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A Narrative Inquiry on the Impact Leadership Development Has on the Professionalization of Early Childhood Education in New York State

Michelle A. Paige
St. John Fisher College, mpaige1018@gmail.com

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Abstract
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Michelle A. Paige

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Dr. Adam L. Rockman

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Dedication

There are so many people to thank along the way of this life-changing journey. This dissertation was completed because of the inspiration from the late Dr. Bertrand J. Armstrong and the late Kenneth E. Wilson. My grandfather, Dr. Armstrong showed me that receiving a doctorate was possible. Kenneth was the first person with whom I shared this dream. You told me to get it, so I got it! Thank you both for the inspiration and motivation.

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Biographical Sketch

Michelle A. Paige is currently an Adjunct Lecturer at CUNY Lehman College. Ms. Paige attended St. John's University from 1990 to 1994 and graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1994. She attended CUNY Queens College from 1996 to 2000 and graduated with a Master of Science degree in 2000. She came to St. John Fisher College in the summer of 2015 and began doctoral studies in the Ed.D. Program in Executive Leadership. Ms. Paige pursued her research in "A narrative inquiry on the impact of leadership development on the professionalization of early childhood education in New York State" under the direction of Dr. Robert Siebert and Dr. Adam L. Rockman and received the Ed.D. degree in 2018.

Abstract

This qualitative research examined the early childhood leadership preparation and resources, as well as the career trajectory and impact of these factors, have on the professionalization of early childhood education in New York. At the time of this writing, there is no defined and formal career track for an educator to become an early childhood administrator, and as a result, there are a variety of entry points for professionals to become leaders in these programs. The narrative inquiry methodology was used to research the impact leadership development has on the professionalization of early childhood education.

Eight semi-structured interviews, supported by an online questionnaire were administered to early childhood leaders from eight New York State counties. Research indicates that leadership development is often retrospective. The leadership role has an identity crisis, as there are significant inconsistencies in the titles and professional identities of leaders. Despite these inconsistencies, research indicates that leaders identify themselves as servant leaders, assuming the role with an approach of vision for the community, service and dedication to their staff, and empathy for the children and families.

Recommendations for future research include expanding this research to be more inclusive of the 62 counties of New York State. Recommendations also include research specific to women in the early childhood leadership role, as they comprise over 90% of

the workforce. As early childhood education continues to grow as a national topic, this

research can also be replicated in states other than New York.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The quality of children's experiences, their environment, and relationships with people in the first 5 years of life all have a lifelong effect on their social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development (Essa, 2014; Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015). The adults in a child's life bear the responsibility of creating and supporting these experiences (Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008). Second to family support and relationships, early care and education programs play an integral part in a child's development (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2012; Gestwicki, 2011). Public awareness and advocacy for quality early childhood programs intensified at the turn of the 21st century, as child development research and national initiatives, such as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), influenced early childhood education public policies (Barnett, 2003). Subsequently, early childhood educators, developmental psychologists, public advocates, and program funders began to shift their ideals of early childhood programs from custodial care facilities to early childhood education programs (Brown, 2013).

Early childhood education (ECE) refers to the educational and developmental support of children, ages birth through second grade (Essa, 2014). According to data collected in 2014 by New York State (2016), there were approximately 1,184,591 children in New York State between the ages of birth and 4-years old. Parents and guardians of these children have several options when considering enrolling their children in ECE programs.

There are a variety of early childhood education settings available to families in New York State. The enrollment of their children is predicated upon parental preferences, needs of the child, and income of the family (Zaman, Amin, Monijan, & Ting, 2012). There are privately run preschools and nursery schools that require tuition payments for enrollment (Pate, O'Neill, Bynne, McIver, & Brown, 2014). Admission requirements for private settings include the age of the child and a family's capacity to pay the tuition. Head Start and Early Head Start are free, social service programs that are federally funded programs and provide early care and education to children and families who live below the federal poverty benchmark (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services [DOHHS], 2017). A family of four, with an annual household income of or below $24,600, qualifies for these federal programs (U.S. DOHHS, 2017).

Large metropolitan cities often have publicly funded early childhood education programs for children from birth through 5-years old (Zaman et al., 2012). These programs were created to educate and care for children while parents work or attend school (Pilarz, Claessens, & Gellatt, 2016). New York City's Administration for Children's Services (ACS) is an example of a large early childhood education program funded by federal, state, and New York City contracts (New York City Independent Budget Office, 2010).

Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) is a New York State funded education initiative that specifically provides funding for the education of 4-year-old children (New York State Education Department [NYSED], 2016b). UPK is a free public-school program, and due to its rapid expansion and the need for adequate space, these classes for 4-year-old children are operated in public schools, private schools, and community-based

organizations (Holcomb, Sudol, & Center for Children's Initiatives, 2014). New York City Mayor, Bill de Blasio, announced in April 2017 that New York City planned to expand its UPK program to include free public education to 3-year old children (NYC Newswire, 2017; Taylor, 2017). The pilot program referred to as "3K for All" was proposed to begin in the fall of 2017 in the South Bronx and in Brownsville, Brooklyn.

Head Start, Early Head Start, UPK, and programs funded by local municipalities are often operated by and through community-based organizations (CBO). CBOs are often non-profit entities, and they are formed to fulfill the needs of children and families in local communities (Albarran, 2014). Research suggests that CBOs have a unique opportunity to engage communities to provide services, such as early childhood education, for those who may not have access due to financial or social constraints (Albarran, 2014). Programs across the country, including those in New York State, rely heavily on a combination of these funding sources to run centers, contributing to the confusing labyrinth of regulations and varied standards that require management from early childhood leaders (Kagan, Tarrant, Carson, & Kaurez, 2006). As a result, early childhood educators remain a vulnerable and disconnected workforce (Kagan et al, 2006).

Regardless of the program models or funding sources, research has confirmed the importance of early childhood education and its role in the future school success of young children (Bowman et al., 2012; Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2015; Kagan et al., 2006). Brain development research and its implications of how and when young children learn have influenced early childhood education program design (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Neuroscience research indicates that learning processes

begin at birth (Gunner, Broderson, Krueger, & Rigatuso, 1996). As a result, parents, caregivers, and educators are presented with an important and unique opportunity to facilitate supportive and stimulating environments for young children during these critical developmental stages (Sripada, 2012).

This child development research, along with shifting public perceptions, has created a paradigm shift from program models that provide custodial care to a model that provides developmentally appropriate curricula and pedagogy (Halpern, 2013; Kagan & Kaurez, 2012). Under the old paradigm, the focus was to provide a safe haven for children while their parents went to work. Under the new paradigm, the focus is on research-based curricula that fosters cognitive, physical, and emotional development (Albarran, 2014; Ceglowski, 2004).

Subsequently, the infrastructure of early childhood education needed to change to support this new approach to early care and education (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015). Licensing requirements, which include the credentials of classroom staff, became more demanding on both the national and local levels (Gable, Rothrauff, Thornburg, & Mauzy, 2007). For example, all ECE programs in New York State must now comply with the licensing regulations promulgated by either the New York City Department of Mental Health and Hygiene (2016) or the Office of Children and Family Services (2015) of New York State.

Home-based and Early Head Start programs must hire lead teachers who hold, at a minimum, the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential (U.S. DOHHS, 2017). Lead teachers in larger systems, such as New York City's Administration for Children's Services (ACS), require New York State teacher certification, preferably in Birth through

Second Grade (New York City Department of Health & Mental Hygiene [NYC DOHMH], 2016). UPK teachers employed in public school buildings must hold a New York State teacher certification, which covers the education of 4-year-old children (New York State Education Department [NYSED], 2016a). This can either be the relatively new teacher certification for Birth through Second Grade or the older Pre-K, Kindergarten, First through Sixth Grade teacher certification (NYSED, 2016b).

There are a variety of options for instructional staff who want to pursue these teaching credentials (Bowman et al., 2012; Goffin & Washington, 2007). Most aspiring early childhood teachers enroll in higher education institutions (community colleges, 4-year colleges and universities, and graduate schools), or in community-based organizations that provide training, and ongoing practice in the workplace (Barnett, 2003). While there are initiatives and policies to support the professionalization of teaching staff, early childhood leadership development and training is not keeping pace with the demands of the emerging expectations in early childhood education programs (Bloom, 2004; Gerstenblatt, Lee, & Travis, 2014). Aspiring early childhood administrators face no such requirements, and they have very few options for professional leadership development and training outside of compliance requirements (Bloom, 2004; Kagan et al., 2006; Ryan, Whitebook, Kipnis, & Sakai, 2011; Talan & Bloom, 2011).

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (2016) is the regulatory body that determines staff requirements for preschools in New York City. Under the current regulations, early childhood education directors must hold a valid teacher certification and have a minimum of 2 years of experience in an early childhood

classroom (NYC DOHMH, 2016). The New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) is the regulatory system for programs in New York State. Directors of these programs are required to have 1 year of experience in an early childhood education classroom, in addition to a minimum of an associate degree or a CDA, with documented intentions to complete an accredited bachelor's degree in education, leading to teacher certification (New York State Office of Children and Family Services [OCFS], 2016).

Regardless of the program model or design, early childhood education program leadership is charged with creating and providing developmentally appropriate experiences for all children (Bloom, 1992; Boyd, 2013; Gerstenblatt et al., 2014; National Association of the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 2009). When measuring outcomes in education, including those in ECE settings, research indicates that effective leadership is the second-most important contributing factor in determining school and program success, behind only the quality of classroom instruction (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). This is a critical finding, as the international research spotlight has been turned to the importance of quality early childhood education experiences and the impact these experiences have on a child's success in K-12 education (NAEYC, 2009).

Traditionally, resources have been allocated to classroom improvements in efforts to address the overall program quality of early childhood education (Barnett, 2003). In comparison, few resources have been directed toward leadership development and support (Boyd, 2013; Goffin & Means, 2009). Although child development research emphasizes the importance of creating high-quality early childhood education programs, careers in early childhood education, including those in leadership positions, do not

command respect or recognition in society (Bloom, 1992; Goffin, 2013). Additionally, research indicates that most ECE leaders did not plan, nor did they aspire to becoming, early childhood education administrators or managers (Bloom, 2004; Ceglowski, 2004; Dunst, 2002; Goffin, 2013). Instead, they were transitioned out of the classroom and placed in administrative roles based on job performance, including interactions with staff and parents (Ceglowski, 2004). Many were recognized by upper management to possess the skills and interest to fill a vacant leadership role (Bloom, 2005; Dunst, 2002). Often, leadership development and preparation were not part of the process (Goffin & Washington, 2007).

As a result, new leaders of early childhood education programs are often appointed to their leadership positions with little to no leadership training (Bloom, 1992; Rafanello & Bloom; Rhodes & Huston, 2012). Research conducted with Illinois early childhood education administrators indicates that 90% of early childhood administrators in the state were classroom teachers before beginning their administrative roles (Bloom, 2005; Rafanello & Bloom, 1997). Only 20% of these administrators actively pursued administration as a career goal, and only 27% felt prepared for the position (Rafanello & Bloom, 1997). Under these circumstances, there are few programs and opportunities to properly prepare and develop the personnel who accept and suddenly find themselves in the early childhood leadership positions (Goffin & Means, 2009).

There is an expectation that early childhood education leaders will facilitate quality programs and experiences that support the development of young children (Bloom, 2004; Boyd, 2013; Briggs, Rhines-Cheney, Davis, & Moll, 2013; Gerstenblatt et al., 2014). However, to do this systematically and across the entire spectrum of ECE

programs, this initiative requires a cadre of professionals engaged in ongoing education and training in the best leadership practices (Goffin & Means, 2009). Unfortunately, these structures and educational opportunities needed to prepare the early childhood workforce for this philosophical shift are rare or non-existent (Goffin & Means, 2009).

Research indicates that there are direct short-term and long-term benefits to be derived from the professionalization of ECE leadership (Guernsey & Mead, 2010). One such benefit of professionalizing ECE administration would be consistency in professional identity (Goffin, 2013). This could potentially create the opportunity for collective preparedness in a space that is traditionally left to the individual to develop (Hayden, 1997). There could also be an emerging cohort of educated and trained professionals who would establish a new baseline of standards, regardless of the program model, program location, or funding source (Goffin & Washington, 2007). According to Ingersoll and Perda (2008), by definition, the professionalization of an occupation is the space where credentials, licensure, professional development, compensation, and respect no longer conflict with each other. Using this lens, the professionalization of early childhood education leadership development becomes an important consideration for policy makers (Sripada, 2012).

Another possible benefit to be derived from the professionalization of early childhood education leadership is by creating consistency of the language used to identify staff and to define leadership roles. The New York State Education Department (2016) defines the certified person or people responsible for the day-to-day operations and leadership of pedagogy in a public school as the school building leader (SBL). The title for the person holding the SBL credential is the principal. Society and members of this

professional title have little ambiguity as to whom the principal is and the general expectations and responsibilities that come with the leadership role (Bush & Glover, 2014). The opposite is true for leadership titles in early childhood education. There are many possible titles for leadership in ECE, including program leader, site director, supervisor, teacher-director, administrator, program director, and education coordinator (Boyd, 2013).

Problem Statement

There is an absence of preparation, training, and individual career planning opportunities for current and future early childhood leaders in New York State, which directly impacts their capacity to lead (Goffin & Means, 2009). Despite the rapidly changing landscape of early childhood education and increased awareness of its role in a child's educational development, there are few opportunities or resources for administrators to acquire the leadership and management skills necessary to oversee a quality early childhood program (Bloom, 2004; Goffin & Means, 2009; Goffin & Washington, 2007; Leithwood et al., 2004). The career pathway to ECE leadership is uneven and underdeveloped because there is no defined licensure track for ECE leaders in New York State (NYSED, 2016a).

The absence of opportunity for ECE administrators to prepare for their positions creates a professional void in a workforce that has a direct impact on the educational experiences of young children (Bloom, 2004; Goffin & Means, 2009). Research indicates that children's experiences in ECE have an impact in school success through high school (Brown, 2013; Marcon, 1999). In addition to academic success, research suggests that high-quality ECE programs influence future returns on investment,

including higher paying jobs, investments in safer communities, and even reducing the risk of incarceration (Barnett & Ackerman, 2006; Booker, 2011; Cheadle, 2008). If indicators of ECE program quality rest heavily on the capacity of the ECE administrator to manage and lead (Leithwood et al., 2004), then failure to adequately professionalize the ECE leader as an integral component of the education of young children perpetuates a disservice to children throughout New York, jeopardizing their first school experiences and future success (NAEYC, 2009).

Research also suggests that early childhood education is the foundation upon which all learning rests (Guernsey & Mead, 2010). Bloom (2004, 2005) described the leaders of this important developmental stage as the *gatekeepers of quality*. Early childhood administrators are responsible for creating a climate that promotes the optimal growth and development of children as well as implementing systems to ensure that high quality is maintained (Bloom, 1992). As leaders, early childhood administrators must be able to envision goals, affirm values, motivate staff, achieve unity or purpose, and foster norms of continuous improvement for their programs (Bloom, 2004).

Bloom (2004) stated that administrators are responsible for a myriad of program quality components including fiscal management, health and safety compliance, human resources development, curriculum development, and community engagement. Early childhood leaders are accountable to these measures of quality, regardless of their background or the administrative positions that they hold (Briggs et al., 2013). This study explored the lack of formal preparation, training, and professionalization in ECE leadership and how these deficits can impact the experiences and career path of ECE administrators.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was twofold. First, the study researched how ECE leaders in eight New York State counties viewed themselves in their leadership roles. Research conducted in 2004 stated that a clear majority of ECE leaders viewed themselves as teachers, and they tended to view their leadership roles through this educator lens (Goffin & Means, 2009).

The second component of this research was to assess the professional development opportunities available to administrators as they related to their leadership practices. New York State does not require early childhood administrators to complete leadership or management courses as a requirement for qualification for directorship positions (NYSED, 2016a). The requirement for leadership positions are the same requirements for ECE teachers (NYC DOHMH, 2016). The research examined potential barriers and gaps for New York State ECE leaders, both internal and external. Access to appropriate leadership development and what is the impact of these barriers on their leadership role was also examined.

Potential Significance of the Study

There is potential for this research to be used by early care and education professionals in New York State to identify the gaps in leadership professional development and how addressing these gaps could improve preparedness and competence of ECE leaders as well as the ECE programs they oversee. The New York State Department of Education (accredited higher-education administration programs) and other stakeholders in the field of early childhood leadership could benefit from this research. Illinois is an example of a state that responded to the demands for creating a

certification track for early childhood leaders (Rafanello & Bloom, 1997). Illinois government passed legislation that requires school principals to hold a P-12 license (prekindergarten through Grade 12), instead of the traditional K-12 certification. This additional graduate and post-graduate course work could develop leadership in preschool curriculum and implementation as the demand for preschool increases (Ressler, Doherty, McCormick-Ferguson, & Lomotey, 2015). The New York State Department of Education, in partnership with administrative certification programs in higher education, could add these research findings to a growing body of literature that advocates for state licensure for ECE leaders.

Research Questions

Early childhood education is now considered a key factor in predicting school success (Brown, 2013; Marcon, 1999). The leadership of these ECE programs is charged with overseeing, maintaining, and strengthening the quality of these programs (Bloom 2004, 2005). Currently, there is no required leadership license or training in New York State for ECE administrators (NYSED, 2016a). The research sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How do program directors identify themselves as early childhood administrators?

2. What educational and professional development experiences inform the practices of early childhood administrators?

3. How do program directors implement their education, training, and professional development experiences when leading early childhood programs?

4. What do ECE administrators identify as gaps in their leadership preparation, and what impact did these gaps have on the programs they have led?

Theoretical Framework

The research of the continued professionalization of the ECE leadership workforce was supported by human capital theory. *Capital* refers to tangible resources that can be used to generate income, including real estate, money, financial investments, and non-real estate property, and machines, equipment, and even people (Oxford Dictionary, 2017). Human capital is often referred to as the intangible resource (Goldin, 2014). The foundation of human capital principles rests on the theory that communities reap social and economic benefits from investment in people and their development (Schultz, 1961; Sweetland, 1996).

One category of human capital investment is health care (Vaisey, 1962). The premise of this variation of human capital is predicated on the theory that there are societal benefits when people individually and collectively invest in healthy living (Gardner & Gardner, 2012; Mushkin, 1962). Investments in proper nutrition, proper physical activity, and connections to adequate and appropriate preventive health care create communities of people who are prepared to perform at optimal levels (Gardner & Gardner, 2012). Modern applications to this theory can be found in the partnership between the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and ECE programs throughout the country. Research indicates that proper nutrition for children is vital to proper physical and cognitive development (Tobin, 2013). Another emerging example of a health-focused human capital theory practice is the incentive programs many companies offer to its employees if they can demonstrate membership and use of a fitness

club. Once again, the theory that employees who invest in a healthy lifestyle promotes productivity and has a positive impact on a company's bottom line (Gale, 2017). Healthy employees are productive and reduce overall health care costs for both companies and individuals (Gale, 2017; Gardner & Gardner, 2012).

Literature, beginning in the late 1950s, began to examine the impact that education has on human capital theory. Jacob Mincer (1958) commenced research on the correlation between an individual's job training and his or her salaries. Mincer's rationale implied that both formal education and information, along with formal training, resulted in higher earned income over the span of an individual's career, in comparison to an *untrained* individual within the same field of work (Becker, 1962; Kryscynki & Ulrich, 2015; Mincer, 1958).

Evidence has supported the application of human capital theory to the lack of professional development and training of early childhood administration. Becker (1962) found that people invest in themselves while they are young. This concept is referred to as the time profile of investment in human capital (Becker, 1962). When people invest in themselves at the earlier stages of life or career, they usually forgo the immediate increase of opportunities or wages (Becker, 1962; Ceglowski, 2004). The observed opportunities or earnings are realized later and the return on investment begins to manifest (Ceglowski, 2004). This same theoretical framework can be applied to the development of early childhood education administrators.

