and Robson, 2012).

Ethical issues regarding recruitment.

Obtaining informed consent must include participants who have consented voluntarily; participants must never be coerced into participating (Check and Schutt, 2012; Neuman and Robson, 2012). When using a snowball sampling method for the recruitment process potential participants who were approached may have felt, or even be, pressured to participate in the study. Potential participants were instructed to keep their decision to participate confidential. I reiterated to potential participants that this is a voluntary study and that their choice of whether or not to participate will not influence future relations with Ryerson University or me.

Trustworthiness.

I made a conscious effort to make practices and data analysis methods I used visible and auditable so that readers would be able to track and verify the research process used (Rolfe, 2006). I also attempted to increase the trustworthiness of this study by making analytical memos.

My data will be made available to other interested researchers who may want to reanalyse them (Neuman and Robson, 2012). In conclusion, it is important to remember the purpose of qualitative studies, which is to come up with new connections between concepts, elaborating on already generated concepts – not to generalize from a sample across populations.

Ethical issues regarding dissemination.

Each participant was informed of the privacy and confidentiality of the study and that neither their name, nor the names of the centres would be mentioned in the research or any dissemination of the research and its findings. As not only a research ethical concern but as a human rights issue, all participants had access to the information collected, analysed and concluding results (Bell, 2008; Cullen, Hedges & Bone 2005). A summary of the study will be e-mailed to all participants who chose, on the consent agreement, to receive a follow-up summary report.

All participants were informed that all information is confidential and collected data would not in any way be connected with their identity. In an effort to reduce risk of their identity being exposed, all conversations (written, spoken, and recorded) were kept strictly confidential. The final research report used pseudonyms assigned to each participant. Therefore, both names and addresses of workplaces were omitted. The following section, participant profiles, gives a brief description of each chosen participant who was interviewed for this study.

Participant Profiles

Information was gathered through the interview process which provides us with a brief background of each participant's experience in the field of childcare and the respected sectors. The following participant profiles will include the years of experience they have working in each

respective sector, and if still employed in childcare, in which sector they currently work. The information provided for this section is limited in an effort to maintain confidentiality. Pseudonyms will be assigned to each participant in an effort to maintain confidentiality (Neuman and Robson, 2012).

Participant A.

Participant A—Ashley—began her professional experience in 2002 when she first obtained her Early Childhood Assistant certificate. Soon after that, in 2005 she graduated with her diploma in Early Childhood Education and has been working full-time since then. In her seven years as a full-time ECE Ashley, has spent one year in two different for-profit centres combined, which she reports were both chain owned/franchise. The remaining six years of her experience have been spent in a unionized non-profit childcare centre where she is still currently employed.

Participant B.

Participant B—Brittney—completed her diploma in ECE in 2005 and since then she has worked for nine years in the field as both a supply and full-time teacher. From 2005 to 2008 Brittney worked in two for-profit childcare centres, which were both chain owned/franchises. In 2008 Brittney decided to pursue a degree and continued on to complete her master's degree. She worked for a few non-profit childcare centres while she pursued higher education. Currently Brittney has been working full-time in a non-profit centre for a year.

Participant C.

Participant C—Cathryn—has worked in the childcare field for seven years. Her experience started as a student in placement at a private childcare centre, owned by a company, who then hired her on as an employee. Cathryn worked for six years at this company-owned childcare

centre. She worked nine months full-time, and as a student she worked part-time resuming full-time status during their summer program. Cathryn then worked for three years at a college-affiliated childcare lab school, which was unionized. There she worked full-time hours in summers, and part-time while in school. Cathryn is in the process of completing a master's degree and is looking to work within the field of early learning.

Participant D.

Participant D—Diana—is a landed immigrant who taught as an elementary school teacher in her home country. She registered in an ECE program in Toronto and while she worked towards her diploma she was hired as an educator in a privately owned, for-profit childcare centre. Diana worked for three years in a for-profit centre. Diana was then offered a job in a unionized, college affiliated lab school. She has worked at this non-profit centre now for six years. Diana has been working in the field of early childcare for 10 years; since she migrated to Canada in 2002. In addition, she has 18 years of experience in her home country as a teacher.

In conclusion, I have emphasized that this study is only a preliminary study and that it should be viewed as objective knowledge influenced by the primary researcher. The following section will lay out the research findings.

Findings

The purpose of this research is to examine early childhood educators' perceptions of the differences in working conditions between for-profit and non-profit childcare centres in the GTA. In keeping with Whitebook, Howes, and Phillips' (1990) definition of "adult work environments", working conditions has been used to include aspects of a childcare centre's operation that impinge directly on the quality of the day-to-day demands and rewards of working in the centre. Working conditions has been operationalized to include: benefits, wages, staff qualifications, professional development, and turnovers. Four ECEs were interviewed, and in an attempt to underscore Moss' theory of democratic political practice, their perspective and relevant local knowledge was brought to the discussion of working conditions. The themes that emerged from the voices of these ECEs were consistent with many of the indicators for quality working conditions discussed in the literature, along with some additional factors which were found to also have an effect on their working conditions.

The first theme encompasses material conditions in regards to ECEs' working conditions between sectors. Material conditions refer to the concrete and tangible working conditions identified by the participants, which consist of: benefits, wages, professional development, and staff qualifications. According to ECE participants the sector of a centre had an impact on first, the level of compensation given to ECEs, which includes benefits, wages, and raises; and second, the value employers placed on education, which was evident in who was hired and what kind of professional development opportunities were provided. The second theme which emerged through the analysis of participants' interviews illuminated how these ECEs were psychologically impacted by non-material conditions within their work environments. Non-material conditions refer to the intangible working conditions expressed by the participants, in

regards to their psychological wellbeing. ECE participants' psychological well-being was influenced by the amount of support offered/given by the centre, sense of community in the working environment, decision-making/autonomy, how they were valued as ECE professionals, turnover rate, and the disconnect between centres' and ECEs' goals, philosophies and visions. It is important to note that turnover rate was included as a non-material condition, because the ECE participants explained that they resigned due to psychological factors brought about by working conditions in non-profit centres. Through the interviewed ECEs' reports and stories the participants bring to the forefront their knowledge and how they experienced working conditions on a personal level in each sector, for-profit and non-profit.

Theme 1: Material Conditions

The first theme that emerged through data analysis stressed the importance of concrete material experiences to these ECE participants. The codes discussed in this section were consistent with the literature review findings and the indicators created to help define working conditions.

Benefits.

Not all for-profit childcare centres offered benefits to their ECEs. Two of the four participants interviewed reported not receiving benefits at all in for-profit centres and the for-profit centres that did offer benefits covered only a limited number of services. Ashley said, "full-time staff did get some benefits. Were they as good as the not-for-profit ones? No, but they did get something." Brittney found that the amount deducted from each of her pay cheques, at the for-profit centre, for benefits took a toll on her financially, since her income was not that high to begin with:

When it comes to benefits: the places that I worked at for-profit, I noticed that I was paying an amount from my check, which is standard. However, when you're getting paid a lower amount to start with that can make quite a difference when you also have to pay an amount to your benefits. However, at the not-for-profit centre that I am working at right now you get benefits in addition to the salary.

All four participants interviewed expressed that they received benefits from their non-profit childcare centres. For example, Brittney said:

Yes, I mean the benefits the first year of service are still decent but after you work two years you have a different package of benefits which I think is a hundred percent, right now I am at eighty or ninety percent which is still decent.

As employees in non-profit centres, not only did these ECEs receive benefits, but their families were covered as well. Diana said, “they don’t only cover me, they cover my children too. Ashley said, “we have benefits for medical, dental, and all the para services, a maximum of \$2,500 for a person in my family.”

Wages.

Wages were identified by all four participants as a major distinguisher between sectors. Wage was a topic addressed spontaneously by all participants. During the open-ended interview questions all four participants spoke of the issue of variance in wages between the sectors. Participants addressed the issue of wages on their own accord and without prompts.

All four ECEs agreed that wages were higher within the non-profit sector. When asked, ‘in which sector were the wages higher,’ participants replied with the following quotes: “...certainly the not-for-profit”, “definitely, the not-for-profit”, “not-for-profit did pay better overall, the wages were higher in the, not-for-profit”, and “the not-for-profit of course.” Brittney said, “Non-for-profit was a higher paid salary in comparison with for-profit.” Brittney continued on to say, “I wasn’t paid as well as I would have liked” in a for-profit centre. The difference that these participants experienced in the wages between the sectors was a deciding factor for Ashley when she was asked ‘is there a sector you would rather work in?’ Ashley responded:

Certainly the not for profit because the wages are actually quite a bit different in that two people could come out of college both holding the same exact credentials of diploma in ECE one works in a for-profit centre at barely above minimum wage the other one could work at a non-profit centre making several tens of thousands of dollars more working for a non-for-profit sector. That's a big one.

