

EXPERIENCES WORKING SPLIT SHIFTS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

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ABSTRACT

Experiences Working Split Shifts: A Phenomenological Study of Early Childhood Educators

Master of Arts, 2020

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Care work in general, and the work of early childhood educators, in particular, are both undervalued and gendered (Langford, Richardson, Albanese, Bezanson, Prentice, and White, 2017). While there is substantial research outlining the low wages and undervaluation of Ontario's Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs), there is no known research on the effects that split shifts have on workers in this sector. Split shifts, when viewed by a worker as problematic, were found to be detrimental to overall health in the case of bus drivers (Ihlström, Kecklund, and Anund, 2017). It is not known whether the same could be said for RECEs. Given this noted gap, there is a need for research on the impact of working split shifts on RECEs. This study aims to address this noted absence of research for this female-dominated workforce performing care work. In order to do so, ten RECEs who self-report working a split shift were asked about their experiences through in-person, semi-structured interviews. These interviews gathered insight on how RECEs perceive that this work arrangement affected them professionally and personally, as well as what they believed could be done to address this scheduling system. Some of the key findings were that working split shifts resulted in even lower than "normal" compensation, and a sense that RECEs were being policed. There were also concerns about space and language indicating ownership of classroom space, as well as challenges navigating territoriality around that space. Finally, there was an overall feeling that split shifts helped to further undervalue the undervalued RECEs in general.

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There is love in believing in someone; there is love in being believed in.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Background Information and Statement of the Research Problem

Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) working in Ontario's child care centres are overworked, underpaid and undervalued (Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, 2019). Child care and the issues faced by children, families, and staff are points of discussion among municipal, provincial and federal policy makers (Watters, 2019), as well as RECEs themselves. RECEs, however, are affected by far more than what these discussions often address. Provincial legislation dictates that RECEs run before-and-after-school programs when a child care center is the deliverer of these services (Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014). With the high demand for child care in general (Richardson and Langford, 2015)— and specifically, before-and-after-school care— thousands of RECEs across the province are working at two high-peak times: early morning and late afternoon. Hence, these RECEs are actively working a split shift. To be clear, for the purposes of this study, RECE includes those who are registered and in good standing with the Ontario College of Early Childhood Educators (OCECE). Split shifts refer to a work shift where an employee is required to come to work twice in the same day with a significant gap of time between shifts. For RECEs, this gap often includes the hours that children are in school.

Split shifts for RECEs have become more commonplace in recent years. Since full-day kindergarten's roll-out across Ontario in September 2016 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016), the number of licensed child care spaces for children aged four to twelve has dramatically increased (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2019). Research on the impact of working split shifts, however, is limited and has mostly focused on the work of bus drivers. Split shifts have been known to cause insomnia and "excessive daytime sleepiness" (Ohayon, Lemoine, Arnaud-Briant, and Dreyfus, 2002, p. 577). Bus drivers who perceived split shifts to be problematic had more

stress, poorer health, and more negative psychosocial work conditions than their satisfied counterparts (Ihlström, Kecklund, and Anund, 2017). Few known studies have addressed the split shift at present and no known studies have discussed the split shift in relation to RECEs. As such, the previously noted findings from Ihlström et al. (2017) on the effects of split shifts for bus drivers are particularly relevant. These findings, paired with the fact that RECEs are working with children, generates questions about the impact of these working conditions. Furthermore, the RECE's ability to offer meaningful participation and autonomy on their program planning and delivery are also of concern.

Split shifts have also been found to cause an increased feeling of being overwhelmed by tasks and not having ample time to complete them, both being heightened for women in Spain (González Chapela, 2015) — where split shifts are common across many work sectors— of which RECEs are mostly comprised (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2019). Lower hourly wages have also been reported for those working split shifts in Spain (González Chapela, 2015). In another Spanish study of teachers, those working a split shift presented with greater levels of physical and mental fatigue, worse moods, and less job satisfaction than their full shift counterparts (Ilella, Zarceño, Serrano Rosa, 2020). Again, whether the same is found for Ontario's RECEs is not yet known.

Considering the disruptions in work, limited autonomy, and barriers to relationship building that split shifts impose, in tandem with outside factors, such as RECE's work and responsibilities to their own children and family, their schooling, and second jobs, one can speculate that some RECEs may not be able to be as present in their classrooms and personal lives as they may otherwise have the capacity to be. Furthermore, if RECE working split shifts have more stress, poorer health, and more negative work conditions— as bus drivers working

split shifts were found to have (Ihlström et al., 2017)— these added stressors could easily negatively affect their work and personal lives.

Split shifts are, in the case of early learning and care, a women’s issue. RECEs are a workforce comprised of predominantly women; in fact, only two percent of all RECEs in Ontario identify as male (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2019). Given that RECEs are affected by the wage gap (Child Care Now, 2018), such may be made worse by the lack of full shift working hours. Currently, 25 percent of RECEs work a second job (Child Care Now, 2018), to which split shifts may make it difficult to do, thus limiting their ability to earn additional income. In her interview with *Child Care Now*, Nancy Santos, an RECE, stated, “[The RECE wage]... it’s not even *decent* pay – it’s not enough to do basic things like pay down debt, save for a house or for a wedding” (Child Care Now, 2018). This raises important questions, including why those in a regulated profession, that requires considerable education, are not earning a liveable wage that matches their level of professional training; why 25 percent of those working in this sector take up a second job; and why that second job may prove impossible to hold down given the scheduling challenges that a split shift may bring about? (Child Care Now, 2018). These compounded questions and challenges then become yet another invisible women’s issue to be tackled.

Compared to other sectors requiring a two-year college diploma, for example, Architectural Technicians and Law Clerks, it is notable that RECEs earn far less (Ontario Colleges, 2018). A large part of this gap in earnings between sectors with similar educational requirements may be attributed to the notion that care work— the work which RECEs do— is not ‘real’ work, requiring real skills and training. Misunderstandings and misrepresentations of the role that RECEs perform contributes to the undervaluation of the field as well (Goldstein,

1998). Although care work, as it relates to the early childhood sector, promotes the healthy development of young children, it is generally not held in high esteem in our society (Friendly and Prentice, 2009).

The notion of care, from a Western perspective, often conjures up hugs, smiles, and other displays of positive emotion. Care work is seen, not as a job or an important component of a career, but as a set of feelings, and is not treated as a conscious, learned, and ethical act, when performed well (Goldstein, 2018). Thus, while RECEs are a professional and regulated workforce, requiring college-level education or higher, their actual job functions go mostly unrecognised and undervalued.

In Canada, there is a tendency to hold early learning and care at greater value when it is perceived to be focused on school readiness (Langford, Richardson, Albanese, Bezanson, Prentice, and White, 2017). As such, instead of appreciating where children *presently* are, value is placed on where they will be— on what they will ‘become’ (Langford et al., 2017).

Because more value is placed on the formal education system, and RECEs do not currently hold a formal role in school curriculum delivery (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016), their value is doubly diminished. Many RECEs have the capacity and training to implement early childhood pedagogies (Kashin, 2007), yet what they are allowed to contribute to public education is very limited. In light of this, if education is considered a “universal public good” (Langford et. al, 2017), then where does early learning and care fit?

Although a considerable amount of research indicates that quality early childhood programs led by well-trained RECEs are vital to children’s development (Richardson and Langford, 2015), its commensurate value to a child’s overall education is not yet acknowledged.

There is a noted divide between early childhood education and the education of children at the ages of five or six.

To speak specifically to this study's purposes, this limited view of RECEs and the work that they do is damaging to all RECEs and their role in society; but it may be especially damaging to RECEs working split shifts. The fact remains that research is silent on this, and that we know little about the impact of working split shifts on RECEs. Therefore, this qualitative research study was conducted on the experiences that working a split shift has on RECEs. The research question for this study is: What are the experiences of RECEs working a split shift? This research will help to create a dialogue around an issue that has not yet formally been researched— split shifts— that RECEs regularly work, as well as potentially guide and/or encourage future research on the personal and professional ramifications that split shifts have from the perspective of RECEs themselves.

Purpose and Significance

This research was conducted with the intention of beginning a dialogue on split shifts worked by RECEs. Through semi-structured interviews, RECEs were encouraged to share their lived experiences of how split shifts affect them both professionally and personally, in addition to exploring what they think could be done, if anything, to address challenges that arise as a result of this type of work scheduling. There is no known formal research conducted on split shifts for RECEs at the time of writing, even though thousands of educators are currently employed under this scheduling model. As a result, I was committed to better understanding what RECEs are thinking and experiencing when working split shifts: do they experience them as detrimental to their overall well-being, in the same way that they were found to be for bus

drivers (Ihlström et al., 2017)? This research is necessary, given the political climate that so far, has failed to address high parent fees, poor working conditions for child care workers, and the ongoing promotion of market-based models that result in lack of space for all children who require care (Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, 2019). If changes are to be made to scheduling in before and after school programs, a deeper knowledge of how split shifts are experienced within the sector is needed. While this study is limited in what it can accomplish, it sheds new light on how split shifts are experienced by some RECEs who are living with them today. The aim is that this research may lead to more attention given to this mostly invisible issue and to the potential rethinking of the complex work relationships and experiences that accompany this type of work.

Study Design and Conceptual Frameworks

Design

This study follows a qualitative, phenomenological design. Phenomenological design is rooted in inquiry by which the lived experiences of individuals from a particular group describe and experience a ‘phenomenon’ (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). In this case, the group is a subsection of RECEs and the phenomenon they are experiencing and the focus of study is working split shifts. Thus, ten RECEs who self-report working a split shift were interviewed virtually. Semi-structured interview questions were used, with RECEs answers being transcribed and coded for arising themes.

Theoretical Frameworks

This study has been guided by critical theory, with the goal of empowering RECEs, given their socioeconomic standing and gendered experience while working in Ontario. Critical theory follows a transformative worldview and is concerned with identifying and addressing injustices experienced by marginalized groups, affected by gender, race, culture, among other social factors and experience, and their intersections (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Marginalization, in this case, focuses on an underpaid, undervalued workforce of predominantly female employees. Guided by critical theorist, Donna Mertens, central importance is placed upon “the lives and experiences of communities that are pushed to societies’ margins” (Mertens, 2009, p. 48). Furthermore, the findings from my social inquiry will be linked to the notion that action must occur (Mertens, 2009). Given the highly politicized nature of early childhood education and care (Langford et al., 2017), policy level action is needed to address challenges that result from the lived experiences of RECEs working split shifts. Using critical theory under this transformative worldview, the notion of empowering RECEs to recognize the constraints placed upon them based on their gender, their socioeconomic status, their ethnicity, and/or their culture will be both important and evident.

My lived experience as an RECE allows me to establish an “interactive link” (Mertens, 2009, p. 48). Thus, while I am taking on a research role for this study, I have lived much of what the participants also have by being an RECE who has worked a split shift. As Mertens comments, “In order to know a community’s realities, it is necessary to establish an interactive link between the researcher and the participants... knowledge is socially and historically located within a complex cultural context” (Mertens, 2009, p. 48). This interactive link is imperative to producing ethical transformative research (Mertens, 2017). Notably, however, the relationship I have to the community which I am researching— RECEs working split shifts— must also be

critically analyzed for “cultural blinders that might obscure [my] ability to contribute to positive impacts” (Mertens, 2017, p. 18). Given so, I remained cognizant of the truth that although I am an RECE who has worked a split shift, oppressions are intersectional and structural (Mertens, 2009). To elaborate further, I am a heterosexual middle-class, white settler, who identifies as a woman and who has benefitted from systems that have oppressed others. While I faced hurdles and disadvantages as an RECE, there are RECEs who face additional oppression as a result of racism and transphobia, which I will never experience. As such, the RECEs who participate in this study may have experiences vastly different than my own.

