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Early-Career Child Care Teachers' Perceptions of Their Training Experiences

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

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MSECS, Walden University, 2012

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Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

In a Midwest state, child care teachers who enter the workforce with only a high school diploma or GED credential are not required to complete child development training before being placed in a classroom. Child care teachers need foundational knowledge to provide quality care and education to young children. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore how early-career child care teachers with no advanced education in child development experience training upon entering the workforce. Personal narratives are scarce in existing research, and understanding the perspectives of child care teachers provided an opportunity to consider appropriate training and career support. The research questions examined participants' perceptions of their initial training experiences and explored their thoughts about ongoing training needs. Using an interpretative phenomenological approach, narrative data were collected from 8 participants through semistructured interviews. Knowles's theory of andragogy emerged as the theoretical framework. Data analysis included organizing the data; developing codes, categories, and themes; and interpreting the findings. Findings indicated that early-career child care teachers rely on observational learning and desire training that incorporates adult learning principles. Participants described ineffective online training that does not support the acquisition of knowledge or skills. The resulting project was a policy recommendation suggesting the development of a statewide endorsement program that includes preservice and inservice training and peer coaching. The adoption and implementation of the child care endorsement can drive social change in support of ongoing national and statewide efforts to improve child care quality and outcomes for child care teachers and the children they serve.

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Dedication

I dedicate my project study to my father, Marv Canupp, who passed away in 2000. As a young college freshman, I watched my father work hard to earn his Master's degree in International Relations. On the day he graduated, I promised him that I would achieve my doctorate by the time I was 40. While I did not quite make that timeline, I never forgot my promise. My father always told me that I could achieve anything I put my mind to, and I have never forgotten that either. I wish he were here to celebrate with me. Cheers to you, Dad! I love you, always.

I would also like to dedicate this work to the child care administrators and teachers who work tirelessly every day to build foundations for young children. They do it despite a lack of respect, low wages, and much inconsistency. They do it because they care deeply about young children and their success. Never, ever forget that you matter. I salute you!

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My husband, Alan, and children, Kyle and Kelsey, have stood by my side as I completed coursework, shed tears, and celebrated milestones. They have steadfastly supported my dream, encouraged me to achieve my goals, and reminded me to "keep my eye on the prize" when I questioned my ability to succeed. Their sacrifices will never go unnoticed. I love you more than you will ever know.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore how early-career child care teachers with no advanced education in child development experience training upon entering the child care workforce. Approximately 41% of early childhood teachers possess only a high school diploma (Institute of Medicine [IOM] & National Research Center [NRC], 2015). Given that 59% of early childhood teachers work in child care centers (National Survey of Early Care & Education Project Team, 2013), a substantial portion of child care teachers are untrained upon entering the workforce (Whitebook, 2014). Additionally, a high school diploma or less is the minimum qualification for child care work in 28 states (Whitebrook, McLean, Austin, & Edwards, 2018). Due to inconsistent data across the states, it is difficult to fully assess the exact number of individuals who work in child care settings without the benefit of higher education. Currently, there is no primary source of longitudinal data for the early childhood workforce (Whitebrook et al., 2018).

There is an ongoing call for all early childhood professionals to have bachelor's degrees to increase the quality of care and child outcomes in early childhood settings (IOM & NRC, 2015; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Whitebook, 2014). While there is evidence that increased teacher education has a positive impact on the developing child (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2000; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2006; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000), the research linking education to practice is unclear. Although higher levels of teacher education may improve child outcomes, Early et al. (2007) concluded that a focus only on higher education would not

adequately address quality improvement in early childhood education. Several studies have found that understanding the needs of child care workers will aid in addressing concerns regarding training and education within the field (Pianta et al., 2014; Shpancer et al., 2008).

The early childhood education field has evolved from a perception of custodial care to one that recognizes the importance of specialized training (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Whitebook, 2014). It is a field described as fragmented and in need of professionalization (Goffin, 2015). Research into the development of young children has consistently shown the benefits of a well-qualified workforce with knowledge of child development (Bowman et al., 2000; NICHD, 2006; IOM & NRC, 2015; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Some studies have suggested that child care teachers should have a bachelor's degree (IOM & NRC, 2015; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Whitebook, 2014). However, Kashen, Potter, and Stettner (2016) warned that workforce development should address low wages and high turnover in conjunction with increasing the educational qualifications of the industry. Inconsistent regulations mark child care, and many states have minimal educational requirements (Child Care Aware of America, 2017; IOM & NRC, 2015; Whitebook, McLean & Austin, 2016). It is critical to understand the training experiences of child care teachers with minimal education to increase their knowledge, skills, and dispositions. However, an in-depth search of the current literature resulted in limited sources that specifically address the training needs of child care teachers entering the workforce with only a high school diploma or GED.

The Early Childhood Education Landscape

As women's participation in the workforce has increased, so has their reliance on out-of-home care for their children. In the United States, 64.7% of women with children under age 6 were employed in 2016 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2017). Additionally, 65% of all children under age 6 reside in homes where all adults are working (Annie Casey Foundation, 2017). Child care has become a necessity for most families, and a majority of children spend at least some time in out-of-home care before entering kindergarten (NICHD, 2000). Approximately 10 million children under age 5 are cared for in out-of-home settings daily by a workforce that exceeds 2 million (Whitebook, McClean, Austin, & Edwards, 2018). Families rely on a variety of settings for child care, including child care centers, preschools (public or private), Head Start programs, family child care homes, or kinship care (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Whitebrook et al., 2018).

There is no national oversight of child care centers; regulation of these settings varies and is often managed by different departments within each state, and there is no national oversight of child care centers (Whitebook, 2014; Whitebrook et al., 2018). The licensing of child care centers is often managed through a state's social welfare office or health department, while public preschools are incorporated into the state's education system (Whitebook, 2014). In Ohio, for example, child care centers, private preschools, family child care homes, before and after-school programs, and Head Start programs are licensed by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS), whereas the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) regulates public preschool programs. Child care licensing regulations establish a legal baseline from which child care centers are

permitted to operate that typically include requirements for staff/child ratios and maximum group sizes, health, safety, and nutrition, with minimum qualifications for administrators and staff, training requirements, child activities, and parent involvement (Child Care Aware of America, n.d.). Because child care licensing establishes minimum legal requirements, it does not guarantee the quality of a program (Child Care Aware of America, n.d.).

Early childhood education is a complex field that does not have a unified professional identity (Goffin, 2015). It has been described as fragmented, chaotic, and disorganized (Evans-Allvin, Flis, & Wat, 2015; Goffin, 2015; Goffin, Phillips, Austin, & Whitebook, 2016). It consists of individuals with varying educational qualifications who have different job responsibilities and who work in many types of settings (IOM & NRC, 2015; Whitebook et al., 2014). Although they share the goal of caring for and educating young children, "these professionals are not acknowledged as a cohesive workforce, unified by their shared contributions and the common knowledge base and competencies needed to do their jobs well" (IOM & NRC, 2015, p. 1). An exploration of the history of early childhood will shed light on why the field is described this way.

The Early Years of Early Childhood Education

The early childhood education industry evolved from two separate traditions, one focused on caring for children of working parents while the other focused on early learning (Whitebook et al., 2016). In the 19th Century, day nurseries became a means of providing care for children of low-income families with a primary purpose of providing a place that protected children while their single or widowed mothers worked (Cohen,

1996; Lascarides & Hinitz, 2011). It was commonly believed that such facilities were essential because lower-income families were not capable of adequately caring for their children (Cahan,1989). Historically, day nurseries were an avenue for public health and child protection versus child education; they typically focused on cleanliness and hygiene (Cahan, 1989). Day nurseries were lacking in financial and personnel resources, resulting in a type of custodial care limited in its ability to provide nutritional meals, manage the number of children per adult, or include educational activities for the children (Cohen, 1996). As a result, no standards emphasized the qualifications of the caregivers who worked in day nurseries. The day nurseries provided necessary support during the industrial revolution and later as the nation saw a dramatic influx of immigrants, and they evolved into today's child care centers (Cohen, 1996; Feeney, Moravcik, & Nolte, 2016).

While the day nurseries offered services for impoverished families, nursery schools began to provide facilities and programs targeted at affluent families in the early 1900s (Cohen, 1996). Their purpose was to provide education for children that would help them become successful in the future (Cohen, 1996). Nursery schools were commonly associated with colleges and universities and were used as sites for observation and research related to the study of child development (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2011). The term *nursery school* was coined in England by McMillan, who envisioned a place where adults learned about working with children through practice. Thus, student teaching derived from nursery schools in the early 20th Century (Liebovich, 2016). During the depression, the Works Progress Administration implemented funding for Emergency Nursery Schools to support unemployed teachers and offset the physical and

mental effects of the Depression (Michel, 2011). Because unemployed teachers mostly staffed the schools, they took on an educational perspective that the day nurseries did not have. Today's public preschool system has evolved from the nursery schools (Cohen, 1996).

During the 20th Century, several events occurred that led to the evolution of the early childhood education field. The first of seven White House Conferences on the Care of Dependent Children, held in 1909 by President Theodore Roosevelt, focused on the nation's role in protecting children and families (Cohen, 1996). The first conference led to the formation of the Children's Bureau and the Children's Welfare League as the nation began to recognize the importance of children's development (Cohen, 1996). This change in perspective became a critical moment in moving towards a focus on teacher development and set the stage for the evolution of early childhood education (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2011).

In 1942, Congress implemented the Lanham Act, which provided funding for building bridges and infrastructure during World War II. The Lanham Act also carried funding for states to convert existing nursery schools into child care centers in areas where women were needed to work in factories serving the war effort (Cohen, 1996). States could use funds to construct and maintain child care centers, provide training and salaries to teachers, and cover operating costs (Herbst, 2013). The Lanham Act is significant in the history of child care because it was the first federal program to universally subsidize child care for children from all socioeconomic backgrounds

(Herbst, 2013). The funding was meant to be temporary during the country's time of crisis and was suspended shortly after the end of World War II (Cohen, 1996).

In the 1960s, President Johnson's "War on Poverty" saw the beginning of Head Start, which was intended to provide comprehensive early education and services to low-income families (Cohen, 1996). The 1965 recommendations for Head Start indicated that comprehensive programs could improve opportunities for children living in poverty (Cooke, 1965). Head Start began as a summer program in 1965, was quickly expanded to a school year in 1966, and has been continuously federally funded for more than 50 years (Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, 2015). Head Start took the lead in pushing for increased education of early childhood teachers by requiring teachers to have a Child Development Associates (CDA) credential by 2010. A further mandate for all Head Start teachers to have an associate's degree by 2011, with a requirement that 50% of teachers have a bachelor's degree by 2013, emphasized the necessity of higher education (Head Start Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center, n.d.).

The 1994 Head Start Reauthorization laid the groundwork for expansion that became known as Early Head Start, a program focused on low-income families with pregnant women, infants, and toddlers (Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, 2015). Early Head Start services offer home visits, child care programs, or a combination of the two depending upon the community (Love et al., 2002). Early Head Start employees were required to possess, at minimum, a CDA credential by 2010 (Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, n.d.)

The development of the CDA credential was a direct result of Head Start's commitment to the professional development of its teachers (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2011). Created in 1972 with support from Head Start and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the CDA defined the role of early childhood teachers by combining coursework with practical application (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2011). For the first time, the CDA outlined competencies for providing quality care to young children, and these competencies represented a significant advancement in the field (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2011).

The 1989 Military Child Care Act also had an impact on the field of early childhood education. Before congressional hearings that led to the development of the Military Child Care Act, quality child care was not a priority for the military (Lucas, 2001). It had a history of substandard facilities, failed to provide adequate training or wages, and was subject to child abuse allegations (Campbell, Appelbaum, Martinson, & Martin, 2000). The 1989 Act pushed the Department of Defense to implement systemwide improvements, including the development of standards governing all child care facilities, teacher-child ratios, staff training and qualifications, child abuse prevention procedures, parent participation, and healthy practices (Campbell et al., 2000). Military child care programs began requiring comprehensive and progressive training, including an initial orientation and course related to the age-group the employee worked with (Campbell et al., 2000). Additionally, wages were increased for the completion of each training milestone (Campbell et al., 2000). As a direct result of the Military Child Care Act, the Department of Defense child care system has become a model for child

care nationally and is typically the highest in rankings of child care that focus on benchmarks such as quality and training (Child Care Aware of America, 2017).

Professionalizing Child Care in the 20th and 21st Centuries

As women continued to enter the workforce in the latter part of the 1900s, the need for child care services continued to grow, and a shift toward increasing quality emerged (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2011). Large and small-scale studies began to find a positive relationship between high-quality early childhood programs and child outcomes (NICHD, 2000; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Travers, Goodson, Singer, & Connell, 1980). Specifically, Travers et al. (1980) found a relationship between caregiver behavior and children's test scores that showed that teachers with specialized education were more actively engaged with children than teachers without such training. By 2000, research supporting the benefits of high-quality care and teacher education was so sufficiently documented that Shonkoff and Phillips (2000) proclaimed, "The general question of whether early childhood programs can make a difference has been asked and answered in the affirmative innumerable times. This generic query is no longer worthy of further investigation" (p. 379).

The seminal works *Eager to Learn* (Bowman et al., 2000) and *Neurons to Neighborhoods* (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000) laid the groundwork recognizing the growing science of child development and its connection to the field of early childhood education. Both works emphasized the importance of increasing educational qualifications for early childhood teachers and encouraged national policy to address the issue (Bowman et al., 2000; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). While there is no national policy

regarding the qualifications of child care teachers currently, advances have occurred at state levels. As of fall 2019, quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS) had been implemented in 41 states and Washington, DC, but they vary widely regarding teacher qualifications and professional development requirements (The Build Initiative & Child Trends, 2016).

With a rich and diverse history, the U.S. early childhood education system is fraught with disparities (Goffin & Washington, 2019). Early childhood education continues to be fragmented between private child care and publicly funded preschool (Goffin, 2015). Private child care programs have minimal educational requirements for their teachers in 28 states (Whitebrook et al., 2018), while public preschool teachers are required to have a bachelor's degree in all states (Whitebook, Phillips, & Howes, 2014). The disparity between the child care and public early childhood education systems has led to a view that caring for our youngest children is not as highly valued as educating children in public schools (IOM & NRC, 2015; Whitebook et al., 2014; Whitebrook et al., 2018). There is a hierarchy that values professionals based on the age groups they work with and the setting in which they work (Goffin & Washington, 2019). The child care workforce is undervalued, underpaid, and underprepared for the work of caring for and educating young children (Whitebook et al., 2018).

The Problem

National Concerns

Several researchers have concluded that children receive higher-quality child care when their teachers and caregivers are well-trained and have a strong knowledge base

(IOM & NRC, 2015; Rhodes & Huston, 2012; Whitebook, 2014). Child care teachers need access to training and professional development that enables them to acquire competencies that support children's success (IOM & NRC, 2015). Early childhood educators need high-quality professional development focused on the improvement of practice (Sheridan, Edwards, Marvin, & Knoche, 2009). A lack of consistent credentialing standards has led to low levels of education and limited specialized training being the norm across the industry (IOM & NRC, 2015).

In the United States, approximately 15 million children under the age of 5 are cared for by 562,420 child care workers (Pickett, 2018). Children average 36 hours in child care programs weekly, and as many as 25% spend time in multiple settings because families frequently need child care during nontraditional hours (Child Care Aware of America, 2017; IOM & NRC, 2015). Researchers have consistently demonstrated that children, especially the most vulnerable, benefit from high-quality early experiences (IOM & NRC, 2015; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Whitebook et al., 2014). The provision of high-quality child care has been linked to the education and qualifications of the workforce and, yet, most states continue to have minimal preservice training or education requirements (Goffin, 2015). In a 2012 national report Whitebrook et al. (2014) found that 40% of lead teachers did not have college degrees or credentials. The statistic represents an 11% increase in nondegreed teachers over what was reported in the 1990 Profile of Child Care Settings (Kisker, Hoffert, Phillips & Farquhar, 1991). In 28 states, the minimum education qualification for working in child care centers is a high school diploma, GED credential, or less (IOM & NRC, 2015; Whitebrook et al., 2018).

The field of early childhood education has been called upon to professionalize itself by requiring bachelor's degrees (IOM & NRC, 2015). However, researchers have routinely identified several interrelated issues that pose challenges to the achievement of this goal. Traditionally, child care wages are well below those of teachers working in public education (Whitebook et al., 2016). Advances in the science of child development and recognition of the positive effects early educators have on children's development have not led to an increase in wages (IOM & NRC, 2015).

A related issue is that of attrition within the field. A review of empirical literature conducted by Totenhagen et al. (2016) found a positive relationship between wages and retention that is also impacted by education level. Because of low wages, those who earn higher degrees frequently leave child care for higher-paying jobs in school-based settings (Whitebook et al., 2014). Whitebook et al. (2014) compared data from the 1989 National Child Care Staffing Study to data from the 2012 National Survey of Early Care and Education. Although conducted 20 years apart, the two studies showed that turnover has been an ongoing and significant issue in child care (Whitebook et al., 2014). These conclusions are supported by others who have posited that low wages and education levels are contributing factors in the high turnover rate among child care workers and that these issues are endemic to the profession (Goffin, 2015; IOM & NRC, 2015).

In addition to low wages and high attrition rates, the child care regulatory system has inconsistent expectations for employee qualifications. There is no federal oversight, and each state operates a licensing system that regulates minimum education and training requirements for new employees (Whitebook, 2014). Because each state manages child

care licensing separately, there is a broad spectrum of educational qualifications for child care workers across the country (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015). Given the high number of states with minimal requirements for entering the child care workforce, the purpose of this study was to explore how early-career child care teachers with no advanced education in child development experience training at the outset of their career.

There is a great deal of research indicating that young children benefit from having knowledgeable child care teachers. Furthermore, there is a push for the workforce to attain a bachelor's degree to work with young children. Understanding what drives individuals to select child care as a career without completing a college degree by exploring their educational experiences, family characteristics, and perceived career options may aid programs in better supporting them early in their careers. Given low wages and high turnover issues, understanding the training experiences of child care teachers entering the workforce with limited education supports the development of systems to ensure they have some knowledge before working with young children.

Statewide Concerns

Each state has licensing requirements that regulate minimum education and training requirements (Whitebook, 2014). In Ohio, there are 6,232 center-based child care programs licensed and regulated by ODJFS (Child Care Aware of America, 2019) and a workforce of 37,110 child care workers (Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, 2018). Child care centers are programs licensed to care for seven or more children and can be child care centers, private preschools, Head Start programs, family child care providers, or before and after school programs (ODJFS, n.d.). Regardless of the setting,

each entity is subject to the same regulations except Head Start programs, which are subject to both state and federal oversight. In Ohio, the minimum education requirement for teachers to work in a child care center is a high school diploma or GED, and there is no requirement for individuals who work in such settings to complete any training before employment (ODJFS, 2016a). Child care workers must be at least 18 years old and have a high school diploma or GED upon being hired (ODJFS, 2016a).

The state licensing guidelines do not allow child care employees to have sole care of children until they complete a mandatory 6-hour online orientation (ODJFS, 2016a). Additionally, within 60 days of hire, employees must complete a 1-hour child abuse overview training that is valid for 2 years (ODJFS, 2017). Child care center employees are required to complete a minimum of 6 clock hours of training annually (ODJFS, 2016a). The approved topics areas for the annual training include (a) child growth and development; (b) family/community relations; (c) daily planning, child observation and assessments; (d) career development; and (e) learning environment and experiences (ODJFS, 2016a). The required orientation and child abuse training count towards the annual 6-hour training requirement (ODJFS, 2016a). Therefore, it is possible for an individual who begins working in a child care center to have no additional training in the first year.

In 2005, Ohio implemented a pilot of its quality rating improvement system (QRIS), Step Up to Quality (SUTQ), which became a statewide initiative in 2006. Initially, the three-star SUTQ rating was only available to publicly funded child care centers (ODE & ODJFS, n.d.). As an Early Learning Challenge Grant recipient in 2011,

the state began work in 2012 to develop a new model that would include all public preschools and family child care providers. Implemented in 2013, the new model is a building block approach that includes five stars (ODE & ODJFS, n.d.). Programs seeking one star must meet all of the requirements for that particular rating, and programs pursuing two or three stars must meet the requirements of all previous rating levels. Programs seeking to achieve four or five stars must meet all of the one, two, and three star requirements and then can earn additional points for accreditation, teacher/child ratios, and group size, which enable them to meet the four- or five-star rating (ODE & ODJFS, n.d.).

SUTQ has domains in four areas, including (a) learning and development, (b) staff qualifications and professional development, (c) administrative and leadership practices, and (d) family and community partnerships. Each domain has additional subdomains that reflect best practices, are research based, and can be found in the QRIS of all other states (Heinemeier, D'Agostino, Hamilton, Kim, & Winglee, 2017). The SUTQ subdomains include curriculum and planning, screening and assessment, interactions and environments, staff supports, program administration, staff management, staff education, professional development, transitions, and communications and engagement.

Training and ongoing professional development are essential components of QRIS and are included in every state's system (Gomez, Kagan & Fox, 2015; Heinemeier et al., 2017). The state developed the Ohio Professional Registry (OPR) to serve as a centralized workforce database to support early childhood professionals and the QRIS

(Ohio Child Care Resource and Referral Association [OCCRRA], n.d.). The OPR provides a place for all of Ohio's early childhood professionals to record their professional development using a career pathways model that awards points for formal education, training, experience, and specialized credentials and certificates (OCCRRA, n.d.). ODJFS requires all child care center employees to use the OPR.

In addition to the required orientation and child abuse training, all teachers working in programs that are star-rated or pursuing a star rating are required to complete two online training sessions within 30 days of employment. Ohio's Overview of Child Development is a 3-hour course, and Ohio's Approach to Quality is a 2-hour course (ODJFS, 2016b). Staff qualifications for each star level increase and are determined by the child care center rather than the individual. For example, a child care center pursuing a one-star rating must demonstrate that at least two lead teachers have a CDA or one teacher has an associate's degree in early childhood education or a related field or has a career pathways Level 3 (ODE & ODJFS, 2017). At the four and five star levels, programs are awarded points based on teacher education. Additionally, the ongoing training requirements for child care teachers working in SUTQ rated programs are progressive. Individuals working in programs with one, two, or three stars are required to complete 20 hours of training during each biennium, and this increases by 5 hours for each additional star rating (ODE & ODJFS, 2017).

There are 6,232 ODJFS licensed child care centers (Child Care Aware, 2019) in this state, and according to the OCCRRA, 2,764 are publicly funded. According to Heinemeier et al. (2017), more than 1,800 child care centers participate in SUTQ, and

81% are publicly funded. SUTQ will continue to be a means for increasing quality across the state as all privately owned, publicly funded child care centers are required to be SUTQ rated by 2020 and must be highly rated with three, four, or five stars by 2025 (Heinemeier et al., 2017). While these requirements continue to push all publicly funded child care programs to become highly rated, the state does not account for almost 3,500 child care centers that do not accept publicly funded children. According to data received from the Ohio Child Care Resource and Referral Agency, as of fiscal year 2018, 44% of individuals working in Ohio's licensed child care centers have had only a high school diploma or GED credential.

Positioned against the national outcry for bachelor's degrees for early childhood teachers, the lack of qualifications or training requirements in this state represents a gap in practice. While there is extensive evidence that training and professional development is the most effective method of preparing individuals to work with young children, there is limited scientific research about what forms of training or professional development are most appropriate for individuals entering the workforce with limited education or training (Buysse, Winton, & Rous, 2009). Missing from the research is a consensus regarding the knowledge and skills necessary for teachers to provide high-quality care and education (Brown & Englehardt, 2016). Furthermore, there is a lack of research focused specifically on individuals who enter the workforce without advanced education.

In this project study, I explored how early-career child care teachers with no advanced education in child development experience and perceive training upon entering the workforce. It is valuable to understand the perspectives of current practitioners to

provide them with appropriate training and career support. Exploring the personal narratives of this important, and too often overlooked, segment of the workforce provides useful insight into what learning needs they have at the outset of their careers (Shdaimah, Palley, & Miller, 2018; Shpancer et al., 2008). Information gathered from child care teachers regarding their beliefs and experiences is lacking and appears to be a gap in the research (Gomez et al., 2015; Sheridan et al., 2009; Shdaimah et al., 2018; Shpancer et al., 2008).

Rationale

The purpose of this study was to explore how early-career child care teachers with no advanced education in child development experience training upon entering the child care workforce. Interviews with eight child care teachers who were in their first 2 years of child care employment allowed me to gain insight into their experiences and perceptions that could be used to make recommendations to the state licensing agency, develop a preservice training model, or provide professional development to child care administrators. A phenomenological study was warranted because research directly related to child care teachers' experiences is limited (Gomez et al., 2015). Sheridan et al. (2009) stated, "It still remains the exception rather than the norm for research attention to be paid to professionals' own understandings of current and proposed practice" (p. 392). Teachers' experiences must be understood to design relevant training and professional development (Dall'Alba & Sandberg, 2006). This study adds to the literature by sharing child care teachers’ perspectives and experiences about training as they entered the child care workforce.

Definition of Terms

Career pathways model: Ohio's model is a means for quantifying the work history, formal education and credentials, and professional development of all early childhood professionals in the state. The framework awards points that lead to career pathways levels (OCCRRA, n.d.)

Child care center: Programs that are state-licensed to provide care and education to young children in nonresidential settings. Providers may be for- or non-profit, corporate or private, faith-based, or home-based.

Child care teachers: For this study, child care teachers are individuals who work in child care centers as lead teachers or teacher's assistants.

Early care and education: An overarching term that identifies public and private programs that support children's development from birth to kindergarten entry (Tarrant & Huerta, 2015).

Early childhood professionals: Individuals in child care centers, family child care homes, or schools who work with infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-aged children and their families in child care centers, family child care homes, or schools with the intent to support children's development and learning (NAEYC & NACCRRA, 2011).

Early Head Start: A federally funded program established in 1994 to provide comprehensive services to low income families with infants and toddlers. Services take place through home visits or in center-based programs.

Family child care homes: Child care offered in the homes of regulated/licensed and unregulated/unlicensed child care providers.

Head Start: A federally funded program established in 1965 to provide comprehensive services to low income children aged 3 to 5 and social services to their families.

Initial training: Refers to training taken before working with young children and is often synonymous with preservice training (NAEYC & NACCRRA, 2011). In the study state, initial training may also refer to first-time certification in First Aid, CPR, Communicable Disease Recognition, or Child Abuse Prevention and Recognition.

Inservice training: Professional learning that occurs during practice; often synonymous with professional development (IOM & NRC, 2015).

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC): A professional membership organization that promotes high-quality learning for all children birth to age 8 by supporting practice, policy, and research (NAEYC, n.d.).

Preservice training: Describes training taken before working with young children and is often synonymous with initial training (NAEYC & NACCRRA, 2011).

Professional development: May include education, training, or technical assistance to prepare individuals to work with and on behalf of young children and their families offered before or during employment (NAEYC & NACCRRA, 2011). For this study, the terms professional development and training are used interchangeably.

Publicly funded child care: Subsidies available to families who are at or below the federal poverty limit.

Public preschool: Educational programs for children aged 3 to 5 located in public schools. Programs often combine groups of typically developing children with children who have special needs.

Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS): Rating systems that systematically rate early childhood programs in an effort to increase quality in early learning settings (Lahti, Elicker, Zellman & Fiene, 2015). Most QRIS systems use a tiered rating scale with 1 to 5 levels of quality benchmarks typically focused on learning environments and curriculum, staff qualifications and professional development, administrative practices, and family and community collaboration (Boller et al., 2015; Faria, Greenberg, Hawkinson, & Metzger, 2016).

Step Up to Quality (SUTQ): Ohio's tiered quality rating improvement system (QRIS) for child care centers, family child care homes, before and after-school programs, and public preschools.

Training: NAEYC and NACCRRA (2011) defined training as learning experiences related to a specific area of interest associated with a particular skill set that is delivered by a subject matter expert. Training can be provided in many formats, including, but not limited to, conferences, workshops, or webinars. Generally, training does not lead to college credit (Zaslow et al., 2010). For this study, the terms training and professional development are used interchangeably.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study will shed light on how early-career child care teachers with no advanced education experience training upon entering the workforce.

Researchers have consistently shown that children benefit from high-quality child care provided by knowledgeable teachers and caregivers (IOM & NRC, 2015; Rhodes & Huston, 2012; Whitebook, 2014). Understanding the experiences of early-career teachers will benefit children, teachers, and child care centers. Paying attention to the personal narratives of individuals who entered the child care workforce with minimal education can provide insight into training and professional development they might need and how it could be different from that of a child care teacher with an associate or bachelor's degree.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore how early-career child care teachers with no advanced education in child development experience training upon entering the child care workforce. There is limited research from the perspective of teachers currently working in the field (Gomez et al., 2015; Shdaimah et al., 2018; Sheridan et al., 2009). Research that addresses understanding how professionals acquire knowledge and skills that translate to effective practice is essential (Sheridan et al., 2009). Asking appropriate questions of sufficient depth provided data that could lead to the development of suitable training for early-career child care teachers, empower administrators to support and train this segment of the workforce, or motivate the state licensing agency to implement more stringent training requirements.