The research questions were also created under the assumption of a lack of professional development for new ECE administrators; and as a direct association, this lack of leadership training affects the quality of the ECE program (Bloom, 2004; Goffin

& Means, 2009; Goffin & Washington, 2007; Leithwood et al., 2004). New program leaders in ECE are often thrust into leadership positions with little to no training (Bloom, 2004; Espinosa, 2002). Research indicated that the majority of new ECE directors did not seek the job, but rather, they were recognized by upper management to possess the skills or availability to fill a vacant ECE position (Albarran, 2014; Bloom 2004, Leithwood et al., 2004). In these circumstances, there is often no opportunity to properly train and develop leadership skills in operations, program design and development, human resources, curriculum management and assessment, and health and safety domains (Bloom, 2004; Goffin, 2013). Potentially, federal and state education governing bodies could recognize the opportunity for a return on investment by applying the human capital theoretical framework to the preparation of ECE administration (Shultz, 1961; Sweetland, 1996).

The development of ECE employees, including leaders can be framed and supported with the human capital theoretical framework. With this creation of human capital theory, Theodore Schultz (1961) added depth to the definition of *capital*, as defined and understood by Western economists. Schultz (1961) added that people, their skills, knowledge, information, and experiences are qualitative and quantitative components of a sound economy. These human assets, in this case ECE leadership, should be included when accounting for capital resources such as cash, real estate and products for ECE programs (Shultz, 1961).

Definitions of Terms

Early childhood education has many terms that are used to define and describe components of the field (Boyd, 2013). To assist with understanding the complexities

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and, often times, the overlap of words and phrases, the following definitions are available as a guide.

Administrator – individual or individuals who are assigned or identified to lead and develop staff and programs toward a common goal or vision (Jones & Pound, 2008).

Childcare –used interchangeably with the term *day care*. This ECE model is typically a publicly funded, community-based organization that provides care for infants, toddlers, and children up to 5 years old. The traditional purpose for this program model is custodial care, which allows parents to work or enroll in job-readiness programs (Gerstenblatt et al., 2014). Tuition for these programs are often subsidized by a government contract and offer a sliding payment scale, which is determined by household income.

Early Childhood Education (ECE) – the training of children from birth to age 8 years (Essa, 2014; Gerstenblatt et al., 2014; Kagan & Kaurez, 2012; NAEYC, 2009). This training includes a variety of models, including private and publicly funded programs. These programs operate at least 5 hours per week, for at least 1 week per month. ECE programs are also known as nursery schools, preschools, childcare, or day care programs (New York University, 2008).

Early Head Start – federally funded program that connects children and families to early care and community resources. Pregnant women, children from the ages of birth through 3-years old, including foster children, homeless children, or children who are part of a family and who live at or below the federal poverty guideline qualify for Early Head Start (DOHHS, 2016). A family of four, with an annual household income of

$24,300, are generally determined to live in this economic status. This is a free federal program.

Head Start – a federally funded program that provides education and health services for children, ages 3 through 5 years. This initiative was part of the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act under President Lyndon B. Johnson's administration. Head Start is administered through the Administration for Children's Services. The income requirements for Head Start are the same as Early Head Start (DOHHS, 2016). This is a free federal program.

Professional Development – the initial preparation and ongoing learning experiences designed to improve knowledge, skills and perceptions, and competencies in the field of early childhood development and education (Barnett, 2003, NAEYC, 2009).

Professionalization– the professionalization of an occupation is the space when credentials, licensure, professional development, compensation and respect no longer conflict with each other (Ingersoll & Perda, 2008).

Program Director –in early childhood programs these individuals are also referred to as site directors, education directors, center directors, or education coordinators. These terms are used interchangeably throughout this paper (Boyd, 2013).

Universal Pre-kindergarten (UPK) – also called *Pre-K*, refers specifically to the education of 4-year-old children (Hicks, Kekies, Cochroan, State University of New York, 1999). New York State provides $385 million in funding to 440 school districts to educate approximately 119,555 four-year-old children (NYSED, 2016b).

Summary

In New York State, families can connect over one million children between the ages of birth and 4-years old to a variety of early childhood programs throughout the state (New York State Department of Health, 2016). Brain research has demonstrated to the world of K-12 education the importance of ECE programs for children before their fourth birthdays. It is arguably a vehicle for closing the achievement gap for minority and underserved children (Pianta et al., 2008). Important research affirms what many parents and caregivers have known for years that (a) good prenatal care, (b) warm and loving attachments between young children and adults, and (c) positive, age-appropriate stimulation from the time of birth make a difference in children's development for a lifetime (Gunner, Brodersen, Krueger, & Rigatuso, 1996).

These findings have significant implications for the profession of early childhood education. There has been a shift away from words like *childcare* and *day care*, as they implied a rudimentary approach to the work (Pilarz et al., 2016). These terms are being replaced with *early childhood education* or *early learning*. Contextually, childcare and day care are program models that allowed parents to work and attend school or job training. Early childhood education and early learning programs were developed to facilitate development in children (Rhodes & Huston, 2012). The research also demonstrates the impact ECE has on a child's capacity to reach developmental milestones through adolescence.

It is the expectation, as the gatekeepers of quality, that ECE administrators manage, lead, and facilitate high-quality experiences in programs throughout the state (Bloom, 2004). While there have been changes in policies and teacher certifications to

address the needs of early childhood instructional staff, there have been few opportunities for ECE administrators to commence their work as prepared leaders (Leithwood et al., 2004). New York State currently does not have a career pathway for ECE leadership certification (NYSED, 2016a).

While there is an opportunity to earn a CPAC credential, it is an option for best practice, and it is not a requirement for pursuing a career as an early childhood education administrator (OCFS, 2016). Research indicates that most ECE leaders did not anticipate becoming administrators; therefore, they usually missed the opportunity to pursue traditional management and leadership coursework such as fiscal management, community engagement, and human resources development (Bloom, 2004; Espinosa, 2002; Goffin & Means, 2009). This qualitative study researched the credentials and training of administrators relating to their preparedness for their positions, while also exploring their own perceptions of their preparedness as it impacted the programs they lead. The participants of this research created a narrative that articulated the importance of early childhood leadership development and the impact it has on the continued professionalization of an often-times overlooked, under-resourced, and underestimated component of the education of children.

This research paper has five chapters. The first chapter reviewed the research problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, and the potential significance of the study examining the impact of leadership development on the professionalization of early childhood education. The chapter concluded, first, with the definitions of terms pertinent to this study and, finally, with this summary. A review of the literature on the evolution in early childhood education in the United States, research pertaining to early

childhood leadership, and current trends in leadership development is presented in

Chapter 2. The research design, methodology, and analysis are discussed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 presents a detailed analysis of the results and findings, and Chapter 5 discusses

the findings, implications, and recommendations for future research and practice.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction

Early childhood education has evolved from its early days in the late 1800s to present day models (Pianta et al., 2008). The term early childhood education (ECE) is used to refer to the education of children from birth to second grade (Essa, 2014; Gerstenblatt et al., 2014; Kagan & Kaurez, 2012; NAEYC, 2009). Early childhood education was once considered custodial care for young children of working parents, defining the ECE administrator's role as a monitor or manager (Bloom, 2004; Goffin, 2013). Research then began to emerge regarding brain development of young children, asserting that a child's environment has an impact (either negative or positive) on his or her social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development (Gunner et al., 1996; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2010).

The creation of public policies and programs, such as Head Start, a component of the War on Poverty (1964), No Child Left Behind (2001), and state-funded Universal Prekindergarten (2008), helped shift program models from custodial care to early childhood education centers (Albarran, 2014; Barnett, 2003; Bianchi, 2011; Lamb, 1998; Zaman et al., 2012). To keep pace with these developments, new requirements for instructional staff began to call for additional training and professionalization as a work force, and subsequently, state departments of education throughout the United States created certification pathways for early childhood teachers (Barnett, 2003).

Second to meaningful instruction implementation, leadership is a vital component to successful child outcomes (Bloom, 2004; Kagan et al., 2006; Leithwood et al., 2004; Nupponen, 2006a). Kouzes and Posner (2008) also found that organizational success rests on the strength of the leadership. Ironically, the development and professionalization of the early childhood administrator continues to be an underdeveloped and under-resourced component within the early childhood educational workforce (Bloom, 2004; Goffin & Means, 2009; Goffin & Washington, 2007; Leithwood et al., 2004; Nupponen, 2006a). Despite the roles and responsibilities of the early childhood education administrator as the gatekeeper of quality, there is a gap in the development of this professional role (Bloom, 1992, p. 141).

Consistent with most states' requirements across the country, New York State does not have a certification for early childhood administrators (Allen & Kelly, 2015; NYSED, 2016a). In order for one to understand the impact of these dynamics within early childhood education, this literature review covers the evolution of early childhood education and care, the societal implications for the importance of early childhood education, and the role the administrator has through this evolutionary path toward the professionalization of early childhood education.

Historical Context of Early Childhood Education

Historians can trace the beginnings of custodial care in the United States to colonial times (Michel, 2011). Enslaved Africans, Native Americans, and indentured servants would care for the children of plantation owners, allowing women the freedom to manage the duties and responsibilities of running a plantation (Michel, 2011). In addition, the children of slaves who were too young to work (mostly under the age of

5 years) were cared for and watched in groups by older slave women (Michel, 2011).

Variations of these settings existed, but there was a commonality of children being

watched, reared, and cared for on a regular basis by those other than the children's

parents (Michel, 2011).

The end of the 19th century brought the end of slavery and the advent of the

Second Industrial Revolution (Engelman, 2015). After the Civil War, women, many of

them widows with children, found themselves in a new role. Many men were killed or

permanently disabled during the Civil War battles, and as a result, land and property were

sold to financially sustain their families (Engelman, 2015; Michel, 2011). Women,

mostly mothers, now found themselves in need of employment outside of their homes in

order to support their families (Engelman, 2015; Michel, 2011). Large metropolitan

cities, such as New York and Chicago, employed women in factories, leaving them to

decide who would care for their children as they embarked on 12-hour work days

(Engelman, 2015; Michel, 2011). Out of desperation, some mothers left their children

unattended in tenements as they went to work (Michel, 2011).

Informal childcare that was mostly associated with the working poor and

immigrant population, soon became one of the earliest drivers of the need for social

services for women and children in the United States (Michel, 2011). The issue and

concern for proper childcare and child rearing became a topic of interest for Josephine

Dodge, a New York philanthropist (Michel, 2011). In collaboration with other

philanthropists, the Model Day Nursery, one of the first public childcare centers, was

opened in Chicago in 1893. This group would go on to establish the National Federation

of Day Nurseries, the first national organization dedicated to addressing childcare issues (Michel, 2011).

Included in the conversation of early childhood leadership development is the self-perception of leaders in their roles as administrators (Goffin, 2013; Leithwood et al., 2004). Research asserts that self-perception of early childhood education leaders not only refers to what leaders think they do or what title they respond to (Leithwood et al., 2004; Nupponen, 2006a, 2006b; Robertson, 2012). Self-perception also includes reflecting on their leadership styles, and it is often connected to leadership styles as defined by organizational leadership research (Leithwood et al., 2004; Nupponen, 2006a, 2006b; Robertson, 2012). While research specific to the dynamics of early childhood education leadership is limited, studies have connected early childhood administrators' leadership styles to the tenants of organizational leadership (Muijs, Aubrey, Harris & Briggs, 2004; Robertson, 2012). Leaders, in the context of early childhood education, have identified themselves as transformational, transactional, servant, or distributive leaders (Bolman & Deal, 2004; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Robertson, 2012). Research also posits that these self-perceptions are often contingent upon the funding source or program models (Robertson, 2012).

Early Childhood Education Public Policies

United States government initiatives. Simultaneously, there was a movement to encourage women to stay home and raise their children, instead of working outside of the home (Kleinberg, 2006; Michel, 2011). The early 20th century ushered in the public policy of mothers' or widows' pensions. The pensions were state subsidies given to women who were widowed or abandoned. The subsidies were used as income, allowing

women to stay home with their children. Increasingly, social welfare agencies began to accept these subsidies to pay for childcare or other assistance, such as food or housing (Michel, 2011; Skocpol, 1992). By 1930, all states in the US had passed legislation to include some type of mothers' pension, making this an historic public policy initiative created to assist low-income, working mothers. Historians have asserted that the mothers' pensions are the footprint for the Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF), a national subsidy for families in need of temporary financial relief (Kleinberg, 2006; Michel, 2011; Skocpol, 1992). TANF is still used as eligibility criteria for children to enroll in Early Head Start and Head Start programs throughout the country (DOHHS, 2016).

As the United States was entering times of social turmoil and civil unrest, poverty across the nation was an issue that resonated with President Lyndon B. Johnson. The War on Poverty, declared in 1964, was a response to a national need to empower and connect Americans to resources that would improve the overall health and welfare of families (Albarran, 2014; Gable, 2014; Guernsey & Mead, 2010; Halpern, 2013; NAEYC, 2009). R. Sargent Shriver and Dr. Urie Bronfenbrenner developed the beginning concepts of Head Start (Albarran, 2014; Zaman et al., 2012). Initially, Head Start was a pilot summer camp program for 4-year-old children whose parents went to work or vocational school. The model was to connect children and families to services, such as medical treatment, job training, and social services, as well as exposing children to developmentally appropriate environments (Albarran, 2014; Gable, 2014; Guernsey & Mead, 2010; Halpern, 2013; NAEYC, 2009). Pedagogy and curriculum, once reserved for affluent families who could afford to send their children to nursery schools, were now

being implemented in a national education system for children living in poverty (Zaman et al., 2012).

Head Start is categorized as part of the Economic Opportunity Act (EOA) of 1964, which included other initiatives such as Job Corp, Volunteers in Service to American (VISTA), and the Urban/Rural Community Action Plan (United States, 1964). As a former teacher, President Johnson believed that education would contribute to breaking the cycle of poverty (Renchler, 1993). Since its inception in 1964, Head Start has grown to support children in Early Head Start programs, which educate and care for children under the age of 3-years old, as well as care for and educate pregnant mothers (DOHHS, 2016). Head Start programs expanded to assist the migrant immigrant community, as well as Native American tribal communities (DOHHS, 2016).

Throughout the decades, under the support of President Lyndon B. Johnson and up through President Barack H. Obama, early childhood initiatives, such as Head Start, early childhood education continues to be a relevant agenda topic for politicians (Jacobson, 2006). In 2006, President George W. Bush spoke to members of Congress, advocating for the expansion of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), to include more regulations and benchmarks for high school students. Critics immediately responded to this expansion by proposing a shift in resources and effort toward early childhood education (Jacobson, 2006). President Obama responded to this initiative in the early months of his presidency by expanding the No Child Left Behind Act (2008) to include extensive increases in funding to states for universal prekindergarten programs.

New York State and New York City expanded their universal prekindergarten capacity to provide prekindergarten for 70,000 four-year-old children in 2016 (Taylor,

2017). New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, in an unprecedented move, expanded

public school education for early childhood children, by announcing 3K for All (Taylor,

2017). He has earmarked $36 million for the 2018 City budget, just a fraction of the

estimated $1 billion it would cost to educate New York City's 3-year-old children for free

(Taylor, 2017). Mayor de Blasio plans to pilot the program in the selected areas of the

South Bronx and portions of the borough of Brooklyn. These communities will now

have an additional option for the ECE programs for their 3-year-old children.

Additionally, Head Start remains at the forefront of the education of young

children throughout the country. As this is an arm of the EOA, Head Start is responsible

for reporting to Congress all metrics and outcomes regarding the effectiveness of its

programs. Consequently, with this data, Head Start has become a polarizing topic,

frequently debated on the Senate floor because of discussions from opposing positions on

the merits of the program and its relevance for preparing young children for long-term

success through Grade 12 (Bloom, 2004; NAEYC, 2009; Pianta et al., 2008; Sripada,

2012). Head Start, Montessori, and other early childhood program models rely on data to

support the importance and relevance of early childhood education.

The model of custodial childcare continued to get support from both public policy

and philanthropic entities (Kleinberg, 2006; Michel, 2011). During World War II and the

years immediately following the hostilities, families needed all adults in the household to

make ends meet, resulting in the need for young children to be in someone else's care

(Michel, 2011). In 1944, there were approximately 3,000 formal childcare centers

nationwide, caring for 130,000 young children of working families (Michel, 2011).

Concerns about quality of care began to emerge, as many facilities claimed to be

watching children without providing stimulating or nurturing environments. The Kaiser Company in Portland, Oregon responded to this concern by creating Child Service Centers (CSC). CSCs were architect-commissioned spaces that offered 24-hour care, hearty and nutritious meals prepared on-site, and an early childhood curriculum, which was facilitated by trained experts and teachers (Michel, 2011). This is an early example of an early childhood model that transitioned from the custodial care of children to the education of young children.

Early childhood developmental theorists. Simultaneously, nursery school movements were occurring both in Europe and the United States. Emilia Montessori, an Italian physician, developed a child development theory that emphasized providing stimulating and supportive environments that foster the development of children (Zigler & Stycfo, 2010). The Montessori method soon piqued the interest in the United States, and educators began Montessori training (Zigler & Stycfo, 2010). Zigler and Stycfo (2010) stated that George Stoddard, the Director of the Iowa Child Welfare Research in 1931, believed research supported the need for the formal education for children as young as 3- or 4-years old. This shift would allow children to begin their education approximately 4 years before the existing practice in the early 20th century in the United States. During the Lyndon Johnson presidency, R. Sargent Shriver became interested in the early education experiences of children, especially poor children, and he asserted that research supported the concept of children attending school at younger ages (Zigler & Stycfo, 2010).

Social scientists, psychologists, and behavioral scientists in the early 20th century began to research child development in new ways, consequently, influencing the

structures and implementation of early childhood pedagogy in Europe and the United States. Jean Piaget (1941) was at the forefront of child development research in Europe, and he was one of the first researchers to suggest that intelligence and child development were biological functions, which were greatly influenced by environment and experiences. Piaget's (1941) research of children suggests that children have four stages of development: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete, and formal. These stages of cognitive development are progressive, and children replace information with more sophisticated concepts as they move from one stage to another (Piaget, 1941). Harvard psychologist, James Bruner (1968), brought Piaget's theory to the United States in the mid-1950s, influencing pedagogy from teaching children what to think to how to develop their cognitive skills.

While social science research explored the possible connections to early schooling and future success in school to model citizens in a community, brain development research provided us with insight on the importance of how a young child's brain develops and provides context for the importance of facilitating development in nurturing, supportive, and stimulating environments (Gunner et al., 1996; Sripada, 2012).

Research Impact on Early Childhood Education

Brain development research. As parents continue to make decisions about which childcare setting meets the needs of their children and families, research continues to influence the landscape of early childhood education (Ho & Chen, 2013). While brain development and neuroscience research was conducted, arguably for centuries, advances in technology have enabled researchers to conduct comprehensive tests and analysis (Newberger, 1997). Brain development research, particularly in the last two decades, has

made impactful claims about when and how young children's brains develop (Gunner et al., 1996; Ho & Chen, 2013; Twardosz, 2012).

The development of the brains of young children is critical to the cognitive, physical, and emotional capabilities (or lack thereof) for the duration of the person's life (Allen & Kelly, 2015; Gunner et al., 1996; Ho & Chen, 2013; Twardosz, 2012). A child's brain is physically and chemically altered when new skills, language, and social-emotional connections are made (Twardosz, 2012). Most of these physical and chemical developments in the brain take place by the time a child reaches 5-years old, resulting in people having 90% of their total brain weight by the time they enter kindergarten (Twardosz, 2012; Woolfolk, 2010). One can make the connection about the importance of the brain development years as they coincide with the time a child spends in early childhood education programs.

Research shows that there are three possible external influences on child development (Burchinal et al., 2011; Carter, 2010). Adult interactions, home environment, and school environment can have either a positive or adverse influence on a child's development (Carter, 2010). Examples of interactions that foster positive brain development are proper sleep, language development through conversations with children, loving and nurturing temperaments and tones, and visual and auditory stimuli (Carter, 2010; Woolfolk, 2010). While philosophical debates between the influence of nature versus nurture continue to generate robust conversations in the social and educational arenas, research suggests that the environment in which children grow and develop is critical to their future success, not only as students, but as citizens (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Children who are not in environments that foster the necessary

physical and chemical brain developments have a high risk of missing the opportunity to develop appropriately, effecting cognitive, social-emotional, physical, and language skills that are needed to succeed in school and in life (Burchinal et al., Carter, 2010; Hemphill & Tivnan, 2008; Woolfolk, 2010).