Bezanson’s (2006) work on the gendering of care work, uses a Feminist Political Economy framework and focuses on the importance and undervaluing of social reproduction (the critical but taken-for-granted, day-to-day processes involved in reproducing and maintaining people) has been used to guide this research. Social capital— an important factor that is perpetuated through social reproduction is paramount here and has been considered alongside this work. because “without good networks, people have a harder time managing day to day and getting ahead in labour markets or their communities” (Bezanson, 2006, p. 427). In addition, “a social reproduction framework is attentive to social class and to race/ethnicity...(and)... it is critically cognizant of the ways in which capital attempts to minimize its costs for the enormously expensive and onerous work of caring for people over the life course” (Bezanson, 2006, 436). Bezanson (2006) also explained that because capitalists and capitalism seek to minimize costs (for increased profits), they seek labour markets that are stratified (layered; divided; fragmented). It is no wonder then that we see a high representation of women, and especially racialized women, in low-paid caring professions (Bezanson, 2006, p. 436). Bezanson’s (2006) insight, coupled with Mertens (2009) work on how oppressions are

intersectional (Mertens, 2009), provide a good framework for thinking about the experiences of RECEs who find themselves in female-dominated, low paid care positions, with poor working conditions (Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, 2019). We also know that many RECEs are relatively well educated, with good social capital, but with little ‘pay-back’ relative to their education and social capital because they are in caring professions that are involved in social reproduction (Bezanson, 2006). These considerations will be particularly relevant in the discussion session, when considering how the government could best respond to this work and future work like it. However, it is crucial that social policy responses from governing bodies do not increase the burden of care work onto already undervalued and overburdened groups (Bezanson, 2006)— such as RECEs working split shifts.

Feminist ethics of care, as guided by the work of Langford and White (2019) has deeply informed this work. Langford and White (2019) explore care in a plethora of ways: Care as a power relation, as it is gendered, as an interaction (giving versus receiving), as altruism, as the differences between ‘care’ and ‘caregiving’, and as an assumption of needs. Noting that RECEs perform care work (Langford et al., 2017), it is crucial to be cognizant of this reality alongside what care actually entails. For this work specifically, my concern centres on gender and care, as well as the difference between care and caregiving. Much of the distribution of care work in Western countries is patriarchal and unjust in that women and racialized groups are expected to take up the care work (Langford and White, 2019). Given so, it is this work’s intention to grapple with one particular area in the sector— split shifts— that I believe also contribute to gendered and racialized systems of oppression. Notably, much of these contributions have to do with the way that care in early childhood settings is set up and acknowledged according to Taggart (2011). Because care is so often seen as natural (Langford and White, 2019; Langford et al.,

2017, and Taggart, 2011), it is rarely named as a skill and knowledge (Taggart, 2011). To expand farther, whereas an accountant might receive praise for their maths skills, an RECE might not receive praise for their care skills.

Reasons for this Research, my positionality and reflexivity.

I am an RECE who has worked split shifts. I am also an RECE who left a position that I loved to embark upon more schooling, in the hopes that I would one day be able to afford the basic necessities of life. My decision to leave ECE work was fuelled by my inability to earn a living wage while being employed full-time; but it was also fuelled by how undervalued I felt each day at work. My undergraduate education and additional professional development felt unrecognized and unvalued, so I was compelled to leave the profession that I loved.

I worked a split shift for close to two years, constantly hoping that I would get moved to a full-day shift. Not only would a full-day shift have allowed me to earn more money, it also would have allowed me to have more time in my personal life. By working a split shift, I worked mornings and afternoons, and had a six-hour unpaid gap in my work day. Compounding the problem were the high transportation costs that I incurred due to my daily four-way trip between my home and work location. The feeling of daily exhaustion that I experienced during that time is difficult to describe. During this experience, I heard about similar struggles from my RECE colleagues working the split shift. I found it intriguing that so many RECEs seemed to be plagued by this issue, yet no one at the policy level even appeared to pay attention to its existence.

I choose this topic of research in the hopes that the impact of split shifts on my RECE colleagues will be better understood. Through this research, I hope that researchers, policy

makers, and child care operators will become cognizant of the lived experiences of these RECEs, and to develop recommendations that emerge from the themes raised by my research participants, with the hope of seeking changes and additional research.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The main topics that guide my literature review are current statistics and findings on RECEs, as well as the few studies that have focused on split shifts. There are three main themes in my review of literature. The first is that RECEs are underpaid and undervalued, and the split shift serves to perpetuate and amplify this reality. The second is that because of this, split shifts likely affect RECEs well-being. The third and final, that options beyond the split shift actually exist. While the academic literature in this area is limited, I will draw on a growing body of professional literature, from bodies like the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC) and the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario (AECEO).

RECEs are Underpaid and Undervalued—the Split Shift Perpetuates This

At the time of writing, 70 percent of Ontario's RECEs earned less than \$20.00 per hour (Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, 2019). A wage this low is not commensurate with the average cost of living, particularly in major urban areas, nor is it reflective of the education, experience, continuous professional development, and regulated membership that is required of all of Ontario's RECEs (Child Care Now, 2018). Given this, not only are those in the early childhood sector underpaid, they are undervalued, in part, based upon the low pay that they receive for qualified, regulated, and necessary work. As you can see, the problem here is cyclical.

Given that the majority of the early childhood workforce is comprised of women also contributes to the undervaluation of the field; 98 percent of Ontario's RECEs self-identify as women (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2019). Currently, much of the media focus speaks to the lack of affordability for families, poor quality of care for children, and the existence

of “day care desserts” within the province (Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, 2019), yet the issues pertaining to RECEs themselves go largely unacknowledged. “Across Canada, all equity-seeking advocacy groups working to redress the childcare crisis of high fees, poor access, and a patchwork of services have foregrounded the importance of changing the conditions under which [RECEs] provide care for children” (Langford et. al, 2017, p. 320). Furthermore, women’s issues have sometimes “taken a back seat to children’s issues” (Richardson and Langford, 2015). This is not to suggest that children’s issues should not be forefront; it is, however, important to note that RECEs should be of forefront concern too. That the split shift in which thousands of RECEs work has not yet raised notable media attention speaks to the foregrounding of other, seemingly more pressing issues— something that I hope to change through my research.

Split Shifts May Affect RECEs Negatively

It is not surprising that being underpaid and undervalued goes hand-in-hand. This may factor into RECEs’ overall job satisfaction, as well as their ability to perform their job functions to the highest capability. With the insomnia and daytime sleepiness that split shifts have been found to cause in other work sectors (Ohayon et. al, 2002), it is notable that RECEs are working in these conditions without policy-level discussions occurring about potential ramifications to RECE’s well-being. Bus drivers who perceived split shifts to be problematic had more stress, poorer health, and more negative work conditions than their satisfied— those who enjoyed working a split shift— counterparts (Ihlström et. al, 2017). Although bus drivers and RECEs are vastly different workforces, few studies speak exclusively to split shifts, which is where Ihlström et. al (2017) ground-breaking work is salient. Not only are further studies regarding split shifts needed, studies regarding split shifts *and* RECEs exclusively are especially needed.

The early childhood sector is one with a very high turnover rate— poor pay and poor working conditions are a contributor to this (Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario, 2016). With RECEs leaving the sector altogether or moving to higher-compensated roles— with better working hours— in the school board (Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario, 2016), it is clear to see why lack of child care spaces (Richardson and Langford, 2015) is an issue in the province. Although lack of space is also due to underfunding (Child Care Now, 2018), a workforce that cannot afford the basic costs of living will, reasonably, look to other lines of work. In order to retain a skilled workforce, employers need to be paying RECEs a decent wage, proposed to begin at \$25.00 per hour, as well as ensure good working conditions (Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario, 2016). That 25 percent of the sector works a second job (Child Care Now, 2018) is another indicator of inadequate working hours and inadequate pay.

This study is concerned with whether or how the experience of working split shifts may contribute to the high turnover rate in the sector. Considering the gap in working hours that a split shift presents, RECEs may leave these shifts for other careers that offer full-time, full-day hours without an unpaid gap in the middle of their workday.

Additionally, the split shift is a form of precarious work, based on Campbell and Burgess' (2018) model. According to this model, precarious work occurs when job insecurity, employment insecurity, work insecurity, income insecurity, working-time insecurity, skill reproduction insecurity, and representational insecurity occur. With precarious work comes reproductive insecurity; although RECEs are an educated, professional workforce (Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, 2019), they may be dissuaded from having children of their own (Chan and Tweedie, 2015). Ironical, is it not, that such could impact a sector who works with

children? Whether one chooses to procreate or not, it is startling to think that the precariousness of the split shift— or, perhaps, even full-shift RECE work— could be a deciding factor concerning whether or not to have a child.

In addition to the precariousness of the split shift, RECEs— who perform care work at their workplaces (Langford et. al, 2017)— may be performing caring roles at home too. Such is not to suggest that RECEs should not be performing care at home, however, given that 98 percent of the sector self-identify as female (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2019), the gendered implication of care should be considered. In fact, women often perform more caring labour at home than men (Anving and Eldén, 2016). Given so, there may be additional roles that RECEs who work split shifts perform at home, that the male workforce is not as consistently required to do. Additionally, though no literature presently exists on this topic, it is questionable whether RECEs working the split shift might out-perform fellow full-shift RECEs in their caring labour at home— particularly if they use the unpaid portions between morning and afternoon shifts to perform family laundry, meal prep, and undertake household cleaning duties, to name some. Thus, if the established norm is set for an RECE to perform caring labour in-between shifts, would they seek out career opportunities that did not allow for such care to be performed during the day; would this inhibit their career prospects? While data concerning this question specifically does not currently exist, it can be difficult for women to challenge these barriers (Anving and Eldén, 2016). In fact, Barkham's (2008) research on child care workers in Britain saw some of the participants out of their study recount regret at not pursuing education farther due to the care they were expected to provide for their families. In addition to this, RECEs are exploited by high expectations combined with low wages and poor working conditions (Andrew and Newman, 2012); the split shift may add an additional layer to this exploitation of the sector.

Options Beyond Split Shifts

Some employers in the early childhood sector are beginning to implement alternatives to the traditional split shift associated with before-and-after-school care. The Toronto District School Board continues to operate a pilot project at select city schools through their Extended Day Program, which began in September of 2018. In these programs, the Designated Early Childhood Educator (DECE) who began before school care dually worked in the Kindergarten classroom until mid-day, at which point a second DECE entered the classroom, finished the day in Kindergarten and proceeded to provide after-school care (Toronto District School Board, n.d.). Given that scheduling beyond split shifts is beginning to be implemented demonstrates that different work patterns are certainly feasible for RECEs.

Split Shifts - Further Oppression in an Already Undervalued Sector?

At present, 98 percent of RECEs in Ontario self-identify as women (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2019). As a result, it is necessary to consider their experience as a predominantly female workforce. Those who perform work needed to maintain the labour power of others is undervalued—both exploited and unwaged workers hold an interest in challenging the capitalist market that oppresses them; the labour force is gendered and further oppresses women who become “shadow workers” (Turner and Brownhill, 2006, p. 92). Given the current circumstances, it is my view that RECEs are shadow workers. The idea of intersectionality is also important here, because the oppression felt by many RECEs is further exasperated by other oppressions such as race, culture, or class (Turner and Brownhill, 2006). There is no doubt that the work of RECEs is vital to ensuring the labour power of others. Not recognizing their worth

given this reality, thus can act to oppress them further. In this work, I seek to better understand how an already undervalued group of workers— RECEs— may be further undermined and undervalued through the implementation of and lack of recognition for their working split shifts; which I believe serve to exasperate challenges experienced by RECEs.