Research Question (RQ)1: How do child care teachers without advanced education in child development describe their training experiences upon entry into the workforce?

RQ2: How do early-career child care teachers describe their long-term training needs?

RQ1 asked teachers to describe the training they received upon entry into the field because there is a need to understand their experiences with training. Knowing if they perceive the training they received as beneficial provided data that could be used to revise existing training or develop new, more appropriate training. RQ2 focused on what teachers identified as their ongoing training needs after they had been in the field for some time. Through in-depth questions, I sought to understand the experiences of early-career child care teachers concerning their training. I attempted to understand the contexts from which they approached their work with young children. It was anticipated that some commonalities would arise when analyzing the data, which could be incorporated into a training model, professional development, or public policy.

Phenomenology focuses on the meaning individuals attach to their experiences regarding a particular phenomenon (Vagle, 2014). Training is approached in a variety of ways, and I was interested in what topics are addressed, methods of training, and how teachers use the training they receive. Additionally, I wondered if child care teachers perceive training as beneficial to their daily work and if other types of training would be useful. To address the research questions, participants were asked to reflect on their previous experiences with education. Participants shared their experiences with initial training and what training topics would have been beneficial but were not received. Finally, participants provided insight into what knowledge they think child care teachers should possess when they enter the field, including their views on college degrees.

Addressing these issues sheds light on how training may or may not prepare child care teachers to work efficiently with young children in the short and long-term. Documenting the experiences of early-career child care teachers and analyzing the common themes that emerged captured data from a segment of the workforce that is often overlooked in the research (Dall'Alba & Sandberg, 2006; Gomez et al., 2015; Sheridan et al., 2009).

Review of the Literature

The focus of this phenomenological study was to explore how early-career child care teachers with no advanced education in child development experience training upon entering the workforce. When conducting phenomenological research, a partial literature review is conducted before data collection in a manner that does not unduly influence the researcher's interpretation of the participants' experience (Vagle, 2014). The primary goal of phenomenological research is to "capture the tentative manifestations of the phenomenon as it is lived – not use existing theories to explain or predict what might take place" (Vagle, 2014, p. 124). An early review of the literature provided insight regarding how the phenomena might manifest during data collection. Upon completion of data collection, a further study of the literature was conducted to connect the participant's experiences with the broader context of early childhood education and child care teacher research.

Multiple databases were searched to locate peer reviewed articles, including Education Source, Academic Search Complete, PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, SocINDEX, ERIC, ProQuest, SAGE Journals, and Google Scholar. Additionally, I searched for articles and studies published by entities such as NAEYC, The Center for the Study of

Child Care Employment, Zero to Three, and the Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. Multiple combinations of the following keywords were used to locate relevant research: *child care, daycare, early childhood education, teacher, workers, qualifications, preservice, training,* and *professional development*. To ensure that current research was located, citation chaining on Google Scholar was completed for the most relevant articles.

In this section, I have highlighted current research regarding societal views of child care as a disrespected profession for which educational attainment is not necessary (NAEYC, 2016; Whitebook, 2014). Additional topics addressed in this section include overarching issues regarding wages, attrition, and characteristics and demographics of the workforce. Discussion of efforts to prepare child care teachers and professionalize the workforce, such as core knowledge and competencies and quality rating improvement systems, is also included.

Public Perception

Caring for children before kindergarten has, historically, been equated to babysitting (Kagan, Kauerz, & Tarrant., 2008; NAEYC, 2016) and is not perceived as teaching (Ackerman, 2006), leading to the belief that child care requires limited significant skills or education (Whitebrook et al., 2018). Child care teachers are adamant in their stance that they are educators, despite such common perceptions (Boyd, 2013). Travis, Lee, Faulkner, Gerstenblatt, and Boston (2014) examined what practices enable child care providers to flourish in their workplaces. Travis et al. sought to understand what workplace conditions the participants identified as most significant to their work.

Being trusted and respected by peers, administrators, and families was a primary theme in the participant's responses. Participants valued their role in children's lives and described their professional identity as educators because they recognized their purpose in teaching and working with young children (Travis et al., 2014).

Boyd's (2013) study of 32 teachers in New England addressed efforts to professionalize the workforce. Many participants were frustrated by the perception that they were babysitters versus teachers, they were lazy, or they lacked professional skills (Boyd, 2013). Participants indicated responsibility for completing child assessments and early identification of learning or behavioral problems, tasks that require expertise and a particular skill set (Boyd, 2013). Participants expressed a belief that meeting increased training requirements was evidence that they were professional teachers (Boyd, 2013).

The general public does not believe teachers who work with children before kindergarten need the same skills as teachers who work with older children (Whitebook, 2014). Limited licensing regulations reinforce the belief that teaching young children does not require pedagogical knowledge (Whitebook, 2014; Whitebrook et al., 2018). Because each state manages child care licensing separately, there is ample variation in the educational qualifications of child care workers (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015).

The 2018 *Early Childhood Workforce Index* (Whitebrook et al., 2018) reported that 28 states set the minimum education requirement for child care workers at a high school diploma or less. Of these, 19 states do not require a high school diploma. Child Care Aware of America (2017) reported that 10 states require some clock hours related to early childhood education, seven require a CDA credential, one requires an associate's

degree, and one requires a bachelor's degree. In Ohio, the minimum education requirement for child care teachers is a high school diploma or GED credential (ODJFS, 2016a).

Overarching Issues in Early Childhood Education

These attitudes and practices, perpetuated over time, have resulted in a fragmented, two-tiered system of early childhood education (Ackerman, 2006; Goffin, 2015). On one side is child care, which is defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015) as a service focused on children's basic needs while their parents work. On the other is preschool, which works to educate children before kindergarten entry. Subsequently, the two tiers can be thought of as care and education (Cho & Couse, 2008). The early childhood education field can be viewed dimensionally as child care, early childhood education, and early childhood special education (Cho & Couse, 2008). While there are many efforts underway to integrate all of the systems and ensure that early childhood educators can effectively support all children regardless of their needs or the setting in which they are enrolled, additional complexities are evident.

Data from the 1989 Child Care Staffing Study (Whitebook et al., 1990) revealed that wages, turnover, and teacher education were quality indicators for child care settings. Almost 30 years later, these interrelated issues continue to be cited in the research. Compensation for child care teachers falls well below that of teachers in public education (Whitebook et al., 2018). Within the child care workforce, teachers working with children aged birth to 3 earn less than those working with children aged 3 to 5. According to the recent Early Childhood Workforce Index, wages for child care teachers with a high

school diploma or less averaged between $7.50 and $11.00 per hour, with the lowest wages being paid to individuals working with children ages birth to 3 years old (Whitebook et al., 2018). However, teachers with bachelor's degrees earn between $9.30 and $22.60 per hour; the broad range in wages has been attributed to the higher salaries earned by public school preschool teachers (Whitebook et al., 2014). Nationally, child care workers rank in the second-lowest percentile for annual wages across all occupations (Whitebook et al., 2016). In the study state, the average wage for a child care worker is $9.86 per hour and has not increased since 2015 (Whitebrook et al., 2018). Child care workers earn less than farm workers and those in the fast food industry (Whitebook et al., 2014).

Low wages have been linked to high attrition within the industry. When data from the 1989 Child Care Staffing Survey (Whitebook et al., 1990) was compared to NSECE data (IOM & NRC, 2015), researchers found that teacher turnover has been a significant concern over time. Totenhagen et al. (2016) reviewed 32 articles that examined issues with retention of the child care workforce. They identified multiple categories that impact retention, including wages and benefits, job satisfaction, other employment opportunities, education and professional development, demographics, and characteristics of the organization and job (Totenhagen et al., 2016). They found that income is directly related to turnover in that individuals with higher incomes tend to remain in their positions for more extended periods (Totenhagen et al., 2016).

While some child care workers leave the field altogether, it has also been documented that some move to higher paying child care centers rather than leaving the

industry (Totenhagen et al., 2016). The possibility of moving to a new position increases with education and experience. Child care teachers who earn college degrees frequently move to better paying positions within public school systems (Totenhagen et al., 2016; Whitebrook, Phillips, & Howes, 2014). Cho and Couse (2008) labeled such movement between child care and other settings as in-field mobility in which employees seek higher paying positions within the early childhood arena that prioritize their education, training, and years of experience. Totenhagen et al. (2016) concluded that increased education might be partially responsible for turnover in child care centers but might also lead to increased retention within the early childhood education field.

Teacher turnover can be examined from two perspectives: those who leave the field entirely, and those who move to new positions. Grant, Jeon, and Buettner (2019) analyzed data from the 2014 Survey of Early Childhood Educators and reviewed surveys from 1,129 center-based teachers. Their findings suggested a significant relationship between a person's intent to continue working in child care and their work conditions, personal motivation, and psychological wellbeing (Grant et al., 2019). Given the high cost of turnover, these findings are significant to the overall understanding of issues inherent to the child care industry.

Characteristics of the Early Childhood Education Workforce

In 2012, the IOM and NRC conducted the first nationally representative study of the early childhood education industry. Data from more than 10,000 questionnaires representing approximately 1 million center-based teachers and caregivers and 1 million paid and 2.7 million unpaid home-based child care providers were analyzed (National

Survey of Early Care & Education Project Team, 2013). In regards to center-based teachers, four types of programs employ early childhood teachers, including school-sponsored centers, Head Start, public pre-K, and other centers were classified (National Survey of Early Care & Education Project Team, 2013). Data showed that 59% of early childhood workers are employed in public or private, for- and non-profit child care settings (National Survey of Early Care & Education Project Team, 2013).

Demographic Make-Up of the Workforce

When considered within the context of birth to postsecondary educators, the workforce serving children birth to 5 is the most diverse (Douglass, Carter, Smith, & Killins, 2015). The center-based early childhood workforce is primarily female; current estimates indicate females make up 94% of those employed in the field (Child Care Aware, 2019; Whitebrook et al., 2018), a decrease from the 97% reported by the U.S. Department of Education in 2016 (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The updated statistics imply an increase in the number of males working in child care centers between 2016 and 2019.

There is a wide age range, with 28% aged 29 and below, 46% aged 30-49, and 26% aged 50 and above (Whitebook, McLean, & Austin, 2016). The field has a racial and ethnic profile of primarily white individuals; 65% are white, 17% are African American, 14% are Hispanic, and 5% are other racial or ethnic groups (Whitebook et al., 2018). Additionally, 22% of child care workers are foreign born (Child Care Aware, 2019). Of the women working in the child care industry, 52% are mothers (Child Care Aware, 2019).

The educational background of the early childhood workforce ranges from no formal education to bachelor's degrees or higher (Whitebook et al., 2016). Among center-based teaching staff, 35% have bachelor's degrees or higher, 17% have some college, 28% have an associate's degree, and 19% have a high school diploma or less (Whitebook et al., 2016). Additionally, there were educational differences between teachers working with children younger than age 3 when compared to those working with children age 3 to 5. Among the infant and toddler teachers, 28% had a high school diploma or less, whereas only 13% of teachers working with three to five-year olds had a high school diploma (IOM & NRC, 2015). The data support the contention of researchers that a significant portion of the workforce has minimal education (Cho & Couse, 2008; IOM & NRC, 2015; Whitebook, 2014).

Preparing Child Care Teachers

Research consistently suggests that early childhood professionals should have bachelor's degrees (Bowman et al., 2000; Phillips et al., 2016; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). In their seminal work, *Eager to Learn,* Bowman et al. (2000) recommended that early childhood teachers have bachelor's degrees that include early childhood specialized education and incorporate student teaching and field experience. There is significant evidence that the knowledge gained from higher education leads to positive and lasting impacts on young children. An emerging alternative perspective proposes that a bachelor's degree may not stand alone as a factor in improving quality and child outcomes (Ritblatt, Garrity, Longstreth, Hokoda, & Potter, 2013). Early et al. (2007) conducted a meta-analysis of studies that sought to predict classroom quality and child

outcomes based on the education of preschool teachers and found no significant association. The authors recommended a broad range of learning opportunities and supports for teachers aimed at teacher-child interactions rather than dictating bachelor's degrees (Early et al., 2007). Bowman (2011) cautioned against a bachelor's degree mandate given that some independent studies show no consistent connection between child outcomes and teacher education.

The evidence for requiring bachelor's degrees is inconclusive. Lin and Magnuson (2018) opted to explore if child care teacher training and education could predict classroom quality and kindergarten preparedness. In their study with 119 child care centers and 189 teachers, they found no direct correlation between classroom quality and teacher education. When compared to teachers with college degrees, those with no early childhood training had lower classroom quality. However, they also found no direct association between higher classroom quality and bachelor's degrees. Lin and Magnuson (2018) attribute their findings to a lack of consistency among degree programs; content and rigor are highly variable. They also suggested that programs with a supportive infrastructure exhibit higher overall quality because they may provide mentoring, ongoing professional development, and coaching (Lin & Magnuson, 2018). The study results also suggested that requiring bachelor's degrees for all teachers would not be sufficient to enhance children's kindergarten readiness (Lin & Magnuson, 2018).

The research on college attainment for early childhood educators is limited, especially concerning those who work the youngest children. It does not sufficiently reflect the teacher's perspectives on experiences in bachelor's degree programs or how

educational advancement has affected them personally and professionally (Huss-Keeler, 2019). For child care teachers, the path to a college degree is complicated by the low wages they earn, a lack of financial support, and family obligations (Huss-Keeler, 2019). Nationally, only 35% of center-based child care teachers have bachelor's degrees (Whitebrook et al., 2016).

A primary mitigating factor is the content of bachelor degree programs that offer limited coursework related to the birth to age 5 range (IOM & NRC, 2015; Ryan & Gibson, 2016). Huss-Kessler's (2019) study with 17 child care teachers who participated in a bachelor's degree program specific to children birth to age 5 yielded interesting data. The child care teachers included in the study reported high personal motivation for completing their degrees, including a desire to make family members proud and proving to themselves they could do it. Additionally, participants reported gaining new perspectives for their work, an increased understanding of child development, and higher confidence levels (Huss-Kessler, 2019). The data gathered from such studies support policymakers, researchers, and educators in exploring what supports and training early childhood educators need to achieve successful child outcomes (Ritblatt et al., 2013).

Core Competencies

Early childhood education is defined as the period from birth to age 8 (Gomez et al., 2015) however, bachelor's degree programs tend to focus primarily on the period from kindergarten to third grade with little coursework related to the birth to 5 age group (Ryan & Gibson, 2016; Whitebook & Ryan, 2011). Based on the premise that one must understand previous and future development, NAEYC (2009) advocated for specialized

knowledge and skills to work with infants/toddlers, preschoolers, or early elementary grades. Because the young developing child learns through a combination of play and daily routines, it is difficult to identify the degree of knowledge and skill necessary to provide care and education (Whitebook, 2014). Researchers agree that early childhood teachers need a foundational understanding of the science of child development (IOM & NRC, 2015; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Researchers also emphasize the importance of developing quality relationships with children (Bowman et al., 2000; IOM & NRC, 2015) including a focus on environmental and biological factors that affect children's behavior (IOM & NRC, 2015; Snell, Forston, Stanton-Chapman, & Walker, 2013). Multiple organizations have outlined competencies for working with children aged birth to 5 for more than four decades. However, no single set of core competencies for the child care workforce exists.

Recommendations from IOM and NRC

Based upon the current understanding of the science of child development, knowledge of educational practices, and the field of early childhood, the IOM and NRC (2015) outlined foundational and specialized core knowledge in *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth through Age 8.* The authors described foundational expertise that all adults working with young children should possess. Because there are many ways to interact with children, foundational knowledge applies to individuals who function as counselors, case managers, occupational and physical therapists, and teachers. Specialized knowledge relates to the skills needed by teachers who work directly with young children that support children's development and learning (IOM & NRC, 2015).

Specialized knowledge can be thought of as specific teaching methods and age-related developmental milestones.

The IOM & NRC recommended that all individuals working with young children, directly and indirectly, need to have basic knowledge of child development, the importance of lasting relationships, and factors that impact children's behavior (IOM & NRC, 2015). Furthermore, foundational knowledge should be used to develop skills that enable teachers to maintain effective relationships with children based on their age, developmental level, family engagement, and cultural diversity. Children's behavior must be understood as a factor of their social emotional development that will enable teachers to promote positive behavior and minimize behavioral challenges. Foundational knowledge helps teachers recognize the need for ongoing assessment and referral to support services for concerns about developmental delays or child abuse and neglect.

In addition to describing knowledge and competencies for the broad field of early childhood, the authors of *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth through Age 8* (IOM & NRC, 2015) identified more detailed knowledge and competencies for those who work directly with children such as child care teachers. A core knowledge base grounded in developmental science and cognitive, socioemotional, and physical domains of child development is the root of the recommended competencies. In addition, the authors outlined skills for practices to help children learn, working with diverse populations of children, developing and using partnerships, and continuously improving practice (IOM & NRC, 2015). The IOM & NRC (2015) suggested an urgent need for national consistency. The knowledge and skills needed for working with young children

are fundamental to each child's development, and while there is some alignment between states, there is more work to be done (IOM & NRC, 2015).

Ohio's Core Knowledge and Competencies

Ohio has developed core knowledge and competencies that indicate what early childhood professionals should know, understand, and be able to do to provide environments, experiences, and relationships that encourage the growth and development of all children (ODE, ODJFS, Ohio Department of Health [ODH], Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services [ODMHAS], Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities [ODDD], & OCCRRA, 2015). Ohio's Early Childhood Core Knowledge and Competencies (CKC) document, initially developed in 2006 and revised in 2015, was the first of a family of competency documents written to support the early childhood field. Additional documents include the Core Knowledge and Competencies for Program Administrators, Ohio's Afterschool Core Knowledge and Competencies, Ohio's Core Knowledge and Competencies for Early Childhood Mental Health Professionals, and Ohio's Core Knowledge and Competencies Field Guide: Guiding Young Children's Behavior by Supporting Social Emotional Development (Early Childhood Ohio, n.d.).

Ohio's CKC builds on the knowledge that, with families, the adults who work directly with children help to shape children's understanding of themselves, others, and their world (ODE et al., 2015). The CKC addresses six areas of specialized knowledge and skills necessary for quality early childhood practice including (a) child growth and development; (b) family and community relations; (c) health, safety, and nutrition; (d) child observation and assessment; (e) professionalism; and (f) learning environments and

experiences (ODE et al., 2015). Each content area contains a rationale, knowledge base, and specific competencies that identify the observable skills an early childhood professional should possess at varying levels of their career. The competencies are divided into three levels that signify the professional's advancing skills over time (ODE et al., 2015).

Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential

In the 1970s, the CDA credential was developed in response to dual challenges facing the field at the time. Developers recognized the need to improve the knowledge and skills of those working with young children and improve the quality of programs to positively impact child outcomes (Washington & King, 2017). Since 1975, when the first CDA was awarded, more than 370,000 early childhood teachers have earned credentials (Council for Professional Recognition, n.d.). Almost 50 years later, the early childhood field continues to grapple with these challenges (Washington & King, 2017).

The Council for Professional Recognition acknowledges the different skills and knowledge needed to work with children of different ages or settings by offering specializations for infant/toddler teachers, preschool teachers, family child care providers, and home visitors (Council for Professional Recognition, 2013). The Council for Professional Recognition unveiled an extensive revision in 2013. Titled CDA 2.0, the updated competencies incorporate current knowledge about child development and 21st century technology (Washington, 2013). CDA candidates are required to complete 120 hours of professional development in the following subject areas: (a) planning a safe and healthy learning environment, (b) advancing children's physical and intellectual

development, (c) supporting children's social and emotional development, (d) building productive relationships with families, (e) managing an effective program, (f) maintaining a commitment to professionalism, (g) observing and recording children's behavior, and (h) understanding the principles of child development and learning (Council for Professional Recognition, 2013). CDA candidates must also develop a professional portfolio following guidelines set forth by the Council for Professional Recognition, be observed in the classroom by a Professional Development Specialist, and complete a final exam (Council for Professional Recognition, 2013). The CDA credential is renewable every 3 years by completing an additional 45 hours of professional development or one 3-credit college course. An advantage of the CDA credential is its portability; it is accepted in all 50 states, many countries, and a wide variety of settings, including military child care and Head Start (Washington, 2013).

NAEYC's Standards for Professional Preparation Programs

NAEYC first published standards for degree-granting programs that have been revised several times in the intervening years (NAEYC, 2009). In the most recent iteration, NAEYC (2009) acknowledged that the standards are applicable beyond teacher preparation programs and suggest they are beneficial for all levels of early childhood education. The standards outline common expectations that identify what teachers of young children should know and be able to do. They include (a) promoting child development and learning; (b) building family and community relationships; (c) observing, documenting, and assessing to support young children and families; (d) using developmentally effective approaches to connect with children and families; (e) using

content knowledge to build meaningful curriculum; and (f) becoming a professional (NAEYC, 2009). Although the NAEYC standards (2009) are for degree-granting programs, they closely mirror the standards and functional areas set forth by the Council for Professional Recognition's CDA credential.

Zero to Three's Critical Competencies for Infant-Toddler Educators

The IOM & NRC (2015) report identified core knowledge for the early childhood workforce while acknowledging that there are specific considerations for working with infants and toddlers. From research, it is apparent that the experiences a child has in the first 3 years are critical to their future development and success (Bowman et al., 2000; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). There is a need to appropriately prepare the segment of the workforce that works with infants and toddlers (Lee, Shin, & Recchia, 2016). Dean, LeMoine, and Mayoral (2015) developed Critical Competencies for Infant-Toddler Educators for the Zero to Three organization that are aligned with the NAEYC standards for early childhood professional preparation and the CDA Credential competency standards.

The competencies are a direct response to the IOM and NRC's (2015) call for additional support for the infant-toddler teaching sector of the early childhood field (Dean et al., 2015). Critical competency areas, including supporting social emotional development, supporting cognitive development, and supporting language and literacy development, were identified (Dean et al., 2015). Additionally, 13 subareas focus on the vital knowledge and skills infant-toddler teachers should possess. The subareas focus on the importance of relationships, fostering self-identity, building meaningful curriculum,

promoting exploration, guiding behavior, and facilitating language development (Dean et al., 2015).

Quality Rating Improvement Systems (QRIS)

In the late 1990s, states began developing QRISs to improve quality and child outcomes in early childhood programs (Boller et al., 2015). Limardo, Sweeney, & Taylor (2016) indicated that 77% of the states, including Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia, have implemented a QRIS, and the additional states have QRISs in varying stages of implementation. Similar to restaurant and hotel ratings, QRISs typically evaluate administration, learning environments, and workforce development (Gomez et al., 2015). States have implemented their QRISs in various ways; some have mandated that specific types of early childhood education programs become rated while others have an entirely voluntary system (Child Care Aware of America, 2017). For example, Ohio's SUTQ program is required for child care centers and family child care providers who participate in subsidized child care and all public preschools; it is voluntary for child care centers and family child care providers that do not participate in subsidized child care programs (ODE & ODJFS, n.d.). Professional development plays a vital role in QRIS systems, where each level of rating outlines increased requirements for minimum teacher qualifications and ongoing professional development (Gomez et al., 2015). Every state has recognized the importance of professional development by including it in their QRIS (Gomez et al., 2015).

Because QRIS programs are relatively young, new research is just beginning to explore their effectiveness in improving early learning program quality. A recent study of

Ohio's SUTQ rating system explored its validity from multiple perspectives, including face, content, construct, procedural, and predictive validity (Heinemeier et al., 2017). Questionnaire findings showed that when asked to identify quality indicators, 58% of the programs signified that staff qualifications were important and 47% agreed that professional development was a relevant factor for high-quality child care (Heinemeier et al., 2017). Survey data showed that 34% of parents identified college education as an important component of quality. The authors noted that the low responses regarding staff education were interesting and might indicate a belief that higher education is not necessary for high-quality care and education (Heinemeier et al., 2017). These results support the contentions made by others that higher education may not be the only ingredient necessary for the provision of high-quality care and education (Bowman, 2011; Early et al., 2007; Gomez et al., 2015).

Conclusion

A review of the literature shows that the early childhood education field is made up of a diverse group of people who work in child care centers, public schools, and a variety of other programs. They differ in educational requirements and income levels, which set them apart from each other. Despite ongoing calls to increase education requirements, identify competencies, and implement quality improvement efforts, the field remains fragmented (Goffin, 2015).

This literature review included discussion of many issues related to improving quality and enhancing outcomes for young children. Decidedly absent from the cited research are the perspectives of child care teachers who are an essential source of

information; their voices are rarely evident in the research (Boyd, 2013; Gomez et al., 2015; Shdaimah et al., 2018; Shpancer et al., 2008; van Laere & Vandenbroeck, 2017). When the voices of child care teachers are considered, they indicate that they are not babysitters and are, in fact, instrumental in the education of young children (Boyd, 2013; Shpancer et al., 2008). Shpancer et al. (2008) analyzed questionnaire data to explore how child care teachers viewed their profession. Participant responses reflected the desire to be seen as educators who wish to be "acknowledged, regarded, addressed, and paid in accordance with their skills, commitment, and contribution" (Shpancer et al., 2008, p. 410).

While there is ample research regarding the need for an educated workforce, there is a lack of research focused specifically on the experiences of early-career teachers who have limited education. Boyd (2013) investigated how the push for professionalism, specifically increased training and professional development, affected the participants. Despite 66% of the participants having only a high school diploma, they frequently voiced they were teachers with learned skills rather than babysitters (Boyd, 2013).

Given the landscape of the early childhood education field, understanding the experiences and perceptions of child care teachers will aid in developing systems that enable them to become competent and skilled child care teachers. The purpose of this study was to explore how early-career child care teachers with no advanced education in child development experience training upon entering the child care workforce.

Implications

Sheridan et al. (2009) suggested that there is a need for research that goes beyond theory building to explore the processes that influence change and seek to understand how teachers are affected. Research can provide insight into how professional development and training leads to meaningful change in the knowledge and skills of teachers. This phenomenological study addressed a local problem focused on child care teachers who enter the workforce with no advanced child development education and how they experienced training at the outset of their careers. The results of this study could inform the development of a statewide preservice training model that could enhance the quality of child care. A preservice training model that addresses the identified needs of early-career child care teachers would benefit child care programs, the individuals they employ, and the children who are enrolled. The results of the study could also support the development of a curriculum for child care administrators in support of their efforts to build a cohesive, well-trained workforce. Alternatively, the study results could lead to policy recommendations that address workforce training requirements for entry-level child care teachers.

Summary

Child care is a public good, yet researchers have found that the industry has widely varying standards for teachers. Low wages, high turnover, and inconsistent regulation have led to an early childhood landscape that is fragmented (Goffin, 2015). While there has been a national call for child care teachers to have bachelor's degrees (Phillips et al., 2016), a high school diploma or less is the minimum qualification in 28

states (Child Care Aware, 2017; Whitebrook et al., 2018). The qualification to work in Ohio child care centers is a high school diploma or GED credential, and there is no requirement for training before working with young children (ODJFS, 2016a).

This section has highlighted the history of the early childhood education profession and noted the differences in educational requirements for child care teachers and public preschool teachers. Most notably, Ohio public preschool teachers are required to be college educated, whereas child care teachers are not. Ohio has implemented its SUTQ quality rating system and CKC but has not increased the educational qualifications for child care teachers. Furthermore, SUTQ is only required for programs that receive public funds. Private programs are not required to achieve a SUTQ rating. They are not held to the same higher level of teacher qualifications or professional development as SUTQ rated programs. The purpose of this study was to explore how early-career child care teachers with no advanced education in child development experience and training upon entering the child care workforce. Through one-on-one semistructured interviews, data was collected about how early-career child care teachers with no advanced education experience and perceive training upon entering the workforce.

In the following section the research design and details regarding participant selection are described. Information on how data was collected and the process used for data analysis is included. Additional discussion addresses details about informed consent, data storage, and ethical issues.

Section 2: The Methodology

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

Researchers implement quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods approaches to conduct research studies. They use the quantitative approach to test theories by measuring the relationship between an identified set of variables (Creswell, 2014). Quantitative research is useful for measuring trends, percentages, or behaviors but does not answer questions of why individuals think or act in particular ways (Goertzen, 2017). Conversely, qualitative researchers are "interested in how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). Their focus is on seeking the in-depth meanings people attribute to their experiences (Barnham, 2015). When researchers combine qualitative and quantitative data, their studies are identified as mixed methods research. Researchers select this design because they believe that combining statistical data with narrative accounts will provide a deeper understanding of issues than either design could do alone (Creswell, 2014).