While some pediatricians, educators, and psychologists understood and understand the importance of the stages of brain development and growth, the public, including parents, were not exposed to the depth of this important research. In 1996, at the height of President William J. Clinton's re-election bid, declaring to increase funding to Head Start programs, brain research was published by Gunner et al. (1996). This research gained national attention after its findings were highlighted in mass media. *Time* magazine covered the story of brain research, and *ABC* television aired, "I Am Your Child," an exposé that highlighted key components for the public (Newberger, 1997). New brain-imaging technologies enabled scientists to investigate how the brain develops and works. Stimulated in part by the overall well-being of children in America, the findings have affirmed what many parents and caregivers have known for years in making a difference in children's development for a lifetime. They need: "(a) good prenatal care, (b) warm and loving attachments between young children and adults, and (c) positive, age-appropriate stimulation from the time of birth" (Newberger, 1997, p. 4).

The original findings had significant implications on the early childhood education field. There was a shift away from words like childcare and day care because they implied a rudimentary approach to the work and programs (Diamond & Whittington, 2015). Childcare and day care monikers shifted to early childhood education or early learning (Diamond & Whittington, 2015; Goffin, 2013). Contextually, childcare and day

care were custodial care program models that allowed parents to work and attend school or job training (Albarran, 2014; Ceglowski, 2004). Early childhood education practitioners were now equipped with new data that informed how early learning programs were created or modified to facilitate development in children (Rhodes & Huston, 2012). As a result of the public awareness, questions of quality began to be asked from a different perspective (Baker et al., 2013; Cascio & Schanzenbach, 2013; Diamond & Whittington, 2015; Halpern, 2013).

As brain development research supported early childhood education as a major contributing factor to school success, social science research was also providing its own findings regarding the short- and long-term effects on children who were enrolled in early childhood programs (Barnett, 2003). Research demonstrates that children who attend ECE programs tend to have higher language and social development skills when entering kindergarten, in comparison to children who did not attend any ECE programs before kindergarten (Barnett, 2003; Hemphill & Tivnan, 2008). Many children with special needs or developmental delays, who attend ECE programs, have their delays addressed before kindergarten, often resulting in partial or full remediation of developmental delays such as speech or minor cognitive delays (Barnett, 2003). There are also long-term implications for sustained success for children who attend ECE programs. One 15-year study from Chicago (Reynolds, 2009) highlights the potential long-term benefits of ECE programs.

The Chicago Longitudinal Study (Reynolds, 2009) studied children who attended one of the 24 Chicago Child Parent Centers (CPC). These centers were located in low-income communities throughout Chicago and surrounding neighborhoods. The data

show that 49.7% of the sample of children who attended who attended CPC graduated high school in comparison to the 25% of the control group (who did not attend). Also, there was a lower arrest percentage for the children that attended CPC at 16.9% in comparison to 25.1% of the control population (Reynolds, Temple, Robertson, & Mann, 2011). The study asserts that there is a positive impact for children, families, and communities for children who attend ECE programs.

Based on the data of both medical science and social science research, early childhood programs began to shift from custodial care facilities to early childhood education programs (Brown, 2013). The landscape of ECE has been shifting from custodial care models to ECE programs that implement developmentally appropriate pedagogy (Kagan & Kaurez, 2012). The shift in the public's perception of the importance of ECE has influenced program designs and curriculum. ECE centers have adjusted their focus from the custodial care of young children to the education of young children (Goffin, 2013; Goffin & Means, 2009). Previously, free or subsidized childcare centers were predicated on the model of center-based custodial care. The focus was to provide a safe haven for children while their parents went to work. Often there was inadequate or inappropriate support for early childhood development. New information about the importance of early education has increased the demand for more programs to offer research-based curriculum that fosters cognitive, physical, and emotional development. As early childhood programs shift to meet the demands of the community and parents, early childhood as a profession also need to adjust, accommodate, and support the new rigor of programs (Brown, 2013; Goffin, 2013).

Despite the research and shift of public perception toward the importance of early childhood education, there is a lack of professionalizing the careers in early childhood education including that of the program leadership (Barnett, 2003). Higher education programs, in conjunction with state departments of education, are catching up to the new rigor of early childhood education by implementing certification and licensure tracks for instructional and classroom staff (Bowman et al., 2012; Gable, 2014; Goffin & Washington, 2007). There is still a gap of development for ECE administrators to lead these new models of education (Barnett, 2003; Bloom, 2004; Gerstenblatt et al., 2014).

Meaningful experiences for children who attend early childhood programs have a significant impact for future success (Dunst, 2002). Teachers are charged with facilitating these experiences in the classrooms (Albarran, 2014). Early childhood administrators are tasked with leading these programs for successful child outcomes (Bloom, 2004). This leadership success is defined as the ability to approach challenges and program development in a systematic way (Bennis, 2009). The same expectations can be established when measuring or quantifying a successful early childhood education program. In addition to pedagogical implementation, preschool administrators are also charged with managing human resources, fiscal policy, advocacy, and facilities issues that their predecessors did not (Ryan et al., 2011). Bloom (2004) stated that, "Leadership is the business of every director who administers an early childhood or family service program. It is an essential ingredient in any thriving organizations and one of the strongest predictors of high-quality early childhood and family service programming" (p. 21).

Early Childhood Leadership Development Landscape

Despite Bloom's (2004) assertion, leadership development still struggles to gain traction as a national concern. Nationwide, nearly 50% of early childhood administrators do not have a degree in early childhood or general education (Ryan et al., 2011). Depending on the type of organization and degrees offered, the early childhood administrators have a variety of entry points into the leadership role (Goffin, 2013. The standards and qualifications for lead teachers can be minimal, and quite often, new administrators are often thrust into a leadership position to fulfill a compliance need or by the recommendation of a higher-level administrator (Ryan et al., 2011). As a result, preschool programs are led by well-intentioned, administrators who, quite often, hold the same teacher credential as the employees they supervise (Jones & Pound, 2008).

There was a national shift in program models for early care and education in the late 1990s, largely due to the expanded brain development research and its consequential public response for the need for changes in the field (Baker et al., 2013; Cascio & Schanzenbach, 2013; Diamond & Whittington, 2015; Halpern, 2013). As these new program models changed, so did the roles and responsibilities of the early childhood educational workforce (Barnett, 2003; Early & Winton, 2001). Consequently, policy makers, educators, and researchers commenced program evaluations and research to acquire data regarding a plethora of early childhood education topics, including leadership preparation and development. There are reputable leadership programs on a national level as well as programs available to early childhood leaders in New York State.

National leadership development resources. There are programs that attempt to professionalize, support, and further develop the early childhood education leadership

position. Organizations and, in some cases, government agencies are addressing the gap in leadership preparation and development. In 2004, data show that there were only 12 leadership development institutes across the country (Munn, 2004). Goffin and Means (2009) continued to build on this leadership development research and published their findings in the Leadership Development in Early Childhood Care and Education research report. In 2009, 5 years after the Munn (2004) research, the number of leadership development programs grew sevenfold to 86 programs (Goffin & Means, 2009). While the data clearly demonstrate an increase of the quantity of programs, there were still some concerns about the content and intent of the programs (Goffin & Means, 2009). Key assertions of this research indicate that the leadership development programs were driven by professional development that addressed site-level management of operations, and it often neglected to offer broader leadership skills development (Goffin & Means, 2009). The additional research publication indicated that in 2013, the number of early childhood leadership development programs decreased to 55 nationwide (Goffin & Means, 2013). While the total number of programs available decreased, the research asserts that the training and development topics expanded beyond center-based management and included topics such as advocacy, general or non-specific leadership skills, policy, systems building, PreK-third grade alignment, and collective impact (Goffin & Means, 2013).

There are two national continuing-education opportunities for early childhood leadership development. The first is offered through The National Institute of Childcare Management (NICCM) with 45 continuing-education units in ECE leadership training and professional development. The National Administrator Credential (NAC) is a

nationally recognized credential, and it is accepted in Texas, Louisiana, Utah, and Oklahoma as a qualifying requirement for ECE directors (National Institute of Childcare Management [NICCM], 2010). Other states recognize this as a professional achievement, but it cannot be used toward the local qualification requirements for early childhood education leadership (NICCM, 2010).

The second continuing-education opportunity, and the more-reputable national credential, is administered through the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership. The Aim4Excellence National Director credential is an online program that has successfully credentialed over 2,000 early childhood administrators (McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership, 2016). Nine topics, which include general leadership, building business plans and strategies, and evaluating program quality, comprise the requirements to complete the credential; all of which can be completed at the pace of the participant (McCormick Center, 2016). This credential is available to anyone interested in leadership development and, starting in July 2017, it is a requirement for every early childhood program leader in Illinois (Illinois Department of Human Services, 2016; McCormick Center, 2016). NAEYC also recognizes this credential as an indicator of program quality when assessing programs for national accreditation (NAEYC, 2016).

New York State leadership development resources. In additional to the opportunity for leaders to receive national early childhood leadership credentials, New York State is also attempting to address the professionalization of the ECE leadership role through three leadership development programs that are available for current and emerging administrators. The Children's Program Administrators Credential (CPAC) of

New York offers fiscal management, human resources, program management, and leadership development courses for educators who are interested in developing skills that are integral to leading ECE programs (New York Association for the Education of Young Children [NYAEYC], 2017). CPAC coursework is offered in four locations in New York State: the CUNY School of Professional Development, Empire State College, Hudson Valley Community College, and the University of Wisconsin-Platteville (online courses).

The CUNY School of Professional Development CPAC program is designed specifically for current center directors, with the goal of developing and strengthening the skills they need to continue impactful leadership in their programs (NYAEYC, 2017). The balance of the aforementioned programs offers the CPAC credential for those enrolled in associate or bachelor's degree education programs (NYAEYC, 2017). The New York Association for the Education of Young Children (NYAEYC, 2017) developed this program to fill a professional development gap; however, this is not a mandated requirement to hold an ECE leadership position in New York State.

Bank Street and Columbia University Teachers Colleges both offer degree programs that are specific to early childhood education leadership (Bank Street, 2017; Columbia University, 2017; Goffin & Means, 2013). One of the rare degree programs specific to early childhood leadership, Bank Street, offers a 38-credit Master of Science in Early Childhood Leadership degree, and it can be used toward attaining a school building leader state certification (Bank Street, 2017). Teachers College at Columbia University (2017) offers a Master of Science in Education, a Doctor of Education, and a Doctor of Philosophy degree in early childhood education policy, with the goal of

advancing early childhood research, policy, and advocacy. These are not online

programs, requiring students to attend the traditional brick-and-mortar schools.

Early childhood leadership development research. Rafanello and Bloom

(1997) conducted the Illinois Directors Study for the Professional Development Project

for National-Louis University. The purpose of this qualitative research was to gather and

analyze information regarding the availability and access to professional development for

early childhood administrators (Rafanello & Bloom, 1997). It also captured the

perceptions of success and potential for growth within the early childhood profession as

administrators. Data were gathered from interviews and focus groups of Illinois directors

to answer research questions about their perceptions of leadership needs, as well as their

thoughts of the development of an early childhood education leader credential (Rafanello

& Bloom, 1997).

There were several conclusions developed from this research. Regardless of the

amount of time in the administrative role, the directors felt the strongest supports were

the informal peer support and networking (Rafanello & Bloom, 1997). Another

perceived strength expressed in the focus group, albeit informal, was the successful

pooling of community resources. The data also indicate that 90% of early childhood

administrators in Illinois were classroom teachers before beginning their administrative

roles; therefore, they received few opportunities for leadership development prior to the

administrative positions. Of these administrators, 20% actively pursued administration as

a career goal, and within this demographic, 27% felt prepared for the position (Rafanello

& Bloom, 1997). Data from this research suggest that directors valued the concept of

formalized leadership development, "but could not agree when this development should

take place" (Rafanello & Bloom, 1997, p. 2). Administrators demonstrated their interest in the professional growth and its implication on improving and sustaining high-quality early childhood programs, but they expressed disappointment with the opportunities (Rafanello & Bloom, 1997). Subsequent research provided the data to support the need for consistency throughout the state of Illinois, which now mandates (effective July 2017) that all early childhood education program leaders to hold an Illinois Director Credential (Illinois Department of Human Services, 2016).

Preschool administrators were researched in 2011, and the data suggest that in addition to the qualified and trained instructional staff, there is a connection between the level of administrative training and the overall impact this leadership has on a program (Ryan et al., 2011). Of the 98 preschool directors who were surveyed by the researchers, 92% asked both demographic- and experience-related questions. This group of administrators then attended the Director Leadership Academy (DLA). Although the empirical data were used to make correlations between training and program quality, it is important to include the self-evaluations that the administrators submitted upon completion of the DLA. Given that nearly 48% of the participants did not hold an undergraduate nor a graduate degree in early childhood or general education, their participation in this training was an integral component for managing and leading a successful early childhood program (Ryan et al., 2011).

Early childhood systems and programs are implementing leadership development programs in efforts to train new early childhood and preschool administrators (Ressler et al., 2015). In 2010, the Canadian Childcare Human Resources Sector Council (CHRSS) created the program called Mentoring Pairs for Childcare (MPCC). The administrators,

all who had less than 5 years of experience in the leadership role, completed this 3-component cohort in 11 months. There was a combination of formal curriculum to enhance administrative knowledge skill sets, activities to enhance administrative professionalism, and interpersonal connections with mentors and peer support. Ressler, et al. (2015) researched the efficacy of this administrative training model. Post- and pre-training questionnaires, the Program Administration Scale (PAS) (Talan & Bloom, 2011) and the Environmental Ratings Scale (Harms & Clifford, 2005) were used to evaluate the quality of leadership and the overall quality of the early childhood program. Preliminary findings indicate significant improvement in the quality of human resource, fiscal, and policy skill sets and implementation.

This research also indicates an increase in the effective mentoring and coaching between the training participants and their instructional and support staff. Ressler et al. (2015) stated that there was little change captured in the child and staff interactions, as a direct result of this administrative training. This team suggested more time and further research in needed to ascertain the impact on the leadership training and its correlation to the quality of the classrooms.

In addition to freestanding or independent preschool programs, many states or large city public school systems now have preschool as part of the elementary schools (Goncu, Main, Perone, & Tozer, 2012). Illinois government passed legislation that requires school principals to hold a P-12 license instead of the traditional K-12 certification. This additional graduate and post-graduate course work will develop leadership in preschool curriculum and implementation as the demand for preschool increases.

One can assert that the research indicates there are direct short-term and long-term benefits of early childhood leadership development, thereby creating a need to professionalize a career that has socially been deemed as nothing more than babysitting or institutionalized childcare (Bloom, 2004; Boyd, 2013; Goffin, 2013; Shonkoff &Phillips, 2000). There are perceived benefits of professionalizing this field of practice. One such benefit is the professionalizing this career would create consistency in professional identity (Goffin, 2013). This creates the opportunity for collective preparedness in a space that is traditionally left to the individual to develop. There could also be an emerging cohort of educated and trained professionals, who would create a baseline of standards, regardless of the program model, program location, or funding source (Goffin, 2013, p. 31). According to Ingersoll and Perda (2008), by definition, the professionalization of an occupation is the space when credentials, licensure, professional development, compensation, and respect no longer conflict with each other. Using this lens, there are opportunities to begin addressing this public policy.

Summary

The literature review in Chapter 2 presented the evolution of early childhood education in the United States. Brain development research influenced public policy and increased awareness regarding the importance of supporting children's development in early years. Consequently, early childhood education programs have been transitioning from custodial care to institutions of research-based pedagogy. While the profession still struggles to break public perceptions as babysitters, programs have been put into place to develop teachers, elevating them from custodial caregivers to educated, prepared, and certified early childhood teachers. One identified gap in this growth, development, and

preparation of early childhood education leaders. Currently, there is no defined career track for the development for the profession of early childhood leader.

Early childhood administrators are often excluded from the conversation on leadership development as it relates to the impact it has on the programs they lead (Goffin, 2013). Despite the growing importance of ECE, early childhood educators are still widely considered childcare providers or babysitters, and they have had difficulty in shifting public opinion to consider this as a legitimate professional career (Institute of Medicine, 2015. Educators in the early 19th century sought public acceptance for the careers of elementary and secondary schools in which its teachers and administrators acquired and administered a specialized skill that demanded respect (Ingersoll & Perda, 2008). Now, nearly one hundred years later, the need for professionalizing the field now includes early childhood education administrators (Ingersoll & Perda, 2008).

Although there are indicators of a developing professionalization of ECE leadership across the nation, the researcher found a gap in leadership development opportunities that are specific to the population of early childhood administrators in New York City and its surrounding counties. It is clear that New York City does not have a certification career path specifically for early childhood administrators and there is a gap in the research as it relates to the study's proposed research questions. How do program directors identify themselves as early childhood administrators? What educational and professional development experiences inform the practices of early childhood administrators? How do program directors implement their education, training, and professional development experiences when leading early childhood programs? What do ECE administrators identify as gaps in their leadership preparation, and what impact did

these gaps have on the programs they have led? In Chapter 3, the researcher develops the

research design and methodology and attempts to answer questions regarding the impact

that leadership development has had on the professionalization of the early childhood

educational workforce in New York State.

Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

Introduction

There is a continuous shift in the practice and implementation of early childhood education (ECE) from custodial care to programs that offer research-based curriculum (Ho & Chen, 2013). The literature review from Chapter 2 presented the evolution of ECE in the United States. The progression and development of early childhood education was facilitated by brain development research, and it is supported through public perceptions and implementation of public policies (Gunner et al., 1996; Ho & Chen, 2013). Parents, educators and caregivers, and developers of public policy have a recharged perspective and responsibility to facilitate and support the development of young children, both in the home and in educational settings (Sripada, 2012).

In response to the new demands for developmentally appropriate early education and public policy regarding early childhood education reform, ECE programs have been transitioning from custodial care to institutions of research-based pedagogy (Barnett, 2003; Brown, 2013; Gerstenblatt et al., 2014; Kagan & Kaurez, 2012). As the profession continues to challenge the public perception of early childhood educators as babysitters, education reform has supported program development, curriculum development, and advancement in the development and professionalization of early childhood teachers (Ho & Chen, 2013). Despite these advances, the profession still struggles to support the development and professionalization of ECE administrators. Although there are only a few opportunities for ECE administrators to access leadership training and development,

there is an expectation that these leaders will successfully facilitate and manage the education of young children (Bloom, 2005). Training and development is limited in New York State, and it is considered a best practice, but it is not a requirement to assume the leadership position (NYSED, 2016a). All early childhood programs licensed in New York City by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (2016) are required to have a director with New York teacher certification and 2 years of classroom experience. All other counties in the state are regulated by the OCFS. The requirements for a leadership position in an early childhood center are an associate degree in early childhood education and 1 year of experience in the classroom. Leadership coursework is not included in New York State teacher certification higher education programs. Consequently, a vast majority of leaders in these programs do not have leadership development prior to assuming the administrator position.

The purpose of this qualitative, narrative research was to capture the perceptions of ECE administrators as professionals in New York State and to articulate their perceptions of how their preparation and professional development have impacted the programs they lead and support the advancement of ECE leadership as a profession. The qualitative research developed the narrative of eight ECE administrators in New York City and its surrounding counties. In an effort to address the following research questions, one-on-one interviews, supported by anonymous questionnaire responses, elicited detailed demographic data and qualitative information about the participants' experiences:

1. How do program directors identify themselves as early childhood administrators?

2. What educational and professional development experiences inform the practices of early childhood administrators?

3. How do program directors implement their education, training, and professional development experiences when leading early childhood programs?

4. What do ECE administrators identify as the gaps in their leadership preparation, and what impact did these gaps have on the programs they have led?