In supporting both the work of families with children and of elementary school teachers, it is notable that full-day kindergarten has, perhaps, contributed to the high prevalence of split shifts within the early childhood sector. Full-day kindergarten began in all of Ontario’s public elementary schools in September of 2016 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016). Looking to the most recent Early Years and Child Care Report (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2019), it is notable that the number of licensed child care spaces has increased from 64,340 in the 2014-2015 school year to 103,308 in the 2018-2019 school year for kindergartners— a 60 percent increase. As it stands, there is a need for child care— children enrolled in programs and sitting on waiting lists is a testament to this— however, there is still additional need for space creation (Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, 2019). Any funding that has occurred was, at least in part, *because* of need. There is a greater need for child care, particularly before-and-after care, despite the creation of Full Day Kindergarten that was implemented across the province.

Shared Classroom Space May Present Unique Challenges

RECEs who work in before-and-after-school child care settings often share classroom space with Ontario Certified Teachers in publicly funded educational facilities (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2018). This shared space is necessary to meet the high demand for child care, while also aiming to keep the cost of before-and-after-school care reasonable for families (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2018). However, it is necessary to consider how the sharing of

classroom space could impact the RECEs who work in before-and-after-school child care settings, as opposed to their full shift counterparts who typically work in a child care setting that has its own exclusive classroom space.

There is currently very little research concerning the sharing of classroom space between professionals. In contrast, the bulk of the literature on the sharing of classroom space focuses on the sharing of space between children— who the classroom is ultimately built *for*— and teachers (Craig, 2009; Karadag, and Caliskan, 2009). The sharing of space between certified teachers in New Zealand, has been found to be largely positive, however it has been noted that teachers new to sharing classroom space may experience challenges adjusting (Robertson and Simpson, 2012). In another study of shared classroom space for reading recovery programs in New Zealand, it was found that such could be successful if there was careful planning, strong record-keeping, a willingness to compromise, strong support of school administrators, and sharing of ideas between teachers (Dunn and Wooldridge, 2004). Because the latter two studies concern sharing of space between teachers who have the same educational requirements and work for the same school, it is not yet known if similar findings would arise for Ontario's Certified Teachers and RECEs.

Overall, while the current literature on split shifts is very limited, it sheds light on working conditions, turnover rates and psychosocial health of split shift workforces. That said, clearly gaps in research on the effects of working a split shift remain, particularly for RECEs. These gaps and absence of research will begin to be filled by my study which sought to answer what I believe to be important research questions.

The main research question for this study is: What are the experiences of RECEs who work a split shift? A subsidiary question to this is: If split shifts are experienced as negative,

what do RECEs believe needs to be done to address this? To answer these questions, a qualitative phenomenological approach is taken, which requires important conversations with RECEs who are directly experiencing split shifts.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Scope

This study focuses on RECEs working in Ontario's Greater Toronto Area (GTA). The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (2019) has suggested that issues that RECEs in the GTA face can be substantially different from issues faced by RECEs living and working in rural parts of Ontario. These differences include low population density in rural areas, resulting in marketized child care operators often choosing to open centres solely in more urbanized areas, a higher prevalence of seasonal work and non-standard working hours among rural families, and rural centres facing difficulty finding and retaining RECEs (Friendly, Ferns, Grady, and Rothman, 2016). As such, interviewing rural and urban RECEs working split shifts— given the small sample size of ten— would, perhaps, have taken the focus of this study on rural versus urban child care concerns, which was not the focus of this work. Thus, only RECEs working within the GTA were interviewed.

I chose RECEs specifically, as opposed to all child care workers, because RECEs are a regulated profession that have substantial research and statistics outlining certain issues that they face, such as, low pay and undervaluation (Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, 2019). Furthermore, child care workers can include RECEs, child care assistants, behavioral therapists who work one-on-one with children in a child care centre, and cooks who substitute in a classroom during breaks, to name some. Due to the wide range of roles that a 'child care worker' can be defined as, it would seem less conclusive to interview individuals from such a wide variety of backgrounds. Furthermore, RECEs must adhere to a code of ethics (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2019), and therefore have a uniform commitment to the development and

well-being of children and their families, even if the various child care spaces in which they work have them performing different job functions.

This study took place over a six-month period, which included time for seeking ethics approval, conducting semi-structured interviews with ten RECEs working a split shift, transcribing the interviews, coding them and conducting data analysis. Critical theory, as described in the first chapter, was used to guide this research.

Approach

For this research, I used a qualitative approach. A qualitative approach was chosen because, “this form of inquiry [supports] a way of looking at research that honors an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of reporting the complexity of a situation” (Creswell and Creswell, 2018, p. 3). Because there is no known research concerning RECEs and the split shift, it is necessary to conduct exploratory research that allows RECEs to speak directly about their experiences, to determine the ways in which working a split shift affects them. Allowing RECEs to openly discuss their experiences, rather than entering with structured and potentially limiting questions allowed a wide range of themes to emerge. Thus, I was able to begin to map the experiences of working split shifts through the RECEs themselves.

Though the sample size of ten is small, this sample was purposefully chosen for a number of reasons. First, given the one-year time frame of my Master’s program and approximately six months to interview, transcribe, and prepare my findings, it was necessary to be realistic about how many participants I could reasonably accommodate. Additionally, qualitative research often encourages a smaller sample size so that the research can yield rich, detailed information directly from the participants about the topic (Yilmaz, 2013). Therefore, the small sample size was

chosen given the exploratory nature of this study; detailed accounts as to how the split shift impacts— or, perhaps, does not impact RECEs would be evident.

Strategies

A phenomenological approach was used for this study. Phenomenological research, “is a design of inquiry coming from philosophy and psychology in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants” (Creswell and Creswell, 2018, p. 13). For the purposes of this study, I attempted to gain a better understanding of how the split shift affects RECEs professionally and personally, as well as what RECEs believe could be done to address the split shift, if it is experienced as problematic. Given that there is no known research on this topic, phenomenology offers a good starting point as it, “culminates in the essence of the experiences for several individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon” (Creswell and Creswell, 2018, p. 13). As such, a more thorough understanding of the phenomenon itself was be gained. Furthermore, a phenomenological approach to research is particularly useful for phenomena that have little to no prior research (Knapp, 2017). Thus, it is fitting for this particular work. By conducting this study in the GTA, I had access to a diverse population. Toronto is one of the most multiethnic and multicultural places in the world based upon the most recent census data (Statistics Canada, 2016). Phenomenological research values variation among participants (Seidman, 2013). Selecting diverse participants from Toronto was in keeping with said value.

Research Ethics

Before beginning the recruitment and interview process, I submitted my research application for review by Ryerson University's Research Ethics Board (REB) on February 6, 2020. I received the REB's response on March 20, 2020 with their proposed revisions. I then completed the revisions and resubmitted my application on March 31, 2020. The REB contacted me on April 9, 2020 to inform me that my research had been approved for a one-year period.

Although I initially received ethics approval to do in-person interviews, the COVID-19 global pandemic caused me to make changes to my interviews as in-person meetings were no longer possible. As a result, I submitted an amendment and received REB approval to conduct my interviews virtually. The interviewees, however, were still residents and workers within the GTA.

Many ethical considerations guided this research. As noted above, approval from the REB was gained prior to any research or participant selection being conducted. In anticipating ethical issues for this study specifically, participant's names were kept confidential. Due to the nature of this study, it was necessary to consider that harm could come to participants if their identity were to be revealed. For example, if a participant conveyed negative experiences working a split shift and their employer saw this, their job could be at risk. Furthermore, some child care centres/operators may have policies forbidding their employees from speaking about them, thus, it would have been unethical to ask participants to do so. To mitigate this, pseudonyms were used. Additionally, the name of each RECE's employer was not used and was stricken from transcribed interviews entirely. Coding participant names was necessary from the very beginning of participant selection, thus ensuring that, "a casual observer happening to see a transcript on a desk could not identify the participant. Original records such as contact

information sheets, informed consent forms, and audiotapes, must be kept in a secure place to guard against the names of participants being accidentally revealed” (Seidman, 2013, p. 72-73).

Another ethical consideration was that of consent. All participants signed an informed consent form (see Appendix C) which relayed who I am, the purpose of my study, the benefits of participating, the level of involvement needed, potential risks of involvement, the guarantee of confidentiality, the right to withdraw at any time, and who to contact in the event of questions or comments (Ryerson University, n.d.). Finally, beneficial to participants was that of offering new knowledge on an issue that affects RECEs. This is in keeping with ethical guidelines that a research problem should be reflective of and beneficial to participants (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). By gaining new knowledge on the experiences of RECEs working split shifts, future research, with a larger sample size, could be done to better inform child care policies on the split shift itself.

After REB approval was given, participant recruitment began. The participants in this study were RECEs who were currently registered and in good standing with the College of ECEs. All interested persons were able to email me using the information provided in my recruitment poster (see Appendix A), which was shared by Erin Filby of the AECEO and Carolyn Ferns of the OCBCC on their respective Facebook pages. Additionally, the recruitment poster was also posted in the private Facebook group, *Registered Ontario Early Childhood Educators*. In this group, posting by all members is welcomed, so long as posts pertain to the early childhood community. Given that I am an RECE, and therefore, have contacts who are RECEs working a split shift, it was necessary to clarify that those who I have worked with in the past were not eligible participants. This was to ensure that no conflicts of interest were present,

while also being mindful that easy access to participants can actually make the interviewing process more complicated (Seidman, 2013).

After participants answered the ad (see Appendix A), participants were verified to be current members in good standing with the CECE— this information is openly available through the CECE’s public register. Interested persons then emailed me, and upon confirmation of the participation criteria, were sent a consent form (see appendix C). Participants who signed the consent form were then scheduled in for a Zoom interview, of which was audio-recorded. The ten RECEs recruited were a purposive sample. Participants were actively recruited until ten eligible RECEs in good standing who disclosed working a split shift were found.

Data Collection Tools and Procedures

I collected data through semi-structured interviews (see Appendix B). As mentioned above, the interviews took place online, over Zoom. Because the participants were offering their time and knowledge, it was preferable that I was flexible in accommodating participants’ preferred date, time, and location of their interviews (Seidman, 2013). As such, I worked with them to identify what was best for them and worked around their schedules as best I could.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen for a number of reasons. Firstly, I wanted to know about the experiences of RECEs working split shifts. I, however, did not know if RECEs perceived split shifts to be problematic, and if they did, whether they believed that there are, for instance, professional ramifications because of this. Seeing as there was so much unknown, it was fitting to keep interviews conversational, by allowing participants to share their lived experiences concerning this topic in an open-ended way. This was useful for data collection, as it

provided information that was authentic, from the point of view of study participants (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

All interviews were conducted individually. Given that the split shift was a perceived problem for some RECEs and not others, ensuring that participants were not swayed to agree with the perceived opinion of the group was the primary reason for this. Furthermore, some participants may not have felt comfortable being identified among fellow RECEs.

Data Organization

All interviews were audio recorded using a password-protected digital audio recorder. The interviews were then uploaded to my password-protected computer and transcribed by me. I also took notes during the interviews, in case the digital audio recorder failed to work and to capture any nuance that would not be caught on the recorder; all researchers should ensure that they have a backup method in case equipment fails (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Although video recordings may have showcased the body language of participants, audio recordings seemed less likely to identify participants (easier to anonymize) and were likely to make participants more comfortable and at ease.

All audio files of the interviews were downloaded using the participant's assigned pseudonym. The transcribed file was then saved under their pseudonym as well. It was necessary to consider the amount of time transcription would take (Seidman, 2013). As such, adequate time to interview *and* transcribe was scheduled to ensure that both tasks were accounted for. Because I coded the interviews and was looking for themes among all them, it was beneficial that I was the one transcribing. Researchers who transcribe their own interviews, 'come to know [the

content] better” (Seidman, 2013, p. 118). Having a better understanding of the content aided in a better understanding of emerging themes.

Data Analysis

For this research, data analysis was conducted using NVivo software. NVivo “is [a] qualitative data organization software program... [and] assists in the management, analysis, and organization of text (interview and focus group transcripts), images, and sound files and is appropriate for those engaged in a diverse range of qualitative research methods” (Ryerson University, n.d.). Additionally, this software was available for free to registered graduate students at Ryerson University, which made it accessible and affordable for me to use.

