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A Phenomenological Study of Perceptions of Early Childhood Administrators Related to Transformational Leadership, Educational Paths, and Organizational Climate

Lori Hayes
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Lori Hayes

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2012

Abstract

A Phenomenological Study of Perceptions of Early Childhood Administrators Related to

Transformational Leadership, Educational Paths, and Organizational Climate

by

Lori Hayes

MA, National University, 1997

BA, Kean University, 1987

Proposal Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Administrator Leadership for Teaching and Learning

Walden University

April 2012

Abstract

Early childhood (EC) administrators could be the most important contributors to quality experiences in EC settings; they are also responsible for the caliber of experiences for children and staff. A quality EC program is licensed and accredited with administrators who have professional preparation and work experience and can lead and manage EC programs. There are the few direct educational paths to become an EC administrator. This lack of standardization influences the quality of leadership and organizational climate in EC settings. The purpose of this qualitative study as reflected in the research questions was to explore the experiences of EC administrators regarding their educational paths, their views of themselves as transformational leaders, and the influence of their leadership on their organizational climate. Prior research on the subject of leadership practices in EC suggests that Burns' transformational leadership is most beneficial, but this leadership style has not been explored in detail in EC settings. This phenomenological study included interviews of six EC administrators about their educational paths, their views as transformational leaders, and how their leadership influenced the organizational climate in their setting. Data were analyzed for themes that emerged. Findings suggested the need for streamlined undergraduate and graduate coursework. Implications for positive social change are the potential for improved quality of programs and for the support needed for early childhood leadership.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to all my family and friends who constantly encouraged me through the doctoral study process and had faith that I would finish my journey with success. I would also like to dedicate this to the early childhood administrators who work tirelessly to ensure young children start their lives with a quality education.

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Section 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

As the awareness of early childhood education as a public policy priority increases in the United States, there is a stronger need for capable leadership (Abel, Mauzy, Thornburg, & Heger, 2008). Early childhood administrators play a critical role in creating supportive work environments through effective supervision and stronger leadership skills (Kagan, Kauerz, & Tarrant, 2008). Effective leadership practices in early childhood education settings can affect the environment in many ways, which includes creating a healthy organizational climate (Marotz & Lawson, 2007). Conversely, negative staff feelings and attitudes, destructive staff behavior, and ineffectiveness within the organizational structure characterize a negative organizational climate (Schilling, 2009).

With research demonstrating the importance of early learning, especially for impoverished families, societies around the world are turning attention to the need for high quality early childhood education (Hirsch-Pasek & Golinkoff, 2003). High quality early childhood education can positively affect learning and development in young children, including gains in achievement, higher high school graduation rates, decreased behavior problems, grade repetition, and decreased crime and delinquency (Barnett & Frede, 2010). As society enters the twenty-first century, more than 9 million children younger than age 5 years attended a formal early childhood organization called either a *child care center* or *preschool* for at least part of each day (Fuller, 2007). Interest is

renewed in the potential of early childhood care and education to have an impact on school readiness for children between the ages of birth through age 5 years (Goffin & Washington, 2007). The interest in school readiness can be attributed to a number of factors. One factor is research on early brain development, which has been heightened by reports supporting the importance of the first 5 years of children's lives. A second factor is research on the impact of high quality early childhood education programs on children from low-income families as reported in reductions in criminal behaviors. A third factor is that early childhood education is a credible way to reduce the achievement gaps between children from low-and middle-income families (Goffin & Washington, 2007). With the need for high quality early education programs being established, there is also a need for high quality early childhood administrators to lead these programs.

Early childhood administrators must have the knowledge, training, and ability to form sustainable relationships within their environments to effectively lead to change (Nguni, Slegers, & Denessen, 2006). Researchers have associated transformational leadership with increased organizational effectiveness (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004). This type of leadership occurs by challenging followers to think in ways in which they are not accustomed to, inspiring them to accomplish beyond what they felt possible, and motivating them to guide their performance (Nguni, et al., 2006).

The most progressive early childhood administrators define *leading* as the manner of influencing others to achieve common goals rather than coercing, controlling, or manipulating people to achieve desired outcomes, as in transformational leadership

(Bloom, 2003). The transformational leadership style was shown to be a highly effective leadership model and to increase organizational effectiveness within school organizations (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004). Transformational leaders motivate and influence others and energize, empower, and engage others to pursue common goals (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bloom, 2003). Early childhood administrators who learn to use this style of leadership could create a healthier, more productive work environment in contrast to the traditional top-down style of management (Bloom, 2006). Additionally, those who empower their staff by sharing authority and power find greater meaning in their work, meet their own higher level needs through their work, and develop enhanced personal and professional capacities (Bloom, 2003).

As leaders, administrators can foster an understanding of the school vision, facilitate implementation of the mission, and positively influence the school climate (Kelley, Thornton, & Daugherty, 2005). An effective early childhood administrator must be an individual who guides, shapes, influences, and leads others toward an accomplishment or outcome while also having an organizational vision (Marotz & Lawson, 2007). To provide effective leadership in an early childhood setting, leaders must articulate a clear vision of the future and a general plan of action for getting there. They need to be capable of maintaining a balance between getting the job done and meeting the needs of people (Rodd, 2006).