These participants reported no schedule for regular raises in ECEs' salaries in their for-profit childcare centres. All four participants explained that from their experiences in for-profit centres ECEs would have to request/advocate for a raise. Brittney says that raises would be earned in her for-profit centre, but that they were "very minimum, there was not much." Similarly Cathryn explained that:

There could be raises but you'd have to be there for a really long time for it to level out the way that it did in the not-for-profit. Raises were not frequent and there was no structured system like you worked this amount of time and you get a raise. It didn't work that way.

Diana said:

It was very unpredictable and unstable like you don't know if you could get a raise it was up to the owner. If she wanted to give a raise she would, if she didn't want to she wouldn't. In order to get a raise you would have to have been working there for years.

Ashley similarly explained that:

You had to advocate for them so there was no regulate increased. Staff were very upset they had to actually approach the owners and ask for a raise and plead their case. It wasn't like there was a formal review process. Basically what would happen was that staff would get annoyed of being paid the same wage over a couple years and they had to go to the owner and push for a raise.

The quotes above indicate that for-profit centres lacked standard scheduled raises, compared to non-profit centres which provided standard scheduled raises.

In contrast, all participants reported that raises were regular and standardized in non-profit centres. When asked if raises were given in the non-profit centre, Brittney answered "yes"

and continued on to explain that, “every year you do get a raise because they have a scale salary and they also have wage subsidies in addition to that so it is a fair amount”. Cathryn explained:

Yes, based on the number of months that you were there you would get increases, with professional developments you would get increases, with going back to school you would get increases. There were a lot of opportunities for that. We were unionized so the raises kept coming with the number of years spent there.

These ECEs speak about the support from their union to justify their regular pay increase. Cathryn clarified that, “because it was unionized I think that it made a big difference, like they were liable to give raises. It makes a difference when someone is like watching your back as a staff member”. When asked if raises were given in the non-profit centre Ashley answered, “oh absolutely, particularly when you are in a unionized environment,” Diana answered, “yeah because we are unionized and every three years they renew our contract. Yes, there is a stable raise every three years like you know you’re going to get a raise so it’s a formal system.” In conclusion, all four participants reported a regular and predictable raise schedule setup and implemented for ECEs when working in their non-profit childcare centres.

Staff qualifications.

Participants reported that ECEs and ECAs working at for-profit childcare centres were under qualified. Two of the four ECEs interviewed stated that their centre hired ECEs who had not yet completed their diploma. Ashley said, “staff were often untrained,” adding that:

There would be unqualified assistants; some would be just the minimum age of 18. In talking with some of the permanent staff there, some had not completed high school but were old enough to work and unfortunately they were the ones that were at the most disadvantaged because they were paid a lot less, they were paid minimum wage really. They did not even have the respect of their coworkers.

Cathryn, elaborated that at her for-profit centre the education requirements to become an ECE included, “a diploma in early childhood education unless you were an early childhood assistant, then you wouldn’t need any educational requirements.” Diana explained her situation as:

Many other people there didn’t have any education at all and were working as ECEs. Because all of the women who were working there were immigrants they had some background diplomas like me from back home, but no specialized childhood education. Some of them were going to school, like me. I was working as an assistant in the infant room and because I just started going to school she hired me and because of my education background back home she hired me as an early childhood assistant. But I would say most of the people: they didn’t have their diplomas, so I don’t know how she had the license for the centre because I know in Canada you have to have ECE diploma in order to be working in the field.

Within the non-profit childcare centres the participants reported ECEs working with additional educational qualification, such as bachelors of arts and masters degrees. Ashley said,

Not- for-profit ECEs were very much more qualified, at the very minimum is the early childhood assistant certificate. But many of us have our diploma in early childhood education, degrees in education, and some of us well, at least one masters.

Cathryn similarly said, “in a not-for-profit it was at least a diploma in early childhood education but many of the staff had degrees.” Diana reported that a diploma was not enough to work as an ECE in her current non-profit centre, but that one would also be required to “be registered with the Ontario College of ECEs.” Brittney even said that being a registered ECE was the minimum requirement. A bachelor’s degree was suggested, although it was not written or advertised as being required.

Brittney explained:

The place that I work at promotes lifelong learning. Having my masters and applying there even though I was told I was over qualified but I was still given the opportunity to work there, it just says a lot about a place that so what if you have your masters so that’s a good thing and they promote that type of opportunity and privilege.

Whereas for-profit childcare centres rarely hired ECEs with the minimum educational requirements, at times hiring those with none at all; non-profit childcares at times housed full-time ECEs who had credentials above the minimum educational standards.

Professional development opportunities.

Professional development was not a requirement for participants when working in for-profit childcare centres. Ashley reported, “there were no PD [professional development] opportunities for full time staff.” For-profit centres were reported providing limited opportunities for professional development if any at all. Cathryn said, “they really didn’t have anything available other than the first aid and CPR which was mandatory each year.” Diana said, “No, that wasn’t an expectation at all. There wasn’t even a discussion about that.” One ECE, Brittney, remarked, “I was the one that had asked or inquired about some workshops because as a young graduate I think some of the challenges I was facing I definitely needed that support but I think I had maybe attended one workshop on my own time but most of the time the answers I received were ‘that we don’t have enough funding to send you.’”

Ashley believed that for-profit centres’ concerns around their budget and generating a profit took priority over professional development opportunities. When asked if professional development opportunities were encouraged in her for-profit centre Ashley explained,

No, not at all. That wasn’t even on their radar. It affects the bottom line when you’re sending staff out to professional development opportunities. The expectation is that the owner would pay for the workshop; therefore, they were more concerned about meeting their minimum, I think, in order to turn a profit.

Ashley’s belief was supported by the comments of two other participants’ experiences. Brittney and Cathryn expressed that while working as ECEs in their for-profit childcare centres they were not compensated for taking part in professional development opportunities. Brittney mentioned

that professional development opportunities were usually not paid for by the centre and were usually after work or during their lunch. Brittney said, “for-profit places that I worked at didn’t compensate the staff for their time.” Cathryn said, “in the for-profit there wasn’t really time or the resources to allow the staff to do professional development, it was really on their own. Whereas in the non-profit there were plenty of opportunities and supply staff were hired to fill the roles of full-time ECEs who were out at workshops”.

Professional development was a mandatory requirement for all participants’ in their non-profit childcare centres. Cathryn said that professional development opportunities were mandatory and that ECEs,

Were required to do a number of courses or workshops per year. So there were a lot more opportunities for professional development in the not-for-profit centre because, they had people coming in to do workshops with staff which made it a lot more accommodating. It was easier for ECEs to just stay at work and have a workshop there rather than having to travel to a different centre or find time on their own to do that kind of stuff.

When asked if she was required to complete professional development courses Diana explains that,

In my current work, the non-profit, that is an expectation. At the end of the year when we are evaluated there is a part in the evaluation we have to fill out what we did throughout the year, professional development and we do have to attend different workshops, conferences, seminars, even taking courses to keep upgraded with what’s current in our field.

Diana elaborates to say, “We have three PD days. If we want to use more than those three days they do support, and they do compensate you with the money; a hundred percent.” When asked if professional development opportunities were encouraged in her non-profit centre Ashley said,

All the time. Yes, that is actually a part of our annual performance review, what professional development opportunities have you done over the course of your year and what would you like to do. We also have mandatory professional development days we have two days a year that are designated particularly for our own in house professional development where all of our centres gather together. Also, we have professional

development opportunities outside of the organization so if we would like to continue on, and I have taken advantage of this myself, I wanted to continue on and complete my degree in education I had tuition reimbursement from my organization. If I would like to complete my masters I can have tuition reimbursement for that as well so it's a huge difference.

Participants illuminate the variation in professional development opportunities offered in the for-profit sector in comparison to the non-profit sector. "There were more opportunities for professional development, there were a lot more," said Brittney when asked what her experience was working in a non-profit centre. When asked the same question Diana felt like she was given the opportunity to develop as an early childhood professional; she said, they gave "us the opportunity to grow. Before, there was no professional development, no opportunity to grow. Here [at her non-profit] they support us to go to school to continue our education to attend workshops to develop as professionals." Diana agreed with Brittney when she said, "there is no professional development in the private compared to the other [non-profit] centre." Diana expresses an appreciation for the professional development opportunities offered to her in her non-profit centre when she said, "I feel I have room for improvement as a professional they [her current non-profit centre] support professional development."

Non-profit centres were reported by participants as going above and beyond when it came to professional development. Professional development opportunities were encouraged in participants' non-profit childcare centres through reimbursements, compensations, supports, and professional learning community. Ashley explains, "I don't think we ever pay out of pocket for anything, it's automatically just paid. It's usually paid for by the centre supervisor so no money leaves my pocket and I can do any PD". Brittney said,

When staff had to go after hours to attend, they were paid for those hours over time. If anybody is taking the bus, yes, people are definitely compensated for it usually it is a carpool that we do and that person usually gets gas money.