The design for this doctoral study was a qualitative approach to explore how early-career child care teachers without advanced education experience training as they enter the workforce. I selected the qualitative method because I hoped to generate detailed accounts of individual training experiences that could be compared and contrasted to identify common experiences, appropriate training topics, and methods of instruction for child care teachers who enter the field without the benefit of advanced education.

Justifying a Phenomenological Approach

Qualitative researchers can select from a variety of methods such as grounded theory, case study, ethnography, phenomenology, program evaluation, and narrative inquiry (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010; Merriam, 2009). Researchers select the method that most appropriately addresses the research problem and question they have identified. The researcher uses grounded theory approaches to develop theories that do not currently exist to address a research problem (Creswell, 2012, 2014). Developing new theories was not the intent of this study. I conducted this study to gain a deep understanding of how early-career child care teachers experience training upon entry into the workforce. Ideally, an understanding of these issues provides industry leaders with information that may enable them to better support this particular population of child care teachers.

Case studies explore phenomena in their contextual settings and seek to understand a particular concern or issue (Lodico et al., 2010; Yin, 2014). A case study is particularly useful when a specific feature is being examined, and the results of the research are then applied to other similar contexts. The case study design could be applied to this research study. However, to better support child care teachers in their work, a more in-depth exploration of their training experiences ensures their voices are evident in the literature regarding advancing the early childhood profession.

Ethnography places the research emphasis on understanding cultural phenomena such as customs or norms of a particular group (Merriam, 2009). The ethnographer immerses themself in the subject's lives and shares experiences and rituals for an

extended period to study group interactions (Creswell, 2012). Child care teachers come from many different backgrounds and have a variety of reasons for their career choice. Child care centers are equally as diverse, and each one approaches the training of new employees differently based on their philosophy, needs, and licensing requirements. Because child care centers are vastly different from each other, ethnography was not an ideal research method for this study.

Lodico et al. (2010) described narrative inquiry as a process of capturing information from a participant and retelling it as a story in chronological order. Creswell (2012) offered that “narrative research designs are qualitative procedures in which researchers describe the lives of individuals, collect and tell stories about these individuals' lives, and write narratives about their experiences" (p. 22). To offer insight into how child care teachers experience training, input from multiple teachers was necessary. The story of one individual's experiences is not sufficient enough to advance the literature related to child care teachers and their training.

Phenomenology was the design selected for this study because of its focus on studying the events and experiences individuals or groups have in their lives. The goal of phenomenological research is to understand individuals in the context of their everyday lives and experiences rather than to develop a theory (Vagle, 2018). Vagle (2018) contended that the researcher studies the lived experiences of humans to investigate how a phenomenon manifests itself. Phenomenological studies explore the collective experiences of multiple individuals to gain an in-depth understanding of a central phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The phenomenological approach is insightful and

incorporates detailed experiential descriptions that allow readers to "have a new appreciation of the complexities and nuances of the phenomenon" (Sohn, Greenberg, Thomas, & Pollio, 2017, p. 141).

The focus of this phenomenological study was to understand how individuals who have no advanced education experience training when they begin working in child care environments. Researchers have consistently indicated that there is a knowledge base associated with caring for and educating young children. When individuals enter the field of child care with no advanced education, they need to build this knowledge base. How this occurs varies widely depending upon the child care facility and the regulations to which they must adhere. A phenomenological study that addresses the training experiences of child care teachers gives voice to their perceptions and provides meaningful insight that may expand on what is understood about the needs of this population of child care teachers and how they can be supported within the context of training. Approaching these issues from the phenomenological tradition enabled me to focus on the specific experiences child care teachers have and how they feel about and perceive those experiences.

Justifying the Interpretative Phenomenological Approach

An interpretative phenomenological approach (IPA) was used to develop a transparent account of how child care teachers experienced training when they entered the workforce. IPA is an approach used to conduct a detailed exploration of participants' lived experiences and how they make sense of those experiences (Smith, 2004). IPA researchers are interested in how a particular phenomenon was experienced, what those

experiences mean to participants, and how participants make sense of their experiences (Smith, 2011). It requires the researcher to detail first-person accounts from participants that give voice to their experiences (Larkin & Thompson, 2012). Phenomenology is useful to the child care field because it captures the stories of the participants as they share concrete, first-person accounts of their entry into the child care workforce. The voices of those working in the field are often absent from research and ongoing debates about professionalizing the industry (Boyd, 2013; Gomez et al., 2015; Shdaimah et al., 2018; Shpancer et al., 2008; van Laere & Vandenbroeck, 2017). Larkin, Shaw, and Flowers (2018) lamented that the perspectives of a particular group are frequently omitted or misrepresented in qualitative research. Working directly with child care teachers aided in illuminating their experiences within the context of the research questions. The results of this study help readers to make sense of the participants' experiences with training and offer additional perspectives that contribute to ongoing national discussions about the qualifications and training of those entering the child care field with limited education.

The goal of the project study was to explore early-career child care teachers' experiences by addressing the following: (a) how child care teachers without advanced education in child development describe their training experiences upon entry into the workforce and (b) how early-career child care teachers describe their long-term training needs. Given that a large proportion of child care teachers enter the workforce with no advanced education in child development, the objective was to understand how training supports the development of the skills necessary to provide quality care and education to

young children. Semistructured interviews and in-depth textual analysis provided insight into early-career child care teachers' perceptions regarding training received, what was missing from their training experiences, and what they perceived child care teachers' training needs to be.

Participants

Criteria for Participant Selection

Purposive sampling was critical to this particular study because it was important for the study participants to meet specific criteria (see Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Homogenous sampling was used to ensure participants had defining characteristics identified for the study. Failing to consider important characteristics would have defeated the purpose of the study. Participants for this study worked in ODJFS licensed child care centers, had no advanced education beyond a high school diploma or GED credential, and less than 2 years of employment. Length of employment was an essential facet of the study because the experiences teachers have upon beginning work are more readily recalled than those of a teacher who has worked for many years.

Qualitative samples generally include small numbers of participants to generate in-depth descriptions (Lodico et al., 2010). Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) posited that the study should dictate the number of participants and suggested a range of six to eight participants is sufficient for interpretative phenomenological research. Larkin et al. (2009) suggested that small sample sizes are necessary because of the time it takes to conduct a detailed analysis of each participants' transcript. IPA emphasizes small sample sizes and quality over quantity to produce detailed, reflective accounts of each

participant's experiences (Larkin et al., 2009; Larkin & Thompson, 2012; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). In this study, a sample size of eight participants offered a window into the experiences they had at the outset of their child care careers. The small sample size enabled the exploration of similarities and differences between participants (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

Procedures for Gaining Access to Participants

Eight participants were recruited from ODJFS licensed child care centers that were not SUTQ rated in central Ohio. Prior to the interviews, I had no direct or indirect contact with the child care teachers who chose to participate. However, because of my long-standing role as a statewide trainer, I was familiar with the participants' supervising administrators. To ensure that I did not have previous relationships with the participants, I recruited teachers with less than 24 months of experience because I have not provided training to programs in more than 30 months.

I accessed a list of early childhood programs in one Central Ohio county on the ODJFS website and 93 facilities were initially identified. Head Start programs were excluded from the study because federal mandates require staff to have higher educational levels than child care centers. Programs that are licensed by the ODE were also eliminated because teachers are required to have a teaching license that can only be achieved after completing an associate's or bachelor's degree. Preschool-only sites were eliminated because they are part time preschool programs that do not provide child care services. Programs that accept only school-age children were removed from the potential list of study sites because they typically have a small workforce. Lastly, programs that

operate only in the summer months were excluded. Twenty-six remaining child care centers met the primary criteria of ODJFS licensure (see Appendix B). While this is a large number of child care centers compared to the small number of participants, I anticipated that some of the programs would have employees who did not meet the research criteria. It was not possible to know this information before contacting each child care center.

"Gatekeeper" is a term used for those who provide support and services that are valuable to researchers, and they ease entrance to study sites and access to participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). For this study, the child care center administrators were the gatekeepers and aided in locating participants who met the study criteria. To gain access to participants, I contacted the child care administrators for the identified child care centers. I introduced myself, briefly explained the purpose of the call, and asked if they employed teachers who have only a high school diploma or GED credential. If they did not, I thanked them for their time and moved to the next child care center on the list. If they did have employees meeting the primary criteria, I asked if they had any employees who had been employed for less than 24 months and moved to the next center if they did not (see Appendix C). Seven administrators provided me with contact information for eligible employees. I initially contacted 19 identified individuals by telephone using a script that enabled me to begin building rapport (Appendix D). I briefly described the research study and determined whether they were interested in participating. Eight individuals agreed to participate, and we scheduled a time to meet at a local library. The library provided a neutral location and private rooms to conduct each interview.

The Interview Process

Phenomenological research aims to gain deep insight from the perspective of individuals who describe, in detail, their experiences during a specific period of their lives (Clark, 2000). Establishing a comfortable working relationship with participants is essential to the research process. The researcher must work to put the interviewee at ease by helping them understand why their knowledge and experiences are essential to the study. Ryan and Dundon (2008) cited five stages of developing rapport with participants, including (a) opening the interview, (b) searching for common ground, (c) establishing empathy, (d) embedding rapport, and (e) closing the interview. At the outset of an interview, the participant may be uncertain of their role or cautious about the relationship. I began each interview with an introduction and a brief description of my background as a preschool teacher, child care administrator, and a statewide trainer. I then explained informed consent and provided them with the consent form (Appendix E). The participants were provided time to review the form, ask questions, and sign that they consented to the interview. I then explained the interview process and offered each participant an opportunity to ask questions or share concerns they had. I explained that their unique experiences and insights were the basis of the study. I ensured that each participant knew that they would not be named in the final research study and understood their right to withdraw from the study at any time.

The purpose of an interview is to facilitate a discussion in which the interviewee has an opportunity to tell their story as it relates to a particular experience (Smith et al., 2009). Polkinghorne (2005) suggested that a one-time interview does not typically give

the time to gather the "full and rich descriptions necessary for worthwhile findings" (p. 142). Working with each participant over two interviews allowed time for a relationship to unfold naturally and provided participants time to reflect on their experiences between interviews (Polkinghorne, 2005). Additionally, the time between interviews was used to listen to each interview and record my thoughts and reactions in a reflective journal. This process helped me to prepare for a more in-depth second interview. Each participant was interviewed twice for approximately 60-90 minutes each time.

Protection of Participants' Rights

Ethical research is grounded in informed consent, protects all participants, and makes a positive contribution to society (Naughton, Rolfe, & Siraj-Blatchford, 2010). To ensure the procedures aligned with the accepted protocol for the protection of participants and Walden University's Institutional Review Board's (IRB) policies, I completed an online course, *Protecting Human Research Rights* (Appendix F). The National Institutes of Health (NIH) stressed the importance of understanding the rights of protected participants. Issues around protected classes were addressed in the IRB application. Researchers are also required to consider the potential risks inherent in their studies, including physical, psychological, or social harm (Creswell, 2014). These potential risks were also identified in the IRB application. IRB approval was received prior to conducting any interviews.

Consent forms were provided to each participant to explain the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to confidentiality (Lodico et al., 2010; Creswell, 2014). Each participant who chose to participate in the study

signed the consent form before engaging in the first interview. Confidentiality is an essential consideration in all research, and processes to protect the participants must be developed by the researcher (Creswell, 2014). In actuality, it is impossible to promise complete confidentiality as it implies that no one will see interviewee responses (Smith et al., 2009). Smith et al. (2009) posited that researchers instead take measures to protect the anonymity of their interviewees. For example, because I planned to conduct one-on-one interviews, I had access to their names and places of employment. I needed to take steps to ensure anonymity when reporting data. I accomplished this by ensuring that I was the only individual with access to interview transcripts, and I assigned each participant a fictitious name in the final study report.

Data Collection

Semistructured Interviews

IPA employs semistructured interviews, which allow for some flexibility during the interview process (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2015). The process requires the development of initial research questions, which can be modified based upon participant responses, thereby enabling the participant to tell their own story (Smith et al., 2009). Even with flexibility in mind, it is crucial to develop an interview protocol to guide the discussion because it will lead to depth in the responses and analysis. According to Smith and Osborn (2015), attention given to the interview questions allows the researcher to consider any challenges that might arise and concentrate on what the participant is saying. The protocol should include several questions for all participants and additional probative questions that are asked based on participant responses

(Merriam, 2009). A self-developed interview protocol was created (see Figure 1), and intentionally subtle prompting questions were crafted to encourage participants to share more deeply (Smith & Osborn, 2015).

Larkin and Thompson (2012) and Vagle (2018) suggested interviewing each participant more than once. Two 60-90 minute interviews allowed participant responses to be clarified and supported detailed descriptions of the participants' experiences. The first interview focused on developing rapport with each participant. It included questions about their educational experiences, their families, and initial entry into the child care field. The purpose of the second interview was to gain insight regarding the training that child care teachers received when they began working in the field by exploring their training experiences. All participants were in their first 2 years of work in a child care setting, which enabled them to reflect upon and describe training they felt would have been beneficial to receive when they began working with young children. The interviews were recorded because taking comprehensive notes during the interview leads a researcher to become less open or responsive to what the participant is saying (Vagle, 2018).

Processes for Managing Data

Self-reflection enables a researcher to minimize the influence of previous experience with a phenomenon. Gearing (2004) described phenomenological reduction as the process in which "a researcher suspends or holds in abeyance his or her presuppositions, biases, assumptions, theories, or previous experiences to see and describe the phenomenon" (p. 1430). The literature often uses phenomenological

reduction, bracketing, and epoche synonymously to describe how a researcher removes or sets aside their biases (Gearing, 2004). Objectivity is the goal, and the researcher must work to uncover what is universally accepted and can only do this if they assume a position of not knowing (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). While it is not possible to shut out one's experiences and perceptions, Eddles-Hirsch (2015) suggested that a researcher can be open to participants' descriptions by intentionally setting aside "any preconceived knowledge or everyday beliefs he or she regards might be used to explain the phenomena being investigated" (p. 252). To acknowledge my own experiences and perceptions throughout the research process, I maintained a reflective journal to process my impressions and monitor for the influence of biases or subjectivity (Lodico et al., 2010). The reflexive journals were used throughout data collection and analysis to record initial interpretations of possible themes that were arising from the interviews. The journals and interview data guided the final literature review.

Each interview was manually transcribed, which allowed me to remain close to the data, notice nuances, and identify emerging themes. I used HyperResearch to organize the data for coding. Transcriptions were organized by date and saved electronically and physically in date-ordered folders. All data and information were stored electronically on a password protected laptop computer, and paper records were stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home office. All records related to this research will be destroyed after 5 years.

Data Collection Timeline

Maintaining a data collection timeline is critical to the data analysis process. Once IRB approval was received, data collection took approximately 14 weeks. During that time, I worked with gatekeepers to access participants, conducted one-on-one interviews, and began transcribing each interview. The entire transcription process took an additional three months. Table 1 explains the data collection timeline.

Table 1

Data collection timeline

Step	Activity	Timeframe
1	Contacted child care center administrators; secured Letter of Cooperation	Week 1
2	Sent email invitation to child care teachers	Week 2
3	Conducted interview1	Weeks 4-8
5	Transcribed data	Weeks 5-9
6	Conducted interview 2	Weeks 10-14

Role of the Researcher

It is crucial to develop relationships with the study participants during the interview process. The goal of the qualitative researcher is to elicit detailed descriptions of each participant's experiences as they related to the original research questions (Smith et al., 2009). Phenomenological research is highly personal, as the researcher guides the

participant to share their lived experiences (Vagle, 2018). As the researcher, I put participants at ease by sharing my background in child care as a former preschool teacher, administrator, and statewide trainer. Participants are often nervous at the outset of the interview, and knowing I had been a child care teacher seemed to put them at ease. As trust developed, each participant became increasingly willing to share intimate details about their experiences (Smith et al., 2009).

Data Analysis Procedures

Reliable data analysis relies on strong data collection. Conducting IPA is an iterative process that involves a case-by-case analysis before seeking patterns across the cases (Smith et al., 2009). Larkin and Thompson (2012) suggested beginning the analysis by free-coding, which requires researchers to record their emotions, responses, preconceptions, and initial ideas about themes. The process of reading the transcripts and listening to the recordings multiple times, combined with notetaking, allows the researcher to become immersed in the data. (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Maintaining a reflective journal throughout data collection and analysis is recommended and is a process in which the researcher can record their thoughts, feelings, and perceptions to prevent them from unduly influencing interpretations of the data (Lodico et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2009; Vagle, 2018). This process should continue throughout the analysis phase of the study and is an essential step in managing researcher bias.

Free-coding is followed by a line-by-line analysis of the individual interview transcripts to identify emergent themes in the data (Larkin & Thompson, 2012). Managing the vast amount of data manually is time-intensive. HyperResearch was

selected as a tool for data analysis because it is user-friendly and supported the coding process. Using HyperResearch simplified the process of identifying categories and themes. Combining the process of free-coding and HyperResearch allowed the detailed descriptions inherent to phenomenological research to emerge. The goal of this process was to seek out convergent and divergent experiences and commonalities and differences among the participants that could then be interpreted (see Larkin & Thompson, 2012). The initial codes and themes remained flexible to allow common themes to become evident in later analysis of all the transcripts (see Larkin & Thompson, 2012; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Vagle, 2018). Following individual transcript analysis and identifying themes across all of the participants allowed patterns within the data to emerge.

Accuracy and Credibility

Accuracy and integrity are of the utmost importance throughout the research process, especially in the analysis and reporting of study results (Lodico et al., 2010). While quantitative studies are concerned with rigor and validity, qualitative research relies on credibility and trustworthiness. (Cope, 2014). I maintained credibility by consistently examining my perceptions and feelings throughout the analysis phase of the project study (see Lodico et al., 2010). Throughout the interviews, probing questions helped to clarify what participants were sharing to ensure their responses were clearly understood. On several occasions, participants asked questions that allowed meaningful discussions to occur.

Researchers work to ensure that their biases do not influence the results. The process is called confirmability and is demonstrated by fully describing how conclusions

were reached and providing participant quotes that highlight each emergent theme (Cope, 2014). Qualitative researchers do not expect their research to be widely generalizable, but they do work towards transferability (Cope, 2014; Lodico et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2009). Transferability requires the researcher to analyze links between their own experiences, existing literature, and their data analysis (Smith et al., 2009). In addition to paying close attention to establishing accuracy in the research results, a peer reviewer who works in the child care industry reviewed the analysis. Lodico et al. (2010) suggested that peer review should be conducted by someone familiar with the industry to identify biases or conflicts in the research analysis (Lodico et al., 2010). Throughout the process of analyzing the data, close attention to each of these aspects of accuracy ensured a high-quality and relevant research study.

Limitations

By its nature, qualitative research employs smaller samples than quantitative research, resulting in experiential narratives regarding a research topic (Merriam, 2009). Only eight participants from one region of the state were interviewed. It is possible that child care teachers from other areas of the state would have different perspectives and experiences. It is possible that some areas of the state have grant funding to support child care programs and their employees. Localized initiatives may provide additional resources or training to child care teachers which would result in opportunities that are not available to the individuals interviewed for this study.

The original research criteria included interviewing participants with between six and twelve months of experience. It quickly became evident that this was a limiting

criterion; the scope was broadened to include participants who had been employed in child care centers for up to 2 years. It was a beneficial adaptation because it enabled greater depth in the exploration of the similarities and differences between the participant's experiences.

As described, there are many interrelated concerns in the child care field. This study is limited in scope, and it is not possible to study the overlapping issues of wages, attrition, or gender-related topics. Future studies could explore these related issues with much more extensive samples that would contribute to the literature and aid in shaping the future of the child care industry.

Procedures for Data Analysis

The child care industry has no federal oversight leading to a lack of consensus about the knowledge individuals should have to work with our youngest children. To better understand this issue from the perspective of the workforce, two research questions were posed (a) RQ1: How do child care teachers without advanced education in child development describe their training experiences upon entry into the workforce?; and (b) RQ2: How do early-career child care teachers describe their long-term training needs? The following section includes the data collection methods, analysis processes, and overall findings. Fictitious names were assigned to all of the participants to protect their identities.

The Participants

The eight study participants were White females ranging in age from 19 to 38. The women who participated in this study live in rural farming communities within an

hour of a major metropolitan center. The child care programs they work in serve between 50 and 80 infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-agers daily. Three of the women worked in the same child care center they attended as young children. They felt this was an advantage because they had a better idea of what to expect when they began working. The remaining five women did not attend child care as children, so they had no context when they began working. Of the five, three shared that they did not know what to expect when they applied for jobs in local child care centers.

I uncovered similarities and differences among this group of women that helped me to understand them. Two participants were raised in blended families with shared parenting situations that required them to move between two households for most of their childhood years. Two others were raised by single mothers and were the oldest of multiple siblings. Both described having to take on parenting roles at a young age. A significant commonality was the lack of college completion by their parents. Only one participant had two parents with college degrees. These factors may have played a role in the participants' lack of college experience.

Several of these young teachers shared that they began college but did not finish. One participant described completing a year of college in pursuit of an uninteresting career field. She shared that she was unmotivated to attend classes and do the work necessary because she "did not know what she wanted to do with her life." Although I did not ask, I wonder if this young teacher participated in any college or career preparation workshops or opportunities while in high school.

Four of the participants explained that their parents had encouraged them to attend college but provided little direction to support the achievement of a college degree. Perhaps this was because the parents did not have college experience and were ill-equipped to provide the direction some of these women needed. When asked if college was something they would consider at this point in their lives, three participants indicated that they had thought about it but were still unsure of what degree to pursue or where they would get the money to pay for school. The remaining participants indicated that college was not something they were interested in at this point in their lives.

With one exception, the participants shared that their formative school experiences were mostly positive. They felt comfortable in their schools and did not struggle with any particular subject. Seven of the participants explained that they completed school with many of the same peers they had in kindergarten. One participant described a negative situation with an authoritarian teacher in the second grade. She portrayed the teacher as "uncaring and unwilling to help the students to be successful." This participant explained that the negative experiences she had in the classroom left a distaste for school that made her unwilling to pursue higher education after graduation. Instead, she was just glad to graduate and "get out of there."

Three of the women were recent high school graduates for whom this was a first full-time job. Three women were young mothers who chose to work in child care centers because they could receive discounted child care while contributing to their family income. Two participants accepted child care jobs because they were available when they were searching for work. The oldest individual was an outlier. She described being burnt

out from a long-term position in the medical insurance industry and had a desire to try something new. She described feeling "privileged" that she was able to take her 10-year old child to work with her at no cost.

Semistructured Interviews

Eight participants who possessed high school diplomas and met the study criteria of working in a licensed child care center for less than 2 years participated in semistructured interviews. A self-developed interview protocol provided the questions for the interviews (see Figure 1). Each participant completed two 60-90 minute interviews on separate occasions. Open-ended and probing questions elicited their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about their entry into child care employment, motivation for entering the child care workforce, and experiences with training. Questions addressed their experiences with learning to work in child care settings and the training they received. Each participant was encouraged to discuss their long-term training needs, views regarding how training could be implemented with early-career child care teachers, and what child care teachers should know when they begin working with young children. The interviews also addressed the participants' thoughts on whether a college degree was necessary for working in child care. Each interview was recorded and manually transcribed. Figure 1 includes the interview questions.

Interview Protocol

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What was your family like when you were growing up?
3. Describe your school experiences?
4. Did your parents go to college?
5. In what ways did your family members influence your decisions about college?
6. How do you feel about the decisions you have made and the choice not to go to college?
7. What role do you see a college education having in your future?

8. Who or what influenced you to pursue a job in a child care center?
9. Do you see child care as a long-term career choice?
10. What do your friends or family say about your decision to work in a child care center?
11. How has your decision to work in child care impacted you?

12. What made you feel qualified to work in the child care field?
13. What made you excited to work with children?
14. What made you nervous about working with children?
15. What expectations did you have when you were hired?
16. How is the experience you are having different from the expectations you had?
17. What gives you a sense of satisfaction with your job?
18. What is your biggest challenge in working with young children?

19. Tell me about how you learned to do your job.
20. Describe your first days and weeks in your job.
21. In what ways did you rely upon your coworkers to help you learn to work with children?
22. What are your responsibilities?
23. At what point did you begin to feel confident in your role as a child care teacher?
24. Can you describe times when you did not feel confident?

25. Tell me about any online training you were required to complete when you were first hired.

26. What do you remember about the online training you took?
27. In what ways did the format of the online training you received meet/not meet your needs as a new child care teacher?
28. How has the training you received helped you to perform your job responsibilities?
29. What knowledge or education should a person possess to work with young children?
30. Is college education necessary to work in this profession? Why/Why not?
31. What would you have liked to know before working with children?
32. Now that you have some experience, describe some things you would like to know or understand better and why they are important to you.
33. How have your training needs changed since you began working here?
34. What are your thoughts about your ongoing professional growth?

Figure 1. Interview protocol.

Data Analysis Process

The process of analyzing qualitative data is time-intensive and extensive (Alase, 2017). IPA is an iterative process that requires the researcher to pay close attention to the nuances in participant responses while working to describe their lived experiences (Alase 2017; Smith et al., 2009). Initially, I listened to and manually transcribed each interview and documented keywords or repetitious phrases. This form of free coding enabled me to begin recognizing commonalities among participant responses and led to a long list of initial codes.

HyperResearch is a tool designed to help researchers analyze data. It was selected because it is user-friendly and offers multiple strategies for analysis. All of the transcripts were loaded into HyperResearch, allowing the initial codes to be reduced to a manageable list. A frequency report generated in HyperResearch identified duplicative

codes that were revised. An additional review of the transcripts allowed continued narrowing of the responses and code revision. This multistep process resulted in the identification of categories and themes related to the experiences participants described regarding workforce entry and training.

Development of Patterns, Relationships, and Themes

The goal of phenomenological research is to examine how individuals explore, describe, and make sense of their life experiences (Smith et al., 2009) Specifically, IPA is an approach that values and honors the experiences participants choose to explore during the interview process (Alase, 2017). The coding process revealed several categories and themes related to the research questions, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Categories and Themes

Research questions	Categories	Themes
Research Question 1: How do child care teachers without advanced education in child development describe their training experiences upon entry into the workforce?	Category 1: Child care is an unintentional career choice	Themes associated with Category 1: Life experiences are perceived to be enough
		Expectations for child care work are wide-ranging
	Category 2: Gaining proficiency in working with young children is a multi-faceted process	Themes associated with Category 2: Observation is essential to developing confidence
		Current training requirements are ineffective
		Engagement with others is crucial
		A community of learners would be valuable
Research Question 2: How do early-career child care teachers describe their long-term training needs?	Category 3: I wish I had known	Themes associated with Category 3: None
	Category 4: Learning to work with young children is complex	Themes associated with Category 4: Essential knowledge is broad
		Teachers value life-long learning
		Higher education is not necessary

Data Analysis Findings

Because a phenomenological design was used to complete the study, it was essential to ascertain the lived experiences of these young teachers as they began their careers. Two primary research questions were developed and provided the basis for this study. Additional probative questions allowed participants to expand on their thoughts and experiences related to each research question (see Figure 1).

Research Question 1

Questions 1-11 (see Figure 1) explored the participants' childhood and school experiences, family structures, and decisions they made about college. The goal was to have the teachers discuss their path to child care work. Questions 12-18 (see Figure 1) encouraged the participants to share their perceptions about entering the child care workforce, including their qualifications and expectations for working with young children. Questions 19-29 (see Figure 1) provided insight into how the participants learned to perform their responsibilities. When the data was analyzed, two categories related to this question emerged, including (a) child care is an unintentional career choice, and (b) gaining proficiency in working with young children is a multi-faceted process. Within each category, several themes were identified, including (a) life experiences are perceived to be enough, (b) expectations for child care work are wide-ranging, (c) observation is key to developing confidence, (d) current training requirements are ineffective, and (e) engagement with others is crucial.

Category 1: Child Care Is an Unintentional Career Choice

To understand the participants' experiences, I needed to know why they sought this line of work and what their expectations were once they were hired. Having this information helped me to understand their perspectives about training more clearly. Choosing to work in child care can be an intentional decision based upon a passion for children or a desire to help children learn and grow. For some, the choice is made because a local child care center is hiring, and the qualifications are relatively low. My experience as a child care administrator suggests that people often begin working relatively soon after the interviewing and hiring process, which could be an advantage for someone who needed a job and income quickly. None of the participants described entering the field as an intentional choice because they wanted to work with children long-term. I did not anticipate this; I expected some participants to describe this work as a lifelong career choice.