Winnowing the data was also done. Due to the nature of interviews being very content-rich, it was crucial to consider that themes could not emerge from *every* piece of data. In fact, all information from interviews could not be used during analysis (Creswell and Creswell, 2018), as this would be too lengthy and make it very difficult to establish a few important and cohesive themes.

Using NVivo, the word cloud tool was used for all transcribed interviews. Doing so showed the most common words that participants used along with how often. To determine the context in which the most common words were used, the word tree function was used next. This showed words or phrases that were used before or after each word. Code labels were then assigned. Tesch’s eight steps in the coding process, as described by Creswell and Creswell (2018), was used in guiding the assigning of labels. Tech’s eight steps involved:

1. Getting a solid sense of the data as a whole.
2. Picking one interview and jotting down notes on what it is about at first glance.

3. Doing the above task for a few participants and making a list of all of the topics.
Grouping the topics together as much as possible.
4. Taking the topic list and creating codes based upon it.
5. Considering the most descriptive words for each topic and using them as categories. At this point, drawing lines between categories to highlight their relation to one another can be done.
6. Finalizing categories.
7. Assembling the data and doing a preliminary analysis.
8. Recoding existing data if needed (as cited in Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

Trustworthiness

Due to the small sample size (ten), external validity was certainly considered, though generalizability was not a goal of this exploratory, qualitative study, using non-probability sampling. A sample of ten in a population of 53,180 RECE in Ontario (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2019) is limited. However, we do not know how many RECEs actually work a split shift—let alone what the impact of doing so is on their personal or professional well-being—so it is nonetheless a good and valuable start. Given this study's small sample, it is my hope that future research will examine this topic with a larger sample, perhaps comparing the experiences of RECEs in different regions of Ontario where communities may experience split shifts differently. For example, child care in urban versus rural areas is known to be quite different in terms of access (Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, 2019). This study's findings offer a glimpse into an issue that *some* RECEs have spoken to and experience. This study is trustworthy in context; the ten RECEs interviewed are professionals in the field of early

childhood education and care— their lived experiences should be believed. For trustworthiness to be established, credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, audit trails, and reflexivity should be sought after (Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules, 2017). In doing so, credibility is met through member checking (Nowell et al., 2017). Member checking ensured that participants felt the findings accurately reflected their experiences (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Additionally, ensuring that I reflexively identified my personal biases and positionality was important (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). As an RECE who had a negative experience working split shifts, I must recognize that this is a bias I hold towards split shifts; not all RECEs will have the same experiences. My Master’s Research Paper supervisor, Dr. Patrizia Albanese, reviewed my findings, asked questions, and made informed suggestions. By doing so, another layer of validity was added (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

Transferability is met by my statement that this study’s findings cannot be generalized to the entire RECE population who works a split shift. Although I cannot control how others cite my study, I can confirm that I am not claiming to speak to the experiences of all RECEs who work split shifts. This research is dependable, as it has been reviewed from its earliest stages by a seasoned researcher (Nowell et al., 2017), Dr. Patrizia Albanese. Next, “confirmability is established when credibility, transferability, and dependability are all achieved” (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 3). Audit trails have been established through audio-recorded interviews and transcribed interview documents. Finally, reflexivity was ongoing, throughout this project. It was consciously, top-of-mind, that as an RECE who has worked split shifts in the past, I have personal biases. I dually recognize, however, that not all RECEs who work split shifts will experience this scheduling style in the same, or even similar ways, to how I did.

This study may inspire future research to take place, to test, replicate, verify and expand on my findings using larger, more diverse samples. For instance, the themes from this study could encourage closed-ended questions that could be answered through Google Forms, thus giving the ability to gain access to a larger sample across the province and present more widespread and possibly conclusive results. This study is just the beginning of this research topic— in no way does it purport to represent the entire RECE population who works a split shift.

Dissemination

My goal was to present my research at the annual Canadian Sociological Association's annual conference in June 2020. My abstract was accepted and I was scheduled to present in the Care and Caring Labour forum. However, due to COVID-19, the conference was cancelled. Going forth, I aim to disseminate my research findings by attempting to publish them in a scholarly, peer-reviewed journal and present at the Canadian Sociology Association's future conference in 2021. As such, by publishing my findings, the noted absence of research in this area may begin to be addressed.

I aim to share my key findings with organizations that work with RECEs themselves. Child Care Now, The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC), and the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario (AECEO) will be given copies of my research to distribute to their members, if they would like. Notably, I have worked for the OCBCC and shared office space with the AECEO, so I will maintain this connection and keep them informed about my intentions. Given that the aim of my research is to benefit the RECE community, it is

necessary to present my findings to them; the community in which research is intended to benefit should have access to research findings (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

Lastly, I plan to share my findings on relevant groups on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn. By doing so, my personal contacts will be able to review my work, while also offering the possibility of my work being shared through social media. Although using social media for the dissemination of research findings is relatively new, it is nonetheless, a platform in which to engage a wider audience (Cooper, 2014). The sections that follow present the themes that have emerged through the interviews. The main themes were: (1) compensation, (2) policing of behaviour, (3) claiming space and the language associated with that, and (4) undervaluing of the undervalued.

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

Key Findings

A total of ten RECEs who self-reported working split shifts in the GTA were interviewed over Zoom or Skype. Avaya, Tamara, Isana, Zoe, Laura, Elizabeth, Jen, Emma, Zahra, and Amelia all offered one hour of their time to answer my semi-structured interview questions, as well as openly discuss the split shift and other concerns regarding Ontario's child care centres.

A brief description of the participants is as follows:

- Avaya is in her 50s and earns less than \$40,000 per year. She works in before-and-after-school child care and has been doing so for almost a decade. Avaya has a diploma in Early Childhood Education.
- Tamara is in her early 20s and earns less than \$40,000 per year. She works in before-and-after-school child care and has been doing so for under five years. Tamara has a diploma in Early Childhood Education.
- Isana is in her late thirties and earns above \$40,000 per year. She works as a director in a before-and-after-school child care program and has been doing so for just over 5 years. Isana has, however, been working as a child care professional for over two decades. Isana has a diploma in Early Childhood Education, along with a number of other professional certifications.
- Zoe is in her mid-20s and earns less than \$40,000 per year. She works for a full-day child care centre, where she supports the full-shift RECEs by covering breaks, setting up for activities, and cleaning the centre. Zoe has been working in child care for almost five years and has recently moved to a split shift. Zoe has a diploma in Early Childhood Education on top of a Bachelor of Arts degree.

- Laura is in her late 40s and earns less than \$40,000 per year. She works in before-and-after-school child care and has been doing so for five years. Laura has been working as a child care professional for almost three decades. Laura has a diploma in Early Childhood Education.
- Elizabeth is in her mid 20s and earns less than \$40,000 per year. Elizabeth works with the preschool and toddler rooms in the morning and the after-school kindergarten room in the afternoon. Elizabeth has been working in child care for five years. Elizabeth has a Bachelor of Arts degree.
- Jen is in her early 20s and earns less than \$40,000 per year. Jen works in before-and-after-school child care, and has been doing so for close to five years. She has five years experience working as a child care professional. Jen has a diploma in Early Childhood Education.
- Emma is in her mid 20s and earns less than \$40,000 per year. Emma works in before-and-after-school child care and has been doing so for less than five years. Emma also supports the full-shift program at her child care centre before caring for children in the after-school care program. Emma has a Bachelor of Arts degree.
- Zahra is in her mid 30s and earns less than \$40,000 per year. Zahra works in before-and-after-school child care and has been doing so for one year, while having worked as a child care professional for almost a decade. Zahra has a Bachelor of Arts degree.
- Amelia is almost 30 and earns less than \$40,000 per year. Amelia works in before-and-after-school child care and has done so for almost five years. Amelia has a diploma in Early Childhood Education and is currently working on obtaining a Bachelor's degree.

A typical work day for the participants involved reporting to work in the morning, leaving work mid-morning, and returning to work in the afternoon. Notably, the majority of the participants worked in before-and-after-school child care, which typically works around the schedule of the elementary school. For example, Tamara, whose schedule was quite typical, begins her day at 7:00am and finishes at 9:15am. She then returns to work at 3:15pm and works until 6:00pm.

In-depth interviews with these women resulted in the following themes emerging: (1) Compensation, (2) policing of behaviour, (3) claiming space and the language associated with that, and (4) undervaluing of the undervalued. These themes will be presented one-by-one in detail below following a general summary and overview of my key findings.

Benefits of Working Split Shifts (At Least for Some):

Isana, Laura, and Amelia all had relatively positive views of the split shift. Isana, who has been working a split shift for the past six years of her career and is also a Director at her child care centre, said, “I love [the split shift] because you can go do shopping, you can prep your dinner, you can do whatever you need to do, you can go home for a nap if you really want to”. Isana’s ability to optimize on her time in between shifts— and feel satisfied with what she accomplished— was dually noted by Laura.

Laura stated that, “There are days where [the split shift is] great because it gives you— at least it gives me— that opportunity to plan all those, you know, doctor’s appointments, car appointments. You know, you can do your grocery shopping, you can do Christmas shopping, whatever, because you’ve got that chunk of time in the middle of the day where everybody else is at work, so you don’t have to necessarily contend with all the crowds and stuff”. Likewise,

Amelia, who is currently working on getting her Bachelor's Degree, noted that, "I love having the middle of the day free. I can do groceries or errands or housework or school work. I can do a lot in the middle of the day".

Beyond feeling satisfied with the unpaid middle portion of their shift, Isana, Laura, and Amelia noted that the child care centres they worked for offered monetary premiums for working the split shift, something that the other seven participants did not report their workplaces doing. Furthermore, Isana and Laura both reported working at not-for-profit child care centres that offer health benefits and professional development seminars. Laura and Isana both reported working 6.5 hour shifts each working day— only one hour less than the full-shift counterparts at their centres. With the split shift wage premium, neither Laura nor Isana felt that their full-shift coworkers were financially better off.

Amelia also noted that ten years from now she does not see herself working a split shift or as an RECE, so it is crucial to note that the split shift works for her at present. Isana is the exception financially— she reported earning more than \$40,000 per year. Laura and Amelia however, reported earning less than this. The other seven participants all reported earning less than \$40,000 per year, too.

Some Key Concerns with Working Split Shifts:

Avaya, Tamara, Zoe, Elizabeth, Jen, Emma, and Zahra expressed concern and frustration with working the split shift. Zoe stated, "I find [the split shift] exhausting because I start at 7:45 and then I end at 5:15, but I don't have all those hours in between. So, I just find myself running around, filling in, and then trying to clean up after". In addition to this, Zoe noted that she wished she had more payable hours to better support herself financially. Thus, the desire to work more—

and earn more— was present, yet the actual working hours her centre offered were not. This sentiment was echoed by Tamara and Elizabeth. Tamara also noted that the unpaid portion between her split shift was often spent planning for the children whom she cares for, saying, “The prep time is the big thing. Because we don't really get prep time at all when we’re actually working. So [the split is] when you’re expected to write on your program plan, that’s when you’re expected to fill out your paperwork, do your accident reports, all of that stuff, write in your communication book”.

Unpaid planning time during the break between shifts was a common theme, with Avaya, Jen, Tamara, Zahra, and Emma reporting that they have had to use their personal time to plan for the children whom they care for too. Zoe— who has a Bachelor of Arts degree— though not using her unpaid portion of the day for planning time, noted that instead of planning time, her centre had her performing cleaning duties, saying that, “Instead [of planning time] I’m in the kitchen washing dishes”. Emma, whose workplace guarantees her 30 minutes of programming time per day often asks her to perform other duties instead, such as standing in for the full-shift staff during their breaks or programming time. Thus, the full-shift staff’s programming time is upheld, but the same is not extended to those working the split shift.