Ashley remarked, “there were opportunities for professional development, within the centre, but if you want to go on and do further schooling, that’s supported in terms of having tuition paid for, and you know... there’s camaraderie. Brittney said,

For not-for-profit we hold this monthly kind of professional development discussion group among the staff that are there just to follow up on PDs that we do. We have school-age and kindergarten so the school-age staff might go to a different PD opportunity depending on the challenges that they’re working with. They might fill in the other staff about what they did so it’s sort of like a professional learning community and we may have some articles that we may discuss just to keep our practice more relevant.

Brittney’s non-profit centre planned professional development opportunities around the interests of the ECEs in that centre,

Yes, they really try to get your opinion as to what people are interested in and to relate it to some of the challenges that they’re experiencing with the particular age group that they’re working with. That is more relevant and meaningful to people in general to do the professional development. People are more prone to go when it’s something relevant and meaningful to what they want to learn about. Now it’s usually based on what they want to learn about.

Brittney’s non-profit childcare centre empowered their ECEs’ by allowing them to contribute to decision-making when it came to the professional development courses offered to them.

Theme 2: Non-Material Conditions

This second theme, non-material conditions, reflects a new deeper understanding of the experience of these participants. This theme was not one of the indicators identified by researchers to measure the quality of working conditions for ECEs, however, non-material conditions are relevant since intangible and psychological issues were addressed throughout each participant’s interview. During the interview process ECE participants would highlight the psychological toll that a working condition discussed would have on them personally. This shed light on the significance that not only do material conditions have an impact on ECEs’ working conditions but that also intangible, psychological effects play a role as well. It is important to

address what these ECE participants experienced psychologically in each sector, because non-material factors have an impact on the working conditions of ECEs.

Decision making/autonomy.

Participants reported that their non-profit centres valued input from ECEs when decisions were to be made. When asked ‘did you feel you played a role in decision-making when working in a non-profit centre?’ Ashley answered,

Absolutely in all aspects: in my own room, in what was happening in the centre, I had input in what happens in the other centres. Your contributions are valued, your input on how to make the program better, what materials are needed, all those things are actively asked, and are valued, so it was a completely different experience than the for-profit centres.

Brittney answered, “Oh definitely. Yes definitely. They do ask and respect our opinions so it’s not just asking it but it is also acting upon it which as an employee you do feel respected that you did get listened to.” Diana said,

My manager respects everybody and our opinions. She communicates with us about everything, she trusts us. I talk to my manager and say this is my opinion, these are my thoughts over the subject and then we discuss together. Either she says yes that’s a good idea or she’s going to suggest something else, its more communication and decision making together.

Cathryn also said,

They really valued the input of all the staff and when things needed to be hashed out, they would take my perception. They were really accommodating to my needs and when I felt there was a need in the classroom and I initiated some kind of resource to the families they were definitely game to have that included. They were really collaborative and inclusive.

According to the participants, the owners in the for-profit centres made all the final decisions; ECEs’ voices were not considered when decisions were to be made. When asked ‘did

you feel you played a role in decision-making when working in a for-profit centre?’ Ashley, answered,

No, no, no, because the directive came from the owner and again it was all profit driven so anything that affected the bottom line was of utmost importance to the owners. The bottom line you know, their profits were what was important.

Brittney’s experience in a for-profit centre allowed her, “no negotiation... there was no opportunity for making any decision.” Diana said,

I could never make decisions in the private centre because always I had to go and ask the owner can I do this? Can I do that? What you think if we do this? And she was the one who was always making decisions.

Cathryn explained that her situation,

Was very much more structured and like I said there was a hierarchy so there was the director and the supervisor and then there were team leaders so I didn’t even have the chance to directly report to the director. If I had an issue I had to report to my team leader and the team leader would report to the supervisor; so it was not as collaborative as my experience in not-profit.

All four participants found that decision making was the sole responsibility of the owner or manager of their for-profit centres, as opposed to their non-profit centres, where ECEs’ opinions were requested and valued. With no autonomy or opportunities to make decisions ECEs wanted to leave. Ashley mentioned that the “lack of input from staff” was one factor which influenced her decision to leave two for-profit childcare centres. When asked ‘did you play a role in decision-making when working in a for-profit centre?’ Brittney had said,

No definitely not. I think that was one of my biggest issues. I had to leave this job because there was no negotiation there was no opportunity for making any decisions. I think if you walk into a place and there’s opportunities for decision-making your probably more likely to stay.

These ECEs describe their lack of input with decisions as a major issue which pushed them to leave their for-profit centres.

Turnover.

Turnover has to do with the resignation of ECEs from both the for-profit and non-profit childcare centres. This code has been included in the non-material condition theme due to the nature of the theme reported by participants. ECE participants' resignation seemed to be a direct result of negative psychological impacts experienced in for-profit childcare centres by the interviewed ECEs.

The participants had all resigned from at least one childcare centre due to working conditions. Ashley had resigned from two centres which were both for-profit centres. Ashley goes on to explain that her decision to resign was based on "the lack of respect for the staff and the lack of input from staff." Brittney had also resigned from two centres and they were both in the for-profit sector. As mentioned previously, Brittney decided to leave her position at the first for-profit centre she worked at due to a lack of decision-making opportunities. Brittney had resigned from the second for-profit centre because another for-profit centre next door had lured her with the promise of a higher pay wage, by a dollar, and a happier work environment. Cathryn had resigned from one for-profit centre and one non-profit centre. Cathryn resigned from her for-profit childcare centre because, "I felt like the new director just really wasn't there to support me or to support the children." Cathryn's rationale for resigning from her position at the non-profit centre was based on the fact that, first, she was no longer a student and second, although she was interested in the field of early learning, childcare was not the avenue she was pursuing. Cathryn noted that when resigning from her non-profit centre, "it was a difficult decision to make because I had a really positive experience at that centre." Diana had resigned from one centre and it was

a for-profit childcare centre. Diana explained that she resigned from a for-profit childcare centre because “the low salary and the working conditions were terrible.” For-profit was the only sector from which all four participants had resigned.

Participants mentioned they had stayed temporarily at their for-profit centres to build experience. Brittney said,

It was kind of like I think I can deal with this for another year and I think I was getting the experience. I was at a different level so my expectations weren't as high but as I immersed myself in higher education and I became a lot more experienced and mature, I started to realize the type of environment I would like to work in and the type of growth I would want to have as an early childhood education practitioner. So definitely for the first time I realized that particular place was not for me. I think it was about three months into my position.

Ashley simply said, “I was there to gain experience.” Diana said,

As a new immigrant it's really hard to quit these types of jobs because you try to create some work experience and because everywhere you go to look they're going to ask what's your previous [work] experience. So me, personally, I had to build that working experience. At that time I was a single mom so it was really hard for me to quit that job.

The four ECEs interviewed saw their positions at for-profit childcare centres as temporary. Diana said, “I was just waiting to finish my school, to look for another job. When I finished school and I had my ECE diploma that's when I was feeling more confident, plus some work experience to go look for another job.” Cathryn said, “my reason for resigning was that I was no longer a student and I no longer needed that job.” Ashley said she considered her ECE position at the for-profit centre as a temporary job and said “I knew I was just passing through, earning some money. I would not have considered that a career. No!”

Brittney expressed that the idea of working for a for-profit organization had an effect on the sector's turnover rate. Brittney said,

The whole idea behind working for a for-profit employer; as I got into higher education and I looked at lots of literature and did some advocacy courses, I started to realize what I wanted to do which was long-term staying in this field. My future wasn't in for-profit

centres. My overall vision and the difference that I wanted to make in the early childcare community can't justify working for a for-profit to be honest, it's a mismatch of visions. I realized that this is not the way I wanted to continue. I wanted a career in early childhood education I didn't want a job that was just low expectations, poor quality. I just did not see myself growing as a professional.

In contrast, Ashley felt like her experience in a non-profit centre kept her in the field of childcare. Ashley expressed that working for her non-profit centre,

Changed my mind about childcare and my career path. Initially I was on my way to teacher's college and was going to teach in a school but, after I got to this not-for-profit centre and saw the huge emphasis on the importance of early learning experiences, the way that staff were offered professional development opportunities, and the way they were coached, that feedback was given in a positive manner and the philosophy fit with my personal philosophies as a parent as well. I never left. It actually changed a lot of what I thought about childcare.

Unhappiness seemed to play a role in the participants' resignation from their for-profit childcare centres. Diana said, "it was a very depressing environment and after a while I wasn't happy at all and I was just waiting to look for another job." Brittney likewise said, "I did feel I was not involved, there was a lot of authority over me. I really didn't feel like I could disagree on things and then still have my job the next day. I decided to leave this job." Cathryn explains that she resigned from her for-profit childcare centre because, "I wasn't happy where I was working. I didn't feel comfortable working in that environment." Psychological impacts played a role in ECEs' decisions to leave for-profit centres.