Five participants in this study explained that they just needed a job, but did not intend to continue working in child care long-term. Lack of pay was a concerning factor for several participants. When asked why child care would not be a final career choice, Sarah stated, "Money. You can't make a living off it. I mean, I like it, but you can't live off the income." Allison shared that she was considering going to college to "maybe actually get into schooling that has a little better pay, more benefits than here." Kim explained how family and friends discouraged her from pursuing child care employment because of the lack of pay or benefits. "Family and older adults said you can't really make a living off of that. They don't really offer benefits or a 401-K." The child care

industry has notoriously low wages; research indicates that many individuals working in the field live at or below poverty thresholds (Whitebrook et al., 2018). It appears that these women and their families recognize these issues; low pay may influence their lack of interest in remaining employed in child care.

Although the participants did not enter the child care workforce expecting to turn it into a career, Catherine and Jessica shared that they had found their life's passion for working with young children once they became employed. Jessica described knowing child care work was "definitely where I should be. It's early, but I feel like you just know. You get that feeling, your gut feeling. This is definitely where I'm supposed to be." They described that it was entirely "accidental" and that they did not know they would feel so strongly about their work when they first began working in child care centers.

Interestingly, neither individual brought up wages as a concern. These two individuals were the oldest of the participants, are in stable marriages, and have children. Both described that being able to receive free child care was a contributing factor when they were seeking employment. This is not surprising because child care is expensive and can cost as much as college tuition in some states. For Jessica, there was an additional benefit to bringing her children to work. She felt that it would be a positive experience for her children, one where they would have opportunities to socialize with other children. She explained that her children were with her all the time but, "kids need to be with other kids. My kids get to have more interaction with other kids, and that's a big positive." Being able to work without worrying about how to pay for child care is often a

reason people enter the child care workforce, and the opportunities for one's children was an added benefit for at least one of the study participants.

Life Experiences Are Perceived to Be Enough

Question 12 (see Figure 1) encouraged each individual to discuss what she believed qualified her to work in a child care setting. In asking this question, I sought to understand how their life experiences influenced their choice of work. Additionally, the participants' responses to this question demonstrated the knowledge and experiences that they bring to child care work despite having no advanced education in child development.

They identified being good with children, babysitting experience, and having children as their primary qualifications. Six of the teachers pinpointed that individuals working in child care must enjoy or be good with children. Catherine clarified this line of thinking, "first of all, you should have some kind of love of children and child care before you take the job." Jessica stated, "I've been with kids forever, I've babysat my younger siblings, I've babysat for other people. I just knew I was good with kids." Amy perceived that some experience with children had prepared her for working in a child care setting. "I've been babysitting since I was about ten, so I feel like because I've worked with different ages, I can do a pretty good job." In retrospect, I wonder if the responses would be different if I asked the same question to people with more longevity in the child care.

Three participants were mothers and described having children as a positive aspect that qualified them to work in child care. Catherine was clear in her rationale for why being a mother was an acceptable qualification. She explained that mothers already

have some of the same skills child care teachers are expected to gain, such as understanding feeding schedules, changing diapers, and "you also have a good understanding of families, what they go through as working parents." These women relied on their experiences as mothers to guide their interactions with families and children. Sarah stated that she initially thought it would be challenging to work with other people's children but found that "it makes it easier to care for another child. It's not hard to care for these other kids, and you want them to succeed." She explained that she comes to work thinking about how she wants her child to be treated, and she uses that as a basis to care for other peoples' children.

The qualifications these women identified seem to exemplify the perpetuated belief that child care work is primarily caregiving rather than a combination of caregiving and education. Indeed, Kim echoed these beliefs when she stated, "I feel like child care is more like a trade than it is a profession. Well, it is a profession, but it's different from office work." I followed up Kim's statement by asking if child care is different from teaching and she seemed to contradict her previous statement by stating:

> Yes and no. Because as a child care provider, you're more doing activities than sitting down and reading like here's some knowledge that I'm going to test you on. You might make slime and talk about chemical reactions and how this works or tornado bottles to talk about the weather.

While I did not effectively follow-up on these statements, the contradiction between her statement that child care is a trade and her comment about the differences between child care and school teachers is interesting to consider.

As I continued working to understand the paths that led these women to work in child care, I recognized that it was difficult for some participants to pinpoint what qualified them to work with young children. Emily explained that "honestly, I don't think a lot qualifies me. I mean, I'm good with kids, and I am trained in first aid and CPR." She expressed that she was motivated to apply for a child care job because "I know how to handle people, but the whole kid thing was just kind of like I knew that I was good with kids." Emily's response further established the idea that one can work in child care with limited experiences and education. She recognized that having first aid and CPR certifications would be to her advantage, but she also believed that being good with children would be enough.

Dawn also relied on liking children as motivation to work in child care. She recognized that safety training might be beneficial but shared her uncertainty that a local child care center would hire someone so young and inexperienced:

> I ended up applying there because I like working with kids. I didn't know if I would get anything because I didn't know what the requirements were, but I ended up getting the job. I always thought that I wasn't qualified enough and that I was too young to work there so I never applied before. I thought you would at least have to have CPR training or something like that or some sort of education. I felt like maybe that would be off-putting to them.

For three participants, this was their first job and is reflected in the uncertainty they expressed. A lack of work experience likely led to them feeling inadequately qualified to work in child care.

As a former child care administrator, I see commonalities between the participants and people I have interviewed or hired during my career. Individuals frequently applied for positions without having advanced education. My experience suggests that it is not uncommon for administrators to hire people with limited formal qualifications who express a love of children, who have babysitting experience, or who are mothers. Administrators gain this information through the interview process, and, along with understanding a person's expectations for child care work, it may be used to guide the training process for each new hire.

Expectations for Child Care Work Are Wide-Ranging

When a person seeks and gains employment, they typically have certain expectations for what the work will be like and what responsibilities they will have. Participants who were interviewed provided thoughts regarding their expectations, from not having any to being relatively specific. While some seemed to have a good idea of what their responsibilities would be, others described not knowing what to expect. Three of the women were recent high school graduates with no prior work experience, which may have influenced their ideas about what to expect once hired. Questions 15 and 16 (see Figure 1) specifically explored the expectations the study participants had once they were hired and elicited this response from one individual:

> I never was in daycare when I was a child, so I thought it was just going to be having kids be in a classroom maybe and playing with them, and probably teaching them a little bit, you know, their ABCs, numbers and stuff like that. I

> didn't have a whole lot of expectations because I didn't know what a child care facility would look like.

In this case, Dawn drew on impressions she had about engaging with children and child care work but was unsure of what to expect initially. I asked her a follow-up question about training aimed at understanding how she learned to work with young children. She explained that she took some online training that was required by her administrator, but her co-teacher helped teach classroom responsibilities. "I'm basically like an assistant, she is the main teacher, and I'm kind of just like her follower. I learned what I was supposed to be doing by following her and doing what she told me to do." Because Dawn had limited expectations, she relied on the classroom teacher to provide direction, and "once I knew what was expected of me about the actual job itself, it was easier for me." Dawn's classroom teacher was her primary source of training and provided her with direction that enabled her to become comfortable with her role.

Amy is a recent high school graduate and was the youngest participant at 18 years old. She began her experience in child care settings as a high school student. Service learning was a graduation requirement in her school, so she gained experience as a volunteer and was offered employment upon graduation. She completed 120 hours of volunteer work in the infant classroom and described having on-the-job training during her service learning that prepared her for employment as a toddler teacher. Amy framed her expectations by explaining that, "It's not like babysitting, it's like you're just making sure they're not hanging from the ceiling, and it's more, they're more independent than I

thought they would be." She went on to explain that working in a toddler classroom differs from babysitting because the children are the same age.

Kim expressed that she expected to work side-by-side with another teacher but quickly found that she would be working alone with the children:

> I thought that I would be in the room but not as actively with the kids as I am. I thought that there would be somebody else in the room with me with the kids, but it's just me.

Each individual explained what they perceived the work of child care to be like, and as evidenced, some of their expectations were different from their actual experiences. The expectations they had could be directly related to a lack of training or education regarding working with young children. Had they entered the workforce with some training, they might have had a clearer picture of what to expect. With no prior work experience, they had little to draw from and were unable to provide deep insight into their career choices.

Category 2: Gaining Proficiency in Working with Children Is a Multifaceted Process

Beginning a new job is often challenging and overwhelming. Questions 19-21 (see Figure 1) provided an opportunity for the interviewees to discuss how they learned to do their jobs. I wanted to understand what training they received in the first days and weeks that helped them to gain confidence in their responsibilities. Catherine shared that she began to learn about her new job during the interview process. She received a tour of the facility during the first interview and observed a classroom during the second interview. Interacting with the children and watching the teacher helped her understand

some of the responsibilities. Jessica received an employee handbook that she read several days after beginning work, “but nobody reviewed it with me. They would have if I had questions, but it’s pretty self-explanatory.” The primary way the participants learned their job responsibilities was by being placed directly into classrooms.

Without experience or knowledge, all of the participants were placed with children on their first day of employment with limited understanding of child development or the work that would be required. Each teacher described using observation as a learning tool. Allison and Sarah described being counted in the teacher-child ratio on their first day, which led them to feel like “they just threw me in there” and “it’s just trial and error.” They discussed how they were “figuring it out” by watching others, asking questions, and experiencing the work for themselves. As a former child care administrator, I recognize that it is not always feasible to provide new employees with the opportunity to observe without having classroom responsibilities. Sometimes, the new employee has to step in immediately to ensure that the program is meeting teacher-child ratios. For inexperienced child care workers, this can be challenging because they do not yet understand their roles and responsibilities.

The participants described informal training practices; none of them experienced formal training before being placed in the classroom, such as an orientation or introduction to child development. They described it as an “overwhelming experience” they were not prepared for. Emily expressed her experience, “I felt like that first initial week I was there that it was more of practice because I didn’t know what I was doing. I wasn’t really a help because I was trying to learn.” Sarah explained that she was

overwhelmed on her first day because she was counted in the teacher-child ratio. She indicated that being counted as a primary adult made it very difficult to watch and learn "because I didn't have time to pay attention to the teacher and help the children." Catherine described feeling "fearful and overwhelmed" because she did not know what she was supposed to be doing. "I asked a lot of questions before I did something because I knew that there was [sic] licensing things, and I didn't know what was okay and what wasn't." She went on to describe how the classroom teacher helped her to learn when she unintentionally violated the child care licensing rules:

> I was going to clean the lunch tables. So, I'm grabbing the rag and the bottle, and I set it down, and I'm wiping, and they're like, you can't do that. You have to hold onto the bottle because the kids are nearby. I didn't think about that. And something like that, they're going to tell you once, and you're not going to do it again.

In this example of on-the-job training, the classroom teacher was able to explain what Catherine should be doing by helping her to understand the child care licensing requirements. Catherine's experience demonstrates how working alongside a more experienced teacher helped her become familiar with the licensing regulations, learn the classroom routines, and interact with the children.

Feeling overwhelmed was especially the case for Allison when attempting to help children with toileting. For example, she felt that the children should know what to do without her support. She explained that it took several weeks of observation to recognize that she needed to talk to the children about the bathroom. She described using candy as a

strategy to encourage the children's toilet habits but quickly realized that she needed to give them more than M&Ms. Allison indicated that she learned more appropriate strategies for supporting children in the bathroom by observing her peers and how they interacted with the children. At the beginning of her employment, she did not feel comfortable asking questions because "I was afraid my questions would sound stupid." Allison explained that it took several days before she felt comfortable enough with her coworkers to ask questions.

Kim shared an overwhelming experience in which a child was injured when another child threw a rock at him on the playground. While the injury was minor, Kim described feeling ill-equipped to respond because she was not trained in first aid and did not know who would tell the child's parents about the incident. With support from a coworker, Kim was able to apply ice and a band aid to address the injury. She went on to describe another incident that happened on a field trip she attended. A child got his arm stuck when going down a slide, and she did not know how to help the child. She described not knowing how to check to if the child's arm was broken but that another teacher did. The child was not injured in this incident, but Kim explained that she felt like she would "feel safer doing the job if I had first aid and CPR training." These experiences led her to believe that first aid training should be a priority for all child care teachers.

An additional issue was a lack of engagement and interaction with the child care administrators. The administrator sets the tone for the child care facility and plays a crucial role in helping new employees navigate their initial experiences. However, for two of the teachers this was not the case. Dawn explained she met with the administrator

when she started but did not have interactions with her "when I was actually in the job." She described being told what classroom she would be working in and that the teachers in the room would help her:

> All of my training and conversation that I had with people were with people who worked downstairs. So, I feel like that was frustrating. It would have been nice to have more support from them [center administrators]. Like, you're new here, I know it's challenging. These are some rules, some general rules I can help you with.

Dawn expressed a need to have more interaction with her administrators, which would support her understanding of job responsibilities.

Jessica also experienced limited interaction with her administrator but did not see it from a negative perspective. "Of course, she told me what trainings I needed to do online and those kind of things but really, she kind of just handed me over to [the classroom teacher]." Jessica felt that the administrator and classroom teacher worked together to help her learn about center operations and her responsibilities.

The participants relied primarily on classroom teachers for support because of limited interactions with their administrators. Among these interviewees, there were no specific orientation strategies in which they were able to learn about the organizational aspects of the child care centers. The administrators encouraged questions but placed each new employee in a classroom with a more experienced teacher during their initial days and weeks.

Individuals with limited experience in any workforce need to be oriented to the work and environment. Jessica was the only individual who shared that she received an employee handbook that helped her to become familiar with the child care policies and procedures. In my experience as a child care administrator, I provided each new employee with an orientation that included a review of the employee handbook, discussion of job responsibilities, and described necessary child care licensing regulations on the first day of employment. I helped them integrate into their new role by discussing developmental expectations related to the group of children in their classroom. Additionally, I monitored them during the first week as they worked with a peer and was available to answer questions or address concerns. These strategies and ongoing support were classified as training for each teacher and contributed to a positive culture.

While these participants did not benefit from an administrator-led orientation, they did complete the online orientation required by the state licensing agency. However, the information the orientation includes does not address specific information about individual child care settings. It was clear that the participants felt their administrators were not as involved as they thought they would be. Even participants with more longevity were asking for more information, interaction, and support for an administrator.

Administrators play a primary role in helping new employees understand the nuances specific to their programs, develop the necessary competencies for child care work, and create a supportive work environment. Child care teachers need to work in supportive environments in which administrators, mentors, and peers aid them in acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary to provide high-quality care and education.

Training is both formal and informal. The study participants experienced informal training as they were introduced to the children and work responsibilities. While there is no requirement for child care teachers to have preservice training, these participants had to "figure it out" without the benefit of prior child development knowledge, classroom management skills, or first aid training. Their lack of knowledge influenced how they engaged with the children and managed situations and led them to feel overwhelmed in the early weeks of their employment. Formal training was a combination of observing their peers and online training experiences for these participants. My own experience as an administrator and statewide trainer suggests that becoming proficient in child care work is an ongoing process that has many facets, including working with an administrator, orientation, observing others, and attending training classes.

Observation Is Essential to Developing Confidence

Questions 19 and 20 (see Figure 1) led the participants to describe that observation was a critical component of their training that helped them to become confident in their ability to do their jobs. Humans are natural observers; from infancy to adulthood, this is how we learn to function in the world. It was no different for these eight teachers. They described holding back and watching to understand their roles and responsibilities. It was through observation that they became proficient in their interactions with children, learned the routines and schedules for their classrooms, and became comfortable guiding children's behavior. All eight participants explained that they worked with and observed other teachers before working independently with the children. While most of the teachers were able to observe without having responsibilities,

Allison and Sarah were included in the classroom ratios on their first day which means they were responsible for children while also observing a classroom teacher.

It was evident that the new teachers learned from their peers and that it was a beneficial way for them to understand their job responsibilities. They reflected on how they "stood back and watched" the classroom teachers during the first few days. Kim described this process by sharing that she "was in training with one of the other teachers, and I just kind of watched how she handled the class." She was able to see how the teacher intervened when the children were not behaving by observing her peer resolve situations. Through this process, she learned, "here's how to resolve that and when to put your foot down and have them go sit." In this case, Kim was learning about classroom management and how to interact with children. Because she was young and inexperienced, the process of observing a more experienced teacher enabled her to begin learning how to address children's behavior.

Jessica went into more detail about her experience and described how she began to complete some tasks before the classroom teachers did. She described herself as a "hands-on learner" who "really watched them for the first probably two days." She shared that she told her classroom teachers that she would do anything they asked her to do. It took several days for her to remember the daily schedule and routines. Jessica went on to reflect on how effective the teachers were in helping her to learn the job responsibilities. She shared that the classroom teachers were very good at explaining the reasons behind some responsibilities, which helped her to make sense of the expectations:

> She was very good. She explains things well and shows you everything. She actually shows you. Both of them did really well; they didn't really leave anything out. Of course, there were questions, mostly little things. They both did a good job, and that's the critical part. You have to have someone training you that knows what they're doing.

Jessica's experience highlights the value that observation has as a training tool. It is vital to have individuals who are confident in their teaching roles, understand children, and who can communicate effectively with new hires. In my experience, not all classroom teachers are adequately equipped to train others.

The participants described similar processes and shared that they mostly followed the classroom teacher for several days before stepping up and completing tasks for themselves. It was the opportunity to observe that helped them learn the daily tasks and begin to understand the expectations. Question 23 (see Figure 1) specifically addressed confidence; I asked each participant at what point they felt confident in their jobs. Because on-the-job training is a common practice in child care centers, I was interested in knowing at what point the participants felt like they had learned enough to fulfill their responsibilities effectively.

Jessica explained it took about a month before feeling confident as a child care teacher. The classroom teacher was absent, and Jessica had to manage the classroom. She shared that while it was "kind of nerve-wracking, I think that's when I realized that it's not a big deal, and I can do this. If she hadn't of been gone, I wouldn't have done it, and it went fine." While she described being nervous at first, by the end of the day, she

realized that she knew what to do and had a successful day with the children. She attributed this to the support she had from the lead teacher she been observing.

For Kim, confidence came after about two weeks when she was able to follow the daily schedule and routines with less prompting. Specifically, she described recognizing her confidence when she was able to remember the classroom schedule without referring to it throughout the day. She also described a situation in which she was unsure of what to do when a toilet overflowed. Ultimately, she asked a fellow teacher how to turn the water off and then mopped the floor. Kim explained that while she did not feel confident when the bathroom was flooding, she was able to address the problem appropriately, and that made her realize that she was able to "figure things out." The situation Kim experienced demonstrates that observing someone else cannot prepare a person for every situation. However, developing confidence enables a person to tackle momentary crises.

Initially, Dawn was not assigned to a classroom, so she felt "kind of insignificant for a while. I was just a floater. It was almost a year before I had that moment where I felt like I got this." Eventually, she was asked to step in for a coworker who as off for several weeks. When the coworker returned, Dawn's administrator asked if she would like to have a classroom of her own. She described that opportunity as, "a huge confidence booster for me. Being able to do my own things with the kids and have my own class, I realized I can handle a class by myself and be a teacher." My experience with child care teachers has taught me that individuals who work as floaters or assistants often feel the way Dawn described. However, they play an essential role in the success of a child care center. Beginning work in this manner helps young teachers learn their responsibilities at

a different pace. As they become more competent, administrators begin to recognize that they have more to offer. As an administrator, I often promoted my floaters to full-time positions as lead teachers when I realized they were more than capable of doing the work.

Catherine's experience was different from the others. She began working in a preschool classroom and did not have a positive relationship with the classroom teacher. She described working with the teacher as "stressful and unbearable." Catherine did not have child care experience when she was hired and believed that it negatively impacted her relationship with the classroom teacher. Catherine tried to share suggestions and ideas, but "I just got dismissed." She did not feel as if her ideas were valued and was "feeling down on things after the first week or two." She shared that she was even thinking about quitting at that time but decided to "stick it out. I can't just quit when there's some sign of trouble. I can't give up on it."

Because she stayed at the child care center, she was able to persevere and, ultimately, had the opportunity to become the lead teacher in an infant room. It was in the infant room that she began to recognize how much she loved working with children. "I love the work. I love working with children and nurturing them and helping them learn to grow. It's very exciting, milestones and all that. I didn't like working with that teacher but this has made a huge difference." It was in this classroom that she began to feel confident in herself and "I discovered something new about myself. I realized I'm kind of a leader. Normally, I'm a follower but here I am running a classroom. I've been told that I'm doing a good job." Before being placed in the infant classroom, Catherine was contemplating quitting her job because of the lack of respect she felt from the classroom

teacher. Catherine raised an important issue that does not seem to appear in the research. Sometimes good teachers leave the field because the classroom they are placed in is the wrong fit for them. Catherine may have left her job because of issues with a coworker but being placed in the infant classroom sparked her passion.

Observing other teachers was essential in supporting these individuals as they become confident in their ability to work with young children. Being able to work alongside experienced teachers enabled these individuals to learn about their roles, practice what they were learning, and gain confidence in their abilities. In my experience as an administrator, observational learning is a useful training tool that supports the acquisition of skills and confidence for early-career child care teachers.

Current Training Practices Are Ineffective

Understanding the perceptions these individuals had concerning their training was central to the study. Entry-level child care teachers in Ohio are required to complete two online training courses at the beginning of employment. Specifically, they must complete the ODJFS Child Care Center Orientation training for which they receive up to 6 hours of training credit. The course must be completed within 30 days of hire. Within 60 days of hire, new employees must complete a 1-hour child abuse recognition course that addresses mandated reporter requirements. In almost all employment situations, there is some amount of training involved. It is expected that there will be some pushback about having to take training, but most people recognize its necessity. The participants identified ways in which the current training requirements could better meet their needs,

and this led to the identification of two additional themes, including (a) engagement with others is crucial, and (b) community of learners would be valuable.

Questions 25-29 (see Figure 1) allowed participants to discuss their experiences with the required online training. It was apparent that some of them recognized why the training was necessary, but they also expressed issues with the transfer of learning. “I can understand why you need that initial information, but it doesn’t transfer all that well because you’re looking at a computer screen, and you’re not going to remember all that information.” Six of the eight participants explained that it was challenging to remember what they read on the computer screen when they went back into the classroom. Some felt that the information did not apply to their specific classroom, which made it challenging to pay attention to the presentation. For example, Emily talked about having to learn information appropriate for school-aged children, but she works with toddlers, so “it was information I didn’t need to know.” She explained that “actually being in the classroom and seeing what I have to do helped me a lot more.” The training courses include power points that are read to viewers. The teachers felt that there was no way to engage with the material, which made it difficult to remember what they were hearing or apply the information to their classroom experience.

Several participants shared that they did not have an opportunity to discuss the training with an administrator or peer after completing it. Emily described a brief conversation with her administrator after completing the training, “me and [center administrator] talked about what I went over and stuff like that. But after that, there was nothing else. That was basically it; she asked me if I understood all of it, and if I had any

questions." Limited interaction with an instructor or administrator prevents individuals from asking additional questions that would allow them to process what they are learning. A more mature or experienced individual might have approached the administrator with questions or asked for some time to discuss the presentation in the context of the child care center in which she was working. None of the participants had prior experience working in child care settings, this was the first job for three participants who were also recent high school graduates, and only one participant was over the age of 30. The inexperience could have been a contributing factor to what appears to be passivity. They may not have known how to approach an authority figure or take the initiative to learn more on their own. While their concerns indicate a possible disconnect between administrators and employees, it is also likely that their age and inexperience played a role in the lack of engagement.

The setting for the training played a role for at least one participant. Dawn explained that she was placed in an empty classroom to complete her training, "I get distracted easily, and I wasn't in my own space. I felt isolated. I was in a little room with a little children's table, so it wasn't even a regular table, so I was like hunched over." Dawn went on to describe her experience, "it was difficult for me to understand. It was hard for me to just sit there and read everything because my mind started to wander." The environment in which training takes place is a relevant factor. If the individual is not comfortable or feels isolated, they become distracted, and it is a challenge to remember what they have learned. For Dawn, this was exacerbated by feeling rushed to complete the online orientation:

> I only took me about an hour, but I felt pressured…They told me I could just skim it. They just wanted me to get it done. I was like, oh, I have to hurry up. I was skimming towards the end, but at the beginning, I wasn't going to skim it because I felt like that was illegal. So, I was looking at the clock and was like, oh crap, it's almost been an hour. So, I felt like they just wanted me to get it done in an hour.

Dawn's training was probably incomplete and inconsistent with the requirements set forth by ODJFS. Feeling rushed and isolated are factors that prohibit an individual from effectively absorbing the information. It also sets a tone that training is not a priority, which represents a disservice to the new employees. Dawn is a recent high school graduate with no prior work experience. She described herself as shy and stated that she often struggles with focus. Perhaps part of the issue is a lack of interpersonal skills that made her feel uncomfortable with asking for more time or approaching an authority figure.

The participants described the online training as "boring" and "unengaging." While it is human nature for people to take issue with the training they have to take, the focus of this study is on their perceptions. They described their experiences in ways that demonstrate that the required online training fails to address critical knowledge or prepare them for working with young children. Similarly, they described missing aspects of professional development.

Engagement with Others Is Crucial

The comments made by the participants indicated that they viewed the training as necessary, but they also felt there were some limitations. Specifically, they identified that

the opportunity to interact with an instructor or administrator was missing from their online training. As previously noted, Dawn felt isolated because she was placed in an empty classroom in an unfamiliar environment. Five shared that there was too much information presented in an "unengaging" format that did not enhance their understanding. Four of the women expressed a desire to have someone to talk to or ask questions of because "it would be a lot more beneficial than online." Catherine expressed her issues with not being able to ask questions:

> If I have a question, I ask it right there. I can't ask the recording. You know, something comes up and I'm like I don't really understand this, okay, I just have to guess. There's no way to clarify and understand it, there's nobody to ask. You can't ask a recording.

While this generation of employees may be comfortable with technology, they indicated a preference for interaction with someone knowledgeable and available to address questions. If the online training was presented as a live webinar or face-to-face class, perhaps these issues would be minimized.

In addition to missing support systems, participants highlighted the lack of interaction with peers during the training. Being able to discuss what is new information with other individuals is valuable for adult learners. It allows them to recognize shared experiences, identify misunderstood information, and offer solutions to workplace problems. The absence of this type of interaction was a significant concern for these young teachers who described their concerns and discussed the benefits of interacting with other teachers (see Table 3).

Table 3

Interaction is Missing from Online Training

Participant	Barrier	Possible solution
Sarah	"I just think it's more helpful when you can talk about things you just read or was [sic] told. Just talk about it rather than just stare at a computer and be like ok. You know, most of the time, it just goes in one ear and out the other."	"I think if we had more than one employee starting, do a group session where you do the class together so that you could talk about each thing, interact, and be more hands-on."
Jessica	"I don't learn from reading it. I learn from seeing it happen, having someone walking me through it, talking about it. You can't talk to a computer screen."	"People come from different programs, different backgrounds. They're going to do everything differently so you can learn different ways of doing something. It could all be the right way but just different ways and of course that's beneficial because you can choose which way's best for you."
Emily	"I feel like everything is online now, so we're just kind of like standardizing everything. But just sitting in front of a computer does nothing."	"But if it was something more in-depth, if you were with people doing it. I feel like it would be a little more comprehendible, a little more retainable. So, kind of like the more people, the more different minds, so you get different viewpoints, you get different ways to learn things, you get different perspectives. I feel like sitting down and talking with other people would be a lot more beneficial than online."

The participants indicated that having peers to work with during the training would provide an opportunity to talk through the content and learn about what others are experiencing. Being able to share ideas and solutions to problems is vital to these individuals. Their interest in training with others indicates a desire to complete training in an interactive setting.

I did not anticipate that the teachers would begin to consider ways in which their training could be made more relevant. With no prompting, seven participants discussed what could be done differently with their initial training to help them develop the skills and knowledge they needed. They indicated that although they understood why it was necessary, online training was not the ideal way for them to learn about how to work with young children. In addition to highlighting a lack of interaction, they discussed needing training that supported their learning styles, and they offered a variety of suggestions for the format of training. Their thoughts and ideas provide meaningful insight, which could inform the development of training for early-career child care teachers, especially given the limited educational requirements in Ohio and other states.

Seven of the eight teachers expressed a preference for hands-on opportunities to learn new information. The teachers were emphatic that they are hands-on learners who prefer to learn through activities and experiences rather than passively. Perhaps, this is why they placed such high value on observing experienced teachers. In addition to having hands-on experiences, the majority of the participants expanded on early discussions about the lack of peer interaction during the online training.

A Community of Learners Would Be Valuable

Four teachers highlighted the possibility of taking multi-session training with other child care teachers in a classroom setting. They described a course that would occur over several months that would include individuals from a variety of child care programs. Dawn indicated that engaging with teachers from other child care centers would give everyone the opportunity to, "see what they're doing differently. That's where you can see what they do and you guys can compare and contrast." They emphasized that interaction and co-learning were valuable. With no prompting and without knowing each other, the teachers developed a strategy for training that they believed would create an active learning situation for them. In essence, they described a community of learners.