Split Shift Contributing to Further Undervaluing of RECEs’ Work:

The split shift, and duties associated with it, were deeply impactful to the participants who expressed dissatisfaction with this scheduling style. Even Laura and Amelia, who enjoyed working the split shift, explained that they thought the split shift could contribute to the public’s undervaluation of RECEs. When I asked participants if they thought the split shift contributed to undervaluation, Laura stated “I could see [the split shift] affecting it some ways because [the

public] thinking, ‘oh well, you get this whole big break in the middle of the day, you're only working for 2 hours here and 3 hours there’. So, I can see how some people could see it that way.” Public perception, then, comes into account.

Zoe, who raised concerns about the split shift, noted that “ECEs who do split shifts, they do a lot, they are sometimes undervalued. They’re not always recognized for the hard work that they put in or the work ethic that they do”. Zoe also noted that her full shift counterparts could, perhaps, be more highly valued than herself and others who work the split shift, stating, “[Families value full shift RECEs more] because they see the regular staff who works eight-hour shifts and they don't really see that person who does the split shifts.” Thus, there is, perhaps, an invisibility surrounding the work that some RECEs working the split shift do. The idea that there is different value granted to those working full shifts versus split shifts was echoed by Zahra who said, “[Many people] have the idea that children who are going to before-and-after-school child care are going to a babysitter”. Emma— who has her Bachelor of Early Childhood Studies— reported having to stay past her shift when caregivers were late to pick up their children. Though her centre charged parents and other caregivers when they were late for pickup, Emma and her coworkers were not paid additional wages or receive part or all of the late-charge, and were, thus, required to work for free. Even when no children are late being picked up, Emma noted that her centre requires her to clean the classroom after all children had left and usually she does not leave the centre until 6:30pm, weekly. This amounts to her working an additional 2.5 hours, without pay that her workplace requires of her.

Amelia, whose workplace, at the time of the interview, did not have scheduled shifts for her due to COVID-19, is required to run Zoom sessions for children and families who would like to participate. The child care centre she works for, however, will not compensate her for this and

has not relayed to the families that their staff are not being paid for this valuable work. Amelia noted that this is “frustrating” and that many of the families would be “surprised” to learn this. I found that this was a common theme among participants – the notion that families would be surprised to learn the duties of the split shift RECEs who care for their children.

Isana reported taking a proactive approach to educating the families in her centre, stating, “Every time we have a license in our newsletter, I will write ‘we were licensed this week’... so, we're educating parents and letting them know and I've had some parents come up and say, ‘oh, what are they licensing you for?’. And I've actually had a couple parents sit down and actually look at the [licensing] binder and they're like, ‘wow’”. Notably, Isana is a child care director and has the agency to choose this approach when interacting with families.

Lack of time due to the time constraints of the split shift seems to be another issue that can play a role in undervaluation too. Avaya noted that, “That’s my number one thing, [RECEs are] undervalued... You want to do so many things with the children, but you don't have the time [because of the split shift]”. Perhaps, then, paid planning time is necessary to combat undervaluation as it pertains to the split shift.

Compensation

Nine of the ten participants reported earning less than \$40,000 per year, with only one participant reported earning above \$40,000 per year. Many of the participants expressed that the low compensation levels were not exclusive to RECEs working a split shift, but something experienced by the sector as a whole. The split shift did, however, exacerbate this for some participants.

Feelings of compensation not being commensurate with expertise, experience, or level of professionalization were prevalent. Tamara stated, “I’ve finished college and I still can’t afford to live, like how ridiculous is that? You know, that I’ve completed a college diploma and have a job and I still can’t afford... what [does the government] expect people to do? You know? What do they expect us to do? Why would we want to continue? That’s really hard, why would we continue to do this job if we don’t even get paid enough to live life— at all? And I’m taking care of children, when I can’t even afford to have children myself”.

Elizabeth stated, “I’m still living at home and getting help from my parents. Thankfully, I’ve been able to pay all the stuff that I use, like my car, insurance, my credit card bills, and all that. But if I was living on my own, I wouldn’t be able to do that. I’m trying to save up for a condo or a home and it’s taking me longer than expected and prices just keep going up in real estate”. So, Elizabeth’s salary is not commensurate with the basic costs of living. Tamara, who lives at home with her parents, exasperatedly stated, “Does [the government] want all the ECEs to live on the street because that’s what I’d be doing if I didn’t have my parents. I’m very lucky. I’m serious, because I wouldn’t be an ECE, I’d be like, not fit to be one”.

A recurring theme was concern over and feelings of lost compensation due to the lower number of hours worked through split shifts compared to their full-day, full-shift counterparts. Zahra stated, “[The split shift] has impacted me because right now I am only working five hours a day. So, the afternoon, I wanted to take another job, but I was unable to. So, that’s what I have to keep in mind. If I am taking a job that is closer to home or closer to work, will I reach my other work at what time?” Tamara stated that if she were to live on her own, a second job would be necessary if she continued to work a split shift.

Many participants working the split shift relied on others such as parents and partners to be able to pay bills and live in the GTA. As a result, working split shifts was seen by some as a short-term employment option, and not sustainable or viable in a city like Toronto. Elizabeth, who currently lives with her parents, stated that, “I wanted to pick up another job but then I was just worried about if I would be running late or I would feel tired [at the child care]”.

As mentioned above, another common theme related to being underpaid and not adequately compensated was some employers’ expectation that RECEs would do unpaid preparation work during the unpaid portion of an RECEs day. Jen, for example, noted that at her workplace, there was the expectation that those working split shifts would put in unpaid time to more effectively do their job when they are working their shift. Jen urged that Centres should rethink this practice, stating, “If you want your [child care] centre to be up-to-date, you need to put in the work. And you can’t put in the work if you’re in the program, so you need to get paid outside of the program time”. Emma poignantly stated, “There’s just not enough hours— paid hours— during the day to get everything done”.

Policing of Behaviour

The policing of RECEs behaviour was reported to happen on two main levels by the participants. The College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE) and Ministry of Education were frequently cited as policing RECEs’ work and behaviour, in what, many participants considered to be a negative way, particularly in the case of the former. Licensed child care centres have many regulations that they must follow to meet and maintain compliance. For example, there are rules around meeting adult to child ratios, ensuring a set or minimum amount of time for outdoor play, accident reporting, and the state of play materials is all regulated (Government of Ontario,

2018). All RECEs must maintain membership with the College of ECEs in order to practice, which currently costs \$160.00 per year to renew and \$245.00 to apply for the first time or to renew a past membership (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2019). Additionally, RECEs must meet the requirements of the Continuous Professional Learning (CPL) program which involves completing a learning plan, engaging in planned activities, and collecting evidence and documentation as proof of completion; RECEs can be audited at any time for proof of completion (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2020). The ability to practice as an RECE depends upon maintaining compliance with the College of ECEs. While all RECEs may feel policing of behaviour is applicable whether working a split shift or not, those working the split shift, perhaps, felt it in heightened ways because of the time constraint of attending professional development courses as well as being licensed in a classroom that is shared and RECEs do not have full control over.

Laura noted that workshops can often go until 9:00pm, which is exacerbated by the split shift's late evenings and early mornings. To mitigate this, Laura's employer offers workshops on weekends and gives lieu time to those who attend. Additionally, the Ministry of Education's guidelines for licensed child care may be difficult to follow for RECEs working split shifts, many of whom reported getting no planning time. While attending courses is not mandatory for completion of CPL, many participants noted that their child care centres require them to attend workshops— unpaid— nonetheless.

Emma discussed the intense scrutiny that child care programs are often under, when she stated that, "There was one time I had a [licensing] visit where they... everything was going great. But then they docked me, literally 2 ½ points because on my criteria, because there was a

bingo dabber on the shelf, which wasn't even mine it was the [kindergarten] teacher's. But apparently it was a safety hazard".

Tamara, who noted that it was confusing for children to go from school to child care with such different rules and regulations added, "I don't understand why child care isn't just incorporated with the school board. I feel like that would make things a lot easier because we have the same children, but completely different rules and regulations and policies." The time required to follow these stringent guidelines was also noted to be quite difficult. Zoe stated, "And just trying to find the time especially— especially when you're with the kids all day and, you know, some of the ECEs even work on their lunch break as well and they don't even get to eat lunch sometimes and I really feel for them because that's their time to try to relax, take a break, but because of all of these regulations, they've got to follow it takes a lot of their time away from what they're supposed to be doing."

While I did not specifically ask about the College of ECEs, I was surprised to find that the participants brought this regulatory college up a number of times. Laura stated that the CECE's implementation of Continuous Professional Learning (CPL) was a way that the College of ECE controls behaviour. Laura said, "You know, it seems that it's, you know, you take my money, now we have to do this CPL thing. So, yes, [the CECE] gives you that title that you can put behind you. But on the other hand, personally, you don't always get the support or the respect". Notably, in no way did Laura or any other person disagree with the CPL program— a mandatory program all RECEs must adhere to yearly, outlining their goals and professional development courses. In fact, many participants felt that continuous learning was good for RECEs. However, the mandating of CPL, combined with low pay and high fees, particularly for

those working the split shift and earning less than some of their counterparts that worked full-day, seemed to exacerbate this concern.

Furthermore, the idea that the College of ECE was searching for faults of RECEs was prevalent. Avaya stated, “With the college, I find at first, I was very happy. ‘Oh, there is a group for us.’ But I don't feel they are for us, I don't think that they advocate for ECEs. It's a good thing they're setting standards, they are regulating, those are very important things. But they are looking out for more fault, that's what I find”.

Claiming Space and the Language Associated with Sharing

The sharing of space between elementary school teachers and RECEs in before-and-after-school programs is very common, yet the issues around it frankly, unanticipated. Out of the ten participants, nine worked in some form of before-and-after-school child care; all nine shared classroom space with Ontario Certified Teachers in these instances. Sharing of space can be made more difficult or more amenable depending on the relationship between the child care centre staff and the school staff. Furthermore, the type of language used was found to be crucial to this relationship. Isana stated, “We have one teacher who doesn't want us there, but the others do. And I've been chatting with the admin from the school and we've said, you know, ‘you think you can maybe move her out this year so we can get somebody else? Can we have a rotation?’ And the admin agrees, and the admin actually now is starting to talk and change her wording when she talks to the staff because it's no longer the staff's classroom. It's the child's classroom. So, [the principal] has realized she needs to change her wording to support us a little bit more because nobody owns those classrooms”. Emma considers the classroom to be the domain of the teacher due to the teacher herself interjecting and telling children from the child care:

“Remember, this is *my* class.” Language, however, is only one of many ways that space is claimed and contested.

In fact, it became clear from the interviews that sharing classroom space can make it difficult to enforce the policies and social climate of the child care centre itself. Tamara noted, “Depending on how the teacher— some teachers are really good, but other teachers are like, ‘do not touch my stuff’. And that is very confusing for some of the kids. But, most of them do pretty well and they learn, it depends how long they have been there. But it is confusing for some kids and really difficult to keep their hands off of [items in the classroom]. And the policies are different. Like we can’t speak to the children the way they speak to children. Like it is different, it really is. So, we can’t use the same type of discipline styles, or whatever you want to call it— like approaches with the kids that they do. So, it’s... that’s hard too. Because then you’re, they, I don’t want to be mean, but they’ll be like, ‘don’t touch my stuff’, or, ‘take your hands off my things’, and we’re like, ‘oh, like that’s the teacher’s stuff... we can’t touch the teacher’s stuff’. That’s already against our policy to tell them no, like that they can’t do something. So, that’s another thing that’s really challenging.” Thus, given Tamara’s workplace’s policy of positively redirecting children, the physical space does not allow for this so long as the teacher considers items in the room to be either hers or the child care centre’s.