Several qualitative research methods were considered for this research, including phenomenological, case study, and grounded theory. While Creswell (2014) asserted these methods to be valid and reliable, the narrative qualitative research methodology was used to capture the perceptions of preparedness for the role as early childhood education leaders in New York, and how this preparation impacts the professionalization of this career. This chapter presents the methodology used to complete this research, as well as providing details of: (a) narrative qualitative research methods, (b) research context, (c) research participants, (d) recruitment of participants, (e) establishing trustworthiness, and (f) data collection and analysis.

Narrative Inquiry

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), qualitative research can be defined as the research of people with the attempt to define or understand a problem or phenomenon. Holloway and Bailey (2011) posited that qualitative research is a humanistic method to gather the thoughts and actions of people. Creswell (2014) defined qualitative research as the event that begins as an assumption, and with the development

of research questions, theories emerge from an individual's or group's role in the problem. The data collected are often organized into themes or categories, and the final reporting of the findings include the perspectives of the participants and the interpretation of the problems (Creswell, 2014). The qualitative data potentially add to the existing body of research literature and often provide suggestions for future research (Creswell, 2014; Yates & Leggett, 2016).

Narrative qualitative research suggests that information and data collected from participants tell a story, creating a chronicle of narrative data journals, life experiences, events, and perceptions of an individual (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Czarniawska-Joerges, 2004; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002; Polkinghorne, 1988). This methodology also affords the researcher with the opportunity to connect individual stories and experiences to create a narrative of a culture, family, or community (Czarniawska-Joerge, 2004; Polkinghorne, 1988). It can also be used to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of a person or a group of people and can frame data as they relate to events and the subsequent perceptions created within the context of experiences, culture, or historical context (Creswell, 2014; Polkinghorne, 1988). For these reasons, the narrative inquiry was chosen as the most appropriate methodology for this research.

The narrative community for this research was early childhood administrators in New York State. The data collected framed the context of this community of leaders. The early childhood education leaders' stories memorialized their experiences and the impact these experiences had on their career trajectories. This body of information not only tells the story of the individual ECE leader, but it also captures the narratives of a culture and community (Polkinghorne, 1988; Richards, 1989). Collectively, the data

analyzed from the research contribute to the existing body of literature regarding the role of early childhood education leaders, the impact of their preparedness, and the importance of the leadership roles in the continued need to further professionalize early childhood education.

Research Context

The five counties of New York City (Bronx, Kings, Queens, New York, and Richmond), and Nassau, Suffolk, and Westchester counties were the regions of New York State that comprise the population of the potential participants. Throughout the state, there are approximately 4,313 licensed, center-based early childhood centers; there are 2,283 located in New York City alone (NOCFS, 2015). The United State Census Bureau (2015) reported that New York State's population was approximately 19,745,000, and children under the age of 5-years old represented 5.9% of the state's population. Based on this data, there are potentially over one million children attending an early childhood program throughout New York State.

Different models of ECE centers operate throughout these counties including private nursery schools, local subsidized care centers (often referenced as day care centers), Early Head Start, Head Start, family day care, school based ECE (located in public, parochial, and charter schools), and informal, unlicensed childcare (OCFS, 2015). While all these models or program types play an important role in their communities, administrators of licensed center-based programs were identified as the population for the research. Throughout these program models, the New York State Department of Labor (2017) reports that there are 36,500 childcare workers and an additional 40,000 preschool teachers in New York State. The mean salary for a childcare worker is $20,880, while

the mean salary for a preschool teacher is $32,550 (New York State Department of Labor [NYS DOL], 2017). There were no statistics presented by the New York State Department of Labor specific to early childhood administrators.

In addition to the variety of program modalities, there are constructs of diversity within and between each county. Early childhood education administrators in the identified counties for this research are faced with incorporating variables of both day-to-day management and long-term strategic planning (Boyd, 2013). While these eight counties represent a large portion of what is considered down-state New York, there are cultural and economic characteristics that impact the programs located in these communities. Research suggests that early childhood directors are responsible for not only pedagogy but building relationships with the parents and the community (Albarran, 2014; Espinosa, 2002; Gable, 2014; Guernsey & Mead, 2010; Halpern, 2013; NAEYC, 2009). This research supports the relevance of including information about the counties in which the participants work.

As the *gatekeepers of quality*, the communities in which the programs are located play an important role as the backdrop for the experiences of the children and families, as well as determining resources available to the program (Bloom, 1992; Morgan, 2000). For example, the United States Census Bureau (2015) reported that 30% of the population in the Bronx had an annual household income at or below $24,250. Assumptions, based on this Federal poverty guideline, indicate that there are limited resources, a higher number of Head Start programs, and government subsidized childcare programs. These statistics are important to consider because directors need to navigate the communities in which they work. Table 3.1 reflects household income, population,

and percent of families living at or below the poverty level in New York State and the counties in which the research was conducted (United States Census Bureau, 2015). The 2015 statistics further develop the context for the communities where the research participants work and often live.

Table 3.1

Research Context Demographic Data

Community	Estimated Population – *n*	Median Household Income – *n*	Household Living at or Below Federal Poverty Level* – %
New York State	19,745,289	56,269	14.7
Bronx County	1,455,720	34,299	30.3
Kings County	2,629,150	48,201	22.3
Nassau County	1,361,560	99,465	6.1
New York County	1,643,734	78,871	17.6
Queens County	2,333,054	57,720	13.9
Richmond County	476,015	73,197	14.2
Suffolk County	1,492,583	88,663	7.8
Westchester County	974,542	83,958	10.1

Note. *Federal poverty guideline as defined by the United States DOHHS Department of Health & Human Services (2016) is an annual household income of $24,600 for a family of four. Median household, population, and household information a adapted from statistics from United States Census Bureau (2016).

The researcher acknowledged the importance of collecting data from diverse communities, recognizing the potential impact that these differences would have on the credentials, career trajectory opportunities, and the leadership position itself. It is the expectation of ECE administrators to consider these factors when leading their programs (Gerstenblatt et al., 2014). The communities in which the administrators worked proved to be an integral component of their administrative responsibilities, and they were

reflected in several interviews. The researcher included this information in the fabric of

the research and treated it with the importance expressed by several of the administrators.

Research Participants

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (2016) and New

York University (2008) have defines an early childhood education program as a location

that provides early childhood education services for three or more children, for more than

5 hours per week. The administrators who lead these programs are defined as the people

who are responsible for both the day-to-day operations and long-term planning for the

programs (Boyd, 2013). New York City requires each center-based ECE program to

have an identified and qualified education director (NYC DOHMH, 2015). These

education directors must hold a New York State early childhood teacher license and have

at least 2 years of experience in an early childhood classroom in order to be qualified as

the leader of a center (OCFS, 2016). The programs located outside of the New York City

parameters fall under the governance of the Office of Children and Family Services

(OCFS).

The requirements for ECE administration are much less, only requiring an

associate degree in early childhood education and 2 years of experience in an ECE

classroom setting (OCFS, 2016). In addition to the credential requirements outlined by

the city and state, the selected ECE administrators were identified as the directors of

licensed programs, permitted by either the New York City Department of Health and

Mental Hygiene or the New York State Office of Children and Family Services. Using

these city and state requirement guidelines as the parameters for recruitment, purposive

sampling was used to identify potential participants for this research in eight New York counties.

Purposive sampling of participants intends to identify potential participants from a large group of people, all whom share common criteria for the research (Huck, 2012). Early childhood administrators in eight New York State counties were identified as the purposive sample. The eight counties of New York were chosen because the researcher had access to a large number of potential participants, as well as for its potential diversity of data and experiences gathered from the online questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Once Internal Review Board (IRB) approval (Appendix A) was granted by St. John Fisher College, the researcher solicited voluntary participation of the potential participants for this study. Public directories, which list program information including addresses, websites, and contact information of ECE administrators, was the first step of recruitment.

The directories were accessed to gain contact information for the ECE administrators located in the aforementioned counties of New York State. The website used to gather childcare program information for New York City was www.nyc.gov/childcare/childcarelist. The data for Nassau and Suffolk counties were at the www.childcarenassau and www.childcaresuffolk websites, respectively. Information to access directories for Westchester county proved to be challenging; therefore, the researcher used the Google and Bing search engines to locate lists of childcare centers by entering *day care Westchester county, NY* into the browser.

The directories often had general program contact information. Soliciting the email addresses for the center-based ECE directors required multiple steps in order to

gain more information. The researcher called the programs to get the email addresses for

program leadership. These directories are referenced in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2

Childcare Directory and Internet Searches

New York State Counties	Internet Data Search Engines
New York City	www.nyc.gov/childcare/childcarelist
Bronx	
Kings (Brooklyn)	
New York (Manhattan)	
Queens	
Richmond	
Nassau	www.childcarenassau.com
Suffolk	www.childcaresuffolk.com
Westchester	www.google.com; www.bing.com; "day care Westchester, NY"

This research had two participant groups: Group A and Group B. Both groups

required the recruitment of early childhood education administrators. The administrators

in both groups fulfilled the requirement of holding the minimally required credential

mandated by the licensed program in which they led.

The participants recruited for Group A were invited to participate in semi-

structured interviews, using purposive recruitment strategies. There were 12 early

childhood administrators recruited as potential participants for the semi-structured

interviews. Letters of introduction were sent via email to all potential participants

(Appendix B) and the distribution of the introduction letters was tracked using an Excel

spreadsheet. Six administrators responded that they would be interested in participating

in the research. There were two emails that were undeliverable, and four administrators

did not respond to the two recruitment emails. In order to reach the goal of eight interview participants, the researcher used the snowballing recruitment method. The last two confirmed participants were referrals from administrators who participated in the research.

Snowball selection is a non-random method used when the researcher asks current participants to refer colleagues or acquaintances that may be interested as additional potential participants (Emerson, 2015). This recruitment strategy enabled the researcher to ask existing participants for referrals (Ritchie, Lewis, Elam, Tennant, & Rahim, 2014). There was a potential for biased responses from the participants recruited through the snowball strategy, as prior participants could have informed future participants about the interview protocol (Emerson, 2015). This was mitigated as much as possible by not sharing the interview protocol with any participants prior to the semi-structured interview.

Recruitment strategies for participant Group B varied slightly from that of Group A. This research group participated in an anonymous online questionnaire. Email addresses for 253 early childhood education leaders were collected from the aforementioned directories and Internet searches and entered into the Qualtrics questionnaire development program. The introduction to the research study, as well as the informed consent statement, were part of the questionnaire tool and not sent ahead of the questionnaire itself (Appendix C).

Informed consent was an essential component to this qualitative research process. Informed consent provided the potential participants with the option to participate in the research or to opt out (Ritchie et al., 2014). The informed consent letter and statement

included the purpose of the study, information regarding who was conducting the research, methods for collecting data, type of participation (interview, case study, questionnaire), confidentiality and anonymity disclaimers, procedures for keeping data secured, and the participants ability to withdraw from the process at any time (Ritchie et al., 2014). The informed consent letter (Appendix D) was presented to the Group A participants prior to commencing the interview.

The online questionnaire for the Group B participants had the informed consent as the initial component of the questionnaire (Appendix C). The potential Group B participants who did not want to participate had the option to *click* the option to deny participation. Both Groups A and B participants had the option to terminate their participation at any point during the research process. Two participants recruited for Group A opted not to participate in the research. They were replaced with new participants. One potential participant from Group B opted to not complete the online survey.

Instruments Used for Data Collection

There were two participant groups for this research: Group A and Group B. Two different data collection instruments were used to collect the data for this research. The Group A participants were selected to participate in semi-structured interviews. The Group B participants were selected to complete an online questionnaire.

The data from Group A represent the primary source of information used to answer the research questions. A semi-structured interview is one style of qualitative methodology used to gather data in narrative, phenomenological, case study, ethnographic, or grounded-theory research (Gillham, 2000; Thomas, 2011). The format

for semi-structured interviews is multidimensional (Galletta, 2013; Gillham, 2000; Thomas, 2011). While, the structured questions were guided by the tenants of the interview protocol developed in the conceptualization phase of the research, there was an opportunity for the researcher to expound on responses and to offer an individualized perspective to the same questions. This methodology allowed the researcher to interpret the tenor of the interview and to ask questions to continue a thought or concept introduced by a response to the semi-structured questions (Galletta, 2013). As noted by Galletta (2013), these interviews can be conducted in one session or broken into segments. All interviews for this research took place during one session.

The data collection for narrative qualitative methodology was best supported by the implementation of semi-structured interviews. The experiences of the interviews further supported the characteristics and opportunities with semi-structured interviews. The researcher observed the participants were able to respond to the questions outlined in the interview protocol, while also taking the opportunity to offer a deeper, more personal perspective regarding their experiences as leaders of early childhood education programs. The average length of the interviews was 40 minutes. Although the interview participants were offered the option of participation via telephone, all semi-structured interviews were conducted in person by the researcher. The interviews were recorded on two separate audio-recording devices. The first instrument was the Zoom H1 Handy Recorder and the second was a Samsung Galaxy Smart Phone with the downloaded Voice Recorder application. In the event that one of the instruments malfunctioned the two instruments were used.

While many qualitative researchers have described transcription as an arduous chore, it was the essential first step to transferring important responses to the research questions (Oliver, Serovich, & Mason, 2005; Poland, 2002). The transcription process included several steps. Each recording was reviewed within 24 hours of the completed interview. The digital recordings were uploaded onto the researcher's personal computer, and a quality performance check was conducted. Once the sound quality was assessed as a viable recorded session, the recording was uploaded to an online transcription service allowing the researcher to submit the recorded interviews and convert them into transcribed Word documents.

The verbatim transcription option was selected because this included all hesitations, non-verbal sounds (laughter), and fillers (um or uh). This option was selected because of the nuances that built context and depth into the narrative. The transcripts were returned to the researcher, and the final steps of the transcription process commenced. First, the researcher changed the identification of the participants from *Speaker 1* to *MP* (the initials of the researcher) and assigned *Speaker 2* to a pseudonym that was used to reference the participant throughout the research. Finally, the researcher listened to the recorded interviews with the visual transcription to ensure the accuracy of document.

The Group B participants contributed data to the research by completing an anonymous online questionnaire that was administered using the Qualtrics data collection of software. Qualtrics was the instrument used to create and distribute online surveys and questionnaires. The software also had the capacity to store and aggregate the collected data. The questionnaire, which was a combination of 15 multiple choice questions and

two open-ended questions, was populated into the questionnaire instrument tool. Email addresses for 253 administrators from the eight designated counties were uploaded into the system. Questionnaire tool settings were programmed to maintain the anonymity of the respondents. In order to maintain anonymity, the Qualtrics system created a list serve, which enabled the researcher to send all 253 recipients the invitation to participate in the questionnaire, without disclosing the email addresses of any of the participants. The questionnaire was sent. A second reminder to participate was distributed 1 week later, and, subsequently, 2 weeks after the initial distribution to those who may not have participated. The questionnaire was distributed a total of three times to garner as much participation as possible and to reach saturation of participation from this group.

  Establishing trustworthiness. To mitigate potential limitation issues, triangulation and member checking are examples of how researchers can demonstrate trustworthiness and validity to their qualitative research (Pitney, 2004; Rudestam & Newton, 2007). It is often recommended that more than one method be used to establish trustworthiness (Creswell, 2014). Triangulation in qualitative research includes strategies and methods that a researcher uses to corroborate information gathered from a different tool (Pitney, 2004; Rudestam & Newton, 2007). For example, the responses from a questionnaire can corroborate responses coded from in-depth and semi-structured interviews (Pitney, 2004). Two open-ended questions were included in the online questionnaire completed by Group B participants.

  Member checking was also implemented to establish trustworthiness of the data for the research (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Pitney, 2004; Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Member checking allows the researcher to ask clarifying questions to verify information

that may be unclear or ambiguous (Pitney, 2004; Rudestam & Newton, 2007). For

example, upon review of the transcribed interviews, it was observed that three Group A

participants used the pronoun *they* throughout the interview. The researcher may have

been able to deduce or make assumptions about who they were, but to gather specific

data, the researcher re-engaged these three participants to solicit who these people called

they were. Responses included politicians, parents, college deans, my supervisor, and the

Department of Education. These updated responses provided details that were integral to

the data collection and contributed to the context of the responses. While member

checking and triangulation are respected and recognized processes to support qualitative

trustworthiness, there are critics who argue that the aforementioned, used in isolation, are

not enough to prove trustworthiness (Sparks, 2001). The researcher argued that these two

strategies were effectively used to maintain the integrity of the data collection and

analysis.

Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis

Researchers often engage a panel of experts in the field of their study to review

and substantiate methods and instruments used to gather qualitative information (Pitney,

2004). Prior to the recruitment of potential participants for the research, a letter of

introduction was sent to three early childhood experts and one compliance and quality

assurance expert (Appendix E). The recipients of the letter were invited to review the

interview protocol. The three early childhood experts were invited to participate because

of their knowledge of the early childhood profession. Their feedback was based on their

knowledge of the field including terminology, professional requirements, and

comprehension of the questions based on early childhood education references. The

compliance and quality assurance expert was asked to participate as an expert based on her experiences with implementing and aggregating data from surveys and questionnaires. This expertise was then used to measure the clarity of the questions and ease of use of the questionnaire. The collective 80 years of experience in their respective fields were used to review the interview protocol and give any recommendations for improvement. Each expert signed and submitted an informed consent letter (Appendix F), which detailed their role in the research.

The first document that was reviewed was the list of research questions, the supporting interview questions, and the conversation prompts that were proposed for the use in the semi-structured interviews with Group A (Appendix G). There were no recommended changes from the experts to the research questions. The second document that was reviewed by the experts was the Group B questionnaire.

The initial recommendation by the experts was regarding Question 4 (Q4). Originally, this was an open-ended question on the online questionnaire tool. This was changed to a multiple-choice question. Although this question was posed to demonstrate the variety of titles for leaders in the field, the observation from the experts was that the variety would only represent a limited amount of possible responses. Creating a question with the most prevalent titles in the field, with an option for outlier titles, created an easier process for answering the basic question. Question 12 (Q12) changes reflected clearer language. The experts felt that the original question left ambiguity in the participants' ability to respond correctly.

Eliminating the option of holding a license *in another state* proved unnecessary because the research was intended for license holders in New York State. The addition of

the option for a *childhood, middle school, and high school certification* option was added, as the experts expressed that some participants may be certified but not as early childhood teachers. The last adjustment was applied to Question 14 (Q14). The experts' professional perspective of how early childhood programs are funded lead to the change in this question. Many early childhood programs are supported by multiple funding sources (Albarran, 2014; Bowman et al., 2012; Institute of Medicine, 2015). In the experts' opinion, the participants may have found it difficult to *check only one* choice. The directive was changed to *check all that apply* to reflect the potential complexities and funding of the program models.

The recommendations were implemented to improve the interview protocol. All recommended changes were made to the online questionnaire tool (Appendix C) for Group B. The changes for Q4, Q12, and Q14 were also made to the demographic information questionnaire for Group A (Appendix H). Q15 did not need to be changed for Group A, as it was presented as an open-ended question during the semi-structured interview. The recommended changes did not affect the research methodology, research population, nor the context of the research. However, the recommended changes improved the quality of implementation of the instrument. These recommendations increased the ease of use, which ideally better supported the content connection to the research questions. All changes are represented in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3

Interview Protocol Changes

Proposed Questions	Amended Questions
Q4. What is your title? (open-ended)	Q4. What is your title? Please select one: ☐ Center Director ☐ Education Director ☐ Program Director ☐ Administrative Director ☐ Other ☐ If you selected other, what is your title? _____
Q12. What New York State Certification do you hold? Check all that apply. ☐ NYS Teacher Certification Nursery through Sixth grade ☐ NYS Teacher Certification Birth through Second Grade ☐ NYS School Building Leader (SBL) ☐ NYS School District Leader (SDL) ☐ Children's Program Administrator Credential (CPAC) ☐ I hold a teacher or administrator certification from another state ☐ I do not hold a NYS certification or education license	Q12. What New York State Certification do you hold? Check all that apply. ☐ NYS Teacher Certification Nursery through Sixth grade ☐ NYS Teacher Certification Birth through Second Grade ☐ NYS School Building Leader (SBL) ☐ NYS School District Leader (SDL) ☐ Children's Program Administrator Credential (CPAC) ☐ Licensed Social Worker (LMSW) ☐ Special Education ☐ Childhood, Middle School or High School ☐ I do not hold a NYS certification or education license
Q.14. Which best describes the type of ECE program you lead? Check only one: ☐ Early Head Start or Head Start ☐ Locally Funded Childcare (e.g., EarlyLearn) ☐ Special Education Preschool Program ☐ Universal Prekindergarten Program ☐ Private Nursery or Preschool ☐ Home-Based Provider	Q14. Which best describe the type of ECE program you lead. Check all that apply: ☐ Early Head Start or Head Start ☐ Locally Funded Childcare (e.g., EarlyLearn) ☐ Special Education Preschool Program ☐ Universal Prekindergarten Program ☐ Private Nursery or Preschool ☐ Home-Based Provider
Q15. Describe your career path to becoming as early childhood administrator. (Open-ended)	Q15. Which career trajectory best describes your transition into your first early childhood director position? ☐ I actively pursued an ECE leadership role as part of my career goals. ☐ I was identified by a mentor or supervisor as a viable candidate for a leadership opportunity.