With limited experience, the participants recognized the value and importance of co-learning and indicated that having opportunities to work with others over time would support them as they learned the skills and knowledge associated with working in child care settings. Jessica emphasized that the opportunity to complete a class over a period of time would allow people to get to know each other, share ideas, and learn from each other:

> If you're going to go to a two-hour class and you're just going to sit there for just two hours, you're probably not going to remember what you learned after a couple of days. But if you're going back and revisiting everything over and over again a couple of days later and then over again, you're going to remember it. If you are meeting over and over again like a class then you're going to get comfortable with the people you're with. That's when those stories break out.

> This is what happened and this person had this experience. And this is what happened when this person had this experience. Even if you yourself haven't had that experience, you can build off of what people have done.

In addition to a desire to attend training with other teachers over time, the participants expressed an interest in having opportunities to apply their new knowledge directly with the children in their classrooms. Several very specifically indicated that while they needed some prior knowledge, they also needed to be working in a classroom while taking the training. Emily felt that it is important to be working with children during one's time in extended training. She described that being able to apply what is she is learning is a critical part of the learning process for inexperienced child care teachers.

Sarah also described this idea of practical application between training and the early childhood classroom:

> Just experiencing if for real helps kind of put what you're learning in perspective. Like if they're saying at this age, you know, talking about development and how each child develops, I can compare it to this experience like I've seen it with three of the kids. I've seen and witnessed it first-hand versus reading in a book or on a computer screen and trying to remember it all.

The combination of learning with peers and opportunities for practical application is reminiscent of student teaching in teacher-preparation programs. Interestingly, this group of inexperienced young women identified the need for a community within which to learn while also working with young children.

The first research question asked how child care teachers without advanced education in child development describe their training experiences upon entry into the workforce. The eight child care teachers interviewed for this study explained their entry into the workforce and described how they learned to do their jobs. The participants shared that caring about children, babysitting, and having children qualified them for child care work. They discussed the value and importance of observing their peers to learn the routines and responsibilities of their work with young children. They described issues with limited interactions with their center administrators, which was concerning for some of them. The teachers discussed their experiences with online training and highlighted concerns about the lack of interaction with instructors, administrators, and peers. While doing this, they focused on their need to participate in a community of learners as they gain essential knowledge and skills for child care work. Their responses to research question two showed that this group of women also have strong ideas about what knowledge child care teachers should have, whether college degrees are important, and what their ongoing training needs are.

Research Question 2

Questions 29-34 ascertained the teachers' thoughts about long-term training needs, including what knowledge child care teachers should possess before beginning employment, what they would like to learn more about, and whether a college education is necessary for their work (see Figure 1). I noticed that their initial focus was more about what they wished they had known when they accepted jobs in child care. These discussions led to the identification of two additional categories: (a) I wish I had known

and (b) learning to work with young children is complex. Within the second theme, additional categories were noted, including (a) essential knowledge is broad, (b) teachers value lifelong learning, and (b) higher education is not necessary.

Category 3: I Wish I Had Known

In the context of their limited experience, the teachers were asked to identify what they wished they had known before working in a classroom. Asking such a question once they have a little experience encourages reflection and allows teachers to consider the knowledge that might support the acquisition of the skills necessary for child care work.

Their responses made it clear that some of the participants lacked knowledge about child care center operations. For example, Dawn, who is an infant teacher, was the only person to identify the importance of having the children's names and schedules in advance, "even having the kids' names already written down or a generalized schedule so I can see it or giving me time to study it before I go into work." Dawn shared that it would have been beneficial to have this information beforehand so she could immediately begin building relationships with the babies in her care.

While not required initial training in Ohio, participants believed that first aid and CPR training was necessary for child care teachers. Kim shared that, "I feel like I can do it well. I feel like I could do it better if I had first aid and CPR training. Like, I would feel safer doing the job." Kim also stated that knowing how to respond to emergencies such as a fire or tornado would have been beneficial. General information about fire drills is included in the online training that all participants completed, but Kim was identifying the need for center-specific information that should be communicated by the center

administrator. Information such as the children's names, first aid and CPR training, and responding to emergencies is important knowledge for child care teachers to have. This information was not provided to some of the study participants when they began employment. Their concerns are related to issues previously described regarding the lack of interaction with their administrators. In addition to the structural processes they identified, the participants shared that they need a more thorough knowledge of the child care licensing regulations and child development.

The child care licensing regulations provide the foundation for operating a child care center. The regulations outline the required processes for maintaining a healthy and safe environment for all children. However, some participants discussed their lack of knowledge and how it influenced them in the initial stages of employment. Sarah explained that because she had never worked in child care, she did not realize how strict the state rules were. From her perspective, the licensing rules were not explicitly discussed. Instead, she was told what she could and could not do.

Catherine explained, "what I didn't know was all the [licensing] rules. In my head, what would be ok actually isn't. Some of them are not real clear, they're not black and white, and you've got to read between the lines." She described a situation in which she was sitting on the floor, feeding one baby in her lap and another in an infant seat. Until a coworker told her, she was unaware that the licensing rules require all babies to be held for feedings. Her thinking was that both babies were being fed and were receiving interaction, so she did not realize she was violating the licensing rules. While she understood the requirement, she expressed that it would have been useful information to

have when she began working in the infant classroom. Catherine's experience further exemplifies the value of observational learning previously discussed.

Dawn thought more deeply about why some of the licensing rules exist in the context of a specific requirement that food must be cut into small pieces at mealtimes. She felt that cutting food into smaller pieces would create a more hazardous situation:

> I think that's what I struggle with, we have these rules, and I'm like why? I'm a why person; that's just me when I hear rules. I don't know why and they [coworkers] were just like that's what state says we have to do. I wish they had more background in the training, it would make more sense. I'm not sure everyone is like me but I'm sure there are people who want to know why we do the things we do.

In our conversation, I took the time to help Dawn understand that children's airways are small, and their chewing and swallowing abilities are immature. I explained that the rule is in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children. Through the discussion, Dawn was better able to recognize why the rule exists but was adamant that more training is necessary. I found myself wondering about the training Dawn's coworkers had received, given that it seemed they were unable to explain why the rule exists.

Understanding the licensing requirements, beyond teacher-child ratios, is critically important for the safety and wellbeing of all children. What these participants described is a lack of knowledge that would have helped them better understand their job responsibilities from the beginning. The implementation of licensing regulations is an operational process that is often communicated by the center administrator and

experienced coworkers. Some aspects of licensing compliance may have been addressed during the participants' shadowing and observation experiences. Despite having some experience at the time of the interviews, the participants expressed a need for specific training related to the requirements outlined in the child care licensing rules.

The teachers also discussed a lack of knowledge about child development and expressed a desire to have more in-depth knowledge. Individuals who enter the field without the benefit of training or advanced education do not have this knowledge, and this was evident as they described a desire to know more about young children. Specifically, Sarah shared, "just knowing more about how children develop and knowing what to expect at different stages. I think that would help a little bit." Jessica explained, "honestly, everything that I wish I could know more about has to do with kids and how they learn and how their emotions work." Several participants described needing to know how to interact with children of different ages, particularly regarding guiding behavior.

Individuals who begin working with children without the benefit of child development training describe behavior as a concern. They do not understand social emotional development and have limited understanding of why children do the things they do. Unfortunately, this can lead to the use of ineffective or inappropriate guidance and discipline strategies. Kim shared that she struggles to know what to do when children do not listen while Emily expressed a desire for more training and knowledge about children's behavior. She described using intuition and observation to figure out what is best when a child misbehaves because "I've never really been told what to do when a child has a meltdown." While Emily was learning to manage children's behavior through

experience and observation, we should also consider what happens if the observed teacher is not well-trained.

Young children are at a critical age for social and emotional development, and managing behavior is an area that presents challenges for new and experienced teachers. Many factors influence children's behavior, such as unmet needs, toxic stress, trauma, and other developmental factors. The challenges these young teachers described may be the result of a lack of training and general knowledge about developing children. Their need for understanding how children develop and why they do the things they do was apparent during the interviews

Some participants identified additional aspects of essential knowledge. Interacting with families was described as a training need. As Dawn shared, "talking to parents is very difficult, and I feel like that's something I don't know how to handle." When asked what makes talking with parents difficult, she described not knowing how to answer their questions or how to communicate about a child's behavior. Dawn feared that she would say something inappropriate or inaccurate that would upset the parents. Interacting with families is a critical component when working with young children often cited in early childhood competencies. However, it is an aspect of child care work that was missing from the training these teachers completed, putting them at a disadvantage when situations occur.

Two participants also mentioned a desire to understand how to teach, including areas such as classroom schedules and planning. As with family interaction, these issues were not raised by all of the teachers but are important aspects of child care work. Kim

shared that, “you shouldn’t just make it up on the fly, you should have a plan.” Jessica commented

> What curriculum are you supposed to follow and what do you teach? That’s a question I had here because I didn’t know if they followed a curriculum like an elementary school does. I guess that’s one of the biggest things I’ve had to learn that you don’t get trained for. How do you explain these things? How do you teach? There is definitely more for me to learn.

As Jessica stated, there is a lot to learn when it comes to working with children. The topics the participants described are just some of the areas they identified. In the course of the interviews, I had lengthy discussions with the participants about the knowledge they perceived child care teachers should have.

Category 4: Learning to Work with Young Children Is Complex

In the context of their limited experience, Question 29 focused on what knowledge a person entering the child care field should have (see Figure 1). Much of what the teachers shared mirrored their thoughts about what was missing from their training. Working with children is complex and requires a wide range of knowledge that is gained with time, experience, and training.

Essential Knowledge Is Broad

The women I interviewed identified many topics that teachers should have some understanding of. Child development was identified by every participant but was closely followed by licensing regulations, guidance, and teacher-child interactions. Their lack of experience with children and families is evident in these topics. Most of the participants

described having babysitting experience, each had younger or older siblings, and three were mothers. However, they recognized that their life experiences did not provide them with the right kinds of knowledge needed for working with young children daily.

Understanding how children grow, develop, and learn was a priority for these young women. Kim and Emily were the only participants who had completed Ohio's Overview of Child Development, a 3-hour online training required for teachers who work in SUTQ rated programs. Kim described the training as "very helpful" but continued by explaining that more information about child development, specifically developmental milestones, would be beneficial. Conversely, Emily felt the training was "too standard" and went on to explain she felt like the "training was something you'd look up on the internet when you're trying to figure out how to deal with someone's kid. It wasn't anything like how to really engage with the individual kids." Sarah was interested in knowing more about "how children develop and what to expect at different stages." Having a solid understanding of how children develop over time is critical knowledge to have when working with young children. Individuals who begin working in child care without the benefit of prior training do not have this information.

The study participants also highlighted guiding children's behavior. Dawn expressed the need for more information on how to interact and guide children. She was interested in knowing "how to interact in a way that's kind of like I'm your friend, but you need to listen to me. I find myself doing the same thing whenever they get out of control, and it's starting to now work as well." Dawn was seeking additional strategies for managing children's behavior that she could learn during additional training classes.

The participants noted a wide variety of topics that would build their knowledge and support their work with young children. Although they did not receive this information before working with children, they did learn it through observation and daily interactions with peers and children. Table 4 illustrates the variety of topics identified by the teachers during the interviews.

Table 4

Knowledge Child Care Teachers Should Have

Topic	Sarah	Allison	Jessica	Catherine	Emily	Kim	Amy	Dawn
Child abuse			x	x				
Child development	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Classroom management					x	x		
CPR					x	x		x
Curriculum								x
Developmental milestones	x			x	x			x
Discipline/guidance	x	x			x	x	x	x
Emotional development			x		x			
First aid				x	x	x		x
How do children learn?	x	x	x					
How to run a center	x							
Hygiene			x					
Interacting with families	x			x	x		x	x
Lesson planning				x	x	x		
Licensing regulations	x		x	x			x	x
Managing illness	x			x				
Nutrition/feeding				x	x			
Responding to emergencies			x			x		
Routines/Schedules				x	x			
Teacher/child interaction		x	x		x	x		x
Teaching strategies	x		x		x			x
Team building				x				
Toilet training		x			x		x	
Understanding the standards				x	x			
What to teach to different age groups			x		x			

Even with limited experience and training, the teachers were able to list many aspects inherent to the early childhood profession. The variety of areas they listed demonstrates the intricate knowledge an individual working with children should possess. The areas they discussed mirror the competencies that are included in the Ohio CKC, CDA, and Infant-Toddler Competencies previously discussed. Because these individuals did not have comprehensive training when they entered the child care field, I was also interested in their perspectives regarding ongoing training and professional development.

Teachers Value Lifelong Learning

While discussing what child care teachers should know upon entering the child care workforce was essential, it was also valuable to understand how these teachers felt about their ongoing professional development. Every participant indicated that learning never ends and felt that opportunities for ongoing training were beneficial to their growth as child care teachers. The teachers described the importance of continued learning from a change perspective. They recognized that they need to stay current because standards and policies change. Kim explained that a teacher who continues working with children for a long time needs to continue learning because "things change, generations change, their upbringing isn't the same; they need different things." Sarah echoed these thoughts, "there's always something new to learn. You need to stay up to date because things change all the time." These sentiments were acknowledged by each participant which made it evident that they value ongoing learning.

How such learning takes place is also an important consideration. When asked about what their ongoing learning should look like, some of the teachers revisited earlier

discussions. For example, Catherine felt that observation would continue to be a way for her to learn new information. She also explained that consistently documenting teacher performance should be used to inform ongoing training or areas where retraining might be necessary. Emily shared this perspective but also discussed the need for mentor teachers who could be part of the training process. She described a scenario where the mentor teacher or center administrator would observe, work alongside the mentee, and would provide meaningful feedback. Given that the teachers engaged in observation to learn their responsibilities, it seems that mentors or peer coaches could be beneficial in supporting the continued growth of early-career child care teachers.

Professional development planning has become a focus in many states with the implementation of QRISs. In SUTQ rated programs, teachers must complete professional development plans. Because their programs are not participating in SUTQ, the study participants are not required to engage in formal professional development planning. None of the participants had discussed professional development planning or ongoing training with their administrators. However, several shared that they believe the administrator should play a role in identifying ongoing training for their employees based upon performance observations. Catherine related that she had approached her administrator with interest in attending an early childhood conference with several coworkers. Unfortunately, the conference was cost-prohibitive, and the teachers were unable to attend. Ohio has an extensive professional development registry that is the repository for local and statewide training. All early childhood professionals can search and register for training opportunities. When I asked these teachers about locating

training independently, none were unaware of the registry's existence. Again, this seems to be an administrative issue in which the center directors did not inform their employees of the systems that are in place to support their professional growth.

It was evident that the teachers I interviewed recognize that their learning is continuous. As previously described, they expressed their desire to learn in a classroom setting with other child care teachers. Kim suggested that there should be a "basic course" that begins before working directly with children and continues for several months after beginning employment, which would allow them to practice what they are learning. From her perspective, such early training would provide new teachers with some of the critical aspects of child development, guidance, and working with families previously discussed:

> So, you would do the basic course before they worked with the children, then you would do monthly follow-up meetings when they were working with the children. That would give them the application process. They would be able to go back to the classroom and try out what they were learning.

Kim's ideas about a "basic course" are interesting because they highlight some of the issues raised throughout the interviews.

These young teachers described the importance of foundational knowledge before working with children. They described their need for adult learning principles to be evident in their training, especially opportunities to engage with others in collaborative settings. Kim was the only interviewee to articulate a course that would meet the need for prior and ongoing learning. However, all of the participants described how important it is

to have some knowledge before working with children. They also valued continued opportunities for observation, training, and working with peers during their employment. These discussions led to the question of whether training was enough or if teachers should have a college degree.

Higher Education Is Not Necessary

In response to the national push for increased education, Question 29 (see Figure 1) gave the teachers a chance to reflect on the necessity of college degrees for child care work. Given that these women did not complete college, I was interested in knowing their perspectives on this topic. Their responses wavered between a definitive no and a definite yes. Sarah responded by thinking about her role as a mother. She did not believe college education was necessary because she feels competent in her current role. She expanded on this by sharing that much of her knowledge has come from raising her son. “Seeing as how I’m with kids younger than my son, I can kind of figure it out without that formal education.” The children she works with are younger than her child, so she relies on her experiences with his development.

Jessica agreed that she was also doing the job successfully without a degree but indicated that some coursework might be beneficial. Her rationale was that some courses, such as child development, would be appropriate because they would provide some background information. She felt that classes are not necessary but they would help a person “understand things quicker and better.” Upon further discussion, Jessica backed away from college-level courses and indicated that training classes for child care teachers could meet this need.

Kim initially stated that a college degree was not necessary because child care work is learned through experience:

> I feel like this is one of those professions that's more about experience, and it's learning on the job sort of. I feel like there's things that you need to learn, but it's mostly just learned by doing it.

During the second interview four weeks later, the subject of college degrees came up again, and Kim seemed to change her mind as she thought about essential knowledge. She indicated that 2 years of college would provide sufficient knowledge for someone to feel confident in their work. When asked why a 4-year degree was not needed, Kim returned to the idea that child care is more of a trade than a profession, thereby implying that higher education levels are not a necessity. Dawn echoed the perspectives of other participants. She felt that child care is "90% experience." For each of these women, learning by doing was a priority. They described learning and growing as they observed their peers and engaged with children and families. For them, formal education did not seem to be a necessity.

Emily was the only participant who was definitive that a college degree is necessary. However, she described the need for coursework and experience to be concurrent:

> There obviously needs to be more, but it's about how to do it. Maybe there should just be like a degree, a mix-up. Like you're in the classroom, but you're also with the kids. You're around people your age learning about this, but you also need to be around children learning about them.

Emily identified the need for learning and practice to go hand-in-hand, which aligns with what other interviewees discussed regarding training. Emily was the only participant whose parents had earned college degrees. Even though she chose not to pursue higher education herself, Emily may be influenced by values that were instilled at an early age.

Emily continued to discuss college attainment in the context of how society views child care:

> I think that a lot of people don't [have degrees] because it's just one of those jobs where they're kids. I feel like we tend to think of them as the job when they're not, we're literally raising these people. So, it's just one of those things where I feel like people tend to not realize that we, throughout the day, are taking the place of their parents.

Her perceptions of how child care workers are perceived by society align with previously discussed statements from the participants. Emily's thoughts are valuable because she was able to articulate why so many people do not value higher education attainment for the child care industry.

Throughout the interviews, it was evident that most of the teachers did not view a college education as necessary; instead, they were adamant about experiencing the work to learn. It was interesting to discuss higher education with these participants, and I found myself wondering if having parents who had attended college would have made a difference in their responses. While their views are counter to the current landscape, they add to the dialogue.

Trustworthiness

A variety of methods were used to establish the trustworthiness of this study. Before beginning data collection, I reflected on my own beliefs and values and worked to set aside my biases and preconceived notions. I maintained a reflective journal throughout data collection in which I noted things that I expected to hear as well as information that surprised me (see Appendix H). The reflective journals were referred to frequently during the data analysis process.

In preparation for the interviews, I developed an interview protocol with guiding questions and noted potential follow-up questions (see Figure 1). However, rather than asking only predetermined questions, I allowed our one-on-one interactions to guide the questions, which enabled the participants to share more deeply (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013). There were several opportunities to help the participants understand why a particular licensing rule exists. Often, the interviews became discussions about the participants' perceptions regarding their experiences, which enabled them to think through their professional development needs. Member checks were conducted with several participants via email to ensure I had accurately portrayed their experiences. Creswell (2014) suggested that member checks allow participants to clarify points they made during the interview process.

To ensure that the study results did not portray bias, a peer-debriefer who owns a for-profit child care center reviewed the data analysis. She provided feedback and asked questions that allowed me to refine the results and minimize evidence of personal bias. I also incorporated peer debriefing by soliciting a colleague with expertise in an unrelated

field to review the work. This individual had previously conducted data analysis and provided insight that helped me to communicate the results clearly and without bias.

Discussion

The objective of this project study was to understand the training experiences of early-career child care teachers with only a high school diploma or GED and no advanced education in child development. A phenomenological approach was used because I was interested in understanding their experiences. Two research questions explored how eight women learned to work with young children in child care settings. Through one-on-one interviews, I was able to gain insight into their experiences, thoughts, and ideas regarding the training they received, what they believe they still need to know, and what knowledge is essential for their work.

Three of the participants were recent high school graduates and were working in their first jobs. Their lack of experience and maturity was evident in some of their responses as they seemed to expect the administrators to initiate opportunities for asking questions or learning more about the child care center operations. Only one participant was over 30; the differences between her the other participants was noticeable. She was more intentional in her responses and was able to think more critically about the questions I presented. Life experiences, such as having parents who did not complete college, may have influenced the participants' lack of motivation for higher education. Additionally, societal views of child care as nonskilled work appeared to be relevant for some participants who identified child care as a trade rather than a profession. Overall, the participants provided me with an opportunity to explore their entry-level child care

experiences, but there would likely be different results with more experienced participants.

The teachers explained that they had basic qualifications such as babysitting experience, enjoying children, and being mothers. However, a large body of evidence shows that child care teachers need to develop a complex set of competencies in order to provide high-quality care and education for young children (Council for Professional Recognition, 2013; Gomez et al., 2015; NAEYC, 2009). Through two semistructured interviews, each individual acknowledged this by identifying what they still needed to know and learn. They described needing in-depth knowledge of child development, child care licensing rules, managing behavior, and working with families.

The teachers described their entry into the workforce using terms such as “trial and error” and “they just threw me in.” They portrayed this process as overwhelming and even a bit scary. The experiences they described are not unique. In their study of 18 child care teachers with limited training and education, Nicholson and Reifel (2011) found that teachers were figuring out how to work with children through their experiences, watching other teachers, and posing questions. Participants in the current study mirrored Nicholson and Reifel’s (2011) findings by explaining that they relied on observing or shadowing other teachers to learn the schedules, routines, and responsibilities associated with child care work. I wonder what happens when the person being observed is not well-trained. The training of observed personnel may represent a gap in research as I have been unable to locate any studies that focus on this aspect of child care teacher preparation. The

participants' experiences support the need for a hierarchy of appropriately trained teachers to coach new employees.

In the context of their daily work, the teachers shared that the online training they were required to take did not meet their needs. For these individuals, the online environment was unengaging and did not support the retention of information. The teachers explained that they needed opportunities for hands-on learning in classroom settings with other individuals. The literature supports the need for interaction with instructors, administrators, and colleagues as a primary principle for online learning (Allen, 2016). The participants indicated a preference for taking basic training before working with children that continued once they were employed. Their rationale was that they need to experience the work to apply what they learn to the classroom and children. They described a community of learners in which they could work and learn with other early-career teachers. Knowing that these child care teachers have a preference for face-to-face, interactive training establishes a base from which to explore alternatives to the current training requirements for early-career child care teachers in Ohio.

All of the participants agreed that ongoing training is necessary. They aligned what they need to know with information they wished they had known upon being hired. They described a desire for face-to-face, collaborative learning opportunities for future learning. It was interesting to discover that the teachers did not think a college education was necessary for their work, which is counter to current national discussions recommending that early childhood professionals have bachelor's degrees (Whitebrook, 2014). It is striking to note that several participants indicated that an associate's degree

would be more appropriate than a 4-year degree. They seemed to feel that an associate's degree would be more fitting because it would target the development of knowledge and skills. The teachers discussed child care as a trade versus a profession and emphasized that education for child care teachers should include opportunities for practical application. Both two- and four-year degree programs tend to include field experiences or student teaching, which allow students to apply what they are learning in supervised environments. However, child care teachers who do not pursue these options do not have such opportunities.

Overall, these early-career child care teachers did not believe that the existing training effectively builds the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they need to provide high-quality child care. All of the participants worked in child care centers that are not rated through Ohio's QRIS. Therefore, the child care centers in which they work are not required to meet to the higher standards for employee qualifications and training inherent to SUTQ.

Project Deliverable

According to fiscal year 2018 workforce data provided by OCCRRA, approximately 37% of Ohio's child care workforce holds only a high school diploma or GED. According to Child Care Aware (2019), there are 6,232 licensed child care centers in Ohio. According to OCCRRA, 44.8% of the licensed child care centers were participating in publicly funded child care (PFCC), and 44% of those programs were unrated through SUTQ at the end of fiscal year 2018. Child care centers that participate in PFCC are required to be SUTQ rated by 2020. However, there are more than 3,000

child care programs that do not participate in PFCC. The numbers tell the story; there are a large number of child care programs that are not required to participate in SUTQ or meet higher educational standards for their employees. Some may choose to participate voluntarily, but data specific to such programs is not readily available.

The project deliverable for this study is a policy recommendation paper that supports the contention that Ohio should increase its qualifications for nondegreed, early-career child care teachers. While there is a large body of research suggesting that all child care teachers should have bachelor's degrees, the field has yet to reach a consensus that degreed teachers provide high-quality care with strong child outcomes (Early et al., 2007).

The individuals who participated in this study emphasized their need for interactive, hands-on, and collaborative training. However, the requirements for initial training are currently limited to a 6-hour orientation and a 1-hour child abuse recognition course, which are taken online within 60 days of employment. Individuals who enter the child care workforce with only a high school diploma or GED in this state are at a disadvantage, as are the children in their classrooms.

The policy paper includes recommendations for increased training before and shortly after workforce entry and peer coaching. The study participants deemed knowledge of child care licensing regulations, child development, child guidance, and working with families as essential for their work. Additionally, they identified several other aspects of working with children as necessary for their work (see Table 10). The policy paper advocates that all individuals seeking child care employment who possess

only a high school diploma or GED should be required to complete a 40-hour child care endorsement that would prepare them for the work ahead. The recommendation is for 20 hours of preservice training and 20 hours of inservice training. Breaking the training into two segments will allow for practical application opportunities that the study participants highlighted. The recommendations also include peer coaching at each teachers' workplace. This aspect of their training was deemed critical to the teachers interviewed for this study.

The Ohio Child Care Endorsement (OCCE) would be designed per Ohio's CKC and would align with the CDA credential. Aligning the credential with the CDA competencies would enable child care teachers to transfer their 40 hours seamlessly into a full 120-hour CDA program. Ohio has a longstanding commitment to the CDA and provides TEACH scholarship funding to participants. Completion of the OCCE would encourage programs and teachers to pursue ongoing education that would support the success of Ohio's children from birth to kindergarten entry. The OCCE is described in detail in section 3.

Section 3: The Project

To create social change in Ohio's child care settings, a policy recommendation paper (Appendix A) will be presented to stakeholders within several child-serving organizations. The paper advocates for a mandated increase in educational requirements for early-career child care teachers who possess only a high school diploma or GED certificate and who have no advanced training in child development. The policy paper outlines the national and state child care landscape, which has been described as fragmented and in need of professionalization (see Goffin, 2015). The OCCE is the result of this study and aims to build the foundational knowledge and skills of child care teachers who enter the workforce with only a high school diploma or GED credential and without the benefit of advanced child development training. The recommended OCCE includes the following:

- A mandate that all individuals seeking child care employment who possess only a high school diploma or GED certificate must complete 20 hours of preservice training before being eligible for hire.
- A mandate that these individuals must complete an additional 20 hours of inservice training within 90 days of employment.
- A mandate that child care centers identify peer coaches who will work with new hires to help train them in their responsibilities, support their ongoing learning, and provide a positive culture.
- The 20-hour preservice training will extract topics from Ohio's statewide CDA model and will include 5 hours of training in each topic. The topics

will include (a) maintaining a commitment to professionalism, (b) principles of child development and learning, (c) positive ways to support social emotional development, and (d) planning a safe and healthy learning environment.

- The 20-hour inservice training will include additional topics from Ohio's statewide CDA model and will include 5 hours of training in each topic. The topics will include (a)strategies to establish productive relationships with families, (b) observing and recording children's behavior, (c) steps to advance physical and intellectual development, and (d) strategies to manage an effective program operation.

The goal for this research study was to gain insight into the experiences early-career child care teachers have with training at the outset of their careers. Based on the participants' responses during the interviews, a policy recommendation paper emerged as the final project. Evidence from the data analysis and literature review supported the development of the policy recommendations. In this section, I have outlined the policy recommendation paper that emerged from the findings of this study. Appendix A contains the policy recommendation paper.

Rationale

The purpose of this project study was to understand the training experiences of early-career child care teachers with only a high school diploma or GED and no advanced education in child development. The study results led to the development of a policy recommendation paper advocating for a revision of the child care training requirements.

The study participants indicated their desire for training that better meets their needs as adult learners and that helps them gain necessary competencies. They outlined a need for training to learn about child care licensing, child development, working with families, managing children's behavior, and other relevant topics (see Table 10). They expressed a need for training that addresses their hands-on learning style and provides opportunities to work with other individuals. While it is possible to develop local training to support these teachers, there are likely other child care teachers with similar perceptions and experiences across the state. With this assumption in mind, addressing the statewide child care system by offering a solution to the problem is a natural result of this study.