Support.

The support offered to these ECEs by administrators had an effect on their psychological well-being. As mentioned above, due to a lack of support from management, Cathryn felt very uncomfortable working in her for-profit childcare centre. Ashley said, "the manager was not around to assess the quality of the programming or the quality of the interactions, they were

always either in the office or away from the centre.” When asked about her experiences working in a for-profit centre Brittney said, “the environment was not overall as supportive as I would have liked.” Brittney gave the following example,

Many times when I hit a road block which could be as simple as the strategies I used with a challenging behaviour with children and I needed the support, I would go to my director and ask. She would say, ‘well you know this is what we’ve been doing so do this’. There were disagreements because I know those strategies definitely. I would not apply. There was not much room to discuss different opinions or to involve a resource educator or any other resources. If you don’t have that support you kind of feel like you’ve hit a wall, like you’ve hit a dead end. It would have been nice to have that mentor-supportive relationship to say well you know what this is, what we can do to help, or, if we don’t have those resources, this is where you can go. That direction and that guidance that I needed wasn’t there.

However, when Brittney was asked about her experiences working in a non-profit centre she said,

It is definitely a lot more of a supportive environment, when it comes to wages, benefits, support systems, professional development and having the opportunity to have a conversation with my assistant director and director. There was a lot more of an open door policy I think between staff and directors. Anytime I have a challenge there is opportunity for discussion. Overall there was more of a respectful and a supportive environment as a worker.

Diana said, “my manager supports me, she’s going to help me in case I need any extra support or any extra help.”

Sense of community.

Participants expressed the sense of community found in their non-profit childcare centres as a positive experience. For example Cathryn shared the following:

Personally, I liked the non-profit better. I thought it was just a more inviting environment. It was really friendly to parents and to staff. There were a lot of events that we had with parents, and it was really important to build those relationships with families. We would have potlucks and other kinds of events that would bring us together as a community. There was a huge sense of community in that childcare centre oppose to the for-profit where I didn’t find that to be as much. I really liked the not-for-profit a lot better because,

in general, I was able to grow as an ECE and really learn from people and learn from the families and the kids.

Cathryn said, “I had a positive experience in my non-profit centre. I found it to be a really positive environment where we had a lot of events where the staff had team building and stuff like that to kind of bring us closer together as a team.” Diana said,

I’ve been so thankful and lucky being in the place that I am in right now [a non-profit centre] because first of all you’re respected as a person, your opinion counts and matters. We all work together as team, we trust each other. The best thing is not only I am an infant teacher in the infant room but, every single person that works in a different room altogether; we care for the centre, we support each other, we communicate together, we make decisions all together, and this is very important. We work well together, we work as a team.

Diana also said, “I made some friends, like some other people that were really nice I developed friendships that I still keep in touch with them and talk.”

In contrast, in the for-profit childcare centre Diana expressed that “the working environment wasn’t supporting teamwork. Everybody there, at the for-profit centre, would argue with each other.” Also Kathryn said, “in the private one people were driven to work for those higher positions because we had team leaders and supervisors. Kind of like a hierarchy system within the childcare centre which I didn’t necessarily like because it took away from just providing care for the children and made it more of like a hierarchy and a competitive nature to getting the better job.” On the other hand, in the non-profit childcare centre Kathryn, said, “I liked the team building that we had. I felt like we were really close and it didn’t come down to who was making what money because we were all making kind of the same amount and we were all on the same level.”

Feeling valued.

All participants conveyed the feelings that they were not valued as ECE professionals when working in their for-profit childcare centres. Ashley commented,

They were not valued. The staff I think, were very resentful and that was an ongoing thing that you would hear staff talking about that they were underpaid, they weren't valued and often time even though they were being paid very close to minimum wage they were putting out their own money for their own rooms and they were not being reimbursed for it. It was a very depressing place to be in. You would see that staff were (a) not valued and (b) that they were being taken advantage of when they were putting their own money in to make their room into a better program. The staff in the for-profit were crying, they were angry, that's not something that you see in a not for profit – night and day. Morale was very low, and actually it impacted on the children.

Diana added:

The owner was stressing us. She would come into the room and ask 'why you do this? And why you do that?', and watching you all the time. You didn't have the freedom to work. I knew my job but I felt like the owner always was watching me. She wasn't appreciating us, she was just using us to manage her business.

Diana compared how she was valued in the for-profit centre to the non-profit centre:

The environment is very stressful. You feel you're watched all the time compared to my non-profit managers right now, who of course has high expectations but the way they address those expectations is completely different. In the private centre it was more humiliating; conditions like a slave with no respect and no appreciation.

The families made Diana feel valued while working in a for-profit centre. Diana said, "there was more subsidized families at the private centre, I would say 98% of the families were subsidized. So the families were really grateful. They would greet us very gratefully and were appreciative of the work we did."

Whereas, in the non-profit participants expressed that they felt valued. Ashley stated, "working conditions were fantastic. You're really valued. It's a fun place to work, you know we are all very professional and do our jobs but it's also rewarding." Diana concurred, "you are respected and happy to go to work and you feel at the end of the day you did something

meaningful, something you were suppose to do with the children and families. I just feel very respected as an employee in every way, from my manager to my colleagues.”

An auspice’s purpose (Yield a profit vs. Provide a service).

A childcare centre’s main motive had an impact on these ECEs’ psychological well-being. Participants perceived their motives to be different than that of their for-profit owners’ motives. For example, Ashley noted that “you have to be happy where you are and if you’re not valued and not respected and you can see the main driver is that the owner makes money; it’s a very demotivating place to be.” The for-profit centre’s objective to make money had an effect on the wages and raises they offered their staff. The additional task required of these ECEs to self-advocate in their for-profit centres for a raise was described as an additional stressor. As mentioned before, Ashley explained that co-workers working with her at a for-profit childcare centres had to individually self-advocate to receive a pay raise. Ashley articulated, “staff were very upset they had to actually approach the owners and ask for a raise and plead their case. Staff would get annoyed of being paid the same wage over a couple years and they had to go to the owner and push for a raise.” Diana voiced that, “private childcare centres I believe, are about money making. There’s no quality, there’s no quality care, and there’s no quality in the work environment. The way they treat their employees it’s all about their budget and how much money they’re going to make.” Brittney expressed, “you’re looking at one place that it’s a business. It’s about being cost effective it’s about making a profit so I think there’s definitely a different focus. One you’re trying to make money out of care and learning, oppose to the learning and providing a service, so there are different intentions.”

Disconnect between philosophy of the centre and philosophy of the ECE.

When asked 'what were your likes/dislikes in a for-profit centre' Brittney explained that in her for-profit childcare experience she found it difficult since she did not have the same vision/philosophy as the centre. Brittney said, "I am really trying to practice what I learned in theory but there is that disconnect and it felt really huge at the for-profit place." Brittney added,

I think a dislike would have been not having the same vision or the philosophy coming in. I think I wasn't as mature, I just graduated I wanted the job so I wasn't picky. I didn't really do the research from an employee's perspective to look at what I was getting into, if this environment was going to be supportive. It was an initial shock when I went into a for-profit organization. I started to realize the type of environment I would like to work in and the type of growth I would want to have as an early childhood education practitioner. That particular place was not for me.

Brittney feared losing her job as an ECE at a for-profit centre. She explained that,

I just felt like I had to do what she tells me to or you know I might not be here long enough, the owner was intimidating and she had all the authority. Like I really didn't feel like I could disagree on things and then still have my job the next day so I would just listen and then be like ok.

In contrast, in the non-profit childcare centres the perceived visions and philosophy of the childcare centres were reported as similar to their own visions and philosophies. Brittney verbalized that she felt,

We have a similar vision and the philosophy of the non-profit centre. I respect it is very meaningful to me because of my expectations of what a childcare and a learning place should be, there is that connection. I think that being able to directly apply my education and my theory to a place is definitely important so there's less disconnect when I am working.

Ashley felt that,

The staff buy-in to the philosophy. In the non-profit sector we all embrace the philosophy and believe in it and do our best to model it. For example, the interactions with the children and the families and with each other were very negative in the for-profit, but respected and valued in the not for profit centres.

Summary perceptions from participants.

At the end of the interview all participants were asked two questions: first, from your experience, are there distinct differences in the working conditions between a for-profit centre and non-profit centre? Second, is there a sector you would rather work in? If so, which sector? These two questions give a general feel for participants and their overall opinion of the working conditions between the for-profit and non-profit childcare sectors.

From your experience, are there distinct differences in the working conditions between a for-profit centre and non-profit centre?