Early childhood administrators must have the necessary knowledge and training needed to facilitate a productive school climate within their environment. The

transformational leader attends to the culture and climate of the organization and makes individuals feel part of something worthwhile (Nupponen, 2006b). Early childhood administrators who learn and understand the transformational style of leadership could affect the organizational climate in early childhood programs in a positive way by enhancing the quality of their program.

Consequently, disparities in formal education and training for early childhood administrators may result in inconsistencies in administrator roles which additionally could impact the organizational climate (Muijs, Aubrey, Harris, & Briggs, 2004). There is an abundance of studies on transformational leadership in the business, private, and public sectors. However, there are few studies in the area of transformational leadership in early childhood administration in the United States (Austin & Harkins, 2008a; Austin & Harkins, 2008b; Bloom & Bella, 2005; Hard, 2006; Lower & Cassidy, 2007; Muijs et al., 2004; Sciaraffa, 2004) and even fewer qualitative studies in this area. The studies reviewed were of survey methodology and suggested further in-depth, behavioral research is needed in the leadership development and practices for early childhood administrators and how this impacts the organizational climate in early childhood settings (Austin & Harkins, 2008b; Lower & Cassidy, 2007; Muijs et al., 2004).

The value of this research in closing the gap is to gain more insight into early childhood administrators who exhibit qualities of transformational leaders and how they perceive their educational paths and leadership influences the organizational climate in their settings. This insight is important in early childhood education because the

effectiveness of any early childhood program depends on how well it is implemented (Frede, Jung, Barnett, & Figueras, 2009). The related literature of the educational paths of early childhood administrators, transformational leadership, and organizational climate will be further discussed in section 2 of the study.

Problem Statement

High quality early childhood education is a wise investment because mounting research suggests children who attend early childhood programs are better prepared in school, are likely to attend college, and will have better jobs as adults (Poppe & Clothier, 2005). Skilled early childhood administrators are needed who have the energy and ability to influence others to take their early childhood program forward and positively influence the organizational climate (Nupponen, 2006b). The problem is there are few, if any, direct educational paths to become an early childhood administrator and this could influence the quality of leadership and organizational climate in early childhood settings due to lack of consistency (Lower & Cassidy, 2007). One factor that does impact the quality of leadership and organizational climate in early childhood settings is the style of leadership. Transformational leadership has shown to be beneficial in educational settings (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004), but to date research has not investigated how transformational leadership affects early childhood settings in New Jersey. This is of significant importance because lack of knowledge on part of administrators and staff alike concerning administrative responsibilities could result in lower quality early childhood settings including high staff turnover, low morale, and/or a lack of motivation

(Lower & Cassidy, 2007; Mims, Scott-Little, Lower, Cassidy, & Hestenes, 2008). A greater understanding is needed of the factors that contribute to the development and adaptability of transformational leadership of early childhood administrators and how it influences their organizations (Nupponen, 2006b). Early childhood administrators must use their own skill set to adapt and lead their environments and quite often, with little formal training or education in the area of early childhood administration (Nupponen, 2006b).

Research suggests that many early childhood administrators do not have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities as administrators (Nupponen 2006b; Nupponen, 2006c). To maintain a positive climate free of negative staff feelings and attitudes and destructive staff behavior within early childhood organizations, administrators need to learn, develop, and adopt best practices for their environments (Hale-Jinks, Knopf, & Kemple, 2006). This approach includes the need for formal leadership training or education because effective leadership can assist in creating a coherent, collegial working environment where staff are motivated and engaged in working toward organizational goals and creating a supportive environment for staff (Hale-Jinks, Knopf, & Kemple, 2006; Nupponen, 2006b). However, this area requires understanding early childhood administrators who often feel underprepared for their roles as leaders with limited access to professional development or educational opportunities specific to their position (Nupponen, 2006b). Conversely, administrators who feel they

are prepared, competent leaders contribute to a climate of coherence, commitment, and collaboration within their setting (Nupponen, 2006b).

By focusing on one type of leadership—Burns' transformational theory (1978)—this study presented a greater insight into how transformational leaders view their leadership and how their leadership influences the climate in their organization. The limited prior research on the subject of leadership practices in early childhood education suggested that transformational leadership is most beneficial in educational settings (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004). The concept of transformational leadership is one that has not been explored in much detail in early childhood settings (Lower & Cassidy, 2007; Muijs et al., 2004; Nupponen, 2006b). Transformational leadership, which incorporates an approach of empowerment, teamwork, and collaboration among staff, may be a highly effective leadership model within school organizations (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004). Other terms used for transformational leadership include *visionary leadership*, *participative leadership*, *servant leadership*, and *collaborative leadership*, but all have equivalent significance (Dambe & Moorad, 2008).

In 1985, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation process first came into existence because there was a need to identify high-quality early childhood programs across the United States (NAEYC, 2009). The accreditation process is a voluntary system in which early childhood programs gauge themselves against a series of criterion and standards as a measure of quality in the field of early childhood education (NAEYC, 2009). Increased educational requirements for

the early childhood administrator are one of the established standards of the NAEYC accreditation process.