The project addresses the problem by introducing the OCCE which includes 20 hours of preservice training, 20 hours of inservice training, and peer coaching. The focus is on preparing people interested in employment in child care centers for the work they will be doing. Using suggestions from the study participants, sections of Ohio's current CDA program curriculum make up the training portions of the ECCE. The recommended OCCE offers a solution to the problem of under-prepared child care teachers in a way that has not been attempted in Ohio.

Ohio is one of 28 states that does not require education beyond a high school diploma or GED to work in a child care center (Whitebrook et al., 2018). With 6,232 child care centers (Child Care Aware of America, 2019) and a workforce of 36,110 (Center for the Study of Child Care Employment), 37% of Ohio's child care teachers have minimal education and no training before employment. Currently, individuals entering the Ohio child care workforce are required to complete a 6-hour online

orientation within 30 days of employment and a 1-hour online child abuse course within 60 days (ODJFS, 2017). However, recommendations by national organizations suggest that child care workers should have bachelor's degrees (IOM & NRC, 2015; NAEYC, 2009). Because child care centers are primarily for-profit businesses, the cost of employing degreed teachers is prohibitive for many programs. As an alternative, many states are working to improve their professional development systems in unique ways.

Review of the Literature

Having never developed a policy recommendation paper, I sought to understand its intent and structure. Searches of ProQuest, Academic Search Complete, Google Scholar, online publications, and published project studies that included policy papers as the final project offered insight. Search terms included *policy papers, white papers, policy recommendations,* and *advocacy papers*.

Searches of multiple databases provided information regarding issues and concerns raised by the study participants including ERIC, Educational Research Complete, Academic Research Complete, ProQuest Central, and Google Scholar. Citation chaining for articles that were older than 5 years highlighted more current research. The key terms searched were *adult learning styles, observational learning, peer coaching, online learning, core competencies, professional development,* and *child care training*.

Project Genre

The policy recommendation paper was the most appropriate genre for this study because it provided an avenue to advocate on behalf of child care teachers who enter the

field without the benefit of training or advanced education. Policy recommendation papers offer perspectives about or solutions to a problem (Herman, 2013). Their purpose is to describe an issue or problem in the context of data analysis and link it to recommendations for addressing the said problem (Herman, 2013; Keepnews, 2016). It is a crucial tool used to present research findings to leaders who are busy and unable to review full research studies (Constant, 2014). A policy paper has a specific intent and aims to reach a particular audience (Keepnews, 2016). In this case, the policy recommendation paper is aimed at stakeholders within ODJFS and OCCRRA with the intent of advocating for increased educational requirements for entry-level child care teachers.

There is a generally agreed-upon format for a policy recommendation paper. Most suggest that it contains specific sections, including an executive summary, introduction or background, methodology, literature review, analysis of findings, policy options and recommendations, implementation plan, and references (Constant, 2014; DeMarco & Tufts, 2014; Herman, 2013; Keepnews, 2016). DeMarco and Tufts (2014) equated the executive summary to a research abstract that stands alone and introduces the reader to the background, importance, and position being presented. Herman (2013) further suggested that the writer answer who, what, where, why, how, and when in the executive summary. The executive summary should attract the attention of readers who do not have time to review the entire policy recommendation paper. The writer should present several policy options rather than a single solution (Constant, 2014; Herman, 2013; Keepnews,

2016). Providing several options demonstrates that the solution has been considered in several ways and offers leaders alternate perspectives.

The policy recommendation paper evolved directly from the participant interviews conducted for this study. The policy paper includes several issues related to the study participants' training experiences, including principles of adult learning, observational learning, peer coaching, a community of learners, online learning, and core competencies. The following section addresses these issues in the context of existing literature.

Relevant Training and Professional Development Issues

Principles of adult learning. Adults arrive at learning situations with their life experiences and, as such, approach learning situations in different ways. The study participants indicated that their training did not incorporate active learning strategies that would enhance their understanding and ability to use what they learned in the classroom. As with children, adults express various learning styles and often prefer more hands-on, engaging strategies for their professional development (Ackerman, 2017). It is not possible to view all adult learners through one lens, but it is important to recognize some of their common characteristics (Galbraith, 2004). While there are many theories about adult learning, the most prevalent is Knowles' theory of andragogy (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2015). Knowles' theory provided a conceptual framework for the project because it aligns with the participant's views of training. Knowles et al. (2015) identified several assumptions that describe adult learners:

1. The need to know: Adults need to understand why they need to learn something before they can learn it. Learning facilitators need to demonstrate the value of what is to be learned.

2. The learner's self-concept: Adults prefer to be seen as self-directed learners and often resent others who appear to be imposing their beliefs on them. Learning facilitators need to assist learners in being less dependent upon teachers so they can become more self-directed in the learning environment.

3. The role of the learner's experiences: Adults are not children; they arrive at learning situations with a variety of life experiences that influence their learning. Learning facilitators should place value on experiential learning techniques. The instructor cannot reject the experiences of learners; learners will view this action as a personal rejection.

4. Readiness to learn: Adult learners become open to learning the things they need to know in order to respond to what is happening in their lives at the time. Learning facilitators can invoke the need to know by introducing simulation experiences.

5. Orientation to learning: Adult learners gain knowledge when information is presented in meaningful, applicable ways. Learning facilitators need to present information in ways that demonstrate its immediate usefulness.

6. Motivation: Adults are internally motivated by pressures such as job satisfaction and quality of life. Learning facilitators need to prevent barriers such as lack of opportunities and poorly developed educational programs.

Because the study participants entered the workforce with no training or advanced education, it is assumed that they had a need and desire to understand their responsibilities. The training they received included opportunities for observation and completion of online classes and was described as lacking. It would seem that the adult learning characteristics outlined by Knowles et al. (2015) are critical factors to consider. It is also essential to factor in how learners use what they have learned in their daily work.

Mezirow's theory of transformational learning is relevant to this discussion because it considers how and why adults retain and use the knowledge gained in a learning setting. Mezirow (2000) espoused that adults learn best when their frames of reference or points of view are tested. Griffith and Ballard (2016) explained that transformative learning takes place when one's thoughts, feelings, values, and beliefs are challenged through problem-solving and critical reflection. Mezirow (2000) identified four means by which learning occurs:

1. Elaborate on existing frames of reference.
2. Learn new existing frames of reference.
3. Transform habits of mind; and,
4. Transform points of view.

Griffith and Ballard (2016) described that Mezirow's ideas translate well into hands-on learning opportunities such as role-play and interactive activities that support the developing student-teacher relationship. The teachers involved in this study had limited opportunities for hands-on or active learning. They shared that information

discussed in the online setting was challenging to retain. They described how observing and speaking with their peers helped them make sense of and remember information presented during the online training sessions they completed. Additionally, they explained that opportunities to safely practice emerging skills would have better supported them in the initial weeks of employment.

Kolb's theory of experiential learning is particularly relevant when considering professional development and training. Kolb (1984) developed the experiential learning cycle and identified basic learning styles to demonstrate how individuals progress through dimensions of learning to construct knowledge. Individuals express learning styles by experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting upon learning situations continuously (McCarthy, 2016). Kolb's theory of experiential learning aligns with the project because it highlights the importance of learning styles to consider when developing learning experiences for adults.

Each of the adult learning principles provides insight for the development of training and professional development. The evidence indicates that adults need to be engaged and motivated to learn new information. Active learning is an important criterion for adult learners (Knowles et al., 2015; Zaslow et al., 2010). Pashler, McDaniel, Rohrer, and Bjork (2008) reviewed empirical evidence regarding learning styles. They define learning styles as "the concept that individuals differ regarding what mode of instruction or study is most effective for them" (p. 105). Individuals in the current study highlighted varying strategies that would engage their learning processes more successfully than the required one-dimensional online courses.

Cuevas (2015) suggested that learning style-based instruction is widely accepted but also shared that the research evidence seems to show no benefits to learners. Given his analysis, the application of learning styles by teachers and trainers has been questioned (Cuevas, 2015). It is critical to consider learning styles, motivation, and barriers to learning when developing learning opportunities for adults (Shrivastava & Shrivastava, 2017). Furthermore, adult learners are more likely to see the benefit of learning new information when it aligns with their needs, previous experiences, and interests (Brockett & Heimstra, 2018). Analysis of the data included in this study indicates that the participants desire learning opportunities that align with their learning styles, including hands-on, face-to-face learning. In addition to formal learning opportunities, it is important to consider how individuals gain information through daily engagement in the work setting. The teachers I interviewed described observation as a primary key to their acquisition of skills and knowledge.

Observational learning. The study participants indicated that they depended heavily on observation to learn many aspects of their new jobs. Observational learning is supported by existing literature and is often identified as social learning or social modeling, as described in Bandura's social cognitive theory (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Bandura (2016) discussed four processes inherent to what he identified as social modeling:

1. Attentional processes refer to the information people take away from what they observe.

2. Representational processes are related to memory and refer to the process used to retain observations within the memory for future use.

3. Translational production processes are the actions taken when individuals recall what they have previously observed.

4. Motivational processes regulate whether or not a person will implement what they have learned.

It is human nature to observe; this is one way that infants learn. Observational learning fits in well with child care work as young adult workers benefit from watching others in their child care setting. Observational learning is a strategy widely employed in higher education as students learn the skills associated with their career choice. In education programs, students engage in fieldwork, internships, and student teaching opportunities that allow them to observe and work alongside experienced classroom teachers. There is reason to believe that the same applies to workplace learning. This form of on-the-job training was essential to the women interviewed for this study. Observation serves as a useful tool for child care teachers to gain the skills necessary for working with children.

Peer coaching. While observational learning was a critical experience for the teachers interviewed in this study, peer coaching may also be a beneficial practice as individuals enter the workforce. Sheridan et al. (2009) found a consensus among researchers that on-the-job coaching supports the acquisition of new skills. Evidence and participant views indicate that having a support system is a valuable practice that would help early-career child care teachers learn necessary skills, knowledge, and dispositions. Peer coaching is a viable option for child care centers because it tends to be a low cost

and impactful process that supports both emerging and veteran teachers (Parker, Kram & Hall, 2014, 2015).

Showers and Joyce (1996) first offered peer coaching as a component of professional development for teachers in the 1980s. As they have studied their peer coaching model, they have found that teachers enjoy working and learning together and are more likely to exhibit the transfer of learning based on collaborative relationships (Showers & Joyce, 1996). Cox (2015) applied Knowles and Mezirow's theories of adult learning to peer coaching and found that their characteristics naturally suited the use of peer coaching in the workplace. Citing a lack of existing theory, Hagen, Bialek, and Peterson (2017) conducted a literature review aimed at developing a definition of peer coaching. They found that learning in a cooperative and supportive relationship is critical (Hagen et al., 2017). The results of their study led to this definition of peer coaching:

> Formal peer coaching is the process of formalizing a voluntary, mutually beneficial relationship between two or more hierarchically equal peers in an effort to reach a clearly stated goal, particularly related to performance improvement, through the use of the specific coaching processes and mechanism of learning, helping, and support. (Hagen et al., 2017, p. 553)

The notion that one peer has no authority over another is central to their definition (Hagen et al., 2017). To develop positive and supportive relationships, removing issues of authority ensures that each member plays a role that will aid in the development of knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

In addition to defining peer coaching, it is crucial to consider its components as a training and professional development strategy for child care teachers. Desimone and Pak (2017) applied five elements of effective professional development to the concept of coaching in public schools where coaching is mandated. Highly effective professional development includes five essential dimensions: (a) content focus and how children learn content, (b) active learning including observation and hands-on opportunities, (c) duration of contact hours, (d) collective participation through interaction with peers, and (e) coherence or alignment with existing standards (Desimone & Pak, 2017). However, these dimensions are sometimes tricky to apply in child care settings.

While Desimone and Pak (2017) applied these dimensions to public school settings, they can also be considered in the context of peer coaching in child care settings. Some practices inherent to the K-12 system have been successful in the early childhood sector, especially given the push for increased entry qualifications (Schachter, 2015; Schachter, Gerde & Hatton-Bowers, 2019). The dimensions described by Desimone and Pak (2017) demonstrate the importance of working with peers to understand how children learn, which was highlighted by the teachers interviewed for this study.

There are many coaching models available for use in child care settings. Findings from existing research indicate that coaching is useful. However, it is clear that the quality of coaching efforts needs to follow a systematic process (Moreno, Green, Koehn, & Sadd (2019). Studies have shown that quantity and duration are also likely translate into effective practice (Gerde, Duke, Moses, Spybrook, & Shedd, 2014). However, Gerde (et al., 2014) indicated the need for ongoing research regarding how much time it takes

for positive effects to occur, a factor that may be related to the number of professional development hours required by state licensing agencies. This may be particularly important to consider in Ohio because child care teachers are only required to have six hours of training annually if their centers are not participating in SUTQ. In the first few months of child care employment, individuals are required to complete online training but are not required to complete any additional training.

Principles of online learning. Many states have begun implementing online options to deliver basic training regarding regulations and standards (Stone-MacDonald & Douglass, 2015). Ohio's child care teachers are required to complete two online training courses upon hire. Online training can be an appropriate strategy that provides widespread access, but more research is necessary to understand its effectiveness in helping nondegreed teachers gain skills, knowledge, and dispositions (Ackerman, 2017; Gomez et al., 2015). Stone-MacDonald and Douglass (2015) indicated that online professional development is an efficient way to deliver training broadly while managing costs that appeals to state agencies with limited budgets. Additionally, online delivery methods offer the greatest chance of reaching programs in rural communities or outlying areas (Stone-MacDonald & Douglass, 2015). While there is a body of evidence showing that online training can be practical, Ackerman (2017) advocated for ongoing research regarding the perceptions of participants concerning whether or not online training enhances their knowledge and skills.

Teachers interviewed for this study indicated that the online training they were required to take was not meaningful or helpful in supporting their acquisition of

knowledge or skills. It is possible that the existing online training in Ohio is ineffective because it is asynchronous and lacks interactive opportunities; factors also highlighted by the study participants. It is important to consider what structural elements should be implicit in online training for it to be effective. Allen (2016) offered four principles for the development of online courses for consideration:

1. Customizing courses to incorporate learners' needs, experiences, and interests;
2. Supporting the construction of knowledge versus the transmission of information;
3. Building opportunities for peer-to-peer and learner-instructor interaction; and,
4. Ensuring an authentic learning environment.

These factors exhibit facets of the adult learning theories espoused by Knowles et al. (2015), Mezirow (2000), and Kolb (1984) previously discussed. Additionally, they address concerns raised by the teachers interviewed for this study. In addition to describing their experiences with the existing online training, the young teachers in this study also identified practices that would better suit their professional growth. While the participants were explicit about their need for more engaging training experiences, they also described areas in which they needed additional training to become competent in their work with young children.

Core Competencies for Working with Children

There is a body of knowledge that child care teachers and other early childhood professionals should possess. However, there is no national consensus about the competencies teachers of young children need (Brown & Englehardt, 2016). The

identification of knowledge and skills necessary for care and education is a complex issue (IOM & NRC, 2015; Whitebrook, 2014). A confounding factor is the variety of early childhood settings and the roles associated with each. Children spend time in formal and informal settings, and the competencies associated with each are likely to differ.

Professional settings, such as child care centers, require individuals to have both foundational and specialized knowledge that supports young children's learning and development. The 2015 IOM and IRC report, *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8*, is an evidence-based publication that provides substantial guidance to advance the early childhood industry and workforce. The report described three foundational areas of knowledge adults with professional responsibility for children should possess, including child development, nurturing relationships, and biological and environmental issues the impact developing children (IOM & NRC, 2015). Specialized knowledge is built from the foundational areas and is needed to influence quality learning experiences and positive child outcomes. The IOM and NRC (2015) identified multiple areas of specialized knowledge, including understanding the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical domains of development and content areas such as language and literacy, math, science, technology, engineering, arts, and social studies. Additional aspects of specialized knowledge focus on how children become proficient, consistent relationships, effects of trauma and chronic stress, and effective assessment (IOM & NRC, 2015). These competencies aid professionals in providing positive, supportive care and education to young children.

Participants in this study identified child development, guidance, safety, teacher-child interactions, and family engagement as essential to their practice. Researchers have described how important it is for early childhood educators to understand the developing child. There is general agreement that practitioners need to understand developmental science, developmental learning domains, concepts of language and literacy, math, science, technology, and social studies, and the effects of toxic stress and trauma (IOM & NRC, 2015). Barnes, Guin, and Allen (2018) concluded that professional development related to guidance and behavior is among one of several training needs consistently identified by early childhood professionals. Their sentiments are echoed in the literature regarding early childhood educator competencies and were raised by this study's participants. Knowing how to teach involves having knowledge and skills that go well beyond what an individual enters the field with when they have no training or advanced education. However, it is an important factor to consider for preservice training if the goal is to build supports for early-career child care teachers. They have demanding jobs and are unprepared to address challenging behavior, provide developmentally appropriate interactions, engage with families, and identify potential developmental concerns (Ullrich, Hamm, & Schochet, 2017).

Project Description and Goals

The research conducted to understand early-career child care teachers' perceptions of their training led to the development of a policy recommendation paper that issues a call to action (Appendix A). The policy recommendation paper advocates for a change to the existing child care regulations to mandate preservice training, inservice

training, and peer coaching for individuals who enter the field with only a high school diploma or GED. The policy recommendations introduce the OCCE as a strategy to increase the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of early-career child care teachers. The OCCE is aligned with the internationally recognized CDA credential and includes 20 hours of preservice training, 20 hours of inservice training, and peer coaching.

The primary goal of the policy paper is to offer a solution to the issue of under-prepared child care teachers by suggesting that the state implement the OCCE. Its implementation would support the need for knowledge and skills early-career child care teachers have when they begin working with young children. The policy recommendations will be presented to key stakeholders within Ohio's early childhood education system. The policy recommendations represent a call to action for the state agencies to adopt the OCCE.

Existing Supports and Necessary Resources

Ohio has a robust early childhood system that thrives on collaboration and joint implementation of new policies. The nature of the multi-agency collaboration exemplifies a system that could implement the recommendations in the policy paper. A vital resource is the contact information for the appropriate officials from key organizations so that meeting invitations can be issued. A mutually acceptable time, date, and location for leadership from multiple organizations to meet is essential. Prepared materials for the meeting will include copies of the policy recommendation paper and a PowerPoint presentation designed to showcase the study findings, policy recommendations, and a

suggested implementation plan. While a supportive climate exists, several barriers will likely arise.

Potential Barriers and Solutions

Disseminating the policy paper is a crucial culminating activity for the project study, and several issues require consideration. Most importantly is the need to gather the right people from the right agencies. Including individuals who have no interest or ability to move the project forward would be counter-productive. The solution is to capitalize on existing relationships within the state organizations by briefly sharing the project recommendations and asking for names and contact information of additional individuals to include.

The primary barrier is the ability to gather agency leaders and interested parties at a mutually agreed upon time. There are many priorities in their work that may preclude their ability to come together at the same time. Hosting additional presentations at varying times could prevent this barrier. To reach stakeholders who are unable to attend, a recorded webinar is an additional option for people who are unable to attend. Additionally, a webinar could be a viable tool to reach a wider audience within the state.

When stakeholders learn about the policy recommendations, there could be some hesitancy. It is likely they will have concerns about how to move the process forward, including issues related to advocacy, budget restrictions, developing legislation, and committing personnel to the project. These are necessary conversations should the process move forward, and the issues can be resolved in collaborative ways.

Proposal for Implementation

The policy recommendations that evolved from this project study present an opportunity to advance the child care workforce throughout the state. Several entities have already expressed an interest in learning about the policy recommendations. Once Walden University has approved this doctoral study, the work will begin to share the results. One or more meetings will be scheduled with the leadership of appropriate state agencies. The purpose of the meeting(s) will be to share the results of the study, introduce the policy recommendations, and begin a dialogue aimed at advancing the early childhood workforce.

Key Stakeholders' Roles and Responsibilities

As the person responsible for the project, I will work to inform the early childhood community of the study and subsequent policy recommendations. However, this work cannot be done alone. Ohio has a strong early childhood system that is committed to providing support for young children and the individuals that work with them. Many stakeholders would be involved in advocating for the policy recommendations highlighted as a result of this study. The process for bringing these groups together will involve identifying a champion who supports the project and is adept at bringing agencies and politicians together. The stakeholders described below frequently collaborate on a variety of local and statewide initiatives. Generally, they can effectively develop and advocate for policy changes.

Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS). ODJFS representatives develop and administer child care licensing regulations and conduct

inspections of child care centers. ODJFS leaders would draft and present the proposed legislation to mandate a change in the child care licensing rules should this project move beyond presentation and discussion phase. If approved by the state legislature, ODJFS would implement the policy recommendations.

Ohio Child Care Resource and Referral Association (OCCRRA). OCCRRA leads a network of seven Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies that serve Ohio's 88 counties. As the lead organization, OCCRRA monitors consistency across the agencies and manages important statewide quality initiatives. Together, OCCRRA and the CCR&Rs have developed a statewide CDA model that is offered throughout the state. The statewide CDA model provides the basis for the pre- and inservice training described in the policy recommendation paper.

OCCRRA also manages the OPR, which maintains child care teacher education and training records, provides a system for locating and registering for training, and supports the needs of ODJFS licensing specialists. The OPR is currently used to track CDA training, the Ohio Administrator Credential, Ohio Afterschool Endorsement, and SUTQ progress. OCCRRA would also implement the OCCE through the OPR.

Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs). The seven CCR&Rs provide training and technical assistance to child care centers, out-of-school programs, and families across the state. They work closely with OCCRRA to ensure fidelity for all training programs, including the CDA. These agencies have primary responsibility for implementing the statewide CDA model, including training and contracting appropriate instructors. Their input will be vital to the successful implementation of the OCCE.

Groundwork Ohio. Groundwork Ohio is the leading early childhood advocacy organization in the state. Their efforts aid in educating state leadership and legislators about the importance of quality early learning (Groundwork Ohio, 2019). They are vital stakeholders because of their interest in supporting the growth and development of young children and ensuring a reliable child care workforce. Groundwork Ohio could be a leading voice in advancing legislation should the stakeholders agree to pursue a change in the child care regulations.

Ohio Association for the Education of Young Children (OAEYC). OAEYC is the primary membership organization for the early childhood profession in the state. Their leaders participate in advocacy, policy recommendations, and outreach on behalf of child care programs, Head Start, public and private preschools, and afterschool programs. Their role in the process will be as a voice for the profession. OAEYC will represent a national perspective because they are an affiliate of the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Ohio Career-Technical Schools. The career-technical schools provide high school students with the skills necessary to successfully join the workforce. They are an important stakeholder because many of the schools offer early childhood programs to ready students for work in child care centers, other teaching opportunities, and higher education. Career-technical schools with early childhood programs would ensure graduating seniors have attained the OCCE so they would be ready to immediately enter the child care workforce.

Child care center owners and administrators. Input from child care center owners and administrators will be necessary should the project move forward. They will help resolve concerns about how to effectively transition to an updated hiring system. Additionally, their input will be necessary to develop a system for peer coaching.

Support to restructure the requirements for child care teachers is needed from many entities. Leaders from across the state would need to be involved in developing the structure and enforcement of the Ohio Child Care Endorsement. Their involvement would begin with the presentation of the policy recommendation paper and would be critical in the advancement of the recommendations.

Project Evaluation Plan

Evaluating the project before widely disseminating it is crucial because it could lead to strengthening the overall policy recommendation paper. A formative evaluation tool will assess the overall policy recommendation paper (Appendix A). Evaluative feedback will be solicited from at least two state leaders and two child care center administrators before the recommendations are publicly released. These stakeholders will have an opportunity to evaluate the policy recommendations to ensure the paper is well-developed and includes practical strategies to advance the child care workforce. The feedback received from these stakeholders will be invaluable in ensuring strong policy recommendations. The four stakeholders will review the policy recommendation paper and complete the evaluation survey, which includes open and closed questions. Including both types of questions will provide qualitative and quantitative data that identifies strengths and weaknesses within the policy recommendations. The data will be analyzed

to identify areas of the paper that need revisions before dissemination. The survey includes an area for individuals to identify additional stakeholders to include in the presentation of the paper. Their responses will help to ensure that the right people are involved, and the meeting(s) are truly representative of potentially interested parties. The process of evaluating the policy paper and identifying additional stakeholders before sharing it with a broader audience will be an effective and expedient way to prepare for its dissemination.

Implications for Social Change

Walden University is an advocate for social change and encourages students to become scholar-practitioners who believe in their ability to impact their communities and industries. The research conducted for this project study led to the development of a policy recommendation paper that has the potential to effect positive change in the child care industry within one state. While the results and recommendations cannot be generalized to the entire field, they may be useful to state agencies and child care owners or administrators as they continue working to advance the profession. The study contributes to the literature by offering critical perspectives of child care teachers who are absent from existing research (Gomez et al., 2015; Shdaimah et al., 2018; van Laere & Vandenbroeck, 2017).

The literature review indicates that there is a broad concern for the knowledge and skills child care teachers bring to their interactions with young children (Goffin, 2015; IOM & NRC, 2015; Whitebrook et al., 2018). The purpose of this project study was to understand the experiences and perceptions early-career child care teachers with a high

school diploma or GED and no advanced child development training have about their training experiences. The recommendations made in the policy paper revolve around the implementation of the OCCE. From a social change perspective, the policy recommendation paper will open the door to an idea that has not been a priority in this state. It is a call to action for all early childhood stakeholders to implement a solution to the issue of an under-qualified workforce. The implications of the recommendations are far-reaching because there is an opportunity to fundamentally change the way child care teachers learn their responsibilities and how children learn, grow, and develop in child care settings as a result.

Conclusion

The policy recommendations associated with this research study offer an opportunity to address a gap in practice by advocating for an increase in the educational requirements of a particular segment of the child care workforce. The existing research landscape demonstrates that there is national variation in the entry-level requirements for child care teachers with no advanced training in child development. Should they be adopted, the recommendations that evolved from this study would require all individuals entering Ohio's child care workforce with only a high school diploma or GED to attain a credential that would provide a foundation for ongoing professional growth. Combined with research and data, the policy recommendation paper provides stakeholders with a viable option that builds upon existing quality initiatives within the state.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

In this doctoral study, I explored the perspectives early-career child care teachers who possess only a high school diploma or GED credential have with their training upon entry into the workforce. The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how individuals with limited education and no child development training learn to work with young children. A series of one-on-one interviews with eight child care teachers provided the data for this study. Through analysis of the data, I recognized that their training experiences did little to contribute to skill development, increased knowledge, or the dispositions necessary to provide high-quality child care. The insight gained through the data analysis led to the development of a policy recommendation paper advocating for the implementation of the OCCE. The project incorporates suggestions identified by the study participants and advocates for changing the requirements for entry into the child care workforce. This section includes the project's strengths and limitations, recommendations for future research, and knowledge gained throughout this process. It includes reflection on the significance of the project and its effect on social change.

Project Strengths and Limitations

The existing literature and the research findings frame the final project. Early-career child care teachers indicated that the current online training requirements do not support the development of essential knowledge or skills necessary for their work with young children. Further, data revealed that these young teachers need training opportunities that incorporate adult learning strategies and effective professional development methods. A primary strength of the project is its focus on foundational

training before the beginning of employment, coupled with inservice training once employment has begun. The recommendations include peer coaching, which would enable early-career child care teachers to develop relationships with experienced peers. An additional strength is a recommendation to use training modules that are currently in use, minimizing development costs and implementation time. A third strength focuses on the OCCE alignment with the statewide CDA model, which provides new child care teachers the opportunity to continue their professional development. Lastly, the policy recommendations encourage ongoing collaboration between the state's stakeholders who have a vested interest in adopting measures that lead to positive outcomes for Ohio's children and the child care workforce.

Although the project offers a pathway to support early-career child care teachers, there are some limitations. A limitation of the project is the time it could take for the recommendations to become policy. The legislative process has many potential roadblocks that could keep the endorsement from moving forward. Child care administrators often need to hire quickly to maintain compliance with teacher-child ratios. If the recommendations become law, the administrators may encounter challenges in the hiring process due to such time constraints. The recommended endorsement could also limit the number of individuals who choose to work in child care settings. Some individuals may not be willing to put forth the effort to earn the OCCE. These issues will become less concerning as completion of preservice training becomes the norm for Ohio's child care industry.