Overall, the participants expressed the major difference between the for-profit and non-profit childcare centres they worked at were poor working conditions which lead to negative emotions. Ashley said, “ah, totally different! Yes, there are clear distinctions in my experience. The staff in the for-profit were crying, they were angry, that’s not something that you see in a not-for-profit.” Ashley explains her experience in for-profit and non-profit centres as drastically different, using the metaphoric example of night and day. Brittney said, “the years I spent in a for-profit centre the working conditions weren’t great.” Cathryn said, “the for-profit it was very, very different than non-profits I have worked in. My experience in a for-profit childcare centre was a really negative one the food and the way the staff were treated were not necessarily the highest of quality.”

Is there a sector you would rather work in? If so, which sector?

All four participants said they would rather work in a non-profit childcare centre. Ashley stated, “certainly the not-for-profit and it has been my advice to anyone looking for a job to look for one in the not-for-profit.” Brittney commented that her for-profit centre ended “up being a bad experience. It was a learning experience and I wouldn’t change it because I think I’ve grown as a

practitioner because I have that but definitely quality wise it wasn't something that I would ever recommend or support." Brittney also remarked, "I think now that this is the field I want to be in and I have the knowledge and I have the awareness of what the difference is I would choose non-for-profit for sure." Cathryn stated that, "personally I liked the non-profit better I thought it was just a more inviting environment. In terms of what I didn't like, I can't really think of anything off the top of my head." Diana concurred, "of course the non-for-profit" although she acknowledges that she only had experience in one for-profit childcare centre.

Member Checking/Credibility

Once the analysis section was complete participants were asked to review the findings section to verify that I had accurately represented and interpreted their experiences. Participants were asked to e-mail me their feedback. Member checking was a strategy used to further strengthen the trustworthiness and credibility of this qualitative research study (Thomas and Magilvy, 2011).

Summary of Findings

Through my analysis I found that ECEs collectively agreed that there were major differences between the working conditions in childcare sectors. There were two key themes which emerged from the ECE participants' reported differences in working conditions. First, material conditions were different between the for-profit and non-profit childcare centres. ECE participants reported that their experiences with higher wages, more benefits, opportunities for professional development, and elevated staff education levels favored the non-profit childcare centre. Second, that the psychological impact (non-material conditions) of working in each respective childcare sector were poles apart. ECEs reported that they had a more positive experience working as ECEs in non-profit childcare centres, because they felt valued, supported, a part of a community, and a part of decision making. These two themes demonstrate a collective experience between

the four ECEs, where preference was given to working in non-profit centres. These ECEs' standpoint is of value since they reported on their lived-in realities of being employees within both the non-profit and for-profit sectors. The next section will examine these findings and how they compare with existing literature.

Discussion

This research study aimed to highlight participants' experiences and perceived differences between the for-profit and non-profit sector. Four ECEs who have worked in both for-profit and non-profit childcare centres reported vast differences in working conditions between sectors. The following discussion will identify research consistent or inconsistent with this study's findings as well as discuss the impact that the variations between for-profit and non-profit have on practice and policy within the field of ECEC. Overall, results focusing on the first theme, material conditions are consistent with literature to date and claims made about ECEs' working conditions in the different childcare sectors. The second theme which emerged addresses the psychological effects (non-material conditions) of ECEs working in different sectors and had not been identified in the literature.

Theme 1: Material Conditions

When asked about benefits received as employees, all participants discussed only health care services. Thus data results for this indicator are limited. Consistent with Whitebook, Howe, and Phillips's (1990) and Mullis, Cornille, Mullis, and Taliano's (2003) results, this study found non-profit childcare centres provided more health care benefits to their ECE employees. Two of the four participants interviewed received benefits for health care services from their for-profit childcare centre but these services were limited.

Benefits are an important factor to consider when discussing ECE working conditions, because in a field where employees are earning lower wages, benefits can be viewed as an addition to an ECE's individual salary as well as "provide a measure of longer-term security" (Doherty, Lero, Goelman, LaGrange, and Tougas, 2000).

Findings indicate that wages were a relevant and meaningful issue for this study's participants. All four participants addressed the issue of wage differences between sectors during the open-ended questions at the beginning of the interviews. The participants' spontaneous focus on wages reinforces the importance of wage differentiation to each one of them. Interviewed ECEs reported receiving significantly lower wages in for-profit childcare centres, which is consistent with research that found ECEs received higher wages in non-profit childcare centres (Cleveland & Krashinsky, 2004; Doherty et al., 2000; Mukerjee & Witte, 1993; Mullis et al., 2003; Nuttal, 1991; Sosinsky, Lord, and Zigler, 2007; Whitebook, Howes, and Phillips, 1990).

Wages were found to have an impact on the ECE participants' emotional well-being. Negative psychological impacts have been found to impede on employees' work efficacy and job retention. Diana recounted her experience in a for-profit centre as a depressing place to work, in part because of low wages. Adams (1965) found that "workers who perceive themselves as unfairly paid will lower their work effort" (Adams, 1965 as cited in Leete, 2000, p. 426). Whitebook and Bellm (1999) found that low wages in childcare have been identified as the strongest predictor of instability among educators. The potential link between low wages, lower levels of work effort and high turnover is important because it is likely to result in mediocre or poor quality care provided to the children and families they serve.

The participants reported wage inconsistencies among the ECEs at for-profit centres. Owners of childcare centres appeared to randomly decide an employee's wages. This is a relevant finding since wage disparities have been found to effect employee morale. Frank and Stark (1990) found that wage differentiation within a group reduced staff work morale because it created status deprivation for employees who were being paid less. Clark and Oswald (1996) discovered that relative pay had an effect on employees' job satisfaction and general efficacy.

Levine (1991) argued that wage disparities decreased cooperation among colleagues, which was seen in Ashley's example when she explained that employees who did not complete high school, but were working as ECEs were not respected by their coworkers.

Interviewed ECEs reported that the for-profit childcare centres they worked at tended to hire employees who held the bare minimum of credentials. According to Ashley, at times the minimum age of 18 was the only requirement. In this study, non-profit centres were found to employ ECEs with significantly higher levels of education in comparison with the for-profit centres. This study validates both the results of Doherty et al., (2000) and Sosinsky et al., (2007) who found a relationship between a sector type and ECEs qualifications. In this study, one of the participants, Brittney, holds a master's degree and was able to find a job at a non-profit childcare centre. Brittney expressed joy at being in a place that promoted lifelong learning and that was willing to hire her despite being told she was over qualified with a masters degree.

Highly educated staff are more likely to leave a job if they earn lower wages (Whitebook and Sakai, 2003). This study found the same relationship between qualifications and job retention. Generally, ECEs with more education will not be satisfied receiving a minimum wage. As a result, these ECEs may look for employment elsewhere.

This study's findings are consistent with Mullis, Cornille, Mullis, and Taliano (2003) and Kagan, Sobol, and Quarnstrom (1987)'s results that found that non-profit childcare centres offered and provided more professional development opportunities than did for-profit childcare centres. Participants expressed that when they worked for for-profit childcare centres, professional development opportunities were not mandatory nor were they compensated, opposed to their non-profit employers.

Professional development was particularly meaningful to ECE participants in this study. All participants, unprompted, addressed the issue of professional development as their response to open-ended questions. Indeed, Brittney made an attempt to request professional development opportunities in her for-profit centre but was denied it. As a consequence she attended a workshop on her own time and with her own resources.

Although ECEs are willing to attend professional development courses, the extra time and financial resources needed may be seen as a considerable deterrent. In contrast, ECE participants described their non-profit centres as very accommodating when it came to providing professional development opportunities.

Professional development opportunities or additional qualifications can improve the confidence of ECEs within the classroom as well as improve the quality of services that they provide. Ashley elaborated that she thought the quality of adult-child interactions in her for-profit experience were poor because staff were untrained and were not aware of the impact that negative interactions have on a child's development. The OECD (2001) reported that the quality of education and care provided to children and their families depends "strongly on staff training, and the quality of working conditions across the sector" (OECD, 2001, p.11). Doherty, Lero, Goelman, LaGrange, and Tougas (2000) validate that ECEs should continue to develop their skills and build on their knowledge beyond what they were initially taught. According to these researchers, "life-long participation in professional development is necessary to expand skills and knowledge, to develop fresh ideas, and to refine practice" (p.43).

Based on this study's findings it may seem as if the importance of education is undervalued in the for-profit sector. ECE participants drew attention continuously to the fact that owners are completely motivated by making a profit. Participants suggest that owners have

created a culture of compromise and mediocrity within their programs. For-profit owners frequently hire ECEs with lower qualifications; when hiring ECEs with minimum credentials, owners in a for-profit centre can justify offering their staff minimum wages and benefits. Along the path of mediocrity owners may suggest professional development opportunities at the expense of the ECE, because workers are expected to pay and use their own time.