The State of New Jersey realizes the importance of early childhood education and how it can make a difference in the lives of young children (Lauter & Rice, 2008). In New Jersey, there are approximately 4,200 licensed childcare centers (State of New Jersey, 2011). Of those centers, 218 are NAEYC-accredited centers, approximately 6%, in New Jersey (“Accredited program search,” 2011). An estimate of more than 80% of New Jersey’s three and four year olds attend a quality state funded early childhood program defined by state certified teachers, class size of 15 with two teachers, available mentor teachers, professional development opportunities, and state contracted facilities (Lauter & Rice, 2008). Though the New Jersey state funded early childhood programs and programs accredited through the NAEYC accreditation process represents a small sector of programs across the United States, there is a need for standards in higher education for *all* early childhood administrators (Lower & Cassidy, 2007).

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of early childhood administrators regarding their educational paths, their views of themselves as transformational leaders, and the influence of their leadership on their organizational climate. The following research questions were generated for this study:

- How do study participants describe their educational paths to becoming transformational early childhood administrators?

- How do early childhood administrators view themselves as transformational leaders?
- How do early childhood administrators describe the influence of their transformational leadership on their organization?

Nature of the Study

The research approach for this study was qualitative and the tradition was phenomenological. This approach was chosen to describe the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). The paradigm for this study was postpositivism. This paradigm was chosen because the inquiry of early childhood administrators was a series of logically related steps with multiple perspectives from the participants with multiple levels of data analysis (Creswell, 2007).

I interviewed six early childhood administrators who were employed at NAEYC-accredited centers in northern New Jersey in order to better understand their lived experiences regarding their educational paths in becoming transformational leaders, how they viewed themselves as leaders, and how their leadership influenced the organizational climate in their early childhood settings. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with early childhood administrators by using a prescribed series of questions. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. To create an overall picture of how participants experience the phenomenon, data were analyzed by (a) reducing the information to significant statements to find similar or related themes to create categories that emerge from the

participants' responses, (b) identifying themes from the categories and developing clusters of meaning from the statements and themes, (c) creating narratives of the early childhood administrators' experience, and (d) describing the setting that inspires how participants experience the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Transcriptions were then analyzed to discover significant statements that were developed into themes (Creswell, 2007). This analysis will be discussed in further detail in Section 3 of the study.

Purpose of the Study

Despite an abundance of research in the area of leadership in public schools, relatively few recent studies examine leadership styles in early childhood education, and even fewer studies that take place in the United States (Austin & Harkins, 2008a, 2008b; Deakins, 2007; Hard, 2006; Lower & Cassidy, 2007; Muijs, Aubrey, Harris, & Briggs, 2004; Nupponen, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c; Sciaraffa, 2004). Of these studies conducted, most were quantitative studies so there was a need for an in-depth look at this phenomenon in the United States (Lower & Cassidy, 2007). The purpose of this phenomenological, qualitative research study was to explore the experiences of early childhood administrators regarding their educational paths, their views of themselves as transformational leaders, and how they saw their leadership influencing the organizational climate.

Specifically, the focus of this study was to explore the educational paths of early childhood administrators, how the administrators viewed themselves as transformational leaders, and how the administrators view their leadership influenced their organization.

Organizational climate, as opposed to organizational culture, was examined so the two terms were not confused. Understanding the connection between leadership and organizational climate was critical in creating a functional working environment in early childhood settings.

Conceptual Framework

The transformational leadership theory introduced by Burns (1978) focused on the commitments and capacities of its organizational members and on leaders who have exceptional impact on their organizations. The work of Burns (1978) and Bass (1994, 2006) was used as the conceptual framework for this study. The transformational leadership framework was selected because it was shown to be a highly effective leadership model and increased organizational effectiveness within school organizations (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004). Moreover, this approach was chosen because the transformational leadership theory embraces the concept of teamwork and shared decision making while incorporating a shared vision for the future (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004). This framework is representative of the need for leadership training for *all* early childhood administrators (Lower & Cassidy, 2007; Mims et al., 2008).

Burns (1978) introduced the concept of transformational leadership. He stated that transformational leadership occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality (Burns, 1978). The transformational leader recognizes and exploits an existing need or demand of a potential follower and looks for potential motives, seeks to satisfy

higher needs, and engages the full person of that follower (Burns, 1978). To *transform* is to cause a metamorphosis in form or structure, a change in the very condition or nature of a thing, a change into another substance, a radical change in outward form or inner character (Burns, 2003). Burns (2003) stated that transformational leaders, “empower people; transforming leaders champion and inspire followers” (p. 26). It is a change of this breadth and depth that is fostered by transforming leadership (Burns, 2003).

Bass and Avolio (1994) followed the work of Burns (1978) and studied the transformational leadership theory. They built on Burns’ theory and believed transformational leaders behave in ways to achieve superior results by employing one or more of the *Four I’s*. The first is *idealized influence*, in which transformational leaders behave in ways that allow them to serve as role models for their followers. The second is *inspirational motivation*, in which transformational leaders behave in ways that motivate and inspire those around them by providing meaning and challenge to their follower’s work. Third is *intellectual stimulation*, in which transformational leaders stimulate their followers’ efforts to be innovative and creative by questioning assumptions, reframing problems, and approaching old situations in new ways. Fourth is *individualized consideration*, in which transformational leaders pay special attention to each individual follower’s needs for achievement and growth by acting as a coach or mentor (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Transformational leadership emphasizes relationships, respect for others, and the value of networking and collaboration, all of which affect the climate in an organization

(Nupponen, 2006a). Organizational climate is the total environmental quality and the collection and patterns of environmental determinants of aroused motivation within an organization (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004; Stringer, 2002). Recent attention to school effectiveness and organizational cultures has reemphasized the importance of organizational climate in educational settings (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004).