The child care field is fraught with interrelated issues, including low wages, high attrition, and inconsistent employment requirements, which are compounded by inconsistent regulatory oversight (Goffin, 2015; Whitebrook et al., 2018)). It is often viewed publicly as unskilled work (Whitebrook et al., 2018). Many local, state, and federal initiatives have yet to effectively address the many issues impacting this profession. In this study, I focused only on the training of child care teachers to address the social change mission.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

Project studies can proceed in a variety of ways. Although the interviews were limited to early-career child care teachers, I could have interviewed administrators to ascertain their perspectives regarding the current online training requirements. It would be interesting to know how they view the effectiveness of the existing requirements. Interviewing administrators would also shed light on the processes they implement to orient new employees. Their views might lead to additional insight that could further inform policy recommendations. An additional option would be to include input from families with children enrolled in child care centers to uncover their experiences with new child care teachers. Involving families who use child care services might add depth to the study results. The perspectives of administrators or families could enhance the study findings and resulting project because they view the issues through very different lenses. Perhaps focus groups with teachers, administrators, or families would have offered a deeper dive into aspects of the training and preparedness of child care teachers. Interviewing teachers with more experience could also yield additional information.

Analyzing data from varying groups might have led to the development of training or curriculum instead of a policy recommendation.

The early childhood education industry is a mixed-delivery system that addresses the needs of children through a broad spectrum of services (Whitebrook et al., 2018). In this study, I focused on a small segment of the industry using qualitative methodology. Because qualitative research requires small participant groups, the findings cannot be generalized across the broader early childhood education profession. A quantitative inquiry would have allowed data to draw from a variety of child care programs (i.e., preschools, school-age programs, or Head Start), which would have enabled me to explore training perspectives more broadly. Additionally, the quantitative methodology would have enabled the investigation of a correlation between different training experiences and readiness to work with young children. An alternative would be to conduct a mixed-methods study using quantitative data and narrative accounts to explore these issues.

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

The journey to a terminal degree is a transformative experience. Roberts (2010) compared it to climbing a mountain where one experiences many challenges but celebrates achievement upon reaching the top. Because of the experience, the individual is forever changed. I would agree with Roberts; I am a different person now than I was at the beginning of this journey. I have learned skills I never thought possible and will use these skills across future endeavors.

Researchers must maintain high ethical standards that protect their study participants and sites. I have learned to address potential ethical issues before they become ethical problems. In the process, I have learned to approach a research problem critically. Ethical practice in research involves detailing every step of the research process. I have accomplished this by synthesizing published research, appropriately crediting the work of others, and consistently monitoring how I process my experiences. I have learned to appreciate the scholarly endeavors of those who have come before me. It is their work that allowed me to identify a gap in practice worthy of researching. I have learned that passion is not enough; a researcher must ground their analysis in the existing literature while consistently monitoring their own biases and assumptions.

Researchers must become familiar with the nuances of academic writing. Scholarly writing demands that the researcher maintain objectivity while describing others' research and analyzing data. I have learned to present ideas clearly and logically to avoid confusion (see Roberts, 2010). Continuously reviewing my writing, focusing on using scholarly language, and following recommendations from my committee facilitated the development of my scholarly voice. I have learned the importance of monitoring my writing to ensure that I allowed the data to guide the project recommendations rather than allowing the project to dictate the data.

Researchers have a responsibility to maintain integrity in their writing and must accurately record the thoughts, ideas, and beliefs of study participants (Lodico et al., 2010). As I developed the policy recommendation paper, I continuously reflected on the interactions I had with the young teachers I interviewed. I paid attention to the data to

ensure that I captured their experiences in ways that made sense and reflected their perspectives. The small group I interviewed helped me to understand how training is perceived, and I recognize that they may not be representative of all child care teachers. I was acutely aware that each individual brings differing experiences, values, and beliefs to their work.

While change is needed in the child care field, the voices of its workforce are often left out of the dialogue (Boyd, 2013; Gomez et al., 2015; Shdaimah et al., 2018; Shpancer et al., 2008; van Laere & Vandenbroeck, 2017). As a scholar and leader, I understood that the voices of the study participants needed to be relayed in a way that demonstrated their perspectives and experiences accurately. Leaders must be willing to call for change when it is warranted, and transformational leaders pursue effective change by facilitating innovation and inspiring a shared vision for the future (Ghasabeh, Soosay, & Reaiche, 2015). I recognized the need for changes to the child care regulations that are driven by insights garnered from the study participants. The policy recommendations support the shared vision stakeholders have to ensure a skilled workforce that enhances the quality of child care.

Analysis of Self as Scholar

Attaining a terminal degree has been a lifelong goal. Throughout the process, I have accepted the myriad of challenges that have presented themselves. I have learned to assess the work of others critically, developed research skills, and uncovered my scholarly voice. I have learned to synthesize literature and analyze participant responses. I have learned to appreciate the many different research methodologies and understand

the characteristics of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research. The process of completing the project study has been a transformational experience. I will apply the skills I have developed in future scholarly work.

Analysis of Self as a Practitioner

As a proponent of the value and importance of early childhood education, it has been my lifelong mission to effect positive change that advances the profession. I am passionate about the individuals who care for and educate young children but have always recognized the challenges that come with choosing to work in the early childhood profession. For these reasons, I chose to complete a doctorate in adult education. As an early childhood professional, experienced trainer, and adult educator, I have an intimate knowledge of the expected competencies for child care work. As a scholar and researcher, I have learned how to apply adult learning theories and strategies that support adult learners. I have come to respect how research supports the goals I, and others, have for moving the early childhood education system forward. Through this process, I have learned the importance of objectivity in the research process and recognize that it is crucial to pay close attention to the voices of researchers, participants, and colleagues.

Analysis of Self as a Project Developer

There were several genres to select from for the project study, including program evaluation, curriculum plan, policy paper, and 3-day professional development program. The choice to develop a policy recommendation paper evolved directly from the data analysis. Participants shared that foundational knowledge and skills were essential for their work with young children, and entering child care work without it was an

overwhelming experience. They also described a need for training to meet their needs as adult learners. Nationally, there is an urgent call by industry leaders to overcome issues of fragmentation and disorganization within the early childhood education field (Goffin, 2015, Whitebrook, et al., 2018). As a project developer, I have presented an option that addresses concerns about an underprepared workforce. While the recommendations will not lead to bachelor's degrees, as is currently being advocated, they will support the individuals who enter child care work without the benefit of training or child development knowledge. The policy recommendations I have developed address these needs in an equitable manner that offers a pathway to move the profession forward.

As a scholar-practitioner, I have learned to address the many facets of effective research. It is critical to understand the connection between conceptual frameworks, research design, ethical research practices, data collection, and data analysis. The ability to make decisions about the research design and analysis are crucial factors that contribute to the existing body of knowledge. The skills I have developed ensure that I can continue to conduct research that positively impacts the early childhood workforce and the children and families we serve.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

In this study, I investigated the perceptions early-career child care teachers with minimal education have concerning their training. In the study state, child care teachers can begin working with young children without the benefit of any advanced training in child development. Training requirements for these individuals are limited and do not adequately prepare them for the work ahead. There is a large body of work indicating that

child care teachers need foundational and specialized knowledge to work with young children (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; IOM & NRC, 2015, Whitebrook et al., 2018). However, there is no overarching agreement that college experiences are the answer (Early, 2007). Individuals interviewed for the study agreed that college education may not be the solution, but they did advocate for training that aligns with current literature related to competencies.

The project study has resulted in a policy recommendation that would ensure that individuals who want to work in child care settings achieve basic knowledge and gain skills necessary for their work before and immediately after employment. The study adds to the body of literature because it is based upon the voices of the individuals doing the work; voices that are not always considered (Boyd, 2013; Gomez et al., 2015; Shpancer et al., 2008). Policy decisions are often made without considering the individuals who must follow them. This project study provides data and a possible solution that ensures the voices of child care teachers are heard.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The early childhood education system is fragmented and heavily influenced by society's failure to recognize it as an essential component of the broader educational system (Bowman et al., 2000; Goffin, 2015; Goffin & Washington, 2019; Whitebrook et al., 2018). Regulatory oversight is maintained at the state level and often involves multiple agencies. This has led to a system of child care that does not prioritize the education of child care teachers in the study state or nationally (Child Care Aware, 2013).

These issues prompted me to investigate the perceptions of early-career child care teachers who possess only a high school diploma or GED. Viewing the workforce through the lens of teachers with less than 2 years of experience brought to light the challenges they have with learning how to do their work. The overall goal was to understand how the current child care training for new teachers helps them to learn their job responsibilities and to understand what they believed would be beneficial for the development of skills and knowledge. Data analysis showed that the participants relied heavily on observational learning and that the two required online training classes were mostly ineffective. Results further showed that these participants understand what knowledge they should possess and desire training that meets their learning needs as adults. The implications of this study show that the teachers believe training is essential, but a college degree is not. The qualitative methodology suggests that phenomena should be investigated using small sample populations (Lodico et al., 2010). I interviewed eight child care teachers from three child care centers. A larger group of participants might have yielded different results and led the project in a different direction.

Ongoing research is essential to understand the many facets of the early childhood education profession. Child care is viewed as unskilled work (Whitebrook et al., 2018). However, a large body of evidence demonstrates that this perception is a fallacy. There are many directions ongoing research could take. Researchers could investigate the strategies being used to orient new child care teachers to their work and their effectiveness. Large-scale research projects could investigate the connection between low wages, attrition rates, and training efforts. Another area that could be researched is the

differences between training for infant/toddler teachers and preschool teachers. Research of that nature would aid in the development of appropriate training practices based upon the different age groups that child care teachers work with. Long-term mixed methods studies that examine the correlation between teacher training and school readiness would support national efforts to professionalize the child care industry. The options for ongoing research are endless but necessary to ensure all children receive high-quality care and education from a skilled workforce.

Conclusion

I pursued this study after recognizing a gap in practice for training early-career child care teachers who have limited education and no child development training. I chose to conduct a phenomenological study because I am deeply committed to understanding the perspectives of individuals who work in child care settings concerning their training. Phenomenology is based on understanding how individuals experience different aspects of their lives and how they relate to those experiences. Interviewing a small sample of child care teachers enabled me to gain insight into how they experienced training. Because of the small sample size, it is up to the reader to decide how the data and policy recommendations align with their values, beliefs, and ideas regarding the child care workforce.

Findings from the study demonstrated that early-career child care teachers with limited education place a high value on observational learning. They feel that current online training requirements do not meet their needs as child care teachers or as adult learners. The study's results can be viewed as a call to action to ensure that new child

care teachers have engaging opportunities to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to work for young children. The study participants felt that hands-on, in-person training was needed to prepare them for child care work. They were explicit in describing the need for child development training before and after employment.

A policy recommendation paper evolved from the study findings. The recommendations advocate for the creation of the OCCE, which would include 20 hours of preservice training, 20 hours of inservice training, and peer coaching. The findings indicated that the child care teachers interviewed felt a pressing need for all early-career child care teachers to have access to extensive training opportunities. With this in mind, the policy paper suggests that the state child care licensing agency should require the OCCE for all individuals desiring a career in child care. While the recommended changes are bold, they are not unattainable.

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Appendix A: The Project

Rethinking Ohio's Training Requirements for Early-career Child Care Teachers

Policy Recommendation Paper

Executive Summary

With a workforce exceeding 36,000 (Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, 2018), a significant number of individuals are working with Ohio's youngest children without the benefit of training or advanced education in child development. Ohio has committed to addressing quality issues in its child care centers by implementing Step Up to Quality (SUTQ). Child care centers receiving public funds are required to be SUTQ rated by 2020 and highly rated by 2025. There are 6,232 licensed child care centers in Ohio (Child Care Aware, 2019); 55.2% of those programs are not required to achieve a SUTQ rating because they do not participate in publicly funded child care programs. Ohio is one of 28 states in which the minimum education requirement for teachers to work in a child care center is a high school diploma or GED certificate (Whitebrook, McLean, Austin, & Edwards, 2018). Fiscal year 2018 workforce data for Ohio's child care centers indicates that 37% of child care teachers possess only a high school diploma or GED certificate. Given the data, it can be assumed that there are a large number of child care centers that employ staff to work with young children without the benefit of foundational knowledge identified as essential for child care work.

However, it is important to recognize that some programs are not required to pursue SUTQ ratings but do achieve star ratings.

There is a large body of evidence indicating that child care teachers need specialized training to develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to care for and educate young children (Gomez, Kagan, & Fox, 2015; Institute of Medicine [IOM] & National Research Council [NRC], 2012; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Whitebrook, 2014). However, researchers have not reached a consensus about the format of such specialized training; there is research that indicates that college degrees may not be the only answer (Early et al., 2007). Mitigating factors such as low wages and attrition play a role as individuals with college degrees are more likely to seek work in public preschools where the wages and benefits are much better (Totenhagen et al., 2016; Whitebrook, Phillips, & Howes, 2014). Further, achieving a college degree may place a financial burden on individuals working in child care settings where the wages are among the lowest among all occupations, including farmworkers and the fast-food industry (Whitebrook et al., 2014). In Ohio, the average wage for a child care worker is $9.86 per hour and has not increased since 2015 (Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, 2018). There is no “quick-fix” for addressing the issues of qualifications, low wages, and attrition in the child care industry. Scholars have made many policy recommendations to address these concerns, but few have developed workable solutions.

The early childhood education field has evolved from a perception of custodial care to one that recognizes the importance of specialized training (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Whitebook, 2014). It is a field that is described as fragmented and in need of

professionalization (Goffin, 2015). Research into the development of young children has consistently shown the benefits of a well-qualified workforce (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2000; IOM & NRC, 2015; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2006; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Inconsistent regulations mark child care, and many states have minimal educational requirements (Child Care Aware of America, 2017; IOM & NRC, 2015; Whitebook, McLean, & Austin, 2016). It is essential to understand the training experiences of child care teachers with minimal education to increase their knowledge, skills, and dispositions. However, an in-depth search of the current literature has resulted in limited sources that focus specifically on the training needs of child care teachers entering the workforce with only a high school diploma or GED.

A recent research study conducted with early-career child care teachers in central Ohio sought to uncover the experiences they had with training and learning the work of child care. The phenomenological study included two 90-minute interviews with eight female teachers who possessed only a high school diploma or GED credential, had less than 2 years of experience working in child care settings, and no training or advanced education in child development. Most of the individuals completed the required online orientation and one-hour online child abuse courses within the first week of employment. Additionally, they had opportunities to observe and shadow peers to learn about the daily operations and routines of their assigned classrooms.

The results of the study demonstrate a disconnect between the new child care teachers and their need to understand the child care licensing rules, child development,

child behavior, interacting with children, and working with families. The teachers claimed that the training they received was boring and did not consider their learning styles. Most stated that they did not retain the information from the online training, and they expressed a preference for in-person, instructor-facilitated training was common. The teachers identified a lengthy list of training topics they felt would better support their development of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to care for young children (Appendix A).

As a result of this study, it is apparent that early-career teachers need more. They expressed a desire to engage in training with other individuals where they have opportunities to share experiences and seek support. They described a need for relevant training that builds their foundational knowledge and extends well-beyond a few hours of online, solitary learning. Based on the study, recommendations for the revision of existing training requirements focus on requiring all individuals who aspire to work in Ohio's child care centers to obtain an Ohio Child Care Endorsement (OCCE). The OCCE includes 20 hours of preservice training to be completed before employment, 20 hours of inservice training to be completed within 90 days of employment, and peer coaching for the first six months of employment.

The IOM and NRC (2015) identified two categories of knowledge and competencies needed to work with young children. First, they described foundational knowledge that is necessary to work with children and second, specialized training that focuses on the knowledge and competencies essential to engage children in high-quality learning opportunities (IOM & NRC, 2015). If Ohio required preservice training for

individuals entering the child care workforce without the benefit of advanced education, the teachers would begin their careers with a foundation that would support the growth and development of young children. Continuing with inservice training and peer coaching would establish a workforce capable of providing high-quality care and education to all of Ohio's young children. To further their education, completion of the OCCE could be a bridge into a full 120-hour Child Development Associate (CDA) credential program. The OCCE could have potential long-term benefits for the state's child care industry, its employees, and the children and families who receive child care services.

Background: The Underpinnings of Early Care and Education in the U.S.

The early childhood education industry evolved from two separate traditions, one focused on care for children of working parents while the other focused on early learning (Whitebook et al., 2016). In the 19th Century, day nurseries became a means of providing care for children of low-income families with a primary purpose of providing a place that protected children while their single or widowed mothers worked (Cohen, 1996; Lascarides & Hinitz, 2011). Day nurseries were lacking in financial and personnel resources, resulting in a form of custodial care limited in its ability to provide nutritional meals, manage the number of children per adult, or include educational activities for the children (Cohen, 1996). As a result, no standards were emphasized, and the qualifications of the caregivers who worked in day nurseries were lacking. Day nurseries provided necessary support during the industrial revolution and later as the nation saw a dramatic influx of immigrants, and they evolved into today's child care centers (Cohen, 1996; Feeney, Moravcik, & Nolte, 2016).

While the day nurseries offered services for impoverished families, nursery schools began to provide facilities and programs aimed at affluent families in the early 1900s (Cohen, 1996). Their purpose was to provide education for children that would help them become successful in the future (Cohen, 1996). Nursery schools were commonly associated with colleges and universities and were used as sites for observation and research related to the study of child development (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2011). The term *nursery school* was coined in England by McMillan, who envisioned a place where adults learned about working with children through practice. Thus, student teaching derived from nursery schools in the early 20th Century (Liebovich, 2016). During the depression, the Works Progress Administration implemented funding for Emergency Nursery Schools to support unemployed teachers and offset the physical and mental effects of the Depression (Michel, 2011). Because unemployed teachers mostly staffed the schools, they took on an educational perspective that the day nurseries did not have. Today's public preschool system has evolved from the nursery schools (Cohen, 1996).

As women continued to enter the workforce in the latter part of the 1900s, the need for child care services continued to grow, and a shift toward increasing quality emerged (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2011). Large and small-scale studies began to find a positive relationship between high-quality early childhood programs and child outcomes (NICHD, 2000; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Travers, Goodson, Singer, & Connell, 1980). Specifically, Travers et al. found a relationship between caregiver behavior and children's test scores that showed that teachers with specialized education were more

actively engaged with children than teachers without such training. By 2000, research supporting the benefits of high-quality care and teacher education had been so sufficiently documented that Shonkoff and Phillips (2000) proclaimed, “The general question of whether early childhood programs can make a difference has been asked and answered in the affirmative innumerable times. This generic query is no longer worthy of further investigation” (p. 379).

The seminal works, *Eager to Learn* (Bowman et al., 2000) and *Neurons to Neighborhoods* (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000), laid the groundwork recognizing the growing science of child development and its connection to the field of early childhood education. Both works emphasized the importance of increasing educational qualifications for early childhood teachers and encouraged federal policy to address the issue (Bowman et al., 2000; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). While there is no federal policy regarding the qualifications of child care teachers currently, advances have occurred at state levels. QRISs have been implemented in 41 states, but they vary widely regarding teacher qualifications and professional development requirements (The Build Initiative & Child Trends, 2019).

With a rich and diverse history, the U.S. early childhood education system continues to be fragmented between private child care and publicly funded preschool (Goffin, 2015). Private child care programs have minimal requirements for their teachers in 28 states (Whitebrook et al., 2018), while public preschool teachers are required to have a bachelor’s degree in all states (Whitebook et al., 2014). The disparity between the child care and public early childhood education systems has led to a view that caring for

our youngest children is not as highly valued as educating children in public schools (IOM & NRC, 2015; Whitebook et al., 2014; Whitebrook et al., 2018). The child care workforce is undervalued, underpaid, and under-prepared for the work of caring for and educating young children (Whitebook et al., 2018).

Ohio's Child Care System is Equally Fragmented

As does most of the country, Ohio has a public-private child care system. Child care centers and family child care providers are private and are primarily independently owned. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) provides oversight for these programs. Public preschools are available in most school districts across the state. These programs are licensed by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE). Head Start programs are licensed by (ODJFS) and follow extensive federal mandates.

SUTQ complicates matters because the requirements differ if the programs are licensed by ODJFS or ODE. For example, all ODE preschools are required to have four or five star SUTQ ratings. Whereas, ODJFS programs participating in publicly funded child care (PFCC) are required to have at least a two-star or higher rating by 2020 and at least a three-star rating by 2025. These policies do not account for 55.2% of child care centers that do not participate in PFCC. Additionally, the education requirements for programs that are SUTQ rated vary widely depending upon the rating. While 2018 workforce data indicates that 37% of Ohio's child care teachers possess only a high school diploma or GED certificate, it is likely that the number does not account for every child care teacher in the state. Given these concerns, the OCCE is a viable option to

ensure Ohio's children receive high-quality care and education from child care teachers who have strong foundational knowledge.

Methodology

Positioned against the national outcry for increased education and bachelor's degrees for early childhood teachers, the lack of qualifications or training requirements in this state represents a gap in practice. While there is extensive evidence that training and professional development is the most effective method of preparing individuals to work with young children, there is limited scientific research about what forms of training or professional development are most appropriate for individuals entering the workforce with limited education or training (Buysse, Winton, & Rous, 2009). Missing from the research is a consensus regarding the knowledge and skills necessary for teachers to provide high-quality care and education (Brown & Englehardt, 2016). Furthermore, there is a lack of research focused specifically on individuals who enter the workforce without advanced education.

The purpose of this study was to explore how early-career child care teachers with no advanced education in child development experience training upon entering the child care workforce. Phenomenological research aims to gain deep insight from the perspective of individuals who describe, in detail, their experiences during a specific period of their lives (Clark, 2000). Phenomenology was selected because research directly related to child care teachers' experiences is limited (Gomez et al., 2015). "It still remains the exception rather than the norm for research attention to be paid to professionals' own understandings of current and proposed practice" (Sheridan, Edwards,

Marvin, & Knoche, 2009, p. 392). To design relevant and training and professional development, teacher's experiences must be understood (Dall'Alba & Sandberg, 2006). Research that focuses on understanding how professionals acquire the understanding that translates to effective practice is essential (Sheridan et al., 2009). This study adds to the literature by sharing child care teachers' perspectives and experiences about training as they entered the child care workforce.

Two primary research questions framed the study:

RQ1: How do child care teachers without advanced education in child development describe their training experiences upon entry into the workforce?

RQ2: How do early-career child care teachers describe their long-term training needs?

Regarding RQ1, the teachers were asked to describe what types of training they received upon entry into the field because there is a need to understand their experiences with training. Knowing if they perceived the training they received as beneficial and relevant provided data that was used to recommend new, more appropriate training. RQ2 focused on what teachers identified as their ongoing training needs after they had been in the field for some time. In-depth questions sought to understand the experience of early-career child care teachers. The goal was to understand the contexts from which they approach their work with young children. It was anticipated that some commonalities would arise when analyzing the data, which could be incorporated into a training model, professional development, or public policy.

The results of this study have provided insight into the experiences and perceptions of early-career child care teachers that were utilized to make recommendations to revise the current training requirements described in this policy paper.

Structure of data collection

Homogenous sampling was utilized to ensure participants had specific defining characteristics. Eight female participants were recruited from ODJFS licensed child care centers that were not SUTQ rated in central Ohio. The participants had no advanced education beyond a high school diploma or a GED credential, less than 2 years of employment, and no child development training. Length of employment was an essential factor for this study because the experiences teachers have upon beginning work are more readily recalled than those of a teacher who has worked for many years. Each study participant was interviewed twice for 60-90 minutes each time, which allowed for relationships to unfold naturally and provided participants time to reflect on their experiences between interviews. The interviews were semistructured, which provided opportunities for flexibility throughout the interview process (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2015).

Standard practices for ethical research were followed consistently. IRB approval was received before conducting any recruitment or research. All participants were provided with and signed consent forms explaining the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to confidentiality.

Summary of Findings

The objective of this project study was to explore the perceptions of early-career child care teachers who enter the workforce without experience or training. Through one-on-one interviews, the teachers provided insight into their experiences, thoughts, and ideas regarding the training they received, what they believe they still need to know, and what knowledge is essential for their work.

Three of the participants were recent high school graduates and were working in their first jobs. Their lack of experience and maturity was evident in many of their responses as they seemed to expect the administrators to initiate opportunities for asking questions or learning more about the child care center operations. Only one participant was over 30; the differences between her and the other participants was noticeable. She was more intentional in her responses and was able to think more critically about the questions that were presented. Life experiences, such as having parents who did not complete college may have influenced the participants' lack of motivation for higher education. Additionally, societal views of child care as non-skilled work were relevant for some participants who identified child care as a trade rather than a profession. Overall, the participants provided an opportunity to explore their entry-level child care experiences, but there would likely be different results with more experienced participants.

The teachers explained that they had basic qualifications such as babysitting experience, enjoying children, and being mothers. These qualifications are not supported by a large body of evidence that shows child care teachers need to develop a complex set

of competencies in order to provide high-quality care and education for young children (Gomez et al., 2015; National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009; The Council for Professional Recognition, 2013). Through two semistructured interviews, each individual acknowledged this by identifying what additional knowledge they needed. They described needing in-depth knowledge of child development, child care licensing rules, managing behavior, and working with families.

The teachers described their entry into the workforce using terms such as "trial and error" and "they just threw me in." They described this process as overwhelming and even a bit scary. The experiences they described are not unique. In their study of 18 child care teachers with limited training and education, Nicholson and Reifel (2011) found that teachers were figuring out how to work with children through their experiences, watching other teachers, and posing questions. The participants in this study mirrored Nicholson and Reifel's (2011) findings by explaining that they relied on observing and shadowing other teachers to learn the schedules, routines, and responsibilities associated with child care work. The participants' experiences make a case for ensuring Ohio's child care system provides a way for child care centers to build a hierarchy of appropriately trained teachers to coach new employees.

In the context of their daily work, the teachers shared that the online training they were required to take did not meet their needs. For these individuals, the online environment was unengaging and did not support the retention of information. The teachers explained that they needed opportunities for hands-on learning in classroom settings with other individuals. The need for interaction with instructors, administrators,

and colleagues is supported by the literature, which indicates that interaction is a primary principle for online learning (Allen, 2016). Additionally, they indicated a preference for taking basic training before working with children that continued once they were employed. Their rationale was that they needed to be experiencing the work to truly be able to apply what they were learning to the classroom and children. They seemed to be describing a community of learners in which they could work with other early-career teachers. Knowing that these child care teachers have a preference for face-to-face, interactive training establishes a base from which to explore alternatives to the current training requirements for early-career child care teachers in Ohio.

All of the participants agreed that ongoing training is essential. The teachers referred back to aspects they wished they had known upon employment to identify what they still need to know. They described a desire for face-to-face, collaborative learning opportunities for future learning. It was interesting to discover that the teachers did not think a college education was necessary for their work, which is counter to current national discussions recommending that early childhood professionals have bachelor's degrees (Whitebrook, 2014). It is also interesting to note that several participants indicated that an associate's degree would be more appropriate than a four-year degree. They indicated that an associate's degree would be more fitting because it focuses on developing the appropriate knowledge and skills. The teachers discussed child care as a trade versus a profession and emphasized that education for child care teachers should include opportunities for practical application. Both two- and four-year degree programs tend to include field experiences or student teaching, which allow students to apply what

they are learning in supervised environments. However, child care teachers who do not pursue these options do not have such opportunities.

Overall, the interviews with this group of early-career child care teachers demonstrated that the existing training does not adequately build the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for high-quality child care. Analysis of the data included in this study indicates that the participants desire learning opportunities aligned with their learning styles, including hands-on, face-to-face learning.

Literature Review

Research consistently suggests that early childhood professionals should have bachelor's degrees (Bowman et al., 2000; Phillips, Austin, & Whitebook, 2016; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). In their seminal work, *Eager to Learn,* Bowman et al., (2000) recommended that early childhood teachers have bachelor's degrees that include early childhood specialized education and incorporate student teaching and field experience. There is significant evidence that the knowledge gained from higher education leads to positive and lasting impacts on young children. An emerging alternative perspective proposes that a bachelor's degree may not stand alone as a factor in improving quality and child outcomes (Ritblatt, Garrity, Longstreth, Hokoda, & Potter, 2013). Early et al. (2007) conducted a meta-analysis of studies that sought to predict classroom quality and child outcomes based upon the education of preschool teachers and found no significant association. The authors recommended a broad range of learning opportunities and supports for teachers aimed at teacher-child interactions rather than dictating bachelor's degrees (Early et al., 2007). Bowman (2011) cautioned against a bachelor's degree

mandate given that some independent studies show no consistent connection between child outcomes and teacher education. Policymakers, researchers, and educators are currently exploring what supports and training early childhood educators need to achieve successful child outcomes (Ritblatt et al., 2013).

The study participants consistently expressed a need for training that meets their needs as adult learners. They identified a desire for hands-on, interactive opportunities to gain the skills and knowledge necessary to provide high-quality child care. Adults arrive at learning situations with their life experiences and, as such, approach learning situations in different ways. The study participants indicated that their training did not incorporate active learning strategies that would enhance their understanding and ability to use what they learned in the classroom. As with children, adults express various learning styles and often prefer more hands-on, engaging strategies for their professional development (Ackerman, 2017). It is not possible to view all adult learners through one lens, but it is essential to recognize some of their common characteristics (Galbraith, 2004). While there are many theories about adult learning, the most prevalent is Knowles' theory of andragogy (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2015).