Theme 2: Non-Material Conditions

Initially, I believed that the quality of ECEs' working conditions was determined by the indicators identified throughout the literature. However, through further analysis, evaluation, regrouping and revisions of codes, I found that an ECE's psychological well-being is a relevant factor to include as an indicator of working conditions. The psychological impact experienced by ECEs can be recognized as a working condition, since it too has an effect on the quality of day-to-day rewards they experienced in their childcare centre.

While it is not listed as a working conditions factor in other research, I found that support given to ECEs was important, because without it ECE participants reported feeling as if they were alone. Participants reported not receiving supports as ECEs when employed in for-profit childcare centres compared to the support they felt from managers in their non-profit childcare centres. Ashley felt unsupported when she went to ask her for-profit employer for help and was told to just keep doing what she had been doing. Ashley did not know what to do and felt like she had no one to turn to. Staff collaboration and the building of a sense of community among the staff within a centre help contribute to ECEs' psychological well-being.

Doherty, Lero, Goelman, LaGrange, and Tougas (2000) address a sense of community and collaboration as important since it “enables staff to socialize informally, to give each other support, to confer about problems, and to exert some influence on decision-making in the centre”

(p.32). I, too, found the sense of community to be relevant to the ECEs I interviewed. Cathryn expressed that she enjoyed the positive environment and the many events that were put together, since it brought the staff together as a team. On the other hand, participants reported more of a competitive and disjointed community in their for-profit childcare centres than in their non-profit childcare centres.

A poor work environment can impede the psychological well-being of an ECE and the resulting sense of community in their for-profit work environment. Cathryn and Diana described their work environment as very competitive. Cathryn perceived her role in her for-profit working community as insignificant, and as a result felt as she held no value and had no decision making power.

Unlike other research (with the exception of Doherty et al, 2000), I found that participants reported having more decision-making power and autonomy when working in their non-profit centres rather than in their for-profit centres. Decision-making opportunities enhanced ECEs' working conditions because they feel respected and valued. One of the factors that Doherty et. al. (2000) see as a contribution to the quality of a childcare centre is that ECEs feel valued and supported. "Opportunities to provide input into centre decision-making and some degree of autonomy over their daily work reduces teaching staff burnout" (Doherty et al., 2000, p.3). According to Doherty et. al. (2000) staff who are given more opportunities for real input into decision-making and more autonomy within their work environment feel more satisfied with their job.

My findings indicate that participants felt valued as professionals in their non-profit childcare centres which seemed to be in connection with the level autonomy given to them. Diana mentioned that the owner at her for-profit centre would come into the room and watch her

all the time and ask her to justify and validate her every practice and action. Diana felt very depressed and disrespected because although she knew her job and what was expected of her, she was constantly supervised. Diana was the only participant who expressed feeling valued during her experience as an ECE in a for-profit centre. Diana expressed that the families enrolled at the for-profit centre made her feel valued and respected. Diana recounted that there were more subsidized families in her for-profit centre and she believed as a result, the families were very grateful for the services they were receiving.

All four participants in this study resigned from a for-profit centre, and their reasons for resigning had to do with one or more working condition. This finding is similar those Mullis et al. (2003), Nuttall, (1991), Sosinsky et al. (2007), and Whitebook et al. (1990) who found the turnover rates for ECEs in for-profit centres to be higher.

It is important to note that one discrepancy was found. Cathryn was the only participant in this study to have resigned from a non-profit centre. However, her reason for leaving was not related to working conditions. Cathryn explained that, despite that fact that she was still interested in the field of early learning, she was no longer interested in working in childcare. Thus, Cathryn's resignation is in no way related to working conditions.

While working in for-profit centres, this study's participants viewed their positions as temporary. The temporary nature of these positions likely has an impact on the quality of the services they provide. Knowing that one is not in a work environment long-term may inhibit and minimize the efforts one may put forward in a job. However, no literature was found to substantiate this finding.

High turnover rates can impede and even jeopardize the operation of any childcare center. The abrupt departure of an ECE can disrupt child/family and caregiver relationships (Sosinsky et

al., 2007). The resignation of a primary caregiver can compromise a child's developmental growth (Helburn, 1995; Whitebook and Bellum, 1999, as cited in Whitebook, and Sakai, 2003). This study's findings were consistent with those of Mullis et al., 2003, Nuttall, 1991, Sosinsky et al., 2007, and Whiteboook et al.,1990, who found that turnover rates are significantly higher in for-profit centres. The high turnover rates found in for-profit centres may lead to overall negative effects on the quality of service and quality of working conditions provided.

Participants spontaneously expressed that their objectives, visions, and goals were not the same as their for-profit childcares centres. All participants addressed their concerns around for-profit childcare centres' main purpose, which was to yield a profit. The ECE participants spoke negatively when they addressed the goals of the for-profit centres. Ashley said that when the employer's purpose is to simply make money employees lose motivation. In contrast, these ECEs reported a positive psychological experience when they felt a person-organization fit (De Cooman, De Gieter, Pepermans, and Jegers, 2011). De Cooman et al. (2011) found that not-for-profit workers place higher value on person-organization fit. This can explain the rationale for why participants spontaneously discussed the disconnect with their own visions and philosophy and those of the for-profit childcare centres.

Judge and Bretz (1992) found that a connection between an employee's and an organization's values motivates employees to choose an organization, also known as the person-organization fit. Diana found that a for-profit centre was not for her, she even wished she had done her research prior to accepting the job at a for-profit centre. Devaro and Brookhire (2007) found that person-organization fit is more frequent in the non-profit sector. The characteristics and values of the childcare sector itself played a role in these ECE participants' perceived working conditions.

Ashley felt strongly against the choice to work in a for-profit centre and said, “it has been my advice to anyone looking for a job to look for one in the not-for-profit.” Ashley’s comment is a strong statement because it highlights perfectly the combined feelings of all four ECE participants interviewed in this study. Ashley’s quote speaks volumes about these ECE participants’ experiences with the working conditions within each sector. All four participants expressed that they would rather work within the non-profit childcare option oppose to the for-profit option.

In conclusion, the psychological effects when working in for-profit childcare centres were reported by interviewed ECEs to be more negative compared to more positive psychological effects when working in non-profit childcare centres. Ashley articulated seeing staff angry and depressed in her for-profit centre, which was not something she saw in her non-profit centre. Ashley perceived staff morale to be low in her for-profit centre which she found to have an impact on her colleagues’ work. Brittney echoed similar concerns. Brittney witnessed very happy staff in her non-profit centre, which she found had a snowball effect on other aspects of the program. These findings are relevant because ECEs’ working conditions have an effect on the quality of service provided to the community (Howes et al., 1990; Mullis et al., 2003; Adams, 1965; Frank and Stark, 1990; and OECD, 2001). Childcare centres have a responsibility to bring democracy into their centres. A centre’s decision to include democracy and involve ECEs in decision-making “is a philosophical choice, a choice based on values” (Cagliari, Barozzi, and Giudici, 2003, p.1). Centres also have a democratic choice to view childcare as a commodity or right and a choice to consider the perspectives of ECEs in decisions being made around early childhood policies and practices. These choices are important since they have been proven, through this study, to have a resulting effect on the working conditions a centre provides to their

ECE workforce. Based on this study's findings democracy was certainly not found in the for-profit centres that participants worked in. Do for-profit centres even have a place in Moss' democratic political practice theory? When the whole purpose of a centre is to yield a profit can democracy thrive? Why should for-profit centres engage in democratic political practice? Based on this study democracy does not have a place in for-profit childcare centres.

Looking Ahead / Recommendations

This study found for-profit childcare centres to provide inadequate and poor quality working conditions to their ECEs. However, readers must recognize that although this may tend to shed a favorable light on the working conditions non-profit childcare centres are reported to have provided, this is a false façade. In comparison with the working conditions found among other occupations, such as the teaching profession, not only for-profit but also non-profit centres are mediocre in comparison. ECEs are the main resources for childcare; as a result, there needs to be “an increasing recognition that the work is complex” (Moss, 2006, p. 30). For all ECEs working in for-profit and non-profit childcare centres, fair material and non-material compensations should be provided in an effort to retain quality ECEs in the childcare field. The working conditions provided by non-profit childcare centres, although notably higher in quality, are still a long way from being up to par with other professions and occupations.

Knowing that working conditions have been proven to produce adverse effects on the quality of service a childcare centre provides to its children, families, and employees, improving working conditions (in both for-profit and non-profit childcare centres) needs to be central early childhood centre practices and policies (Adams, 1965; Clark and Oswald, 1996; Doherty et al., 2000; Frank and Stark, 1990; Kagan et al., 1987; Phillips et al., 2000; and Whitebook and Sakai,

2003). This section will propose potential policy and practice changes that may eliminate inadequate working conditions for ECEs working in both sectors.