Even though licensing for before-and-after-school child care dictates when the classroom is to be used by the child care centre, difficult working relationships with the teacher impacted this. Amelia noted that even though her license gives her access to the classroom until 9:00am when the school day begins, the teacher has told her to leave by 8:30am. Though Amelia will bring the children outside at this point, on days when it rains or is too cold, the teacher tells her and the children to go and sit in the hallway. Despite Amelia adhering to this in an attempt to try

and give the teacher time to set up her class before school begins, she notes that the relationship is still very difficult, with the teacher going so far as to say, “It’s 8:35 and you guys are still in my classroom.” So, despite Amelia’s efforts, the teacher does not acknowledge— or even perhaps see— that Amelia has accommodated a request she did not have to.

Even RECE’s perception of who exactly items in the classroom belong to seem to impact the relationship. Amelia noted that she has seen both sides of shared classroom space— the positive and the negative. Amelia stated, “I have worked in rooms where the teacher lets me use her shelf space, she was great. It was a really good two-way communication. And I’ve worked in rooms where the teacher was very adamant, ‘don’t touch my stuff’, ‘these are your kids, these are my kids’ even though at the end of the day they’re all the same kids. So, I think language plays a huge role”. It seems too, that the space is thought to be school-first, child care second, if at all. Zoe stated, “Sharing that space with a teacher is kind of hard because you have to rearrange everything and you have to make sure everything gets put down and then the next day you have to do the same thing and put everything back up and just trying to build a relationship with that teacher, and ensuring that it’s a shared space and trying to respect that teacher’s classroom. It can be challenging at times because you don’t have your own space for your own things for the before and after school program.”

Many of the participants noted that teachers in the elementary schools have made it clear that they consider the classroom space to belong to them and are either unwilling to or angry about sharing it with child care programs. Emma noted that the teacher with whom she shares a classroom has made it clear that she does not want the child care program in the classroom that she teaches in during the day, and that she considers the classroom to belong to her. Emma explained it as follows: “I’ve had to deal with the teacher I share the classroom with not wanting

to cooperate with me about things that are out of my control. She said, ‘this is my class, no one asked me when I didn’t want to give up my class.’”

Isana echoed this statement with sentiments of her own, stating, “So, we have a new principal. She is trying to do the best she can do. She supports us when she can. However, the teachers there have been there for so long and they’re not always willing to share their room. We’ve opened our doors many times, and the first time... if they ran out of paint, if they ran out of glue, we’re the first people they come running to. Right? But if we ever say to them, ‘oh, can we use your chalkboard?’. They would have a... they would lose their mind.”

Jen noted that she had often seen the teachers in the child care’s supply closet borrowing items, even though the same teachers have told the RECEs that the child care is not welcome to use the school’s materials. The relationship between RECEs and the staff at the elementary schools in which space is often shared seemed very important to many of the participants.

The territorial nature of the classroom belonging to either the teacher or child care, instead of the children who inhabit it is noted to be confusing for the children too. Amelia stated, “[The children] don’t really understand why at school they can use the teacher’s materials, but at [child care] they can’t. Because for some of them, it’s the same classroom, like the same physical location”. Child care licensing dictates that the children are supposed to have access to all items in the classroom, but this is not always occurring. Amelia went on to state, “[The children] are supposed to have access to everything, but they don’t. They have access to everything [the child care centre] brings in.”

Avaya emphatically stated, “The teachers, they don’t want a daycare in the room. When I got there, they seem to have had some negative experience, so I tried to make that better and it’s got little better, but I think the teacher in the room while she was there she said she had a

negative experience. She just wasn't open to any kind of daycare being there". So, even if an RECE is willing to establish a working relationship, it needs to come from both sides.

Zahra, who considers her relationship with the classroom teacher to be good, referred to the teacher whom she shares classroom space with as, "my partner". Even with a good relationship though, Zahra described feeling pressure to leave the classroom to the teacher's pre-set standards when her before-and-after-school program finishes its programming time in the morning and the afternoon. Zahra stated, "Cleaning up is very stressful because [the children] were engaged in their activities, but we had to make sure that the room was properly set up how the teacher wanted it". When I asked if the teacher ensured the same level of cleanliness when Zahra entered the classroom, she stated that she often finds herself cleaning up the classroom based on what happened during school hours. Thus, the classroom appears to have a clear hierarchy: Teacher first, RECE second. Jen, who acknowledged the classroom as belonging to the teacher, noted similar sentiments of stress around cleaning the classroom too. Jen stated, "I spend the last hour every day cleaning up all [the child care's toys], but if one thing is out of place, I hear about it the next day from the teacher."

Like Zahra, Jen noted that the teacher does not ensure this high expectation for classroom cleanliness and organization when the child care enters the classroom. Even with licensing, which states that children have access to all toys in the classroom, this is not consistently adhered to based upon the teacher's preferences. Similar to Amelia, Jen noted that, "I'll close off an area because the teacher said, 'do not touch', even though our license says we can have anything in the room".

Some elementary schools have gone to great lengths to lessen the sharing of teacher's classrooms, thus validating that the classrooms do, indeed, belong to them. The teachers who

share space at Elizabeth's child care centre were reported to be quite territorial of their classroom space. Elizabeth stated, "I was told that because there [are] four kindergarten rooms that the kindergarten after-care program would be moved four times, just to give all teachers a chance to have after-care because none of them wanted after-care". This ended up greatly impacting the children, "The child care routine is disrupted every two months because we have to be in a different room... When I told the kids that [we were going to change rooms] they were shocked. They thought that something happened and the principal didn't want after-care to be in that room ever again."

Avaya, who recently moved child care centres, noted the importance of sharing between the teacher and RECE. At Avaya's old workplace, where she had a good relationship with the classroom teacher, the teacher ensured Avaya had ample shelf space in the classroom to store everything; the current teacher she works with does not do the same, and Avaya noted that their relationship is difficult because that particular teacher does not want the child care in, what she considers to be, her classroom. Emma noted that, "If that relationship [with the teacher] is strained, you're not going to have a good time [at work]. I feel very anxious going in". So, negative relationships can impact RECEs mental health too.

Given the barriers that sharing classroom space with a teacher who is less than willing, many participants still showed their resiliency and ability to find a silver lining. For example, Amelia, while expressing concern over the sharing of physical classroom space with the school in which her before-and-after program was situated, reported preferring the split shift in her shared space over that of a full shift. Avaya, who expressed concerns over shared classroom space, nonetheless noted that she loves working with school-age children, despite the challenges shared classrooms can bring about.

Undervaluing of the Undervalued

Avaya noted that, “I think that ECEs [are] just disrespected. I mean just going by meeting some people and figuring out, like, being in a gathering and I'm introduced to somebody, ‘Oh yeah I’m an ECE’. We talk and the next thing you know this person says, ‘oh yeah you do what? You change diapers all day’.” Laura has experienced receiving similar comments, such as: “You’re just a glorified babysitter”, and “You just work in child care.” Laura added that she generally does not engage in arguments with people who make comments like this, choosing to ignore them, instead.

Even the College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE), which originally began with the good intention of professionalizing the field, was noted by many participants as not being successful in addressing the undervaluation that RECEs face. Elizabeth noted that the CECE does not address undervaluation, “Because it has never been their concern”. This appears to be because, the CECE was formed just to protect the public. Many other participants noted feeling dissatisfied with their professional body, too. Isana, for example, stated, “I think [the CECE is] making staff not want to be ECEs because there's no one there to protect us and it's your word against their word and the only thing the college is doing right now that is a good thing is making people stay educated. But no, the [ECEs] are afraid of the college.” Isana went on to share the results of the CECE’s rule about RECEs drinking alcohol in public, stating, “[At a wedding attended by myself and other ECEs] all the ECEs went back and sat down and they were afraid to get up, there were a few of us that got up and had fun, but we were like, ‘Let the college come after you. What can they really say?’. Some of the other ones, they were like, ‘I’m not getting

into it, I don't want anything to happen, I don't want the college to know I was drinking in public, I don't want them to know this'."

Based on the participants' perspectives, the linkage of child care and schools, at least as it currently stands, has, perhaps, contributed to heightened undervaluation of RECEs working in before-and-after-school child care programs. Emma stated, "I think a lot of people have this misperception that child care unlike schooling is just babysitting and playing, but people don't see all that is involved." Emma also explained how many of the teachers at the elementary school where she shares classroom space for her before-and-after-school program refer to her as, "that daycare teacher" instead of by her name which makes her feel "dehumanized". RECEs from child care and teachers from the school board working within the same premises appears to have created a unique power relationship of which RECEs report feeling disrespected and undervalued.

Isana noted that teachers do not often take the many regulations in child care seriously, stating, "Some of the teachers will laugh that we have such a big licensing binder and especially the health regulations, like we're constantly washing our toys. That kindergarten class hasn't washed their toys all year. They wash their toys the last week of August before school starts and that's about it. So, I think the teachers, they think it's a joke sometimes". Tamara also noted that teachers' failure to take child care regulations seriously, citing the fact that she must wash her classroom's toys once a week and the teachers "don't do that at all."

Isana noted that, "when the [school] staff do any activities, they always forget us and they forget the custodians. They remember the secretaries. They remember the [Educational Assistant's] EAs. They remember everybody else, but they always forget childcare and custodians. So, that's our joke at work, is when the custodian's day is, we bring the custodians in

snacks and then when it's the ECE appreciation day or childcare worker day, they bring us in snacks. Nobody else does anything. When you look at the totem pole, where you are, that's... and the children see that." Even Designated Early Childhood Educators— who work for school boards— sometimes undervalue the work that RECEs in child care centres do. Amelia stated that the DECE in her shared classroom space does not want her there and is, "very strict and kind of scary too. I actually have a better relationship with the teacher than I do with the DECE." Thus, this undervaluing of RECEs, particularly in shared classroom space, occurs not just through teachers; all staff members of elementary schools are implicated.

In sum, the interviews revealed some expected and some unexpected but equally interesting findings. The most interesting and unexpected finding related to the struggles over shared space – a territorial struggle, to claim space. Another interesting and unexpected finding had to do with their criticisms of the regulatory bodies that they believed were policing rather than supporting the work that they did. While all RECEs, regardless of scheduling, could feel policed, this was particularly notable for RECEs working split shifts because they were expected to follow licensing regulations in a shared space which they do not have significant control over, and where others sharing the space were not subject to the same regulations. In addition, they received little to no paid planning time to adhere to regulations.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This study began with the intention of understanding (documenting and sharing) the experiences of RECEs working split shifts. If split shifts do have a negative impact upon RECEs personal and/or professional lives, what participants believed needed to be done to address this was a subsidiary grappling. The findings show that the split shift does impact RECEs in a plethora of ways. Namely, I observed three main issues: (1) I heard about inadequate compensation which was often compounded by working a split shift, (2) there was a feeling that there was a policing of behaviour by bodies that were supposed to support RECEs' work, which as explained above, was exacerbated by working a split shift in a shared space, and (3) there was a struggle when it came to classroom space and the language of use, access and ownership, and the territorial claims and concerns that accompanied that. On top of these three observations, there was also a recurring sentiment that the split shift helped to further undervalue an already undervalued sector and group of professionals— who from a hierarchal standpoint are at “the bottom of the totem pole” according to Isana and other participants— when working inside of the public school system. All ten participants contributing to the data for one or more of these themes.

That said, this does not indicate that all RECEs from this study disliked the split shift. In fact, three out of the ten participants had positive things to say about their experiences with this type of work scheduling, particularly when they felt fairly compensated (financially acknowledging the additional challenges of working the split shift), the scheduling allowed them the flexibility to manage other responsibilities in their lives, and their work came with benefits— something that seemed limited to not-for-profit centres and settings. However, for the most part,

the unique working conditions that the split shift presented— particularly when it involved before-and-after-school care— presented challenges for the participants.