One additional, unanimous recommendation was to refer to the participants of the semi-structured interviews as *Group A*, and subsequently referring to the online questionnaire participants as *Group B*. Reversing the title of these two groups put the rightful emphasis on interviewees. The purpose of the responses from *Group B* was to triangulate and add demographic depth to the responses from *Group A*. The original monikers for the group were confusing and put the emphasis on the supporting role of the questionnaire.

The nature of narrative qualitative research is an interpretive process, beginning with the concept development of the research through to the data collection and analysis (Josselson, 2006; Riessman, 2008). The demographic information collected for either quantitative or qualitative research can be used to provide description information about the sample and to answer a research question (Kostoulas, 2014). There were two sets of data that were analyzed for this research.

The first set of data was the demographic responses collected from both Group A and Group B. Group A responded to the demographic questionnaire on paper before their interviews. The responses were then collected and entered into an Excel spreadsheet by the researcher. Group B responses were collected and aggregated through the Qualtrics software database. The questionnaire used in this research identified similarities and differences between the participants of both Groups A and B. The Qualtrics database and the Excel spreadsheet were developed to aggregate the data and run a variety of reports based on the needs of the researcher.

The analysis of the second set of data required the researcher to code responses from the two open-ended questions solicited from Group B's questionnaire and from the

transcriptions of Group A's interviews. The initial step in this process required the researcher to transcribe the recorded interviews. Once all interviews were transcribed, the researcher commenced coding the data.

Coding is one method that can be used to analyze and organize qualitative information (Saldaña, 2016). The researcher used a priori and emergent codes to organize the data from the interviews and open-ended questionnaire responses. A priori codes are a predetermined list of codes that are derived from the research questions, theoretical framework, and key concepts from the literature review (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). The a priori codes for this research were: (a) mentor, (b) training and professional development, (c) experience, (d) leadership, (e) trust, and (f) qualifications. The researcher used these words and phrases to identify codes within the transcribed data.

The transcripts were read several times. They were circled and highlighted into theme words or phrases that could be connected to the a priori codes. The repetition of the process allowed the researcher to employ analytical coding strategies. These categories were then further analyzed and, in turn, themes and concepts were developed. The final step of this coding process developed by Saldaña (2016) was the creation of the themes and subthemes that were direct responses to the research questions. Figure 3.1 illustrates the coding process.

Data → A priori & Emergent Codes → **Researh Themes**
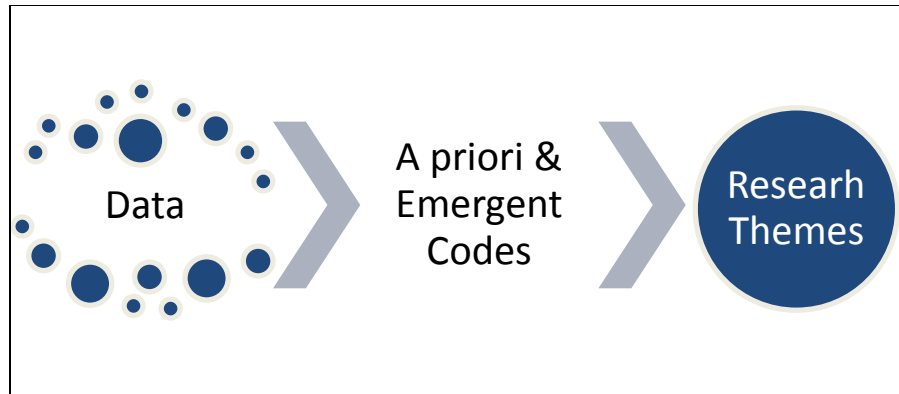
Figure 3.1. Data to Theory Illustration. Adapted from "The Coding Manual for Qualitative Research" (2nd ed.), by J. Saldaña, 2016. Copyright 2016 by Sage Publications.

All transcripts and voice recordings are stored in a fire-proof, locked safe in the home of the researcher. The participants were assigned pseudonyms, protecting their identity and protecting their rights to confidentiality. The pseudonym assignments are included in a password-protected file on an external drive dedicated to the research. All data collected through Qualtrics are stored in a password-protected computer and database. The Excel workbooks are also password protected. These data collection tools will be kept secured, and all information will continue to be kept confidential. All electronic information is stored on an external password-protected drive and it has been placed in the safe located in the researcher's home. All data will be destroyed 3 years after the conclusion of the publication of this work.

Summary

Early childhood education programs focus on the capacity to provide appropriate education and development programs for New York States' youngest children. The existing licensure for early childhood administrators is not mandated (NYSED, 2016a). As part of their responsibilities, ECE administrators must monitor and ensure compliance

and preparation of instructional staff, but these leaders face no credential requirements and have few options for developing the leadership skills they need to lead programs (Goffin, 2013, Leithwood et al., 2004).

Professional development opportunities for early childhood education leaders are also limited (Bloom, 2004; Gerstenblatt et al., 2014). The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of the lack of formal preparation, training, and professional development, as experienced by ECE leadership individuals, and the impact these gaps have on their capacity to lead their programs. The researcher examined the career paths and choices of the ECE administrators and analyzed their perception of their experiences and how these perceptions influenced their leadership of the programs. This qualitative study included interviews with ECE administrators to capture their perceptions of their own capacity to lead programs. The data were collected and coded to develop a qualitative narrative on the preparedness of ECE leaders. Chapter 4 details the findings of the research, producing the data and the developing analysis governed by the methodological constructs outlined in this chapter.

Chapter 4: Results

The narrative inquiry methodology is implemented to create an account or story by collecting data from multiple sources to create one chronicle (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Czarniawska-Jorges, 2004; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002; Polkinghorne, 1988). The purpose of this research was to capture and analyze data regarding the professionalization of the early childhood careers in New York State, particularly as it relates to leadership development. The perceptions of early childhood leaders and their preparedness for their positions, along with the impact of this preparedness on the programs they lead, comprised the major data sets for this research. The insights were organized thematically in accordance with the research questions:

1. How do program directors identify themselves as early childhood administrators?

2. What educational and professional development experiences inform the practices of early childhood administrators?

3. How do program directors implement their education, training, and professional development experiences when leading early childhood programs?

4. What do ECE administrators identify as gaps in their leadership preparation, and what impact do these gaps have on the programs they lead?

Semi-structured interviews and demographic data surveys were included in this qualitative narrative research. There were two participant groups. Group A participated

in the semi-structured interviews, and Group B participated in an online, anonymous

questionnaire. Together, the data from each participant group provided responses to the

research questions and allowed the researcher to develop themes and implications about

the professionalization of early childhood leadership in New York State.

Data Analysis of Research Context

  Geographic data. Demographic data were captured and analyzed to support the

research and to create a deeper backdrop for the narrative inquiry methodology. Included

in the demographic data were statistics regarding geographic locations, gender, ethnicity,

and years of experience of the early childhood administrators in New York State. Given

the purposive and snowballing recruitment measures taken to solicit participants for

Group A, there was an even 12.5% ($n = 1$) rate of participants from each of the eight

counties. While questionnaires were distributed to recruit potential Group B participants

throughout the eight counties of Bronx, Kings (Brooklyn), New York (Manhattan),

Nassau, Queens, Richmond, Suffolk, and Westchester, most respondents were from

Manhattan, at a rate of 61.9%. Table 4.1 lists the geographic distribution of the data.

  Group A demographic data. The participants in Group A represented the

administrators and leaders who participated in the semi-structured interviews. There

were eight administrators ($n = 8$) who were interviewed. Bronx, Kings, Nassau, New

York, Queens, Richmond, Suffolk, and Westchester counties each had one administrator

Table 4.1

Geographic Locations of Research Participants (N = 29)

County	Group A		Group	
	n	%	*n*	%
Bronx	1	12.5	0	0
Kings (Brooklyn)	1	12.5	1	5
New York (Manhattan)	1	12.5	13	61
Nassau	1	12.5	0	0
Queens	1	12.5	3	14
Richmond	1	12.5	2	10
Suffolk	1	12.5	0	0
Westchester	1	12.5	2	10

participated in the interviews. Details regarding specific demographic data are discussed throughout Chapter 4; however, the brief introduction below provides a summary of the participants of Group A. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant to ensure anonymity and to create an ease of reading the narrative developed by the data.

Riley. At the time of the interview, Riley was the administrator of an early childhood education program. This program is one component of a multi-service, community-based organization with locations throughout one New York State county. The program receives federal Head Start and New York City funding. This participant holds a New York State teacher certification for Nursery through Sixth Grade and has been an administrator between 1 and 5 years.

Quinn. At the time of the interview, Quinn was the administrator of an early childhood education program located within a public school. This program is one component of a larger multi-service, community-based organization with locations

throughout Brooklyn, Bronx, New York, Queens, Richmond, and Westchester counties. The program receives federal Head Start and New York City funding. Quinn does not hold a New York State teaching certification nor an administrative certification and has been an administrator between 1 and 5 years.

Leslie. At the time of the interview, Leslie was the administrator of an early childhood education program. This program is also one component of a larger community-based organization with locations throughout the United States. The program receives federal Head Start and New York City funding. Leslie has a New York State Birth through Second Grade teacher certification and has been an administrator between 6 and 10 years.

Natasha. At the time of the interview, Natasha was the administrator of an early childhood education program. This program is also one component of a larger community-based organization with locations in three New York counties. The program receives federal Head Start and New York City funding. Natasha has a dual New York State teacher certification in Birth through Second Grade and Literacy Education and has been an administrator between 6 and 10 years.

Skylar. At the time of the interview, Skylar was the administrator of an early childhood education program. This program is one location of a larger community-based organization with other early childhood education and mental health centers. This program receives federal Head Start and New York City funding. Skylar has a dual New York State teacher certification in Birth through Second Grade and Literacy Education and has been an administrator between 11 and 15 years.

Theresa. At the time of the interview, Theresa was the administrator of an early childhood education program. This is a stand-alone program funded by a collaboration of public funds, private donations, and private tuition. Skylar has a dual New York State teacher certification in Birth through Second Grade and Literacy Education and has been an administrator between 16 and 20 years.

Jackie. At the time of the interview, Jackie was the interim-acting administrator of an early childhood education program. This program is a one-location, privately owned early childhood center and after-school program. This program receives State Universal Prekindergarten funding to supplement the education of 4-year-old children; however, it is funded primarily through private tuitions. Jackie has a New York State teacher certification in Prekindergarten through Grade 6 teacher certification, as well as School Building Leader and School District Leader certifications. At the time of the interview, Jackie had performed as the interim administrator for 6 months, but she also has had intermittent administrative responsibilities since 2012.

Bernadette. At the time of the interview, Bernadette was the administrator of an early childhood education program. This program is a one-location, privately owned early childhood center and after-school program. This program receives federal Head Start funding, State Universal Prekindergarten funding to supplement the education of 4-year-old children, and private tuition. Bernadette has a New York State teacher certification in Prekindergarten through Grade 6. Bernadette has held the administrative position for between 6 and 10 years.

Group B demographic data. Group B represented the participants who completed the anonymous online questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent

electronically to 243 potential participants. Of the 243 possible participants, 15 email

addresses ($n = 15$) were returned to the researcher as invalid or non-working email

addresses; 21 early childhood administrators ($n = 21$) completed the questionnaire, and

one potential participant declined the invitation to complete the questionnaire ($n = 1$).

   Group B gender and ethnicity data. The participants were asked to identify their

gender by responding as either male, female, or by choosing to not respond to the

question. Group A had seven female (88%) and one male (12%) participants, while all

21 participants from Group B were female (100%). In addition to gender identification,

the participants from both groups were asked to identify their ethnicity. Of Group A,

50% ($n = 4$) self-identified as White, 37.5% ($n = 3$) self-identified as African American

or Black, and 12.5% ($n = 1$) self-identified as Asian. Group B was represented by 32%

($n = 7$) African American or Black, 32% ($n = 7$) White, 18% ($n = 4$) Asian, 14% ($n = 3$)

Hispanic, and 4% ($n = 1$) Hawaiian or Pacific Island participants. Table 4.2 reflects the

complete analysis if ethnic data for this research.

Table 4.2

Ethnicity of Research Participants (N = 29)

Ethnicity	Group A		Group B	
	n	%	*n*	%
African American or Black	3	37.5	7	32.0
Asian	1	12.5	4	18.0
Hispanic	0	0.0	3	14.0
Hawaiian or Pacific Island	0	0.0	1	4.0
Native American or Alaskan Native	0	0.0	0	0.0
White	4	50.0	7	32.0
I choose not to answer	0	0.0	0	0.0

Longevity data. The question of longevity as an early childhood education administrator was presented as part of the demographic survey completed by Group A and as Question 6 in the online questionnaire. The available responses were presented as 5-year increments, for example, *1-5 years*, *6-10 years*, and so on. The data indicate 37.5% (*n* = 3) participants from Group A had been administrators between 6 and 10 years, while most of the participants from Group B comprised a group of administrators who had been in the field between 1 to 5 years (33%). There were only three participants, one from Group A and two from Group B, who had been early childhood administrators for more than 20 years. Table 4.3 documents a complete data analysis of the years of employment the participants had as early childhood administrators.

Table 4.3

Longevity of Research Participants as Early Childhood Education Administrators

(N = 29)

Years	Group A		Group B	
	n	%	*n*	%
<1 year	1	12.5	3	14
1-5 years	2	25.0	7	33
6-10 years	3	37.5	5	24
11-15 years	1	12.5	3	14
16-20 years	0	00.0	1	5
>20 years	1	12.5	2	10

The demographic data listed in Table 4.1, Table 4.2 and Table 4.3 provide a descriptive context for the research and create an enriched narrative of a sample of early childhood education administrators in New York State. The ethnicity, years as an early childhood leader, and locations of employment paint a picture of who, and from where, their leadership perspectives are generated. While there were two research groups, Group A directed the research and generated much of the data used to create a narrative. Additional questions were components of both the online questionnaire and the demographic questionnaire, which were completed by the interview participants.

Findings

There were eight semi-structured interviews and responses from two questions (Questions 13 and 15) from the online questionnaire that were used to gather data for this research. All of the interviews were recorded and transcribed using the Rev.com online transcription service. Coding, as Saldaña (2016) asserted, is one of several methods used to analyze qualitative data. Researchers use coding to create bridges between collected

data and the interpretation of this data to create themes or assertions in response to the

research questions (Charmaz, 2006; Saldaña 2016). The data were extrapolated from the

transcripts and organized using a priori codes. The codes were categorized, using the

research questions as the framework. The coded data were then analyzed and organized

to create categories. Finally, these categories assisted in framing themes, which guided

the researcher to make practical recommendations as well as recommendations for further

research. Table 4.4 was created to demonstrate the correlation between the a priori codes

and the research questions.

Table 4.4

Correlation Between A Priori Codes and Research Questions

Codes	Research Questions
T = Title M = Mentor Q = Qualifications	1. How do program directors identify themselves and early childhood education leaders?
FE = Formal Education TPD = Training & Professional Development	2. What education and professional development experiences inform the practices of early childhood education administrators?
P = Preparation LP = Lack of Preparation CT = Career Trajectory	3. How do program directors implement their education, training, and professional development when leading early childhood education programs?
G = Gaps PR = Professionalization GR = Growth WF = Work Force	4. What do early childhood education administrators identify as the gaps in in leader preparation, and what impact does this have on the programs they lead?

Research question 1. *How do program directors identify themselves as early*

childhood administrators? This question was answered in both the demographic

questionnaire administered to Group A and the online questionnaire answered by

Group B as, *What is your title?* Riley, Natasha, Leslie, and Theresa identified themselves

by the title of Center Director, while Quinn self-identified as a Program Director.

Table 4.4 reflects these responses from the participants of Group A. Data from

Group B's online questionnaire responses, reflected in Table 4.5, indicate that 67% of the

respondents self-identified as Center Directors, 14% as Program Directors, 9% as

Education Directors, 5% as Administrative Directors, and 5% identified as Other. Other

titles included, Interim-Acting Director, Vice President of Early Childhood Services,

Early Head Start Director, and Education Center Director. Responses from both groups

demonstrated that most of the participants identified themselves, by title, as the Center

Director.

Table 4.5

Group A Responses To: What is Your Title?

	Center Director	Education Director	Program Director	Administrative Director	Other
Riley	✓				
Quinn			✓		
Leslie	✓				
Natasha	✓				
Skylar					✓
Theresa	✓				
Jackie					
Bernadette		✓			

Table 4.6

Group B Responses To: What is Your Title?

Title	Percent of Total

Center Director	67
Education Director	9
Program Director	14
Administrative Director	5
Other	5

The data demonstrate that there were 10 different titles assigned to the 29 participants from both Groups A and B. The question may seem innocuous; however, the interview responses indicated the complexities in some of the participants' capacity to provide a direct response. Guidance was requested by four participants. One participant asked, "Do you want my title, or what I do?" Leslie, selected Center Director as her official title on the demographic questionnaire tool, but during the interview, she went on to say, "That's hard to answer [chuckle]. I feel like I have so many titles. I'm the Ed Director and the Center Director. Sometimes I'm referred to as the Education Center Director. It really depends on the day."

Similar to Leslie, Skylar selected Center Director on the demographic questionnaire. Her interview response, however, reflected a passionate and more expansive description of the title. Skylar went on to say:

> [I am the] budgeter, personnel manager, hiring [manager], supervisory,
> mentoring, um, parent counselor, uh, child development expert, educator, to name
> a few . . . I'm a psychologist, medical doctor; um, custodian, plumber [laughs],
> cook. [Laughs], food manager, um, licensed, uh, expert, licensing expert, trainer,
> consultant. That's a few, right? [Laughs].

Ambiguity of the position and title was further exemplified in the response given by

Leslie. As an early childhood leader, she struggled with the title because of the

responsibilities and expectations of the position. Leslie stated:

> You see, I didn't even know how to call my own title. That isn't unusual. My job
>
> description has that infamous line, "as needed." That is a catch-all to describe
>
> that you need to take care of everything in the building with no warning as to
>
> what may happen today, because yesterday and tomorrow are also different.
>
> Time management needs to be taught to all leaders. Day-to-day time as well as
>
> big picture planning and preparing time.

Widely used in ethnographic qualitative research, field notes have proven to be

helpful in capturing anecdotal observations and nuisances while conducting research

(Wolfinger, 2002). This proved to be true for this research. Field notes taken during the

interviews were an integral component of the research data. Although it was impossible

to capture the reactions of the Group B participants because they completed the

anonymous online questionnaire, several participants in Group A had a demonstrative

reaction to the question regarding their title. Ryan, Quinn, Leslie, Natasha, and Skylar all

chuckled at the question, and of these participants, three had a difficult time answering

the question. These participants indicated, "it was not straightforward," as they may have

had an official title, but were seldom called by it. Other participants shrugged their

shoulders. All of the Group A participants asked for some type of assistance to help them

answer the question of their title.