A provincial/territorial salary grid should be implemented to provide better pay and regulate scheduled raises. A salary grid would illuminate wage disparities among staff with similar qualifications and experience levels. Improving and regulating the types of benefits provided to ECEs would also help to retain ECEs within the field of childcare.

Moss (2011) argues that based on their local knowledge, ECEs should be invited to engage in, “decision-making about the purposes, the practices and the environment of the” (p.3) centre, as well as, “the evaluation of early childhood work through participatory methods” (p.3). Democracy calls for ECEs, working in both for-profit and non-profit centres, to be included and involved in decisions that directly affect them (i.e ECE working conditions). Democratic political practice involves a collective decision-making process that should involve policy makers, owners, managers and ECEs.

It’s important to note that working conditions in non-profit centres is an issue; however, the subsequent section will focus on recommendations exclusively for-profit childcare centres. Provincial/territorial and municipal policies should aim at creating an ECEC system which is solely comprised of non-profit childcare providers, since they lack motivation to yield a profit. To do this for-profit childcare initiatives must be made unappealing to owners and companies looking to make a profit. Public policies should be set in place to inhibit for-profit childcare centres from receiving any financial supports from the government i.e. grants, or subsidies etc. The lack of financial support may deter owners who have the initiative to use childcare as a business. The growth of for-profit childcare centres should be banned, since they provide inadequate working conditions for ECEs.

After the implementation of the preceding recommendations, for-profit childcare centres grandfathered into the new ECEC system should have new policies set in place. One policy will mandate higher staff qualifications and continual professional development. ECEs and childcare centres would benefit from additional qualifications and ongoing professional development (Doherty et al., 2000). Mandatory and compensated professional development opportunities should be offered to ECEs by their centres. Owners and managers should compensate professional development fees, tuition, and time taken off by ECEs. With these further qualifications perhaps, managers, owners, policymakers, and Canadians as a whole, would find a new value in ECEs and view them more as professionals.

Professional development opportunities should also be offered, and mandatory, to owners and managers of childcare centres. These professional development courses and workshops geared toward owners and managers, within both sectors, may help develop their managerial and leadership skills. Professional development for owners and managers may help them also gain a respect and value for their employees.

Future Research

Although non-material conditions are new to the scholarly literature it needs to be further examined in light of the number of participants interviewed for this study. Therefore, researchers may attempt to duplicate this study with a larger sample size. Researchers could also aim at interviewing more ECEs from diverse backgrounds. Further research could involve conducting a similar study in multiple jurisdictions, thus comparing the working conditions of ECEs not only between sectors, but also between locations. Staff morale seemed to be a reoccurring theme in literature on the discussion of working conditions. Staff morale could be something that is examined independently in future research.

Further research could involve a more thorough examination of the varying types of benefits offered to ECEs, stretching beyond the realm of only medical services. Researchers should ask more in depth questions in regards to benefits, such as sick days, paid breaks, paid planning periods etc. Researchers may also choose to focus in on the issue of unions. I would recommend a study which highlights the issue of unionized ECEs and the difference this indicator may or may not have on ECEs' working conditions, and whether or not it is affected by a childcare sector or auspice.

All four participants had a combined experience of only two different auspice, privately owned and chain owned; although, the variance between sectors and their working conditions was evident in these ECEs' lived-in experiences, a difference based on a centre's auspice was not a relevant finding among these participants, which was inconsistent with what scholarly research identified. I would recommend in further studies that researchers attempt to include participants with a wider array of experiences between, not only the two sectors, but from multiple auspices. In future research on ECE working conditions, researchers should attempt to replicate the methodology outlined in this study using a broader sample size as well to see if the findings are consistent.

Conclusion

With the rapid expansion of a particular for-profit childcare centre in a small town and the discovery that they only pay ECEs minimum wage while providing less than ideal working conditions, I became personally intrigued and interested in the on-going debate about for-profit versus non-profit centres. For-profit childcare centres are expanding; is this good or bad? I have been taught about for-profit and non-profit childcare centres in a light which favoured the non-profit sector but I wanted to hear what ECEs had to say. I was motivated to conduct this study

based on my interest of whether the funding structure of a centre and its auspice has an effect on the working conditions provided to ECEs.

This research is framed around the belief that ECEs' experiences should be viewed as a valued source of knowledge that can contribute and impact decisions being made on their behalf. Therefore, four ECEs were interviewed and through a qualitative analysis process, differences in working conditions between for-profit and non-profit centres were found. The themes which emerged from the participants' voice were not only consistent with previous research findings but also identified new findings.

Through listening to the ECEs' experiences I was surprised at the fact that all ECEs had resigned from for-profit childcare centres. I was also surprised at the extent of which the psychological impacts (referred to as non-material conditions) of working in each sector had on their working conditions. However, this research is only a preliminary examination of the perceived differences between the working conditions of ECEs in both the for-profit and non-profit childcare sector. As a result, additional research is required in an effort to further confirm the divide between the working conditions in each sector. I have proposed further research that may further substantiate these surprisingly new findings.

ECEs' working conditions has been proven through research to correlate to the quality of service provided to children and their families. Doherty et al. (2000) state that, "how teaching staff feel about child care as a career directly influences both how they respond to children and their likelihood of remaining in the child care field" (p.85). The early childhood workforce is growing and for-profit childcare centres are expanding so ECE working conditions are becoming an impressing issue. Thus this issue "needs to encompass restructuring and rethinking" (Moss,

2006, p.31) in an effort to ensure improved working conditions for early childhood educators who care for and educate young children.

Appendix A: Contact and information about study handed out by peers

Hello,

My name is Christine Romain-Tappin, a graduate student in the Master's of Early childhood Studies program at Ryerson University. I am in the process of completing my major research project and am looking for participants to take part in the project. The purpose of my research is to examine ECEs' perception of differences in working conditions between for-profit and non-profit childcare centres. I am looking for participants who:

- a) are 18 years of age and older
- b) have graduated and obtained an ECE diploma
- c) has worked under the title of an ECE in both for-profit/privatized, and non-profit childcare centres
- d) that these centres be located in the Greater Toronto Area.

Should you agree to participate in this research study you will be interviewed for about an hour and a half, at a private location of their choice (ex. Library) and asked to reflect on your experiences of the working conditions in for-profit and non-profit childcare centres. Participants will be asked to answer and elaborate on questions regarding personal experiences working as an Early Childhood Educator in both for-profit and non-profit childcare centres in the Greater Toronto Area, specifically on the topic of working conditions. Although, as a participant you will be asked to disclose the ownership structure of your centre along with auspice: university/college affiliated, independently owned; you will not be asked to disclose the name and location of your workplaces. Your identity will be protected, as I will be using pseudonyms and all conversations (written, spoken, and recorded) will be kept strictly confidential. I am specifically looking for ECEs who match the specific criteria identified above.

Finally, it is important to note that your decision to participate in this research project is completely voluntary and should you choose not to participate no reason is required to validate your choice. Your decision not to participate will have no effect on your relationship with Ryerson University. If you are unsure about participating in this research project or have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me. My contact information is provided below.

For further details about this project and the next steps e-mail me stating your interest and I will send you a follow-up e-mail, which will include as an attachment a copy of the consent agreement for you to review prior to the interview and detailed description of the study.

If you are interested in taking part in this research study, and would like to receive additional information please contact me at your earliest convenience.

Thanks for your consideration

Christine Romain-Tappin

christine.t.franciss@ryerson.ca

P.S. I would like to clarify that the discrepancy you may notice between the primary investigator's name and e-mail address is due to a recent name change. I apologize for any confusion or inconvenience this may cause.

Appendix B: Recruitment e-mail to potential participants

Hi,

I would like to thank you for your interest in participating in my research project. I am excited to have you join the group of participants and appreciate your willingness to volunteer of your time, knowledge, and experiences. I have attached a copy of the consent agreement to this e-mail to ensure that you have time to consider all aspects of participation in this project. I ask that you review the consent agreement and to please contact me with any questions or concerns. If after reading this agreement you decide not to participate in this research project do not hesitate to let me know. Your decision will have no effect on your relationship with me or with Ryerson University.

If you agree to continue on and volunteer as a participant in this study please e-mail me back at your earliest convenience suggesting a convenient time and location for you to meet for the interview process. Two location options could be: at a private room at a public library that is convenient to you or at a private, quiet space at Ryerson University. The expected duration of the interview process is 2 hours maximum. The interview will be tape recorded. When we meet at the allotted location and time, you will sign the final page of the consent form prior to the commencement of the interview.

If you wish to participate in this research project please e-mail dates, times, and a location which is convenient for you in the next 2 weeks.

I look forward to hearing from you,
Thanks again.