Organizational climate can only be described and measured indirectly through the perceptions of the members of an organization and includes key factors such as rules and communication that speak to the emotional and knowledge needs of employees (Sopow, 2006; Stringer, 2002).

Stringer (2002) suggested, “it is important to analyze the organizational climate, leadership practices, and other determinants of climate in our schools and then use those data to target the kinds of changes that will be most productive” (p. 164). Because early childhood administrators play a pivotal role in creating work environments that promote high performance and personal fulfillment, it is important to know their perceptions of how their leadership style can influence the organizational climate in their early childhood program. The transformational leader attends to the culture and climate of the organization and makes individuals feel part of something worthwhile (Nupponen, 2006b).

Strong leadership is an essential ingredient in any thriving organization (Bloom, 2006). A study conducted by Frede, et al., (2009) of state-funded early childhood programs in New Jersey revealed that children who attended a high-quality early

childhood program for 2 years performed 40% higher in the areas of language, literacy, and mathematics through the second grade. High quality early childhood programs and their effectiveness depend how well they are implemented and administered (Frede, Jung, Barnett, & Fegueras, 2009).

According to Burns (2003), “Leadership is a collective process whose dynamic is more than the simple sum of individual motivations and efficacies. Motivation and efficacy are the power of leadership that produces significant change” (p. 151). The limited prior research on the subject of leadership practices in early childhood education suggested that transformational leadership is most beneficial in educational settings (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004). Conversely, how true was this finding in early childhood education programs and how did transformational leadership contribute to the overall climate of programs? I focused on administrators in early childhood settings by recording their lived experiences as transformational leaders through one-on-one, face-to-face interviews. I explored the experiences of early childhood administrators regarding their educational path, their views of themselves as transformational leaders, and the influence of their leadership on their organizational climate.

Definitions

The following definitions were used throughout this study:

Early childhood administrator: The individual charged with the direction and oversight of an early childhood organization (Click, 2004). This person is often referred to as the *leader*.

Early childhood education: Preschool, prekindergarten, early learning, school readiness, early care and education, and child development. Preschool programs are the direct services to children who are not yet eligible for kindergarten. The age range for these children is typically birth to age 5 years (Clothier, 2005).

Leadership style: The manner in which the leader influences subordinates or followers (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004).

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC): An organization dedicated to improving the well-being of all young children, with particular focus on the quality of educational and developmental services for all children from birth through age 8 years. NAEYC accreditation is a national, voluntary accreditation system that set professional standards for early childhood education programs and helped families to identify high-quality programs for their young children (NAEYC, 2009).

Organizational climate: The distinct atmosphere that characterizes work settings and the conditions that exist in the workplace based on the collective perceptions of workers (Bloom, 2006).

Quality program: A quality early childhood education program is licensed and accredited with administrators having professional preparation and work experience who can lead and manage early childhood programs (Culkin, 2000).

Supportive and positive work environment: The physical, social, and psychological aspects of a workplace including strong employment relationships and relational trust (Lowe & Schellenberg, 2001).

Transformational leadership: Burns' (1978) theory that leaders and followers are united in pursuit of higher-level goals that are common to both (Sergiovanni, 1990).

Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations

This study includes several assumptions for this study. First, it was assumed that because all participants were chosen from an institution that received NAEYC accreditation, the administrators had the basic educational qualifications required for accreditation. Second, it was assumed that all participants of the study were early childhood administrators who understand the terminology used for this study in the field of early childhood education. Third, it was assumed that all participants of the study were familiar with the guidelines of the national accreditation process of NAEYC because their program was chosen from the NAEYC website to participate in this study which was confirmed during interviews. Fourth, it was also assumed that all early childhood administrators understood their role as a transformational leader of an early childhood program and could articulate their leadership style.

Because this study was focused only on early childhood administrators in northern New Jersey, there were several limitations within this study. All participants of the study had experience as an early childhood administrator. Criterion sampling took place because one criterion was that all early childhood administrators studied represented people who have experienced the phenomenon, which was working as a leader in an early childhood organization. Additionally, the participants were purposefully selected to ensure they fit the criteria of the study. Selection criteria for this

study included early childhood administrators who worked in NAEYC accredited centers in northern New Jersey. To receive NAEYC accreditation, administrators must have a minimum of a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education, nine credit hours of specialized college-level coursework in administration, leadership, and management, and 24 credit hours of specialized college-level coursework in early childhood education or child development (NAEYC, 2009). An additional selection criterion for the study involved the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) Leader Form that measured self-perception of leadership behaviors (Bass & Avolio, 2000). The potential participants completed the questionnaire and returned it to me via email. Those administrators whose scores indicated they exhibit characteristics of transformational leaders were asked to participate in the study.