Riley offered an additional perspective regarding the question of identity as it

related to the leadership of an early childhood program. "Parents," Riley stated,

"sometimes don't know what to call me. I've been called the principal, the manager, like in a restaurant." Natasha also mentioned the interactions that have taken place throughout the years with parents, families, and the community. She went on to say that some families come in with very low expectations of the director's role, and this often had translated into the parents or community not taking the opportunity to understand the title or the role that accompanies the moniker.

Data for this research question were also generated from the interview question, *What are your responsibilities as the early childhood administrator in your center?* The previous question captured *who* the leaders were. This interview question addressed the *what.* Jackie essentially answered this question when she articulated her sentiments about the title. Jackie, who self-identified to be the Interim-Acting Director, continued with:

> As the acting director, I have to do everything, including my teaching responsibilities. It gets hectic, for sure, especially on a day like today. It's payroll. It's parent issues. It's compliance visits. It's parent or staff issues. But I still need to meet with a parent about a child in my classroom. There's too much to do, but I do it because at the end of the day, the program can't run without a director.

The responses posed to address the first research question corroborate findings from previous research. Early childhood leadership research conducted by Fleet, Soper, Semann, and Madden (2015) posited that early childhood leaders do not provide streamlined responses when asked about their role as the administrator. Additional research also states that oftentimes, early childhood leaders are not able to articulate their

roles and responsibilities as managers or administrators, because of the complexities and multiple responsibilities that they are charged with (Bloom, 1992; Nupponen, 2006b; Ryan et al., 2011). The data collected from the interviews of these New York State early childhood administrators support the findings from previous research that indicates a disconnect of consistent professional identity (Goffin, 2013; Nupponen, 2006b). The data suggest that the roles and responsibilities become synonymous with their titles.

The developing narrative describes the ambiguity of a professional identity that is not self-recognized, and oftentimes, it is misunderstood by the community. The leaders responded, with great hesitation, to a basic query regarding identity. Responses consistently described what they did, not what title they were given. This professional identity crisis, however, did not deter these leaders from pursuing or accepting their appointments of the administrative position in early childhood programs. Service to the children and families permeated the data through the narrative that was being formed by these participant leaders.

While the a priori codes were applied to guide the organization of the data for this research, an emergent code developed in response to the research question regarding professional identity. There was a resounding call to service. Servant leadership has distinct characteristics that were defined by Northouse (2016). They include a leader whose goals are to empower and uplift a community through direct actions, navigate the challenges of the job (beyond descriptions or expectations), and one who sees the potential of what could be (Greenleaf, 1970: Northouse, 2016; Spears, 2002). The narrative from Bernadette supports the servant leadership model, as she stated:

Clearly, we [early childhood education leaders] don't do this for the money. We sometimes sacrifice our own time and family for the sake of the children in our program. I go home after a very long day, only to spend time on my laptop, finishing a grant application so the children can get new play equipment. Tomorrow, I'm having a lunch and learn[ing] for two teachers who are studying for the state exam . . . . I'm exhausted, but it's not fair to give the kids less than they deserve.

Research question 2. *What education and professional development experiences inform the practices of early childhood education administrators?* This research question was developed to further investigate the preparation the New York State early childhood directors experienced either in higher education programs or as participants in leadership professional development. Gathering data regarding their formal education was the first step to attempt to answer this research question.

Formal education. The demographic questionnaire generated data that provided answers to the second research question. One component of the inquiry probed the leaders' higher education studies. The demographic questionnaire administered prior to the interview captured the statistical data regarding the degrees pursued by the Group A participants. Of all of the participants, 50% ($n = 4$) completed an early childhood graduate program, while 12.5% ($n = 1$) completed coursework in childhood education, and 37.5% ($n = 3$) pursued other undergraduate studies. Other degrees completed by Group A participants included literacy, music, and psychology.

Question 8 from the online questionnaire asked the Group B participants, *What was your undergraduate major?* Of the Group B participants, 30% ($n = 8$) reported that

they majored in early childhood education, and 14% (*n* = 3) majored in childhood education. Nearly half, 48% (*n* = 10), of the participants indicated they majored in something other than education. Psychology, anthropology, music, business management, and urbanism/geography were the majors listed by the respondents. The participants undergraduate degree data are reflected in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7

Research Participant Undergraduate Degrees (N = 29)

Undergraduate Degree	Group A		Group	
	n	%	*n*	%
Early Childhood Education	4	50.0	8	38
Childhood Education	1	12.5	3	14
Other	3	37.5	10	48

Table 4.8 lists the data for the participants' responses to the query regarding graduate studies. The majority of Group A, with a response rate of 75% (*n* = 4) earned a graduate degree in early childhood education. Childhood education and other degrees were earned at an equal rate of 12.5% (n = 1). Group B was also asked to respond to graduate studies through Question 10: *What was your graduate school major?* The results were the statistical reverse of the data collected regarding the undergraduate major. Of all of the participants in Group B, 47% (*n* = 10) studied early childhood education, while 14% (*n* = 3) studied childhood education, and 33% (*n* = 5) studied another major (music, elementary education, and music). One participant self-reported that he or she did not attend graduate school. This information suggests that those individuals who majored in something other than early childhood education as an

81

undergraduate student, went on to pursue a master's level degree in this very major. The

higher education data collected for this research are consistent with prior research

regarding the preparation of early childhood leaders as it pertains to the undergraduate or

graduate degrees that are pursued and completed. Espinosa's (2002) research suggests

that only 50% of early childhood education administrators hold a higher education degree

in early childhood education or development.

Table 4.8

Research Participant Graduate Degrees (N = 29)

Graduate Degree	Group A		Group B	
	n	%	*n*	%
Early Childhood Education	6	75.0	10	47
Childhood Education	1	12.5	3	14
Other	1	12.5	5	33
I did not attend graduate school	0	00.0	1	6

Career trajectory. The Group A participants were asked to expound on the

statistical data presented in both Tables 4.7 and 4.8. The participants, essentially,

answered the same question; however, during the interviews, there was a significant

amount of context provided, often in a nostalgic narrative, of their professional

development and pathway to becoming administrators. Through the explanations of their

undergraduate and graduate coursework, the participants also created the narrative of

their career trajectories. This research suggests that the pursuit of higher education was

the foundation of the participants' career trajectories. Of the Group B participants, 43%

($n = 9$) disclosed that they actively pursued an administrative role, while 57% ($n = 12$)

were identified by a mentor or supervisor as a viable candidate for a leadership position. Group A contributed comparable data regarding their career paths.

Skylar, Jackie, and Bernadette all pursued an undergraduate degree in early childhood because they wanted to become early childhood teachers. Statements, such as, "I always knew I wanted to be a teacher," and "I knew from when I volunteered in a school, back when I was in high school, that I wanted to work with little kids." Natasha offered details of the beginning stages of her career in early childhood education by sharing:

> What I really wanted to do was work with kindergarten-age children. Then I had my children, I took some time off . . . when I decided to come back to work, I found this job here at Head Start, which was always something that I wanted to do.

Although an early childhood education major, Leslie's reason for pursuing this degree was not motivated by the desire to be in the classroom. Leslie aspired to work in government as a compliance officer for publicly funded and regulated programs. A requisite for this position, according to Leslie, was "2 years of experience in an early childhood classroom." The career plan, according to Leslie was to "do the 2 years and then reapply for the government position." Once she commenced working as a teacher in a program, her career aspirations shifted, and she began the trajectory to becoming an early childhood administrator. She was identified by a supervisor to have "it" (what it takes to be an administrator), and her supervisor gave her administrative responsibilities outside of the classroom. When a center director position became vacant, Leslie was

ushered in to the position because of her New York State teacher certification and her years of experience in an early childhood classroom.

The remaining four participants in Group A had varied undergraduate and graduate degrees. Quinn held an undergraduate degree in psychology. The pursuit of this degree was motivated by the marketability and diversity of opportunities this degree offered. Quinn's career began in a nonprofit organization, and she became interested in this organizational model. Quinn then enrolled and completed a graduate degree in business, with a concentration in nonprofit leadership development. She went on to say:

> So, it was half in social work, a spin on it, but also teaching social workers how to be leaders of a nonprofit. They went over a lot of business stuff, learned about a 501(3)c, and that kind of stuff, and HR [human resources] things. Things that they [universities] don't necessarily teach you in social work school, they were covering that as well.

Theresa shared a similar experience. As an accounting major, she was encouraged by her parents to pursue a degree that would "feed her family." She found a job as a bookkeeper in an early childhood center, feeling that she could get the "best of both worlds." Opportunities presented themselves for her to provide coverage in classrooms for absent teachers, which inspired her to return to school and pursue a master's degree in early childhood education. Natasha expressed that she wanted to work with older children, therefore, she pursued undergraduate and graduate degrees in childhood education, which specializes in the education of children from first through sixth grade (NYSED, 2016a).

New York State certification. New York State has accredited higher education programs that lead to state certification for Birth through Second Grade (also known as early childhood) teacher certification, school building leader (SBL), and school district leader (SDL) principal certifications, but there is no certification for early childhood administrators (NYSED, 2016a). *What New York State professional credentials do you hold?* was the question presented to the Group A participants during the interviews and as Question 12 in the Group B participant's online questionnaire. Table 4.9 lists the credentials from all the research participants.

Table 4.9

Research Participants' New York State Education Credentials (N = 29)

New York State Certification	Group A	Group B
Nursery to Sixth Grade	4	6
Birth to Second Grade	1	12
School Building Leader	1	0
School District Leader	0	0
Children's Program Administrator Credential	0	0
Licensed Master's in Social Work	0	0
Special Education	2	2
Childhood Education (1-6)	1	4
I am not certified	1	3

Note: Individuals in New York State can hold more than one certification, therefore the response rate is higher than the total number of participants.

Professional development opportunities. In addition to formal undergraduate and graduate education programs, the early childhood leaders often attended professional development and trainings. These trainings included contract compliance mandates, individual topic workshops, professional affiliation conferences, and online webinars or podcasts. The participants in this study expressed an assortment of reasons why they attended professional development. "I needed more information about . . ."; "my teachers needed guidance with . . ."; and "I had to understand the new requirements" were amongst some of the reasons why the participants pursued professional development.

The probing interview questions used to garner data for the second research question asked of the participants were to discuss training opportunities they attended to prepare and support their roles as leaders. Skylar explained that it is difficult to identify leadership training that was specific to early childhood leaders. "Most of the trainings, even at conferences, are geared towards teachers."

Riley, Jackie, and Skylar expressed that they did not have the time to be away from the programs for long periods. The three participants also expressed that they did not have any leadership development before assuming their leadership roles. Leslie, Quinn, Natasha, Theresa, and Bernadette did receive leadership training. Quinn stated that the leadership training took place while enrolled in the graduate nonprofit leadership program. Leslie and Theresa were invited to participate in leadership development training through their employers. Natasha recalled:

> [The program] has afforded us the opportunity to participate in leadership-content trainings and leadership development that can apply to a multitude of items, you know: understanding your supervision approach, how to deal with many different personalities, how to maximize your time for completion of tasks. Not specific to ECE, but definitely very relevant.

Theresa also shared a similar leadership opportunity:

> And my director, at the time, said, "well, there's a certificate program in nonprofit management at [this program]; how would you like to take that?" And I did. I took this six-course certificate program, and I got my certificate in nonprofit management.

Bernadette offered that her leadership training took place after she was in a leadership position and "presume it [training] would have been more beneficial before I took the job," but also added, "it was important to get the training at any point." Noteworthy data also include comments from Skylar and Bernadette regarding the networking of directors to share resources. Bernadette stated, "I wouldn't know about half of the trainings if my colleagues didn't tell me about them, and I guess vice versa." All of the participants expressed their need for training because, "I didn't know what I was doing," "I wanted to have a better program," and "I was overwhelmed, and my staff and parents knew it."

These comments add to the conversation of leaders striving for professional literacy, professional growth, and community trust and recognition, all of which are components identified in a stable profession (Ingersoll & Perda, 2008). Data coded from this research align with statements regarding the importance of early childhood leadership development as a significant catalyst for professionalizing the early childhood work force. Research also states that strategies used to professionalize a work force must include training and development (Boyd, 2013; Ingersoll & Perda, 2008).

The data are consistent with the limited early childhood leadership development. The road to the position of early childhood education is varied and broad, which contributes to the inconsistencies of program purpose, implementation, and vision throughout the state. Often the leaders are trained, developed, and have completed formal education to be teachers, but they have not been trained as school leaders. The research indicates that administrators recognize or have been recognized to need leadership training and development after they commenced their positions. These

findings are consistent with the research asserting that many early childhood leaders have no formal leadership training when assuming their leadership roles (Bloom, 1992; Goffin, 2013; Goffin & Means, 2009; Goffin & Washington, 2007; Rafanello & Bloom, 1997).

Research question 3. *How do program directors implement their education, training, and professional development experiences when leading early childhood programs?* Research suggests that self-perceptions of effectiveness in the role of leader, in conjunction with leadership training, have a direct impact on one's capacity to effectively lead an early childhood program (Boyd, 2013; Goffin, 2013; Holochwost, DeMott, Buell, Yannetta, & Amsden, 2009; Ingersoll &Perda, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2004). Research also suggests that leadership is the second most-important component of school success, and much of this success is contingent upon the capacity of leaders to address challenges and program development in productive and successful ways (Bennis, 2009; Kouzes & Posner, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2004). Data from the interviews support these findings.

The responses to this research question, which was also used, verbatim, as an interview question, garnered responses from a "before training" and "after training" perspective. Similar to the responses from participants in a 2008 Australian research, six participants in this research expressed feeling overwhelmed and unprepared. Jackie stated:

> I never really was interested in the leadership position, but I had the qualifications to cover [the program] while my director was out. I had absolutely no training and nobody thought to sign me up for training. I looked some things up and took a little PD [professional development] on my own. It helped enough for me to do

the basics, and I think my coworkers have more confidence in me. I guess me too.

Skylar's experience was similar to Jackie's, and she went on to explain,

I had no training to be a director before I took my first director job. I had to rely on my own personality and remind myself that I was a quick learner. I made sure I went to the mandated meeting in the City [Manhattan] and that helped with some compliance training. It wasn't until I went to some leadership development conferences with Head Start that I started to get a better sense of what to do as a director.

Riley, Bernadette, and Theresa also expressed similar experiences of the "before and after." Self-perceptions of successful leadership prior to training manifested in statements such as "I wasn't prepared," "no training prior to my position," and "lack of training was real [evident]." There were similarities in responses, with the participants expressing feelings of "letting the children and parents down" and "staff could tell that I wasn't prepared." The data are consistent with previous research that articulates the impact of trained professionals, the quality of the programs, and the self-perceptions of success as directors (Ingersoll & Perda, 2008; Ressler et al., 2015; Ryan et al., 2011).

Quinn and Leslie articulated different experiences, as they both had leadership development prior to taking on the role of early childhood education leaders. Quinn expressed:

I decided to go back to school and get my master's [degree], and I chose nonprofit leadership as my major. So once I finished that, I had in mind that I wanted to do program management. I just didn't know it would be in early childhood . . . .

They [graduate school program] went over a lot of business stuff, learned about a

501(3)c, and that kind of stuff, and HR things. Things that they don't necessarily

teach you in social work school, they were covering that as well.

Leslie also stated:

My second master's [degree] is in school building leadership . . . [also], my

church hosted a 2-year training for members regarding emotional leadership. It

was a program for couples to mentor other couples and adults in the church, so

people could learn how to lead with a heart and tap into emotional intelligences.

Now I can go out and mentor and teach other people on how to look at

interactions and leadership from a more empathetic perspective. I am also

CLASS [Classroom Assessment Scoring System] reliable as a CLASS trainer.

This also helps me to lead people to have better interactions between adults and

children.

Worth noting, all eight Group A interview participants made distinctions between

leadership and pedagogical professional development. Professional career plans and

aspirations for Leslie, Theresa, and Quinn did not include early childhood education;

therefore, their career preparation did not include early childhood higher education

programs, nor did it include early childhood leadership professional development.

Conversely, Riley, Natasha, Skylar, Jackie, and Bernadette all pursued early childhood

education undergraduate and graduate majors, as they aspired to embark on careers as

early childhood teachers. It was not until these participants were thrust into their

positions, that they perceived their deficits as prepared leaders. Research validates this

phenomenon and contributes to the conversation that many early childhood directors are

the gatekeepers of implementing a dynamic education model, and they are often required to do so without a full cache of resources needed to be impactful (Bloom, 2005; Boyd, 2013; Ceglowski, 2004; Espinosa, 2002; Goffin, 2013; Ingersoll & Perda, 2008).

Research question 4. *What do ECE administrators identify as gaps in their leadership preparation, and what impact do these gaps have on the programs they lead?* Although all of the Group A participants were interviewed individually, there was a collective sigh when they were asked the last research question. Out of the eight participants, seven repeated the questions to themselves at least once, as if to properly process the question at hand. The responses were robust and thoughtful, seemingly providing the directors with an opportunity to contribute to a heavily debated conversation. Bernadette offered her view on the gaps by stating:

> It would be nice to be recognized as professionals and treated as such, even when it comes to training. We [directors] work long hours and long program years. They [policy makers] may need to change the schedule so there is time off in the summer, just like public schools. This is when teachers and principals train. If we [early childhood centers] are open 24/7, 365 days, when do we get the chance to train?

Natasha had similar comments, stating:

> We aren't babysitters. When do we actually get a chance to go to training? The profession needs to be recognized as a real thing, not just as babysitting. The future really does depend on good EC [early childhood] experiences.

Leslie added her perspective of the leadership development gap by stating:

> I can list 100 things in that gap of preparation. New York preparation is happenstance at best. Your training really depends on the luck of the draw. If you had a crappy mentor or no mentor at all, you may still be struggling as an administrator . . . . Even now, most of the training for leaders is administrative training. How to complete this, how to fill out that. There are no opportunities for leading from within. No opportunities to develop authentic leadership skills. The leadership credential is attempting to address this, but often it is a little too late. The system has unprepared directors leading burnt-out teachers.

Riley also responded to the question regarding the gap in leadership development by adding: "Leadership roles. I'm not sure what the titles are. Management classes. Conflict resolution. Maybe some financial courses, as well, that go with it. And policies and procedures as well."

As the participants in Group A continued to respond to the last question of the research, data show an extended interpretation of the "gap in early childhood leadership preparation." In addition to professional development and training being a component of professionalizing the field, the administrators expressed other factors as being key to advancing the profession: respect by the community (including parents and fellow K-12 educators) and creating a wage structure for all early childhood instructors and leaders

that is commensurate with their credentials and work load. Riley spoke about respect and public perception,

> Well, I feel that [the] early childhood profession is important and vital to the community, as well as the parents, because they are working, and it's the start of early education and that's important. However, a lot of people have that notion that early childhood is just babysitting and it's not really a profession. People just go and drop off their kid and that's it, but there's a lot more to it. And, it needs to be; it needs to be; I don't know what the word is. It just needs to be out there that, people need to know that early childhood is important.

Quinn expressed similar thoughts when expounding on gaps in the professionalization of early childhood education in New York. Quinn added:

> When they [parents] think of early childhood, they think [of] "they're [children] playing all day" and they don't take it as seriously as school-age learning. It still is very important because [playing] is a fundamental beginning stage of their learning.

Detailed responses continued as the participants developed their perspectives regarding salaries in the early childhood profession. Theresa stated,

> We've given our, our career paths to teachers in early childhood; we don't pay them anything. And they're still making $12 to $15 an hour with a master's degree, but we've given those paths so that they can make decisions about them. And there is a career path to become certified, Birth to Grade 2. Not that that means anything still . . . . I think that, that Albany and the Board of Ed, the New York State Board of Education, needs to recognize that [by] just putting a

certificate down, that you're certified birth to age grade two, [it] doesn't mean

you're "gonna" work in [inaudible], with children under the age of 4, because you

don't earn a living. You can't live on your own. You can't support a family.

And that's a huge stumbling block to us professionalizing our field. After so

many years in this field, it's still a turnover field. I'm a dinosaur now.