Compensation and the Lack of a Living Wage

Compensation for RECEs is, on average, low (Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, 2019), regardless of scheduling style. The split shift, however, can compound already low compensation levels for RECEs. Out of the ten participants, only one, Isana, reported earning above \$40,000 per year. Notably, Isana works as a child care director, so her salary would likely be higher than that of an RECE working solely in the classroom. This finding, however, was still quite troubling, given the professional competencies of RECEs and the basic costs of living in the GTA. All of the RECEs interviewed had, at minimum, a college diploma; many participants had additional educational qualifications and all had professional development courses that they took yearly as mandated by the College of ECEs (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2019). That nine out of ten participants from an educated, professional workforce reported earning low wages in this study was distressing, yet, sadly, unsurprising.

In 2016, only 8% of RECEs earned above \$26.00 per hour, with 58% earning less than \$20.00 per hour (Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, 2019). In fact, much of the dissatisfaction RECEs are typically found to discuss are the low wages that are unrepresentative of the skill, knowledge and training required for the profession (Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario, 2016). All ten participants discussed the low wages that they experienced; some noted that the split shift exasperated this. The split shift, typically offering fewer working hours per day than a full shift in child care, would result in lower earnings *if* both full shift and split shift RECEs earned the same. Some child care centres, like those where Laura, Isana, and

Amelia worked, acknowledge this by offering a monetary premium for working the split shift. However, not all participants reported earning a monetary premium for being employed under this scheduling style. Furthermore, depending upon wage and hours, even with a monetary premium, it would still be possible for a full shift RECE to out-earn their split shift counterpart.

All participants interviewed lived and worked in the GTA. However, \$40,000 per year is not commensurate with the basic cost of living in this area, particularly the closer one gets to Toronto. The median after-tax income of Ontario families and unattached individuals was \$66,200 in 2018 (Statistics Canada, 2020). This would leave the average RECE wage well below Canada's median income. Financial rate comparison website 'LowestRates.ca'— which is frequently cited by banks and mortgage groups— releases a yearly financial report for a variety of locations around the world; their 2020 report on Toronto will, perhaps, provide some saliency here. According to this source, to meet the basic costs of living in Toronto, one would need to earn \$42,494.88 annually after-tax to make ends meet. This number rises if individuals have a car or in the case of home ownership (Cost of Living in Toronto in 2020, 2020). Given this figure, RECEs would routinely be living in poverty despite having post-secondary education, being employed, and providing care that is necessary for the economy to thrive and women's participation in the workforce (Albanese, Rauhala, Ferns, Johnstone, Lam, & Atack, 2010).

Statistics Canada has various parameters to describe persons or households as low income, one of these looking to households as a whole (Statistics Canada, 2020). Many participants, such as Tamara and Elizabeth, described living at home with their parents to make ends meet. Despite working in the field that they went to school for, they noted their inability to afford the basic costs of living in their area on their own. Tamara poignantly noted that the current child care system is far too reliant on the help of parents and romantic partners, asking

what would happen if no RECE were to have these financial supports. Again though, perhaps the split shift exasperates this; there is no known data that currently exists on RECE's salary and living situation relating to whether a split or full shift is worked. This work, however, highlights the potential for examining such data in future.

The Care Work that RECEs Provide is Simultaneously Necessary and Undervalued

Without child care— which is able to exist because of the care that RECEs provide— families would be less able or completely unable to be paid members of the workforce. This, however, is the bare bones of child care's vitality. Before-and-after school care is particularly relevant, because not only are families being supported, the labour of elementary teachers and other school staff is supported too. Even though child care fees are very high in Ontario, with Toronto's infant care sitting at a median of \$1,649 per month, toddler care at \$1,375 per month, and preschool care at \$1,150 per month, these high fees are not an indication of RECEs wages, which remain consistently low (Friendly, Larson, Feltham, Grady, Forer, & Jones, 2018). So, even though fees are high, RECEs wages are far from it. Additionally, RECEs' inability to afford child care for their own children, when fees are so high, wages so low, and waiting lists for subsidized care so long is a serious concern (Friendly et al., 2018). Tamara noted that although she cares for the children of others, she does not feel financially able to have children of her own. I am startled at the disparity between children *cared for* by RECEs and the children *of* RECEs— or in Tamara's case, the children that she feels that she cannot have. I grapple with why RECEs are relied upon to provide care, yet given little to no resources to offer care to their own children and families. Particularly given the concerns about low compensation being further compounded by working the split shift, Tamara's concerns are particularly salient.

Although the work that RECEs do is necessary, 25 percent of the sector undertakes second jobs to make ends meet (Child Care Now, 2018). In fact, some of the participants noted that the split shift prevented them from doing so because they would not have ample time to travel to their second job after working the morning portion of the split shift and then return for the afternoon portion. Thus, their income was affected in a way that full shift RECEs would not experience; full shift RECEs *could* work evenings at a second job. This, however, is not to suggest that working a second job is in any way acceptable for RECEs; RECEs *should* be earning a living wage (Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario, 2016), without the need to work multiple jobs. Sadly, I suspected that RECEs would find the split shift to inhibit their ability to work a second job, as myself and former coworkers experienced this very struggle when I worked a split shift. Again though, a necessary sector— a sector that is crucial to the labour power of families and of school staff— is often working a second job to make ends meet; I am deeply affected by the dichotomy between high expectations and reliance on RECEs while simultaneously underpaying them to the point of poverty. This is unacceptable.

As I noted above, many participants noted that their workplaces expected them to perform free labour too. Though Emma’s child care centre charged parents and other caregivers when they were late for pickup, she relayed that she was not paid additional wages or shared or benefited from the late-charge, and thus was required to work for free. Even when children were picked up on time, Emma noted that her centre required her to clean the classroom after all children had left, and she did not finish doing so until 6:30pm— 30 minutes after her paid shift had ended. Thus, another level of loss of compensation and undervaluation is present. However, not all participants reported similar experiences, which highlights the disparity between child care centres and arrangements. Whether or not this finding is specific to the split shift is unclear,

though I suspect that full shift and split shift RECEs both grapple with unpaid labour depending on the child care centres in which they work. Perhaps the split shift creates an additional challenge, given the satellite-operating nature of many before-and-after-child-care programs.

Inconsistent working conditions plague the sector (Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario, 2016), which was consistent with this study's findings, even given the focus on the split shift. Perhaps then, legislation surrounding who late fees go to needs to be considered, given that this is currently unregulated. Furthermore, although Ontario's Employment Standards Act (2000) notes that employees must be paid for their work, such was not consistently the case with all participants in my study. Perhaps, then, additional guidelines are needed regarding child care—in particular, for those working split shifts, where many employees are performing work at locations other than the child care centre they work for.

Undervaluation by the public was another common theme of this study's findings. All participants noted that they felt undervalued by the public, with some noting that the public did not seem to understand what it is that RECEs really do. Perhaps this undervaluation is more pronounced among those in before-and-after-school child care, which offers a unique setting of occurring in publicly funded schools. When put side by side, as is the case with before-and-after school care, care is often seen as subordinate to education (Langford et al., 2017). The undervaluing of care that is occurring *within* educational settings is especially frustrating and quite perplexing.

Even though RECEs are maintaining the labour power of working families and of workers in educational institutions, they report being underpaid and undervalued (Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario, 2016)—the former certainly informing the latter, and vice versa. This sort of scenario is exactly how “shadow workers” (Turner and Brownhill, 2006, p.

92) are borne. Thus, although RECEs are necessary for child care's functioning, the RECEs from this study reported feeling disposable in public discourse. Quite notably, all participants were women, which was fitting, given that 98 percent of Ontario's RECEs are female (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2019). Concerningly though, shadow work is particularly acquainted with female-dominated professions (Turner and Brownhill, 2006). Because many of these women/RECEs worked at the margins—before and after—within schools, they worked in the shadows of teachers, who through their claim and control of the classroom space, directly and indirectly signaled to RECEs that they were subordinate. Although RECEs can certainly network with one another, given that nine out of ten participants earned less than \$40,000 per year, their options for advancement may be less rewarding compensation-wise than other sectors. Social capital is, thus, necessary to consider here. As noted earlier, good networks are necessary to move up in the labour market (Bezanson, 2006). Because oppressions are intersectional (Mertens, 2009), it is necessary to consider social capital alongside the low pay and poor working conditions that participants described. From a social reproduction standpoint those who provide care work are often women and often undervalued (Bezanson, 2006). There was clearly a hierarchal ladder, of which teachers were at the top, and RECEs and caretaking staff were at the bottom; Isana noted that the latter two were even excluded from school events. Many RECEs may, perhaps, have good social capital with one another, but because of the oppressions they face within the schools where before-and-after-school child care often occurs and in public perception, their advancement opportunities are likely limited.

Notably though, teachers themselves often face the reality of having to purchasing their own classroom materials and supplies, out of pocket, given low classroom budgets; in fact, the federal government even acknowledges this truth by having a tax credit for teacher and RECEs

to claim up to \$1000 of out-of-pocket expenses (Milne, 2016). Thus, the idea that educators in both schools and child cares should fund their own classrooms has been normalized. Given the fact that materials could be purchased by teachers as opposed to the school board, it is crucial to note that some of this territorial nature concerning space could be impacted by teachers attempting to avoid materials that they have purchased out-of-pocket, like markers or books, from getting used, lost or ruined. In this scenario, even teachers, then, are marginalized. Systemic change must occur before contested classroom space can be truly addressed.

Working the split shift seemed to exasperate feelings of undervaluation, particularly given the unique situations participants noted experiencing. In before-and-after-school child care— of which nine participants were involved in— concerns about shared space with elementary school staff, aggressive language from school staff, and lack of support from child care administration for their split shift staff were brought forward. Sharing of classroom space has the potential to be successful if educators have a willingness to compromise and strong support of school administrators, according to a study out of New Zealand (Dunn and Wooldridge, 2004). In the literature review, I noted that I was unsure if similar findings would be found for Ontario's Certified Teacher's and RECEs. This does hold true for this study too though, with many of the participants stating that both willingness to compromise and support of school administration were vital to good working relationships with teachers and other school staff— their class partners. However, all nine participants contributed to the data on difficult working relationships with school staff, despite recounting their efforts to establish harmony. Avaya, for example, mentioned how her relationship with the classroom teacher was negative because the teacher considers the space to belong solely to her, does not want a child care in the classroom, and is unwilling to discuss farther. Clearly, claiming control of space was symbolic

of bigger power struggles. Future research should more deeply explore this contested space, language, and set of relationships. While Isana noted that the principal of her school is beginning to refer to the classroom as belonging to ‘the children’ instead of belonging to a teacher, this is only a first step of what must occur for classroom space to be shared in a respectful and effective way by both teachers and RECEs. Actions must meet language. This study found that everyone was able to claim space except for RECEs; that RECEs who are providing professional, necessary, and trained care have noted their inability to claim space. This is not only a hinderance to their ability to perform their jobs but a symbolic reminder of their further marginalization as a part of an already marginalized profession in our society.

Difficult working relationships with teachers and other school staff clearly influenced RECEs ability to adhere to child care licensing guidelines. Challenges remaining within the classroom for the allotted time and access to materials for the children as per licensing guidelines were all discussed. Participants noted that a good working relationship with the classroom teacher impacted their ability to provide care and perform duties as required by their child care centres. Thus, while some teachers are open to a reciprocal working relationship with RECEs, sadly, others are not. I was, quite frankly, surprised and disappointed by the how prominent this issue, theme and challenge was in my research. Particularly given the fact that both teachers and RECEs are caring for children— albeit in quite different ways— I was alarmed by the lack of respect and intimidation— and, quite frankly, bullying— that occurred. In fact, RECEs and teachers, though both doing care work, are at vastly different points in the care and educational hierarchy. RECEs have profoundly unequal power in their relationships with teachers. Teachers are protected by their union, have wages surpassing that of RECEs, have paid professional development, and have access to health and dental plans. RECEs work in a patchwork, market-

based system (Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, 2019) and do not have standard wages, health plans, unions, or professional development courses. While working a split shift, many participants were expected to share classroom space with teachers, despite the unequal power relations between the two.