The scope of this study was confined to the insights and views of early childhood administrators from early childhood programs who received accreditation from the NAEYC within the northern New Jersey area. This study was delimited to early childhood administrators in northern New Jersey, which reduced the generalizability of the findings. Although other early childhood programs exist in the designated area of northern New Jersey, only early childhood programs listed on the NAEYC website within a specific geographical area, including areas codes 201, 908, and northern areas of 973, were asked to participate in this study.

Significance of the Study

Early childhood administrators are the most important contributors to quality experiences in early childhood settings, which include the quality of experiences for children and staff (NAEYC, 2009). These administrators need to learn, develop, and adopt best practices for their environments (Bloom, 2000). As in formal education programs for public school administrators, early childhood administrators have a need for formal leadership training or education because effective leadership can assist in creating a coherent, collegial working environment where staff are motivated and engaged in working toward organizational goals (Nupponen, 2006b).

There are few preparation programs or educational opportunities to help early childhood administrators learn the qualities associated with being an effective leader and developing a positive work environment (Lower & Cassidy, 2007). The anticipated results from this study could give administrators in early childhood programs a better understanding of how their educational path affects their transformational leadership style which also influences the climate within their organization. Including leadership and management practices in comprehensive early childhood program evaluations is not only logical but also may be necessary to achieve an accurate picture of the environment in which both children and adults develop (Lower & Cassidy, 2007). Furthermore, leadership with low concern for tasks, job duties, and people can be described as ineffective, while lack of experience and knowledge are regarded as obstacles to leadership (Schilling, 2009).

Positive social change is a deliberate process of creating and applying ideas, strategies, and actions to promote the worth, dignity, and development of individuals, communities, organizations, institutions, cultures, and societies (Walden University, 2006). Positive social change results in the improvement of human and social conditions (Walden University, 2006). This research could lead to positive social change because I was looking at the betterment of administrative systems specifically for administrators in early childhood programs. The social change impact could be large because the improvement and development of stronger administrative and leadership systems could affect the administrators, children, and families of children attending early childhood programs. Having a better understanding of administrative practices in early childhood programs could lead to improved quality of programs and supports needed for early childhood leadership. Without quality systems in place at the organizational level, high-quality interactions and learning environments at the classroom level cannot be sustained (Talan & Bloom, 2004).

For this study, communities of practice included those who work in the profession of early childhood education and the children and families who attend early childhood programs. Those who work in the profession of early childhood education understand the complexity of administering and managing an early childhood program on a daily basis. Better understanding of administrative practices and creating systems for a positive organizational climate should exist in every program which, in turn, could positively affect the early childhood community. Continued research in this area might demonstrate

the need for a well-established educational path for early childhood administrators. This research could lead to larger social change in the way undergraduate and graduate level coursework is designed by tailoring the coursework and curriculum to reflect the great need in society for quality and qualified early childhood administrators. The results of this study contributed to the body of knowledge needed to explore how early childhood administrators evolved into transformational leaders and how the evolution influenced the organizational climate in early childhood programs.

Summary

Transformational leadership emphasizes consensus building, shared responsibility, and relationships (Kagan & Bowman, 1997). Early childhood education environments need skilled administrators who have the energy and ability to influence others to take their early childhood organization forward (Nupponen, 2006b). These administrators must have the knowledge needed to effectively lead early childhood organizations by positively empowering and motivating their staff and creating productive, quality organizational climates including high performing staff that is fulfilled in their work environment. Early childhood administrators with sound leadership practices, such as the knowledge of transformational leadership, can improve the organizational climate of their program by improving the quality of work life for staff, decreasing turnover, increasing respect and status for the profession, and influencing the quality of program services (Kagan & Bowman, 1997; Schein, 1997).

In section 1, the issue of educational development for early childhood administrators, transformational leadership, and organizational climate of early childhood programs was introduced. In section 2, related studies conducted in the areas of educational paths, transformational leadership, organizational climate, and their relationship to early childhood administrators was reviewed. In section 3, the methodology for this study, including the research design and context of the study, was discussed. Section 4 consisted of the results of the data collection and analysis procedures. Section 5 concluded the study with a summary and analysis of the results of the study and further recommendations based on the results.

Section 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of early childhood administrators regarding their educational paths, their views of themselves as transformational leaders, and the influence of their leadership on their organizational climate. In this section, the literature reviewed the educational paths of early childhood administrators, transformational leadership, views of transformational leaders, organizational climate, transformational leadership in early childhood settings and organizational climate in early childhood settings.

This literature review began by exploring the conceptual background and foundation of the study which examined Burns' (1978) concept of transformational leadership. The work of Bass (1994), which followed Burns' initial work of transformational leadership, was also reviewed. This style of leadership changed the traditional model from power-based to empowerment-based leadership (Dambe & Moorad, 2008).

This conceptual framework was used as the basis for the study to explore the educational path of early childhood administrators, their views as transformational leaders, and how their leadership influences the organizational climate in early childhood programs. Following this overview, the relevant patterns that emerged from the related literature concerning organizational climate and various aspects of early childhood administration, including transformational leadership, organizational climate, and educational paths of administrators in early childhood education settings, was reviewed.

Various strategies were used for searching the literature, including online searches of bibliographical databases for printed books, online searches of journals, and dissertations through the Walden University website (EBSCO, ProQuest, and Sage databases were most frequently used), the Questia website, Google Scholar, and manual searches at local libraries. Key terms that were used in the search for literature included: *transformational leadership, organizational climate, leadership style, leadership, participative leadership, negative leadership, early childhood education, preschool, child care, early care and education, education, and administration*. The search for journal articles was limited to full-text, peer-reviewed journal articles dated from 2004 to present.