Bernadette and Natasha succinctly stated, "they [New York agencies] need to just

recognize that we are professionals and pay us for the time and certifications," and "we

are not babysitters, and we shouldn't have to live on babysitter wages."

Summary

The data from this research created a narrative on the perspectives of early

childhood leaders from eight New York State counties. The research questions were

developed to address the questions of the current impact of the preparation of leaders,

how this preparation impacts the way they lead, and the influence the gaps have on

further professionalization of a vital career in education. A detailed introduction of the

research participants revealed that while there were some commonalities in program

design, there were clear inconsistencies in the titles these leaders held throughout the

eight counties. In addition to identifying themselves by title, the administrators

connected their professional identity with the tasks, roles, and responsibilities of their

positions, which contributed to their developing narrative as servant leaders.

The data also reflect that half of the participants pursued early childhood

education in higher education with the goal of becoming teachers, not directors. When

the participants discussed their training and professional development, a clear distinction

was made between the self-perceived preparations of early childhood pedagogy versus

that of leadership development. This shift in their career trajectories often resulted in the leaders attempting to identify and pursue professional development and training to fill the gaps and deficits of skills and information needed to actively lead an early childhood program.

Last, the participants articulated the perceived gaps in leadership preparation and how these gaps, if any, affect the advancement of professionalizing the early childhood leadership career. In addition to expressing concerns specific to leadership development and advancement, the participants communicated that the advancement of early childhood needs to include the development of the entire workforce.

A priori codes and one emergent code were used to categorize the answers data from the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to formulate themes regarding the professionalization of early childhood education leadership. Chapter 5 discusses the implications of these themes, the limitations of the research, and the recommendations for the application of the findings, as well as recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

Early childhood education administrators in New York State are faced with the challenge of the ever-changing landscape of educating young children. Early childhood education has expanded throughout the state with the expansion of universal prekindergarten for 4-year old children; new initiatives, such as 3K for All for New York City 3-year-old children; and revisions in Head Start's program design for all children ages birth through 4-years old in New York State and throughout the country (NYSED, 2016b; NYC Newswire, 2017; U.S. DOHHS, 2017).

These expansions have been supported with resources to increase efficacy and school success for more children and families. These resources have focused on building the capacity of social services and increasing the instructional, and pedagogical members of the early childhood education workforce. Although findings from previous research assert that leadership is an integral component of organizational success, the development of early childhood administrators has not been supported with adequate resources or policy improvements. Motivated by the impact that leadership has on the early childhood workforce, the hundreds of thousands of children in the New York State education continuum, and by the lack of attention paid to the development of its leaders, this study was conducted with the following research questions as its guide:

1. How do program directors identify themselves as early childhood administrators?

2. What educational and professional development experiences inform the practices of early childhood administrators?

3. How do program directors implement their education, training, and professional development experiences when leading early childhood programs?

4. What do ECE administrators identify as gaps in their leadership preparation, and what impact do these gaps have on the programs they lead?

The aim of this qualitative research was to gather data that could answer these questions as they relate to the impact leadership development has on the advancement of the professionalization of early childhood education. There were two participant groups for this research: Group A and Group B. Two different data collection instruments were used to collect the data for this research. The Group A participants were selected to participate in semi-structured interviews. The Group B participants were selected to complete an online questionnaire.

In Group A, eight early childhood directors participated in semi-structured interviews, enabling the researcher to implement the narrative inquiry tradition of qualitative research. The data from Group A's interviews were supported by the answers to 21 anonymous online questions answered by Group B's early childhood director participants. The audio-taped interview answers were transcribed, combined with the answers from Group B, and the data were then coded into categories of information. In partnership with the descriptive demographic information from both participant groups, the data were then organized into categories, allowing the researcher to identify the following themes:

Theme 1: Early childhood leaders have difficulties establishing a professional identity.

    a. Subtheme 1: Inconsistent job titles influence self and public perceptions of the role.

    b. Subtheme 2: Early childhood leaders as servant leaders.

Theme 2: Leadership development is often retrospective and not standardized.

    a. Subtheme: lack of a defined career trajectory is reliant on mentorship or self-identified needs.

Theme 3: Professionalization of early childhood education is an under-resourced public policy.

There was ample data generated from this qualitative research to support the themes, which add to the existing body of literature as it pertains to early childhood leadership development and the impact it has on the professionalization of the field. This research demonstrates that, while each of these themes holds individual merit, addressing possible recommendations may be beneficial if they are addressed in conjunction with each other. The remainder of this chapter discusses the connection of these findings to previous research, there is an explanation of the limitations of the research, and recommendations are presented for practical application and future research.

Research Implications

The purpose of this qualitative research was to create a narrative drawn from the lived experiences of early childhood directors in New York. The research questions were developed with the goal of gathering data from interviews regarding the perceptions of their professional identities, career trajectories, and leadership development. Through the questions answered from eight interviews (Group A) and supported by 21 online questionnaire responses (Group B), the data provide a rich conversation about who these early childhood leaders are and what their impact has been in the field. Their stories are as unique as their experiences, but the commonalities among all data sets and the themes that emerged carry implications for the sparse body of literature that is dedicated to early childhood education leadership.

Theme 1: Early childhood leaders have difficulties establishing a professional identity. The first research question, *How program directors identify themselves as early childhood administrators?* established the framework for this theme. It is worth noting, again, that all eight participants of the semi-structured interviews initially had trouble answering this question, indicating that self-perceptions regarding their identity are unclear and confusing. In addition to disclosing their titles, all the directors identified themselves as leaders by articulating what they did in their positions, not by the title of their positions. The data extrapolated from the interviews indicate that the directors were dedicated to "doing what needs to be done to have a good program," or "[I] want to have a good center." These findings support the research of Bloom (1992) who stated that early childhood leaders are the "gate-keepers of quality" (p. 141). In addition to their lack of clarity and their confusion regarding their own perceptions as a leader, there were

serious questions around actual titles that were applied across the field in New York State. A subtheme emerged: The variety of job titles in the profession not only impacts the professionals, but they contribute to the public's confusion and lack of clarity regarding the administrative roles of the leaders in early childhood education.

Subtheme 1: Inconsistent job titles influence the self- and public perceptions of the leadership role. New York State struggles to create common language that could be used to identify the leaders of early childhood programs. Traditionally, the title of the education leader has been contingent upon the title identified by the funding source (Robertson, 2012). Universal Prekindergarten Director, Early Head Start Director, EarlyLearn Director, and Head Start Director are examples of titles developed and driven by the funding source for the early childhood program. The participants in this study identified themselves as Center Director, Program Director, Education Director, and Early Head Start Director to reflect the titles identified by the participants of this study, which were defined by the program model or the funding source. Skyler, however, offered an alternate derivation for her leadership identity. "I am the Vice President of Early Childhood Education. That is my title." In this instance, the title was not connected to a funding source, but, instead, it was created to be consistent with other leadership positions in the organization in which Skylar worked. Overall, the leaders in the field were steadfast and clear about their roles and responsibilities, but they were confused, and at times, jaded by the ambiguity of their identities in the field. The data show that the identity of early childhood leaders is often based on what they do, and not on what their positions are named.

Subtheme 2: Early childhood leaders are servant leaders. The identity crisis for early childhood education leaders is not confined to job descriptions or the plethora of titles ascribed throughout the industry in New York State. The second subtheme speaks specifically to the leadership styles of the directors. Despite the confusion of their titles, their impact on the public, and the self-perceptions of early childhood education leadership, the directors described their careers as a call to service. The participants were resolute when discussing their reasons for becoming leaders in the field. They expressed a need and an expectation to be a change agent for both the school community and the community at large. The participants indicated that part of their role was to have a vision for the children and families of their programs. These data are consistent with the servant leadership model, as defined by Greenleaf (1970), Spears (2002), and Northouse (2016), and they imply that early childhood leaders perceive themselves as servant leaders. The name *servant leader* seems counterintuitive and suggests an oxymoronic style, however, Greenleaf (1970) defined servant leadership as:

> the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead . . . . The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant – first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served (p. 15).

Northouse (2016) defined servant leaders as "attentive to the concerns of the followers, empathize with them, and nurture them" (p. 225). The research participants offered rich data in alignment with the definitions and constructs of servant leadership, with the following statements:

- "This is my heart's work."

- "The community needs good early childhood programs."

- "I encourage my teacher assistants to go back to school."

- "I was a classroom teacher, so I know the stress of my staff."

- "You need to be that person that is here consistently."

- "This community needs to thrive, and a good early childhood program will make better K-12 public schools."

These excerpts from the semi-structured interviews support the definitions and the characteristics spelled out in the servant leadership research.

Despite often unclear expectations for the leadership role and the lack of a defined career path for the profession in New York State, early childhood education leaders assume the position with a vision of how to: (a) execute their roles and responsibilities, (b) inspire and empower both staff and parents to continue their development, and (c) build capacity into their communities. This intrinsic sense of servant leadership demonstrates that the early childhood administrators in this study exhibited varied levels of trust and courage, both of which are attributes of servant leadership as defined in organization leadership research (Dennis & Bocanea, 2005; Northouse, 2016; Robertson, 2012; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011).

Theme 2: Lack of defined career trajectory creates retrospective and inconsistent leadership development. The data gathered and analyzed contribute to the existing research on how early childhood leaders prepare for and pursue their career paths to their leadership positions. The career track for early childhood leaders is undefined and often not deliberate, and as a result, there are many entry points into the position. It is a system that endorses the notion that teacher qualifications are adequate credentials

for early childhood leadership. The first theme asserts that the early childhood leaders'

self-perception and the public's perception of them contribute to their identity crisis in

the profession. This crisis is supported by the undefined educational and developmental

experiences of these professionals.

New York State does not have a standardized career track for early childhood

leaders, but to say that there is no career trajectory would be inaccurate. The implication

of this research suggests the opposite. The lack of a defined, recognized, and resourced

career track enables a broad interpretation of how one can step into or be appointed to the

leadership role in New York State's early childhood programs. This research

demonstrates that most program leaders did not have leadership training prior to

assuming their leadership roles.

These findings, consistent with previous research, have implications for the

leadership capacity in the entire early childhood education workforce. Leithwood et al.,

(2004) posited that effective leadership is the second-most-important indicator of school

success after effective instruction. Early childhood leaders come to their positions with

vision, passion, pedagogical expertise, and additional qualifiers that may be considered as

servant leadership qualities, but they often lack the tools necessary for the administrative

component of their role. Any effort to professionalize the field is negatively impacted by

this lack of organizational capacity. Without standardized requirements for entering the

field, there is no common ground from which these leaders can begin. This does not

mean the profession has unqualified professionals leading a workforce; quite the

contrary. The leaders of early childhood education are qualified, but their administrative

and leadership foundations are difficult to access.

While there are opportunities for administrators in New York State to develop their leadership skills by participating in state-sponsored programs or in the higher education system, early childhood leaders are not required to complete leadership training outside of the teacher licensure requirements. Additionally, research indicates that leadership development opportunities are pursued after the commencement of the leadership position, if it all. This lack of standardization contributes to an inconsistent and volatile workforce, which, by design, creates a varied and confused leadership identity throughout the state. In attempts to mitigate these inconsistencies and align with the intrinsic force of servant leadership displayed by these administrators, these early childhood education leaders identified professional development and mentoring opportunities to build their capacities to become more effective in their roles.

Subtheme: Leadership development is reliant upon mentorship or self-identified needs. With the data gathered from the interviews, with comments such as:

- "My boss told me about . . .";

- "I found a training online";

- "All of the directors in my organization were registered for non-profit leadership training"; and

- "I try to attend as many leadership workshops and breakout sessions [as possible] when I go to conferences,"

the researcher developed a consistent theme in the narrative of preparation and development of early childhood leaders. Outside of compliance trainings that are mandated by the funders or the organizations that host early childhood programs, New York State early childhood leaders are reliant on networking and due diligence to develop

and hone the skills needed to lead and manage a program. The data also state there is an awareness of some improvement in the opportunities to pursue professional development specific to early childhood leadership. The experiences that the participants described regarding their development has implications for the stability of the workforce.

Theme 3: Professionalization of early childhood education is an under-resourced public policy. This third and final theme of the research has implications that tie together the data from all four research questions that were posed in this study. For the resources to be made available for pro-active and pre-emptive leadership development, early childhood education needs to be included in public policy conversations regarding educational preparation and credentials for administrators in New York State. At the present time, initiatives and resources dedicated to educational leadership development address the needs of K-12, and they often overlook the leadership needs of those in the early childhood workforce (Austin, 2014; Guernsey & Mead, 2010).

Public policies and recognition of early childhood as education struggles with its identity on national, state, and local levels, contributing to the confusion regarding how to properly support and fund programs. Head Start, the largest national public policy for the care and education of young children, is not governed under any department of education; rather, it is a regulated initiative of the War on Poverty (1956). The state common core standards and all the funding and resources provided for Head Start's implementation are earmarked for kindergarten through Grade 12, leaving early childhood on its own. This forced the creation of a separate PreK common core task force.

The lack of public policy recognition is also apparent at the Department of Labor (2017). Job titles for childcare workers are not found under any education category, but rather, they are included in the community service category (Department of Labor, 2017). Preschool and kindergarten teachers are also separated from other public-school teachers (Department of Labor, 2017). Failure to include the foundational years of education and care perpetuates the attitude and practice of regarding early childhood education as a separate entity from the education system. It is integral to include early childhood education leadership development and support in public policy and decision making, because these leaders are charged with ensuring the oversight of high-quality experiences for children's first developmental experiences outside of their homes.

Theoretical Framework Implications

Human capital theory was the framework that supported the research for continued professionalization of early childhood education through leadership development. The narrative developed from this research is consistent with human capital theory. While capital refers to tangible assets and resources, such as property, real estate, equipment, and consumable materials, human capital is referred to as the intangible investment in people as a resource (Schultz, 1961; Sweetland, 1996). Investment in the development of early childhood leaders will provide a vital resource for our society, consistent with human capital theory.

When an organization invests in human capital, in this case, the development of leadership capacity, there is an expectation of a return on the investment (Sweetland, 1996). The return on the investment in early childhood leadership include implementing a well-funded leadership development system that adequately prepares educators for the

nuances of early childhood leadership. These leaders will, in turn, be equipped to lead

the schools that will have significant community impact. As research indicates that

children who attend high-quality early childhood programs increase their probability to

complete high school on time and are less likely to be incarcerated, which leads to

stronger communities with lower crime rates (Dunst, 2002; Reynolds et al., 2011).

Investing in the development of the leaders of such a critical education stage will, in turn,

will contribute to the children's potential success as lifelong learners, especially in under-

resourced communities. There is abundant research that speaks to the importance of

strong leadership in early childhood education and its impact on the quality of the

programs they lead (Leithwood et al., 2004, Goffin, 2013; Nupponen, 2006a, 2006b;

Robertson, 2012). This return on investment has strong social justice implications on the

underserved and under-resourced populations. The development of leadership will

facilitate significant and positive results from quality early childhood education

programs. It will build capacity in the early childhood profession, strengthening the

workforce, which will, in turn, provide foundational education experiences for young

children throughout the state.

Limitations of Research

While this research followed the tenets of qualitative research specific to the

narrative inquiry methodology, there were limitations. These limitations include:

(a) researcher bias, (b) time constraints, (c) and a limited sample size. As recommended

by Chasen-Taber (2014), commencing the research with strategies to acknowledge

potential limitations was key to mitigating the researcher bias and time constraints.

Researcher bias was the first limitation of this research. The researcher has worked in the field of New York City education since 1994; first as a public-school teacher, and then as an early childhood education administrator from 2001 to the date of this publication. This inquiry into the professionalization of early childhood careers, especially as it pertains to leadership, comes directly from the professional and personal experiences of the researcher. The researcher has experienced the transition from classroom to the role as the educational leader of a program with a minimal amount of administrative preparation.

Like many of the participants, the researcher commenced the leadership position with a New York State teacher certification and no formal administrative or leadership preparation. The experiences of the researcher also paralleled what Bloom (2004) referred to as the role of the *gatekeeper*. The data collected from several interviews indicate that the participants felt responsible for not only the education of young children but for the overall well-being of the families, facilities, and communities. Once again, these sentiments are like the experiences of the researcher in previous center director positions. These examples of personal and professional biases had the potential to influence the responses or compromise the interview protocol if the proper tools were not put into place to mitigate these concerns (Atieno, 2009; Chenail, 2011; Merriam, 2009).

The first strategy used to minimize the impact of bias during the research was to engage Group B via an online, anonymous survey. Identical demographic questions and two open-ended questions, like those used on the semi-structured interviews for Group A, were used to triangulate the responses from the interviews. In addition, the researcher did not add any anecdotal responses or reactions during the interviews. While many

comments rang true and were consistent with the responses from the semi-structured interviews, the researcher did not interject, nor corroborate, experiences with the participants. The researcher reached out to one participant to ask for clarification of a response. This member-checking technique was used to ensure that the researcher achieved clarity of the data gathered and was, indeed, not inserting a personal bias to an unclear response.

Time constraints were another limitation experienced during this research. Early childhood education can be a very demanding career, especially for those administrators who are charged with the general oversight of the children and employees, often for upwards of 10 hours a day. At the time of the interviews, both the researcher and the participants in this research worked in this field. Scheduling time for the Group A semi-structured interviews proved to be challenging. Several interviews had to be rescheduled due to program conflicts and emergencies. Given the researcher's experience as an early childhood center director, there was an awareness of the value of time. As a result, the researcher was extremely flexible with the scheduling of the interviews and made the decision, for convenience to the interviewees, to go to the locations identified by the participants. Not surprisingly, all interviews took place at the participants' programs locations.

The last identified limitation is the sample size of the participants for this research. There were 21 online survey responses and eight semi-structured interviews conducted. The research intended to examine a sample of New York State administrators; however, the participants from only eight counties were chosen out of a potential 62 counties (New York State, 2017). In general, qualitative sample sizes tend to

be smaller than those of quantitative research (Mason, 2010; Ritchie et al., 2014). Some researchers posited that it is irresponsible to support the theory that qualitative sample sizes should be small, because it deters future researchers from attempting large sample sizes or longitudinal studies (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). Opponents of this view have indicated that more data are not necessarily better for qualitative research, as the tend to become repetitive and, essentially, saturated (Charmaz, 2006; Mason, 2010: Ritchie et al., 2014). While the relatively small sample size limited the researcher's capacity to generalize the data, the participants in the sample provided invaluable data that contributed to early childhood education leadership research.

Recommendations

As early childhood education continues to develop as a respected and recognized career within the education workforce, there are recommendations that can be implemented for both practical application and for future research.

Recommendation 1. Create a vernacular that establishes recognized titles for early childhood educators, including early childhood education leaders. "Gatekeepers of quality" (Bloom, 1992, p. 141) and servant leaders refer to attributes or descriptions of the type of early childhood leader in New York State and throughout the country (Robertson, 2012). Comparatively speaking, school building leaders and administrators of the public-school system are identified by state-established, credentialed, and, often, collectively bargained titles. Independent school leaders garner the consistent title of *Headmaster* or *Headmistress*. The early childhood education workforce would benefit from a designated professional title to identify the person or persons who are charged with leading the early childhood programs. A consistent moniker, such as *Education Director*, for example, would potentially provide clarity to parents, students, the staff, and the public. This consistency would develop respect for the position, which was identified by Ingersoll and Perda (2008) as a key component of the professionalization of the workforce.

Recommendation 2. Require early childhood education leadership courses in New York State higher education for students in either early childhood education master's programs or school-building and school-district certification requirements. The data from this research, supported by the New York State and New York City regulations, demonstrate that early childhood administrators are going into leadership

roles without a standardized expectation for leadership development or training. Early

childhood education in New York State is rapidly expanding, with new initiatives to fund

subsidized education for 3-year-old children and universal prekindergarten classrooms

opening in public schools. One approach to address this gap is to augment exposure in

higher education programs. A recommendation is for all graduate students pursuing a

master's degree in early childhood education to enroll in a foundation of leadership

course.