For shared classroom space to work, parity and communication are essential (Dunn and Wooldridge, 2004); However, it is difficult to have reciprocal communication when there are stark power differences between RECEs and Teachers. Such, however, is not to suggest that all teacher-RECE relationships are negative. In fact, Avaya, recounted how her past workplace was a positive one, by which the classroom teacher ensured Avaya had shelf space inside the classroom for the child care centre's materials. However, despite my initial assumption that the majority of my findings would centre on the split shift itself, it seemed that the physical space in which many split shifts occur was of upmost concern.

Surveillance & Policing - RECEs Who Work Split Shifts Feeling Like They Are Under a Microscope

All ten participants' referencing of their exposure to and feeling of policing of behaviour was another major and interesting insight and contribution. Namely, the Ministry of Education, who licenses child care centres, and the College of ECEs, who regulates the profession, were mentioned as being part of this. My sense was that being side by side in a space with professionals (teachers) who held more power, had more/different levels of autonomy and decision-making power over the space, and were governed by different regulations and expectation made RECEs working split shifts feel more "patrolled" or policed by regulatory bodies. Furthermore, Emma noted that there were not enough paid hours during her split shift to

accomplish all that was required of her under those regulations. To keep up with expectations surrounding quality child care programs, Avaya, Jen, Tamara, Zahra, and Emma reported using the unpaid portion of the day, between their split shift, to do paperwork and plan activities for the children. To expand, Emma's company often asks her to work in the preschool or toddler class, so that the full shift RECE can have their paid planning time. Thus, her workplace upholds the full shift's planning time, yet treats her planning time as disposable. Despite the low wages that participants reported having earned, which was consistent with previous findings on low wages in the sector (Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, 2019; Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario, 2016), participants discussed the scrutiny they often face as RECEs. This became especially apparent when that scrutiny was not extended to (and at times was mocked or dismissed by) teachers that they worked with. So, although participants reported that they were underpaid and undervalued, they felt that they were subject to stricter guidelines than other professionals that they worked with. This surveillance becomes even more apparent then, because RECEs working in full-day child care centres would not be subject to the scrutiny of teachers— quite simply, because they would not be working in the same spaces as them to begin with. Yet again, an issue that, perhaps all RECEs may face, is compounded by working a split shift of this type.

Overall, this study brought to light a large number of unique features and challenged connected to working split shifts. It also indicated that there is a great deal of work to be done in this important yet under-researched area.

Limitations and Implications for Future Work

As noted in prior sections, this study— with its small sample size of ten— cannot be generalized to the entire RECE population (Seidman, 2013), nor did it ever intend to be. The findings and discussion merely offer a glimpse into a topic that has not been researched before. It is my hope, however, that the themes discovered in this work may influence future studies that employ larger sample sizes and span across Ontario, perhaps investigating whether differences relating to the split shift are present between urban versus rural RECEs and their respective child care programs. Given the five month timeframe and considerations for interviewing, transcribing, and organizing data, it was not possible to add the urban and rural comparison (Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, 2019) to this work; however, I am certainly cognizant that there are noted differences between the two and hope that these differences can be explored alongside the split shift in the future.

Another limitation was that interviews took place virtually through Zoom instead of in-person, as originally planned, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of this change, the body language of participant's could not be observed. Virtual interviews, through platforms such as Zoom, certainly offered a solution to no longer being able to interview in-person. However, the “in-person connection” through in-person interaction was not the same; creating connections with participants, even through a simple handshake, can create a positive rapport with participants (Lo Iacono, Symonds, and Brown, 2016). So, while virtual interviews were not my first choice, I was certainly grateful to have this means of communication so that my research could continue, despite the pandemic.

Finally, my small sample size and limited amount of time to conduct this research did not allow me to adequately explore what I think emerged as an incredibly important and powerful theme—the contestation of space. It is my hope that a larger future study can further address the

difficulties that shared classroom space seems to present. All participants working in before-and-after-school child care contributed to this data and experienced significant challenges due to the current set-up regarding shared classroom space with Ontario Certified Teachers. The classroom was clearly a contested space, where power relationships and inequities were especially evident. As a result, future research on this contested arena is warranted.

Going into this work, it was noted that there is a lack of research literature on split shifts, and no known research literature of RECEs *and* the split shift. Such was a limitation, particularly when drafting my semi-structured interview questions. To address this, a phenomenological approach was used, which was particularly useful for phenomena that have little to no prior research (Knapp, 2017). Thus, this work is very reflective of the RECEs who were interviewed. Given this, it is my hope that the themes the participants' responses garnered can be used to build momentum towards a larger scale study in the future and possible political action and policy shifts.

Conclusions

This study examined the lived experiences of ten RECEs who worked split shifts. I found that working split shifts impacted RECEs both personally and professionally. All ten participants contributed to the data for one or more of the four main themes. While three RECEs from this study had positive experiences working split shifts, seven did not; and all participants described difficulties that were unique to split shift employees themselves. Namely, the relationship with elementary classroom teachers and low compensation exasperated by the split shift were unique to this scheduling style. It is notable that this study's findings are very much exclusive to before-and-after-school child care, even though one participant, Zoe, did not work in this type of setting.

Thus, although the split shift is, perhaps, more common in before-and-after-school child care, it certainly exists within traditionally full-day child care services too.

Going forth, it is necessary for the split shift— and the experiences of RECEs who work it— to be more closely examined. I hope that this work will be the beginning of increased attention to the needs of a hard-working, well-educated, yet undervalued group of care professionals, who experience unique challenges working split shifts.



Early Childhood Educators and the Effects of the Split Shift: A Phenomenological Study.

The aims of this study are:

- **To understand how working a split shift affects RECEs professionally and personally**
 - **Begin a dialogue on split shifts for the RECE community.**
-

This study will involve 10 participants. Participation will be confidential. Participants will take part in one-on-one Skype interviews with the Researcher. The total time commitment for participants is one hour. Participants must be Registered Early Childhood Educators who self-report working a split shift in the Greater Toronto Area.

This research will be used for partial completion of a master's degree.

For more information, contact Erica at erica.saunders@ryerson.ca

This project was reviewed and approved by the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board (protocol number 2020-067)

APPENDIX B: Interview Guide

Semi- Structured Interview Guide

- (Remind participants that they do not have to answer any question they do not feel comfortable with and they can rescind consent at any time during the interview).
- How long have you been working in the sector?
- What kind of education do you have?
- What does a typical workday look like for you?
- If you could create child care policy, what would that look like?
- What do you think the impact of the split shift is on children? (Do you think families know this?)
- How has the split shift impacted you professionally?
- How has the split shift impacted you personally? (Financially)
- How has the split shift affected your self-worth? (Who do talk about this to?)
- Do you think the split shift contributes to undervaluation?
- Do you have any questions for me? (Thank you for participating)

APPENDIX C: Consent Agreement



Ryerson University Consent Agreement

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Please read this consent form so that you understand what your participation will involve. Before you consent to participate, please ask any questions to be sure you understand what your participation will involve.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS AND THE EFFECTS OF THE SPLIT SHIFT: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

INVESTIGATORS:

This research study is being conducted by Erica Saunders from the Faculty of Community Services at Ryerson University, in partial completion of her MA in Early Childhood Studies and under the supervision of Dr. Patrizia Albanese in the Faculty of Arts.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Erica Saunders at erica.saunders@ryerson.ca or Dr. Patrizia Albanese at palbanes@soc.ryerson.ca

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

While there is research documenting the low wages and undervaluation of Ontario's Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs), there is no known research on the effects that split shifts have on workers in this sector. This study aims to address absence of research on the split shift for a predominantly female workforce performing care work. In order to do so, ten RECEs who self-report working a split shift will be asked questions through semi-structured interviews over Skype. These questions will gather insight on how RECEs perceive the split shift affects them professionally and personally, as well as what they believe could be done to address any concerns that arise related to this scheduling style. All interviews will be transcribed and coded with the intention of highlighting reoccurring themes. This study is being completed to contribute to a Master's Research Paper for partial completion of my graduate degree.

WHAT PARTICIPATION MEANS:

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:

Participation will require an online, semi-structured interview that will be approximately one hour in duration. This interview will take place over Skype privately between you and the researcher. Some sample questions from this interview are:

- What does a typical workday look like for you?
- What do you think the impact of the split shift is on you? On the children you care for?

With your permission, the researcher may contact you over email to clarify any comments made, to ensure that all quotes are representative of what you meant.

Demographic data including age, e-mail address, education level, gender, income, and name will be collected. Given that this is a new area of research, demographic information, such as age, gender, and income will be used to determine if there are links between age and split shift employment or split shift employment and lack of a living wage, for example.

In order to participate, participants must be Registered Early Childhood Educators in Good Standing with the College of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario. Participants must self-report working a split shift at a child care centre in the Greater Toronto Area.

A summary of study findings will be made available to all participants who wish to receive them once the research is completed in August 2020. A link to the study, on Ryerson's Digital Depository, will be sent via email to all participants who have requested a copy.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS:

This study has potential benefits for the RECE community. With the themes that emerge from this research, a better understanding of how the split shift affects RECEs will be gained. Given so, future researchers may choose to examine these themes with larger sample groups. Additionally, policy-level discussions about the split shift may be had, citing the findings of this research. Acknowledgement of the split shift for RECEs will be done for the first time on a scholarly level, thus publicly recognizing the split shift's existence within the sector.

I cannot guarantee, however, that you will receive any benefits from participating in this study.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL RISKS TO YOU AS A PARTICIPANT:

Given that you are discussing the split shift in a semi-structured interview, conversations may arise that are upsetting, such as: financial repercussions of working this shift and/or challenges of working this shift. While being asked semi-structured questions, you will have the ability to guide the course of the conversation. You will be reminded that you may skip any questions or rescind consent at any time. Because you will provide me with your name, if this were to be revealed, damage to your reputation as an Early Childhood Educator could be a risk. As such, in the published research, your name will be assigned a pseudonym. The generator of your name to a pseudonym will be stored on Ryerson's Google Shared Drive, which is secure and encrypted.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

While you will share your name with me before and at the interview, your name will not be used in any part of the analysis and reporting. Your name, used for contact purposes only, will be stored on Ryerson's Google Shared Drive, which is secure and encrypted, accessible only to the researcher. Pseudonyms will be assigned to all participants. The pseudonym will be assigned at the time of interview and correspond to the audio and transcript files. No other identifying information will be used or shared.

If you agree, the interview will be audio recorded. These recordings will be stored on a Ryerson's Google Shared Drive, which is secure and encrypted. The recordings will be accessible only to the researcher. The recordings will be transcribed and stored on Ryerson's Google Shared Drive as well. The transcriptions will be accessible only to the researcher. All

audio recordings will be deleted after transcription and verification. Transcribed interviews will be destroyed one year after (August 2021) the end of the study (August 2020). Participants have the right to review their transcriptions, upon request. Audio and transcripts will not be released to any other party at any time.

The researcher will be conducting Skype interviews in her home where she is the only one present. Please ensure that the location you choose to Skype in has both audio and visual privacy.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL:

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If any question makes you uncomfortable, you can skip that question. You may stop participating at any time. If you choose to stop participating, you may also choose to not have your data included in the study. Participants may ask that their interview not be used for the analysis up until August 30, 2020. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with Ryerson University or the investigator, Erica Saunders, involved in the research.

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:

Erica Saunders at erica.saunders@ryerson.ca

This study has been reviewed by the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in this study please contact:

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

**EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS AND THE EFFECTS OF THE SPLIT SHIFT: A
PHENOMONOLOGICAL STUDY**

CONFIRMATION OF 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 participate 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

Date

I agree to be audio-recorded for the purposes of this study. I understand how these recordings will be securely stored, transcribed and then destroyed.

Signature of Participant

Date

Do you agree to be re-contacted, via email, if I need clarification on content of the recordings?

☐ yes ☐ no

Would you like to receive, via email, a summary of my research findings when the project is complete?

☐ yes ☐ no

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