Educational Paths for Early Childhood Administrators

Having well-qualified leaders is important yet the paucity of educational paths about how to become a well-qualified early childhood administrator is a major barrier to gaining these necessary qualifications (Whittington, Ebbeck, Diamond, & Yim, 2009). Individuals who aspire towards leadership and administrative roles in early childhood education need a recognized pathway and more opportunities to understand the roles and responsibilities of the position (Nupponen, 2006a). The administrator's level of formal and specialized training is a strong predictor of overall program quality (Bloom, 2000). Only 15 states have regulations requiring directors to participate in either entry or ongoing training in program administration (Kagan et al., 2008). With increased public awareness and demand in the field of early childhood education, there is a lack of prepared and qualified administrators to do the job (Abel et al., 2008).

Every school, especially in early childhood organizations, has unique social and cultural perspectives that include the individualized needs for staff, children, and families (Nor, Pihie, & Ali, 2008). Many administrators, including those in the field of early childhood education, lack an instructional methodological approach to leadership and supervision that should occur in their preprofessional training programs (Glanz, 2007). However, many of the leadership preparation programs demonstrate a lack of relevance in the preparation of school leaders (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005). Colleges and universities who train administrators need to stay abreast of the latest trends in schools so that leadership coursework can be developed appropriately (Ediger, 2006). Specifically, instructors who teach transformational leadership to potential leaders could cultivate curiosity within their students and inspire ethical conduct (Pounder, 2008).

A study conducted by Leech and Fulton (2008) of 646 participants from 26 secondary schools indicated that higher learning institutions should develop programs that enhance a potential leader's skills to create a cohesive learning organization, such as additional training in the area of shared decision-making. Furthermore, faculty of higher education institutions whose job is to prepare future leaders must be able to develop, model, and understand the types of organizations they expect their graduates to create (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005). An international pilot validation study of child care workers by Curry, Eckles, Stuart, and Qaqish (2010) suggested that having a credentialing system in place in the United States could potentially increase standards of care and professionalism in the field of early child education.

Similarly, two studies conducted by Nupponen (2006a, 2006c), one of six early childhood administrators and another of eight early childhood administrators in Australia, indicated that the participants all stressed the importance of the development and implementation of a specific career pathway for individuals who are interested in becoming early childhood administrators. Their suggestions for aspiring administrators in the field of early childhood education included college coursework in business and management, the opportunity for mentoring, and the opportunity to network within their field (Nupponen, 2006b). The results from the Lower and Cassidy (2007) study supported administrators attaining a 4-year degree. The participants wanted to improve their administrative practices and quality of their program; therefore they strived to learn more about early childhood leadership and management practices (Lower & Cassidy).

Whittington, Ebbeck, Diamond, and Yim (2009) conducted a study of university students from Australia with a concentration in early childhood education. The study results suggested that for students who graduated with a four-year degree, their newly acquired qualifications in the field of early childhood administration strengthened their knowledge base and employability. This knowledge helped the students identify their career interests in the field of early childhood education and provided a stepping-stone to a professional career. Another study by Bloom and Bella (2005) of 182 students who completed leadership training in early childhood administration implied those who completed the training had a sense of empowerment and transformed the way they viewed their role as leaders within their early childhood organization. The administrators

stated the leadership training improved their knowledge, helped them become more reflective in their leadership style, and helped with communication and group facilitation skills (Bloom & Bella, 2005).

Furthermore, a study conducted by Mims, Scott-Little, Lower, Cassidy, & Hestenes (2008) of 231 early childhood program directors and 540 early childhood teachers in North Carolina suggested that higher education levels were associated with higher quality scores for their programs. These studies illustrated how credentials at all levels foster effective administration skills for potential leaders and are used as a proxy for overall measurements of higher quality in their early childhood programs (NAEYC, 2007). Moreover, the studies demonstrated the need for the development of leadership training for a school environment, specifically by embracing the concept of transformational leadership, which empowers followers and encourages a common organizational vision (Leech & Fulton, 2008).

Transformational Leadership

Strong leadership is a vital element in any thriving organization. Knowledge of leadership practices is the most important single determinant of an effective learning environment (Bloom, 2003; Kelley et al., 2005). The term leadership style relates to how the leader influences subordinates (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004). The concept of leadership also includes understanding the procedures and processes needed for organizational improvement and effectiveness and the leader's ability to create and articulate a shared vision, meaningful goals, and model ethical behaviors (Kelley et al.,

2005; Paarlberg & Lavigna, 2010). Effective organizational leaders who engage in a system of shared, decentralized decision making, which means making decisions in a committee or a group, are effective leaders who engage people inside and outside the organization as part of a team (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004).

Burns (1978) introduced the theory of transactional leadership and transformational leadership. Transactional leadership occurs when leaders and followers participate in an exchange of needs and services to accomplish their independent objectives. The transformational process occurs when leaders and followers come together for the purpose of higher-level goals that are common to both (Sergiovanni, 1990). Burns considered transformational and transactional leadership as opposing concepts upon the leadership scale. In deference to this viewpoint, Bass (as cited in Nguni et al., 2006) suggested transformational and transactional leadership principles built on one another. Bass (as cited in Nguni et al., 2006) stated that transformational leadership enhances transactional leadership by focusing on the development of followers as well as addressing the goals of the leader, follower, group, and organization.