Christine Romain-Tappin
christine.t.franciss@ryerson.ca

P.S. I would like to clarify that the discrepancy you may notice between the primary investigator's name and e-mail address is due to a recent name change. I apologize for any confusion or inconvenience this may cause.

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Define: Working Conditions

WARM-UP: Background and Childcare Experience

1. Tell me a little about your experience in childcare.
2. In years, how long have you worked in the childcare field?
3. How many centres have you worked?

[**excluding** practicum settings (field placements as part of basic training) but **including** the centre you are now working in] SUPPLY INCLUDED?

4. How many years did you work in non-profit childcare centre?
5. How many years did you work in for-profit childcare centre?
6. Are you currently working in childcare? If so, in which sector?
7. Was your for-profit centre individually owned, or chain owned? Do you know?

ECE PERSPECTIVES

8. a) What are your experiences working in a for-profit centre? (working conditions)

Probes: What was it like? Can you tell me more?

- b) What are your experiences working in a non-profit centre?

Probes: What was it like? Can you tell me more?

9. a) What were your likes/dislikes in a for-profit centre? (working conditions)

Probe: Give me examples?

- b) What were your likes/dislikes in a non-profit centre?

Probe: Give me examples?

10. From your experiences, are there distinct differences in working conditions between a for-profit centre and a non-profit centre?

Probe: What are these differences in working conditions?

11. Is there a sector you would rather work in? If so, which sector?

12. Did you feel you played a role in decision-making when working in a for-profit centre?
Why?

13. Did you feel you played a role in decision-making when working in a non-profit centre?
Why?

Probes: If so in which sector?

FURTHER PROBES

i) Staff qualifications.

- 14.a) What were the educational requirements of ECEs in your for-profit centre(s)?

- b) What were the educational requirements of ECEs in your non-profit centre(s)?

ii) Professional development opportunities.

15. a) Were you required to complete professional development courses in your for-profit centre(s)?
- b) Were you required to complete professional development courses in your non-profit centre(s)?

16. a) Were professional development opportunities encouraged in your for-profit centre(s)?
(via. A follow through and a push form administration)
- b) Were professional development opportunities encouraged in your non-profit centre(s)?
(via. A follow through and a push form administration)
17. a) Are professional development opportunities compensated (via. Workshop fees or travelling expenses money?) in your for-profit centre(s)?
- b) Are professional development opportunities compensated (via. Workshop fees or travelling expenses money?) in your non-profit centre(s)?
18. a) Were you paid for your attendance at professional development workshops conducted during a work day, in your for-profit centre(s)? (E.g. Paid overtime, or considered your own time without pay?)
- b) Were you paid for your attendance at professional development workshops conducted during a work day, in your non-profit centre(s)?

Wages.

19. What was your experience with wages?
20. In which sector were the wages higher?
21. a) Could raises be earned in the for-profit centre?
- b) Could raises be earned in the non-profit centre?
22. a) What determined wage increase at the for-profit centre(s)?
- b) What determined wage increase at the non-profit centre(s)?

Probe: Tell me more.

Benefits.

23. a) Were you offered benefits in your for-profit centre(s)?

Probe: If so what were they?

b) Were you offered benefits in your non-profit centre(s)?

Probe: If so what were they?

Turnover.

24. Have you ever resigned from a position in the childcare field?

Probes: From which sector? Were the reasons related to working conditions? If so, what were your reasons?

COOL DOWN: Conclusion

25. What would make working conditions better for ECEs?

Probe: What would you like to change?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you for volunteering your time to participate in this interview. If you have chosen to receive a follow-up summary report, it will be sent via email at approximately the end of September, 2012.

Appendix D: Consent Agreement

Ryerson University Consent Agreement

The experiences and perceptions of early childhood educators who have worked in both for-profit and non-profit childcare centres in the Greater Toronto Area

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you give your consent to be a volunteer, it is important that you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

Investigators: Principal investigator: Christine Romain-Tappin, ECE, BA; Candidate for Masters in Early Childhood Studies. The supervisors of this research study will be Dr. Rachel Langford who is the director of the School of Early Childhood Education, and Dr. Patrizia Albanese who is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to examine Early Childhood Educators' perceptions of similarities and differences in working conditions between for-profit and non-profit sectors.

Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips' (1990) define 'adult work environments' as factors which include aspects of a childcare center's operation that affect the quality of day-to-day demands and rewards of working in the center. In this study the term '*working conditions*' will be based on: staff qualifications, professional development opportunities, wages, benefits, and turnover. Educators who are either currently or previously employed as full-time ECEs in both non-profit and for-profit childcare centre will be interviewed. There will be a total of up to ten participants being recruited for this study. To be participant you must: a) be 18 years of age or older, b) have graduated and obtained an ECE diploma, c) have worked as an ECE in both for-profit and non-profit childcare centres, and d) that those centres be located in the Greater Toronto Area.

Description of the Study:

You will be asked to:

- 1) Reply to a recruitment e-mail sent by principal investigator
- 2) Suggest a convenient and private time and location to meet for interview process. You will be instructed to select an environment which is private, quiet, and conducive for conversation (e.g. library).
- 3) Read this consent letter, contact principal investigator with any questions or concerns prior to interview
- 4) Meet at allotted location and time, review consent agreement and if subject agrees with all conditions highlighted in this document, to sign the final page prior to the commencement of the interview. The expected duration of the interview process is 2 hours maximum. Interviews will be tape recorded.

- 5) You will be asked to answer and elaborate on questions regarding personal experiences working as an Early Childhood Educator in both for-profit and non-profit childcare centres in the Greater Toronto Area, specifically on the topic of working conditions.

Interview Questions may include:

- a) What are your experiences working in a for-profit centre?
 - b) As an ECE have you ever felt as if you played a role in decision-making which affected you?
 - c) What would make working conditions better for ECEs?
- 6) Select whether or not you would like to receive a follow-up summary report e-mailed to them upon the completion of this study, in regards to information collected from the interview process and the concluding findings of the study.
 - 7) Contact principal investigator within a week following the interview if you have any questions or concerns

Risks or Discomforts:

Due to the personal nature of the questions asked, you may reflect on unpleasant memories while responding to a question, this may lead to discomfort during the interview process. If you begin to feel uncomfortable, you may skip any question or discontinue participation, either temporary or permanently at any time. All information (written, spoken, and recorded) will be kept strictly confidential. Collected data will not in any way be connected with your identity. The principal investigator will be the only one with access to these materials during data collection and analysis. All e-mails and data will be stored apart from one another and all e-mails sent directly to principal investigator's inbox will be promptly deleted after data has been collected. Both research supervisors: Rachel Langford and Patrizia Albanese, will hear/see segments of interview data collected; however, they will not have access to your name. The final research report will use pseudonyms for all participants and will not include names or addresses of workplaces. All attempts will be made to maintain confidentiality.

Benefits of the Study: Although I cannot guarantee you will receive any benefits from participating in this study, by reflecting on your own experiences in past and current work environments you may recognize injustices. As an ECE you may then want to initiate discussions around working conditions and advocate for professionals such as yourself in the field.

Confidentiality: To ensure confidentiality data collected for this study, including audio recordings and written transcripts will not be sent through email or mail, and will be saved on a password protected computer.

When documents and data are not in use by the principal investigator all data will be stored on a USB key protected by a password. Physical documents, USB, and tape recordings will be kept in a locked locker.

The only connection between you and your data afterwards will be through the use of pseudonyms that will be assigned to each participant. Only the researcher and the supervising professors will have access to data collected. Data will be stored until the completion of the

research study and end of the calendar years. All data stored will be deleted from the USB key and all recordings erased by December, 31st, 2012.

Incentives to Participate:

No incentives will be provide to participate in this study.

Costs and/or Compensation for Participation:

You will be asked to give up of approximately 2 hours maximum of their time, excluding travel time. Travel to interview location may involve transportation costs.

Voluntary Nature of Participation: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with Ryerson University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to stop your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are allowed.

At any particular point in the study, you may refuse to answer any particular question or stop participation altogether.

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the research now, please ask. If you have questions later about the research, you may contact.

Christine Romain-Tappin

christine.t.franciss@ryerson.ca

If you have questions regarding your rights as a human subject and participant in this study, you may contact the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board for information.

Research Ethics Board

c/o Office of the Vice President, Research and Innovation

Ryerson University

350 Victoria Street

Toronto, ON M5B 2K3

416-979-5042

rebchair@ryerson.ca

Options for follow-up:

_____ I do not want to receive the follow-up summary report upon the completion of this study.

_____ I would like to receive a copy of the follow-up summary report upon the completion of this study. By choosing this option your email address will be stored for this purpose only.

Agreement:

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this agreement and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to be in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been given a copy of this agreement.

You have been told that by signing this consent agreement you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

Name of Participant (please print)

Signature of Participant to agree to participate

Date

Signature of Participant for consent to be audio taped

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

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