Graduate students enrolled in school building leadership should also be required

to complete an early childhood education foundations course. It would be unrealistic to

think that a single three-credit course would fill the gap in leadership and early childhood

education, but this initiative has the potential to re-ignite a conversation around bringing

these two components together, rather than to continue to address these needs in their

own professional silos. The expansion of early childhood education in the public school

sector is growing by rapidly. Investing in leadership preparation in high education will

be necessary to re-engage school building leadership to early childhood education

concepts, development, and age-appropriate pedagogy.

Recommendation 3. Recommendations for further study. While this

qualitative study facilitated a thorough narrative inquiry, there is potential for future

research based, not only on the findings, but also on the limitations presented. First, the

limitations present an opportunity for recommendations for future research. Time

constraints and the sample size of participants were identified as two limitations to the

study. For this study eight early childhood education directors were interviewed, and 21

childhood education directors completed the anonymous online questionnaire. Although

qualitative research experts assert that saturation can happen with this study's participant size, the field could benefit from a study with participants from more than eight New York State counties (Charmaz, 2006; Mason, 2010; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005; Ritchie et al., 2014). There are 62 counties in New York State (2017). Expanding the research to include more of the 62 counties of the state, or expansion into other states, could contribute to the narrative, which could paint a broader picture of the experiences of leadership development for early childhood education directors throughout the state or the US.

Early childhood education programs are expanding throughout New York State, and as a result, 3- and 4-year-old children have options to attend early childhood programs in public school settings. Consequently, public-school building leaders are now charged with the leadership and oversight of early childhood education. New York State (2017) leadership certification programs do not include early childhood education development, as the certification is specific to K-12 building leadership. This research examined the impact of leadership development gaps for early childhood directors. Potential research for school building leaders can examine and measure their preparation, or lack thereof, as it relates to these leaders' capacity to lead early childhood education programs in public-school settings.

Conclusion

This qualitative research took the stories of eight early childhood leaders and 21 questionnaire responses and created a narrative about how leadership preparation and development can contribute to the professionalization of early childhood careers in New York State. The professionalization of leadership has the potential to build a strong

workforce that could improve the lives of thousands of young children throughout the state. Semi-structured interviews, supported by data derived from an anonymous online questionnaire, were used to answer the research questions created for this research. Although the four research questions were developed in pursuit of specific research goals, the impetus for this research was the overarching goal of exploring the role leadership development can have on early childhood education in New York State.

Consistent with the existing body of research regarding early childhood education leadership development, the participants launched their administrative careers from a variety of entry points. Despite the variety of career trajectories within the profession, clear themes emerged from this narrative inquiry. There was no one defined *road to leadership* for these New York State and New York City early childhood administrators; and consequently, other educators across the state enter the position with a wide array of skill sets, experiences, and development. While there are educators who aspire to become leaders and administrators, by and large, the data reveal that these administrators began their leadership careers because they were recognized and encouraged by other administrators to leave the classroom. This research also asserts that early childhood leaders have an unclear and ambiguous professional identity. How can leadership be successfully resourced and developed if there is a lack of consensus as to what to call the members of this workforce? Last, data the demonstrate that early childhood education leaders commenced their leadership development after assuming the position, remediating a skill set to retro-fit a position they were already tasked to perform.

The preparation of early childhood education leaders needs to keep pace with the expanding and developing program models and expectations of the field. Science-based

research has presented compelling data regarding the developmental stages of a young child's brain, finding that environment is critical to the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical advancement (or lack thereof) of young children. Research also indicates that leadership is critical to the success of any organization, including school systems. Early childhood education leaders, as this research asserts, are dedicated to developing their craft and leadership capacities—despite the ambiguity and lack of a career track for them.

The scope of early childhood education is expanding as the New York State and City continue to invest resources in early childhood programs for 3- and 4-year-old children. Early childhood advocates and educators continue to educate and influence public perception away from custodial care to that of research-based pedagogy, and research continues to compile the benefits of early childhood education, particularly for our most-vulnerable and under-resourced communities. These components and issues exist in isolation, but there is an opportunity in New York State for these components to converge and be addressed as one issue—professionalizing the field of early childhood leadership and recognizing early childhood education as the foundation of the education continuum in New York State.

One question remains: *Will public policy makers commit to formal measures to develop leadership with the goal to advance the professionalization of early childhood education?* Creating clear expectations, standards, and career paths for this profession's leaders will play a dual role for social justice progress in New York State. Professionalizing early childhood education will empower and bring professional parity which is critical to school success, and, in turn, will strengthen the capacity of an under-resourced workforce, provide resources for successful program design, offer

opportunities to influence strong pedagogy implementation, and create education equity

for the youngest children in New York State; particularly for those who are disconnected

from resources and opportunities.

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Appendix A

Permission from St. John Fisher College Internal Review Board

August 2, 2017

File No: 3771-072017-08

Michelle Paige
St. John Fisher College

Dear Ms. Paige:

Thank you for submitting your research proposal to the Institutional Review Board.

I am pleased to inform you that the Board has approved your Expedited Review project, "Preparedness and Professional Development of Early Childhood Education Directors: Implications for the Professionalization of Early Childhood Leadership Careers in New York."

Following federal guidelines, research related records should be maintained in a secure area for three years following the completion of the project at which time they may be destroyed.

Should you have any questions about this process or your responsibilities, please contact me at irb@sjfc.edu.

Sincerely,

Eileen Lynd-Balta

Eileen Lynd-Balta, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board
ELB: jdr

Appendix B

Letter of Introduction

Name of Participant
Street Address
Town, State, Zip

Dear Name,

My name is Michelle Paige, and I am a doctoral candidate at St. John Fisher College. I am sending this letter to you to invite you to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to explore the leadership development and preparedness of early childhood center directors and the impact this has on the early childhood profession. The title of this research is *Preparedness and Leadership Development for ECE Program Directors: The Impact of Credentials and Self-Perceptions of Preparedness for Leading Preschool Programs in New York.*

You have been identified as a possible participant in this research because you are an administrator of a licensed, center-based program in New York State. Your potential participation could contribute to early childhood leadership research and literature and may help lay the groundwork for standardized training and development programs for ECE directors.

Should you choose to participate, you would complete an online questionnaire to capture demographic information. All information obtained from the questionnaire will remain confidential and will be secured in electronic password-protected files, as well as in locked file cabinets. This information will be destroyed in three years. No names or other personally identifying information will ever be associated with the data collected.

If you are interested in participating in this research, please complete the attached consent form and email it to Michelle Paige at _____. This research has been reviewed and approved by the St. John Fisher College Internal Review Board (IRB). If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me at _____ or the Dissertation Committee Chairperson, Dr. Robert Siebert, at _____.

Thank you for considering participation in this research.

Best,

Michelle A. Paige
Doctoral Candidate

Appendix C

Online Questionnaire

My name is Michelle A. Paige, and I am a doctoral student at St. John Fisher College Doctoral Student. You are being asked to participate in an online survey titled, *Preparedness and Leadership Development for ECE Program Directors: The Impact of Credentials and Self-Perceptions of Preparation for Leading Preschool Programs in New York.* This research is being supervised by Dr. Robert Siebert, faculty member in the St. John Fisher doctoral program.

The purpose of this study is to research how ECE leaders view themselves in their leadership roles. The researcher does not anticipate any risks associated with participation in this study. Potential benefits to participation in this study include contributing to the body of early childhood leadership research which may influence public policy for leadership development in New York State.

This should take five minutes to complete.

This is an anonymous survey and the data collected from this survey will remain confidential. The data will be encrypted and kept on a password-protected computer. Print outs from this survey will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the residence of the researcher. All research documents will be shredded and destroyed three years after the completion of this research.

As a research participant, you have the right to:

1. Have the purpose of the study, and the expected risks and benefits fully explained to you before you choose to participate.

2. Withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

3. Refuse to answer a particular question without penalty.

4. Be informed of appropriate alternative procedures of courses of treatment, if any, that might be advantages to you.

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher listed above at _____. If you experience emotional or physical discomfort due to participation in this study, please contact your health provider.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of St. John Fisher College has reviewed this project. For any concerns regarding this study, you can contact Jill Rathbun by phone at _____ or by email at: irb@sjfc.edu.

Q1. Do you consent to participate in this research?

☐ Yes, I agree to participate in this research project.

☐ No, I do not wish to participate in this research.

Q2. Select the county where you work as an ECE administrator:

☐ Bronx Manhattan

☐ Kings (Brooklyn)

☐ Manhattan

☐ Nassau

☐ Queens

☐ Richmond (Staten Island)

☐ Suffolk

☐ Westchester

Q3. What is your title? Please select one:

☐ Center Director

☐ Education Director

☐ Program Director

☐ Administrative Director

☐ Other

Q4. If you selected other, what is your title? _____

Q5. How long have you been an ECE administrator?

☐ Less than 1 year

☐ 1 to 5 years

☐ 6 to 10 years

☐ 11 to 15 years

☐ 16 to 20 years

☐ More than 20 years

Q6. What is your highest level of education?

- ☐ Associate degree
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Post-graduate degree (2nd Master's degree or professional diploma)
- ☐ Doctorate (J.D., Ed.D., or Ph.D.)

Q7. What was your undergraduate major?

- ☐ Early Childhood Education
- ☐ Childhood Education
- ☐ Liberal Arts
- ☐ Other

Q8. If you selected other, please indicate your undergraduate major:

_____

Q9. What was your graduate major?

- ☐ Early Childhood Education
- ☐ Childhood Education
- ☐ Liberal Arts
- ☐ Other

Q10. If you selected other, please indicate your graduate major:

_____

Q11. What New York State Certification do you hold? Check all that apply.

- ☐ NYS Teacher Certification Nursery through Sixth grade
- ☐ NYS Teacher Certification Birth through Second Grade
- ☐ NYS School Building Leader (SBL)
- ☐ NYS School District Leader (SDL)
- ☐ Children's Program Administrator Credential (CPAC)
- ☐ Licensed Social Worker (LMSW)
- ☐ Special Education
- ☐ Childhood, Middle School, or High School
- ☐ I do not hold a NYS certification or education license

Q12. Please describe any coursework or training that prepared you for your role as an early childhood leader or administrator, prior to assuming the role

_____

Q13. Which best describe the type of ECE program you lead. Check all that apply:

- ☐ Early Head Start or Head Start
- ☐ Locally Funded Childcare (e.g., EarlyLearn)
- ☐ Special Education Preschool Program
- ☐ Universal Prekindergarten Program
- ☐ Private Nursery or Preschool
- ☐ Home-Based Provider

Q14. Which career trajectory best describes your transition into your first early childhood director position?

- ☐ I actively pursued an ECE leadership role as part of my career goals.
- ☐ I was identified by a mentor or supervisor as a viable candidate for a leadership opportunity.

Q15. Please select a response:

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ I choose not to respond

Q16. Please select the responses that best describe your ethnicity:

- ☐ African American or Black (for example African American, Caribbean, or country in Africa)
- ☐ Asian (for example, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, etc.)
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino
- ☐ Native American or Alaska Native
- ☐ Pacific Islander or Hawaiian Native
- ☐ White
- ☐ Other
- ☐ I choose not to respond

Appendix D

Informed Consent

Title of study: *Preparedness and Leadership Development for ECE Program Directors: The Impact of Credentials and Self-Perceptions of Preparedness for Leading Preschool Programs in New York*

Name(s) of researcher(s): Michelle A. Paige, St. John Fisher College Doctoral Student

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Robert Siebert

Phone for further information: _____

Purpose of study: The study will research how ECE leaders view themselves in their leadership roles. Research conducted in 2004 stated that a vast majority of ECE leaders viewed themselves as teachers and tended to view their leadership roles through this educator lens. In addition, the research proposed to assess professional development opportunities available to administrators as they relate to their leadership practices. New York State does not require early childhood administrators to complete leadership or management courses as a requirement for qualification for directorship positions. What are the self- perceived barriers to accessing appropriate leadership development and what is the impact of these barriers on their leadership role?

Place of study: Mutually agreed upon location

Length of participation: One hour (60 minutes)

Risks and benefits: The expected risks and benefits of participation in this study are explained below:

The researcher does not anticipate any risks associated with participation in this study. Potential benefits to participation in this study include contributing to the body of early childhood leadership research which may influence public policy for leadership development in New York State.

Method for protecting confidentiality/privacy: Your information and identity will be kept confidential. All names of people and programs will be assigned pseudonyms to protect identity. Voice recordings will be destroyed upon completion of this research. All transcriptions, demographic information, questionnaires, and participant information used for this research will be encrypted and kept on a password-protected computer. Paper documents will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the residence of the researcher. All research documents will be shredded and destroyed three years after the completion of this research.

Your rights: As a research participant, you have the right to:

1. Have the purpose of the study, and the expected risks and benefits fully explained to you before you choose to participate.

2. Withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

3. Refuse to answer a particular question without penalty.

4. Be informed of appropriate alternative procedures of courses of treatment, if any, that might be advantages to you.

5. Be informed of the results of the study.

I have read the above, received a copy of this form, and I agree to participate in the above-named study.

_____

Print name (Participant)   Signature   Date

Michelle A. Paige_____

Print name (Investigator)   Signature   Date

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher listed above. If you experience emotional or physical discomfort due to participation in this study, please contact your health provider.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of St. John Fisher College has reviewed this project. For any concerns regarding this study, you can contact Jill Rathbun by phone at _____ or by email at: _____.

Appendix E

Expert Panelist Letter of Introduction

Name of Participant
Street Address
Town, State, Zip

Dear Name,

My name is Michelle Paige and I am a doctoral candidate at St. John Fisher College. I am sending this letter to you to invite you to participate in a research study, as an expert panelist. The purpose of this study is to explore the leadership development and preparedness of early childhood center directors and the impact this has on the early childhood profession. The title of this research is *Preparedness and Leadership Development for ECE Program Directors: The Impact of Credentials and Self-Perceptions of Preparedness for Leading Preschool Programs in New York*.

You have been identified to participate in this research as an expert in the field of early childhood education in New York. Your potential participation could contribute to early childhood leadership research and literature, and it could help to lay the groundwork for standardized training and development programs for ECE directors.

Should you choose to participate, you would review the proposed questionnaire as well as the interview protocol for the semi-structured interviews of early childhood administrators in eight identified counties of New York.

If you are interested in participating in this research, please complete the attached consent form and email it to Michelle Paige at _____. This research has been reviewed and approved by the St. John Fisher College Internal Review Board (IRB). If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me at _____ or the Dissertation Committee Chairperson, Dr. Robert Siebert at _____.

Thank you for considering participation in this research.
Best,

Michelle A. Paige
Doctoral Candidate

Informed Consent for Expert Panelists

Title of study: *Preparedness and Leadership Development for ECE Program Directors: The Impact of Credentials and Self-Perceptions of Preparedness for Leading Preschool Programs in New York*

Name(s) of researcher(s): Michelle A. Paige, St. John Fisher College Doctoral Student

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Robert Siebert

Phone for further information: _____

Purpose of study: The study will research how ECE leaders view themselves in their leadership roles. Research conducted in 2004 stated that a vast majority of ECE leaders viewed themselves as teachers and tended to view their leadership roles through this educator lens. In addition, the research proposed to assess professional development opportunities available to administrators as they relate to their leadership practices. New York State does not require early childhood administrators to complete leadership or management courses as a requirement for qualification for directorship positions. What are the self-perceived barriers to accessing appropriate leadership development and what is the impact of these barriers on their leadership role?

Place of study: Mutually agreed upon location

Length of participation: One hour (60 minutes)

Risks and benefits: The expected risks and benefits of participation in this study are explained below:

The researcher does not anticipate any risks associated with participation in this study. Potential benefits to participation in this study include contributing to the body of early childhood leadership research which may influence public policy for leadership development in New York State.

Method for protecting confidentiality/privacy: Your information and identity will be kept confidential. All transcriptions, demographic information, questionnaires, and participant information used for this research will be encrypted and kept on a password-protected computer. Paper documents will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the residence of the researcher. All research documents will be shredded and destroyed three years after the completion of this research.

Your rights: As an expert panelist, you have the right to:
1. Have the purpose of the study, and the expected risks and benefits fully explained to you before you choose to participate.
2. Withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.
3. Refuse to answer a particular question without penalty.
4. Be informed of appropriate alternative procedures of courses of treatment, if any, that might be advantages to you.
5. Be informed of the results of the study.

I have read the above, received a copy of this form, and I agree to participate in the above-named study.

_____

Print name (Participant)　　　Signature　　　　　　　　　　　　Date

Michelle A. Paige_____

Print name (Investigator)　　　Signature　　　　　　　　　　　　Date

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher listed above. If you experience emotional or physical discomfort due to participation in this study, please contact your health provider.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of St. John Fisher College has reviewed this project. For any concerns regarding this study, you can contact Jill Rathbun by phone at _____ or by email at: irb@sjfc.edu.

Appendix G

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Q1. How do program directors identify themselves as early childhood administrators?

- What is your current title?
- As and ECE administrator, in previous administrative roles, what was your title?
- Can you describe your career path to your ECE administrator position?
- What are your leadership responsibilities as the program administrator?

Q2. What educational and professional development experiences inform the practices of early childhood administrators?

- Can you describe your higher education credentials?
- Describe any additional credentials or certifications, including any New York State Department of Education credentials?
- Can you describe you career track for your ECE leadership position?

Q3. How do program directors implement their education, training and professional development experiences when leading early childhood programs?

- Can you describe any courses in higher education or professional development that have you can recall that has prepared you for role as an early childhood administrator?

Q4. What do ECE administrators identify as gaps in their leadership preparation and what impact do these gaps have on the programs they lead?

- As an ECE administrator, how has your preparation for the position impacted how you lead the program?
- Describe what you perceive as gaps or missed opportunities for ECE leadership development?
- Describe your perceptions of preparedness for the leadership role when you began the position?
- How can you describe your leadership capacity in comparison to the beginning of your leadership role?

Appendix H

Group A Demographic Data Questionnaire

1. Select the county where you work as an ECE administrator:

   ☐ Bronx Manhattan

   ☐ Kings (Brooklyn)

   ☐ Manhattan

   ☐ Nassau

   ☐ Queens

   ☐ Richmond (Staten Island)

   ☐ Suffolk

   ☐ Westchester

2. What is your title? Please select one:

   ☐ Center Director

   ☐ Education Director

   ☐ Program Director

   ☐ Administrative Director

   ☐ Other

3. How long have you been an ECE administrator?

   ☐ Less than 1 year

   ☐ 1 to 5 years

   ☐ 6 to 10 years

   ☐ 11 to 15 years

   ☐ 16 to 20 years

More than 20 years

4. What is your highest level of education?

☐ Associate degree

☐ Bachelor's degree

☐ Master's degree

☐ Post-graduate degree (2nd master's degree or professional diploma)

☐ Doctorate (J.D., Ed.D., or Ph.D.)

5. What was your undergraduate major?

☐ Early Childhood Education

☐ Childhood Education

☐ Other

6. What was your graduate major?

☐ Early Childhood Education

☐ Childhood Education

☐ Other

☐ I did not attend graduate school

7. What professional credentials do you hold? Check all that apply:

☐ Early Head Start or Head Start

☐ Locally Funded Childcare (e.g., EarlyLearn)

☐ Special Education Preschool Program

☐ Universal Pre-Kindergarten Program

☐ Private Nursery or Preschool

☐ Home-Based Provider

8. Which best describes the type of ECE program you lead? Check all that apply:

☐ Early Head Start or Head Start

☐ Locally Funded Childcare (e.g., EarlyLearn)

☐ Special Education Preschool Program

☐ Universal Pre-Kindergarten Program

☐ Private Nursery or Preschool

☐ Home-Based Provider

9. Please select a response:

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ I choose not to respond

10. Please select the responses that best describe your ethnicity:

- ☐ African American or Black (for example African American, Caribbean, or country in Africa)
- ☐ Asian (for example, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, etc.)
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino
- ☐ Native American or Alaska Native
- ☐ Pacific Islander or Hawaiian Native
- ☐ White
- ☐ Other
- ☐ I choose not to respond