To illustrate Bass' (2006) theory, two studies were reviewed on transformational and transactional leadership. One study that was conducted by O'Shea, Foti, Hauenstein, and Bycio (2009) consisted of 726 registered nurses to investigate if the most effective leaders engaged in both transactional and transformational leadership behaviors. Another study by Frey, Kern, Snow, and Curlette (2009) consisted of 240 participants of various levels of management. The findings from both studies generally

supported Bass' claims that the most effective leaders utilize both traits of transformational and transactional leadership. The studies found that optimal leaders exhibited more transformational behaviors. However, leaders who used contingent rewards, defined as the exchange of valued things, may see an increase in their level of effectiveness because their cooperative work style includes a reward system for the effort of their staff (Burns, 1978; Frey et al., 2009; O'Shea et al., 2009).

Burns (2003) stated, "in people's day-to-day activities, most of their thinking is reactive. People can either cope with things or alter them as they seek solutions or changes that are significant and lasting. To think this way is to think transformationally" (p. 52). Earlier styles of leadership advocated power and authority in the leaders but not in the followers (Dambe & Moorad, 2008). Transformational leaders are capable of motivating others more than they thought was originally possible and additionally, these leaders set higher expectations that can be challenging. Because of these higher expectations, they typically are able to achieve higher outcomes (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Two studies were reviewed to illustrate this concept. Walumbwa, Avolio, and Zhu (2008) conducted a study of six banking organizations in the Midwest and argued that when leaders demonstrated transformational leadership behaviors and provided their staff with the resources they needed to perform their job, levels of performance and job satisfaction were higher. Moreover, leaders boosted staff efficacy, organizational goals, and performance objectives when they took the time to help individual members to view their resources (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Failla and Stichler (2008) conducted a study of

92 nurses, including 15 nurse managers, in a not-for-profit metropolitan hospital campus in southern California. The findings of this study suggested significant correlations between transformational leadership style and autonomy, professional status, and organizational policies and reported a significant association between nursing leadership behaviors and organizational work satisfaction (Failla & Stichler, 2008). Although both studies were in different settings, they supported the previous research describing the positive relationship between transformational leadership and high job satisfaction (Feilla & Stichler, 2008; Walumbwa et al., 2008).

According to Bass and Avolio (1994), transformational leadership is exhibited when leaders are able to have co-workers and followers: (a) arouse interest to look at their work from another perspective; (b) understand and believe in the organization's mission and vision; and (c) develop and motivate their own interests to a higher potential that will benefit the group. This type of leadership cannot be accomplished overnight— involvement cannot be thrust on people and must be implemented gradually (Bloom, 2006). As an example, a study of eight managers working in South Africa conducted by van Eeden, Cilliers, and van Deventer (2008) suggested that managers who used a transformational style of leadership exhibited personality traits associated with this style of leadership. Characteristics of transformational leadership specifically named in this study included a focus on organizational change, a tendency to be proactive, innovative problem solving, and the use of planning for the future (van Eeden et al., 2008). Burns (as cited in Bass & Riggio, 2006) believed that to be a transforming leader, one had to be

morally uplifting. Transformational leaders can use their influence indirectly within an organization by developing their behaviors and actions as role models and also by developing the culture to support the organization's vision and mission (Bass & Avolio, 1994). The results from the van Eeden et al. study showed a connection to the work of Bass and Avolio because the identified traits of the leaders were consistent with their definition of a transformational leader.

Burns (as cited in Bass & Riggio, 2006) stated that true transformational leadership affects all cultures and organizations since both leaders and followers must work towards a common goal for the good of the organization. The key traits of transformational leaders include shared ownership, vision, transparency, and the ability to encourage growth among followers (Dambe & Moorad, 2008). A study by Frey et al. (2009) implied that leaders who were optimistic are more likely to use a transformational leadership style, as opposed to leaders who have issues with trust and a negative view of the world and may not be able to implement the transformational leadership style. Furthermore, a study by Ruggieri (2009) of 60 psychology students who used the Adjective Check List measured the shared attitude of a group towards a leader through the use of common adjectives from a choice of 300 adjectives. An additional study by Schyns and Sanders (2007) of 84 students from a Dutch university were questioned on their perceived personality characteristics of their leader. The results of both studies found that the transactional leader was described as dominant, orderly, and possessed high self-esteem while the transformational leader was characterized as high originality,

greater need for achievement, endurance, nurturance, and change (Ruggieri, 2009; Schyns & Sanders, 2007). These results implied the correlation between leadership traits and individuals who are visionary, optimistic, purposeful, and trustworthy with successful transformational leaders.

Successful transformational leadership is evident when both the leader and follower demonstrate increased performance outcomes and both are able to develop and recognize their own leadership potential and skills (Nguni et al., 2006). Leaders who empower employees to act on their values and serve as positive role models embody the nature of transformational leadership (Paarlberg & Lavigna, 2010). A study by Webb (2007) of 105 institutions in the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities indicated that staff members are motivated toward extra effort when leaders model behaviors exhibited in the transformational style of leadership. These behaviors include a hands-on approach of high energy, power, assertiveness, and self-confidence. Another finding of the study indicated that leaders who displayed a hands-off approach had a higher likelihood to lower motivation among staff, which led to increased absenteeism and decreased production within the organization (Webb, 2007).