Because these participants entered the workforce with no training or advanced education, it can be assumed that they had a need and desire to understand their responsibilities. The training they received included opportunities for observation and completion of online classes and was described as lacking. It would seem that the adult learning characteristics outlined by Knowles et al. (2015) are critical factors to consider.

It is also necessary to factor in how learners use what they have learned in their daily work.

Mezirow's theory of transformational learning is relevant to this discussion because it considers how and why adults retain and use the knowledge gained in a learning setting. Mezirow (2000) espoused that adults learn best when their frames of reference or points of view are tested. Griffith and Ballard (2016) explained that transformative learning takes place when one's thoughts, feelings, values, and beliefs are challenged through problem-solving and critical reflection. Mezirow's ideas translate well into hands-on learning opportunities such as role-play and interactive activities that support the developing student-teacher relationship (Griffith and Ballard, 2016).

The teachers involved in this study had limited opportunities for hands-on or active learning. They shared that information discussed in the online setting was challenging to retain. They described how observing and speaking with their peers helped them make sense of and remember what was presented during the online training sessions they completed. Additionally, they explained that opportunities to safely practice emerging skills would have better supported them in the initial weeks of employment.

Kolb's theory of experiential learning is particularly relevant when considering professional development and training. Kolb developed the experiential learning cycle and identified basic learning styles to demonstrate how individuals progress through dimensions of learning to construct knowledge (Kolb, 1984). Individuals express learning styles by experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting upon learning situations continuously (McCarthy, 2016).

Teachers interviewed for this study indicated that the online training they were required to take was not meaningful or helpful in supporting their acquisition of knowledge or skills. It is possible that the existing online training in Ohio is ineffective because it is asynchronous and lacks interactive opportunities; factors also highlighted by the study participants. It is important to consider what structural elements should be implicit in online training for it to be effective. Allen (2016) identified four principles for the development of online courses that should be considered:

1. Customizing courses to incorporate learners' needs, experiences, and interests;
2. Supporting the construction of knowledge versus the transmission of information;
3. Building opportunities for peer-to-peer and learner-instructor interaction; and,
4. Ensuring an authentic learning environment.

These factors exhibit facets of the adult learning theories espoused by Knowles et al. (2015), Mezirow (2000), and Kolb (1984) previously discussed. These factors and the input of the study participants led to the recommendations included in this paper.

Policy Options

Based on the results of this study, it is recommended that ODJFS adopt the Ohio Child Care Endorsement (OCCE). The policy recommendations suggest that ODJFS should work with other stakeholders to develop legislation that would mandate individuals who possess only a high school diploma or GED who are seeking child care employment to participate in the OCCE program. Table 1 identifies several options to increase the educational qualifications of Ohio's child care teachers. Each option has

positive and negative implications. A detailed description of each option follows the table.

Table 1:

Options for child care training

Options	Description	Pros	Cons
Option 1: Maintain status quo	6-hour online orientation within 30 days 1-hour online child abuse course within 60 days	New child care teachers gain an overview of licensing regulations and an understanding of mandated reporting laws.	Passive learning that requires reading a computer screen. Limited interaction with an administrator to review the training.
Option 2: 40 hour preservice/inservice endorsement	6-hour online orientation within 30 days 1-hour online child abuse course within 60 days 20 hours of preservice training to be eligible for hire 20 hours of inservice training; completed within 6 months of employment Training would roll over into a full CDA program	Maintaining the current requirements would ensure that all child care employees receive the same information when beginning employment Preservice training would provide foundational knowledge Inservice training would specialized specialized knowledge If the individual opts to complete a full CDA program quality and child outcomes would increase Child care centers are better positioned to achieve higher SUTQ	Child care centers may not be able to hire immediately Increasing capacity of existing CDA program Time and work to revise existing child care licensing rules Cost of marketing and advertising to develop an awareness campaign Implementing changes to the Ohio Professional Registry

		ratings because they have staff with a CDA CDA program is currently available through the Ohio Child Care Resource and Referral Association and some community colleges TEACH scholarship funding is available for the CDA program	
Option 3: 40 hour preservice/inservice endorsement with peer coaching	6-hour online orientation within 30 days 1-hour online child abuse course within 60 days 20 hours of preservice training to be eligible for hire 20 hours of inservice training within 90 days of employment Peer coaching for six months Career and Technical Schools incorporate OCCE into the Teaching Professions curriculum Training would roll over into a full CDA program	Maintaining the current requirements would ensure that all child care employees receive the same information when beginning employment Preservice training would provide foundational knowledge Inservice training would provide specialized knowledge Coaching would support new teachers as they develop knowledge, skills, and dispositions High school seniors in Career and Technical programs would possess the OCCE upon graduation Child Care centers are better positioned to achieve higher SUTQ ratings because they have staff with a CDA	Time and cost to develop a system for training coaches Child care centers may not be able to hire immediately Increasing capacity of existing CDA program Time and work to revise existing child care licensing rules Cost of marketing and advertising to develop an awareness campaign Implementing changes to the Ohio Professional Registry

		If the individual opts to complete a full CDA program quality and child outcomes would increase CDA program is currently available through the Ohio Child Care Resource and Referral Association and some community colleges TEACH scholarship funding is available for the CDA	

Option 1

This option is the current process for entry-level child care teachers. Currently, Ohio's child care teachers are not required to have any training or advanced education when they enter the workforce. The child care regulations require all teachers, regardless of their educational qualifications, to complete an online orientation training within 30 days of hire. The training is eligible for six hours of professional development and can be used to meet annual training requirements (ODJFS, 2017a). Additionally, teachers are required to complete a 1-hour online child abuse course within 60 days of hire. Individuals who have completed a full 6-hour child abuse course or who have a current 3-hour refresher course are exempt from the one-hour training (ODJFS, 2017b).

According to Ohio's child care rules, all child care staff members must complete a minimum of six hours of training each fiscal year; the orientation and child abuse courses meet this requirement in the first year of employment. If hired between January and June, child care staff members have until the end of the following fiscal year to meet this

requirement. (ODJFS, 2017a). An individual entering the child care workforce without the benefit of advanced education is not required to have training in child development or other aspects of working with children. Given the caveat regarding hire dates, a child care teacher can work for up to 18 months without any training beyond the orientation and child abuse courses. It is important to note that centers participating in SUTQ have increased training requirements for their employees based upon their star rating.

New child care teachers complete the online requirements independently. It is a passive learning situation in which the trainee must watch videos and listen to someone read slides. Study participants who took these training courses described them as bland and redundant. Additionally, they strongly advocated for in-person training where they could work with an instructor and other teachers to ask questions and share ideas or experiences. Participants in the study indicated that the current online training courses do not meet their needs as adult learners, fail to help them understand their job responsibilities, and do not support their acquisition of the knowledge and skills necessary for their work.

Option 2

Option two suggests the implementation of a preservice/inservice model. In this situation, individuals who possess only a high school diploma or GED credential who want to work in child care settings would be required to complete 20 hours of preservice training to be eligible for hire by a child care center. Once hired, individuals would then be required to complete an additional 20-hours of inservice training within 6 months of employment. Completion of the 40 hours of training would lead to an Ohio Child Care

Endorsement administered through the Ohio Professional Registry (OPR) by the Ohio Child Care Resource and Referral Association (OCCRRA). For interested individuals, the completed training would then roll over into a full CDA program. Teachers earning their endorsement would still need to complete the required online orientation and child abuse courses. Maintaining these requirements ensures that all teachers receive the same information upon entering the workforce, regardless of their qualifications.

OCCRRA has developed a complete CDA program that is delivered across the state in a variety of formats. The program includes 135 clock hours and supports participants in developing a professional portfolio, which is required by the Council for Professional Recognition to earn the credential. The clock hours include nine 15-hour courses that address the CDA functional areas. The preservice training suggested in Options 2 and 3 represent five hours of training from four CDA courses. The inservice training identified in Options 2 and 3 represent five hours of training from an additional four CDA courses (Appendix B). Utilizing the existing CDA model would present cost savings because the content has already been developed and trained instructors are available through OCCRRA and the Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&R).

Option 3

This model for the Ohio Child Care Endorsement includes 20 hours of preservice and 20 hours of inservice training, as described in the second option. However, there are two differences. New employees would be required to complete the inservice training within 90 days instead of six months. A significant difference is the addition of peer

coaching for a minimum of six months. The training provides teachers with foundational knowledge and begins to introduce specialized knowledge. The role of the peer coach would be to provide support and feedback to the early-career teachers that would aid them in utilizing the knowledge and skills gained in the training as they are working directly with children and families in the child care setting. The currently required orientation and child abuse training would continue to be mandated. Students enrolled in Ohio's Career and Technical Schools' Teaching Professions programs would complete the OCCE as part of their curriculum, which would allow them to graduate with the endorsement. As with option two, this option aligns with the full CDA program, which would enable individuals to earn a widely recognized professional credential.

Recommendation

Although three options have been described, option three is the most valuable for Ohio's child care programs, teachers, and children. Maintaining the status quo does little to increase the quality of child care teachers or the quality of care young children receive. Individuals interviewed for this study indicated that the current training does not give them enough knowledge and that it does not encourage retention. The addition of peer coaching in option three offers another layer of training and support for early-career teachers.

The recommended preservice and inservice training is derived directly from the existing statewide CDA model developed by OCCRRA and the CCR&Rs. The content of the OCCE represents segments of each course in the statewide CDA model which is research-based. The training addresses the CDA functional areas and includes

competencies widely cited in the research. OCCRRA and its member agencies have a large contingency of well-qualified trainers who are early childhood professionals with extensive knowledge. They are well-versed in the principles of adult learning and would be able to present highly engaging training.

The incorporation of peer coaching would address young teachers' need for support while working directly with children. Sheridan et al. (2009) found a consensus among researchers that on-the-job coaching supports the acquisition of new skills. Evidence and participant views indicate that having a support system is a valuable practice that would help early-career child care teachers learn necessary skills, knowledge, and dispositions. Peer coaching is a viable option for child care centers because it tends to be a low cost and impactful process that supports both emerging and veteran teachers (Parker, Kram & Hall, 2014; Parker, Wasserman, Kram, & Hall, 2015).

The adoption of the Ohio Child Care Endorsement would be a positive strategy that would move Ohio's child care workforce forward. However, it will take the collaboration of multiple agencies and individuals to more the project forward.

Implementation

One or more meetings will be scheduled with the leadership of appropriate state agencies. The purpose of the meeting(s) will be to share the results of the study, introduce the policy recommendations, and begin a dialogue aimed at advancing the early childhood workforce. Change is complex and challenging (Kotter, 1995), but the opportunity to have a positive impact on Ohio's early childhood system is real. There are multiple steps involved in revising the existing child care regulations, and collaboration

between agencies is a must. As the agency responsible for licensing child care centers, ODJFS should take the lead. OCCRRA will be an essential partner because they manage the Ohio Professional Registry that would award the OCCE credential to child care teachers. OCCRRA's system of CCR&Rs currently administer and deliver the statewide CDA model.

Input from additional stakeholders such as the Ohio Association for the Education of Young Children (OAEYC), Groundwork Ohio, Ohio Career Technical Schools, child care administrators, and owners, and representatives of other child-serving agencies is also necessary. Once the project is fully developed, supportive members of the state legislature will need to be identified. Representatives of Groundwork Ohio, an advocacy organization, are the key to championing the proposed legislation and identifying key members of state government who support the implementation of the OCCE. Together, the identified organizations and the legislators will move the project through the legislature and make the recommendation to the Governor's office. The process is not without challenges, but it is achievable.

In addition to working through all of the minutiae, the stakeholders will need to develop a process for transitioning from the current training requirements OCCE. Attention to all of the details will ensure that all options are considered. The process to fully develop the OCCE and create the appropriate legislation could take several years. Assuming the OCCE becomes the law, additional instructors may need to be identified and trained. While an extensive network of trainers already exists, capacity building may be necessary to ensure there is not a long waiting period for individuals to complete the

required preservice training. Ideally, there will be a 1-year transition period to build the cadre of trainers and train peer coaches identified by the child care centers. The child care center administrators will need to be alerted of the upcoming changes as the implementation deadline approaches. ODJFS has the mechanisms in place to ensure all child care programs are informed of changes to the licensing regulations.

Conclusion

Ohio's educational qualifications for child care teachers are minimal and put entry-level professionals who possess only a high school diploma or GED credential at a disadvantage. Individuals who are hired to work with young children without the benefit of child development training have only their family, babysitting, or parenthood experiences to guide them as they enter the workforce. The study participants described being "thrown in" and using "trial and error" to navigate their first weeks of employment. For these women, observation was a primary learning tool as they worked alongside experienced coworkers. They identified a need for foundational knowledge that is supported by existing literature (see IOM & NRC, 2015). The currently required online training for new child care teachers does not include such foundational knowledge. The study participants highlighted a need for hands-on, interactive training that supports adult learners.

Maintaining the status quo of two online training classes does little to support the incoming workforce, which may result in subpar early learning experiences for Ohio's youngest children. The OCCE provides an alternate path that would strengthen the quality of the child care workforce. Setting a mandate that all individuals seeking child

care employment must complete 20 hours of preservice training before being hired would demonstrate that Ohio values the child care workforce. Requiring early-career teachers to complete an additional 20 hours of inservice training once employed, would ensure that newly hired teachers attain additional knowledge and skills while having opportunities to apply what they are learning in the classroom. Including peer coaching for the first six months of employment offers an additional layer of support that could reduce attrition and increase child care quality.

The development and implementation of the OCCE will require collaboration between multiple state agencies and child-serving organizations that already work together to identify and develop new initiatives aimed at improving outcomes for Ohio's children. Together, they can ensure that strong recommendations encourage the legislature to adopt the OCCE. Establishing a cohesive system for the development of the child care workforce would demonstrate Ohio's ongoing commitment to a child care workforce that ensures all children have access to high-quality child care experiences.

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Appendix A: Knowledge a child care teacher should have

Topic	Sarah	Allison	Jessica	Catherine	Emily	Kim	Amy	Dawn
Child abuse			x	x				
Child development	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Classroom management					x	x		
CPR					x	x		x
Curriculum								x
Developmental milestones	x			x	x			x
Discipline/guidance	x	x			x	x	x	x
Emotional development			x		x			
First aid				x	x	x		x
How do children learn?	x	x	x					
How to run a center	x							
Hygiene			x					
Interacting with families	x			x	x		x	x
Lesson planning				x	x	x		
Licensing regulations	x		x	x			x	x
Managing illness	x			x				
Nutrition/feeding				x	x			
Responding to emergencies			x			x		
Routines/Schedules				x	x			
Teacher/child interaction		x	x		x	x		x
Teaching strategies	x		x		x			x

Team building			x		
Toilet training	x			x	x
Understanding the standards			x	x	
What to teach to different age groups		x		x	

Appendix B: Ohio Child Care Endorsement Training

Preservice training – 20 hours	
Course title	Content
Maintaining a commitment to professionalism 5 clock hours	• NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct • Utilizing professional literature for professional growth • Identifying the Ohio Early Learning and Development Standards
Principles of child development and learning 5 clock hours	• Developmental domains and how they affect the growth and development of the whole child • Factors that may influence child development • Introduction to developmental milestones
Positive ways to support social-emotional development 5 clock hours	• Understanding attachment theory supporting healthy attachment • Temperament and child development • Creating an emotionally safe classroom environment • Using positive talk and guidance with children and families
Planning a safe and healthy learning environment	• Maintaining a safe environment

5 clock hours	• Understanding the legal requirements regarding child abuse • Maintaining a sanitary environment and encouraging self-help skills for handwashing and oral health

Inservice training – 20 hours	
Course title	Content
Strategies to establish productive relationships with families 5 clock hours	• Recognizing families as the child's primary educator and list ways to support families in that role • The importance of a positive caregiver/family alliance • Understanding how child-rearing practices may affect caregiver/family relationship
Observing and recording children's behavior 5 clock hours	• Identify goals, benefits, and purposes of observation • How to apply knowledge to the use of observation and documentation • Demonstrate an understanding of objective vs. subjective

Steps to advance physical and intellectual development 5 clock hours	• Understanding the importance of being familiar with the Ohio Early Learning and Development Standards • Identifying factors which influence how a teacher must meet the needs of individual children • Define and explain gross and fine motor for young children • Explain the importance of physical activity
Strategies to manage an effective program operation 5 clock hours	• The importance of the teacher's role as a member of an educational team • Maintaining positive and productive interpersonal relationships • The impact of collaboration in planning and providing a quality program

Appendix C: Policy Recommendation Paper Evaluation Survey

Your feedback is greatly appreciated!

Participant name:

_____

Workplace:

_____

Job title:

_____

Part I:

Please identify your response to each item on a scale of 1 to 5.

1 – Strongly agree

2 – Agree

3 – Neutral

4 – Disagree

5 – Strongly disagree

1. The paper was logically constructed.

1 2 3 4 5

2. The purpose of the policy recommendations was clearly identified.

1 2 3 4 5

3. Cited research supports the policy recommendation.

1 2 3 4 5

4. The policy paper is easy to follow and understand.

1 2 3 4 5

Part II

Please share any thoughts and ideas you have after reviewing the policy recommendation paper with as much detail as possible.

1. Describe any new information ideas that you gained from reading the policy recommendation paper.

2. Do you believe the recommendations presented in the paper would be achievable? Please explain your response.

3. Please share any additional feedback or comments about the policy recommendation paper.

4. Please identify stakeholders you feel should be included in the dissemination of this policy recommendation paper.

Appendix B: Ohio Department of Job and Family Services Licensed Child care Centers, Licking County, Ohio

Program name	Ages program is licensed to care for
Adventures in Learning Child Care Center	Infant – School Age
All-Star Preschool, LLC	Infant – School Age
Almost Home Daycare, LLC	Infant – School Age
Bright Beginnings Child care, LLC	Infant – School Age
Bright Start Learning Center	Infant – School Age
Childtime Learning Center	Infant – School Age
Creative Minds Learning Center, LLC	Infant – School Age
Granville Child Care Center	Infant – Preschool
Happy Hearts Child Care Center	Infant – Preschool
Happy Little Hearts, Inc.	Infant – Toddler
Kindercare Learning Center	Infant – School Age
Lasting Impressions	Infant – School Age
Licking County Family YMCA Child Care	Infant – Preschool
Little Blessings Academy, Ltd.	Infant – School Age
Little Einstein Learning Center	Infant – Preschool
Little Village Academy	Infant – School Age
Love and Learning Child Care Center, LLC	Infant – Preschool
Milestones Learning Center	Infant – School Age
Montessori Community School, LLC	Infant – School Age
My Place Child Care and School Age Center, LLC	Infant – School Age
Noah's Ark Creative Care	Infant – School Age
Noah's Ark East	Infant – School Age
Over the Rainbow Children's Center	Infant – School Age
Pride-n-Joy Preschool, Inc.	Infant – School Age
Rainbow Child Care Center	Infant – School Age
World of Wonderment Child Development Center	Infant – Preschool

Appendix C: Telephone Script for Initial Contact with Gatekeepers

"My name is Teri Peasley and I am a doctoral student at Walden University. I am seeking potential participants for my research study which involves interviewing child care teachers who have a high school diploma or GED but do not have any college experience. Do you employ teachers who meet these criteria that have been with you for less than two years?"

If a "no" response is received: Thank the administrator for their time.

If a "yes" response is received: "I am interested in interviewing your teachers who meet the requirements I mentioned. Would you be willing to provide their contact information? I will need their name and telephone number so I can invite them to participate in the study. In addition, I am required to have you sign a Letter of Cooperation. This letter provides documentation that you have agreed to provide contact information for your employees who meet the eligibility requirements. I will email you the letter and an electronic signature is all I need. Do you have questions for me?"

Appendix D: Telephone Script

"Hello _____. My name is Teri Peasley and I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University. Your administrator, _____, gave me your contact information. Is this a good time to talk? I am contacting you to invite you to participate in my doctoral study. You are being invited to participate because you have a high school diploma or GED and are currently working in a child care center where you have been employed for three to twelve months. Is this correct?"

"My doctoral research focuses on the experiences of new child care teachers. I am interested in understanding how teachers like you chose to enter the child care field and what your experiences have been."

"Your participation involves two interviews lasting approximately 60-90 minutes each. At our first interview, I will ask you to give consent to participate in this research. I will review a written consent form with you and ask you to sign it before beginning the first interview. Each interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. Following the interviews, I may contact you again to verify the accuracy of my transcripts."

"Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. All of your responses will be kept confidential and your identity will not be

disclosed in any resulting documents or presentations. Do you have any questions regarding anything I have said? I appreciate your willingness to participate and I look forward to working with you."

Appendix E: Consent to Participate in Research

Title of Study: Early-career Child Care Teachers' Perceptions of Their Training Experiences: A Phenomenological Study

Researcher Identification:

Teri M. Peasley, EdD Candidate

Walden University

Introduction and Purpose:

My name is Teri Peasley and I am a doctoral candidate in the Adult Education program at Walden University. I would like to invite you to participate in my doctoral research study which is concerned with the experiences of early-career child care teachers who have a high school diploma or GED credential and 6-12 months of experience working in a licensed child care facility.

If you agree to participate in my research, you will be asked to participate in two interviews at a time and location that is convenient to you. It is anticipated the interviews will last approximately 60-90 minutes. The interviews will take place at a time and place that are convenient to you.

With your permission, I will audio tape the interviews. The purpose of recording the interviews is to accurately record the responses you provide. The recordings will be used for transcription purposes only.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

This study is voluntary and you are free to accept or turn down the invitation. No one at Walden University will treat you differently if you decide not to participate in this study. Please respond to this Informed Consent document within five (5) days of receipt by sending an email stating "I consent to participate in this research study" or "I decline to participate in this research study" to the researcher. You are free to ask any questions you have about the research process prior to consenting or declining. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Participation:

Being in this type of study may involve some minor discomforts that can also be encountered in daily life such as fatigue or stress. Participants are encouraged to be open and honest about their experiences during the interview process. You and/or your employer will not be identified in the final research study. Participation in this study will not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing.

In the event that the participant discloses experiences that are in direct violation of the Ohio Child Care Licensing regulations, a report will be filed with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. The research is a mandated reporter of child abuse. Should any experiences the participant shares be construed as child abuse, the researcher will contact the appropriate Children's Services agency to report the violation.

There are no known individual benefits for participating in this study. A benefit of participation will be the opportunity for entry level child care professionals to reflect upon their career choice and training experiences in the child care field. It is hoped that this research will provide information that can be used to support the development of training that administrators can implement for newly hired teachers.

Participants will not receive gifts or compensation for their participation in this study.

Confidentiality:

Reports, documents, or presentations resulting from this research will not disclose the identities of individual participants. All participants will be given identified as a letter such as A, B, C throughout any written documents. Details that might identify participants, such as employment or location of the study, also will not be shared. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purpose outside of this research project. All notes, interview transcripts, and any other identifying participant information

will be stored in a locked file cabinet and password protected computer in the personal possession of the researcher and will be permanently destroyed in 5 years, as required by law.

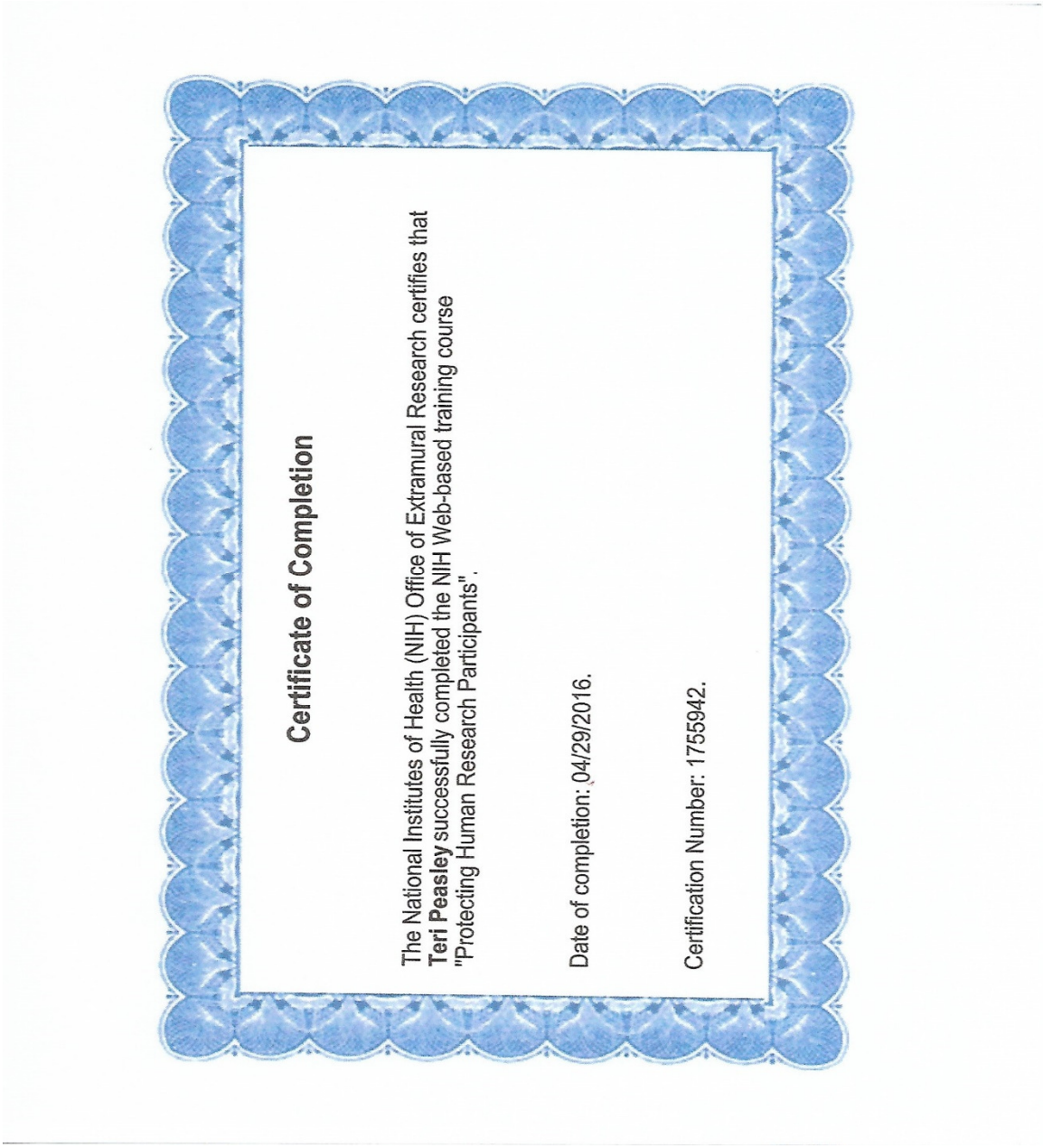
Contact Information:

If, at any time during this study, you have questions, you may contact the researcher at XXX. If you need to speak privately about your rights as a participant, you may contact the Research Participant Advocate at Walden University at 612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is: _____ and it expires on _____.

Obtaining Your Consent:

If you feel you understand the study well enough to make a decision about your participation, please indicate your consent by responding to this email with the words, "I consent to participate in this study". Participants should keep a copy of this consent form for their records.

Appendix G: Protecting Human Research Rights Certificate



Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Teri Peasley** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 04/29/2016.

Certification Number: 1755942.

Appendix H: Sample Reflective Journal

Completed two first interviews this week:

Things I didn't expect to hear:

- Babysitting and being a mother have been identified as qualifications – be sure to link to research about the importance adult learners place on their experiences (even when they have no child care experience to cite as a qualification)
    - Note to self – be careful when writing about babysitting as this is a personal bias (I have issues with people who think child care teachers are babysitters)

- A lack of engagement from the administrators –
    - I was surprised to hear that administrators don't seem to be following up with their staff after the online training – this is a requirement of ODJFS so I wonder why it isn't happening
    - As a former administrator, I see this as an issue (personal bias?)

- Limited knowledge of the licensing rules – this is a problem because licensing governs how programs are operated. It's hard to follow regulations when you don't know what they are

  - One interviewee talked about why there is a rule to cut food into small pieces – shows a lack of knowledge but also that she seemed to have no one to ask.

Things I wasn't surprised about:

- The teachers don't like the online training
  - Unengaging, boring were brought up
  - Online training doesn't seem to prepare them for working with children
  - Some said they didn't retain anything

- I'm not surprised about the topics that are coming up for needed knowledge
  - They are noting child development, licensing, teaching, working with families as issues

Notes to self –

- It is challenging to remain impartial. I sometimes want to answer their questions (like why do we have to cut food into small pieces) or comment on what seems like complacency on the part of the administrator.
- Keep working to get interviewees to open up and tell you their stories.

- Keep looking for meaning in what they are saying and be sure to ask strong follow-up questions