Findings consistent with Webb's (2007) were suggested in a study by Engels, Hotton, Devos, Beouckenooghe, and Aelterman (2008) of 46 primary school principals and teachers in Belgium. This study indicated that principals who were identified by their staff as mentors created an extremely positive organizational culture as opposed to principals who were identified as managers whose organizational climate was much less

positive (Engels et al., 2008). A similar study conducted by Moolenaar, Daly, and Slegers (2010) of 702 teachers and 51 principals in 51 elementary schools in the Netherlands suggested the more a principal engaged in transformational leadership, the more the teachers felt connected to the principal, which was demonstrated by teachers seeking out the principal and teachers feeling comfortable in developing and implementing new knowledge and practices. These studies suggested that leaders who create a flexible, stimulating, participative, and supportive environment encourage the transformational leadership model, thus creating positive organizational climates.

Although transformational leadership focuses on the shared leadership of the leader and followers, a study by Shilling (2007) of 42 middle and upper managers suggested an opposing viewpoint. The results of the study indicated that when negative leadership occurs, the negative consequences defy the social norms of the organization, which defies the situational pressures of the employee and enhances the negativity of the situation. A major problem in any organization is the lack of trust among staff (Ediger, 2006). The study revealed that most followers found qualities such as satisfaction, trust, motivation, responsibility, and commitment as traits they want in their leader (Shilling, 2007). Consequently, it is vital to recognize the difficulties in some organizations involved in changing their systems to adapt transformational leadership, since change is difficult and a stress response in the form of resistance may occur with followers (Larson, 2009). These positive traits of a transformational leader can counteract the possibility of negative consequences within an organization.

A study by Dunn and Brasco (2006) of school leaders and a study by Chen, Kirkman, Kanfer, Allen, and Rosen (2007) of 62 teams from 31 stores of a Fortune 500 company suggested a diverse and altered perspective of leadership. Both studies revealed that although many successful leaders preferred a transformational style of leadership among their followers or team, they needed to adopt different styles and strategies of leadership depending on the individual. The results suggested that leaders look at both the individual as well as the team when considering empowerment and leadership strategies (Chen et al., 2007; Dunn & Brasco, 2006). As both studies suggested, the context of the situation may be of importance in determining the use of transformational leadership (Schyns & Sanders, 2007). There are times when leaders need to understand the differences between individual and group level effects and develop the abilities to know when to best implement transformational leadership depending on the situation (Zohar & Tenne-Gait, 2008). These studies suggested that although the concept of transformational leadership is the underlying component to successful leadership, it may not be successful for all individuals and the leader might use a different strategy for those individuals. These findings are consistent with Bass' (1994) concept of *individualized consideration* where transformational leaders pay special attention to each individual follower's needs for achievement and growth by acting as a coach or mentor.

Other terminology for the transformational style of leadership includes the *distributed perspective of leadership*, which similarly focuses equally on leaders, followers, and specific situations and concentrates on the relationship of all three aspects

(Talan, 2010). Distributed leadership allows for others such as administrators, teachers, and staff to be key players in leadership practices either by design or by default (Spillane, 2006). Distributed leadership can also be defined as the collective influence of the group since no one individual can demonstrate leadership in all contexts (Burke, 2010).

Leaders who exercise distributed leadership build structures and engage staff in the leadership process which builds structures on the development of staff leadership (Laureate Education, Inc., 2006). The organizational contexts of schools have substantial influence on the performance and outcomes of teacher and staff leadership (Murphy, 2005). Staff in a school organization does not have to be in a leadership position to provide leadership (Hackman & Wageman, 2007). Other benefits of teacher and staff leadership include improvement of schools and improvement of test scores (Laureate Education, Inc., 2006).

Similar terminology for transformational leadership is *facilitative* or *participative leadership*, which seeks to decrease the group's dependence on the administrator as the leader by elevating expertise within the whole group and developing a sense of shared responsibility for both organizational problems and organizational achievements (Bloom, 2003). As with transformational leadership, participative leadership is based on the belief that an organization will excel by cultivating and maximizing its strengths as a whole unit (Bloom, 2003). By all members of the team working collaboratively, they are considered equal contributors in the completion of a task or decision (Rodd, 2006). As with transformational leadership, the success of these styles of leadership requires a balance of

organizational needs and individual needs with cooperation and teamwork at the forefront (Bloom, 2000).

To illustrate how leadership can influence an organization, a study by Anderson (2004) of six schools in Canada of the influence between the principal and staff presented three models of leadership within schools. The results of this study suggested that the contested model of leadership occurred when leaders made decisions, and were often challenged by staff. With this style of leadership, staff protected the established ways of the organization and did not want administrator participation on teams (Anderson, 2006). Consequently, leaders who act superior or treat followers disrespectfully could weaken or damage their credibility and influence (Reicher, Haslam, & Platow, 2007). Other variables that could affect the day-to-day leadership of a school organization include (a) time constraints; (b) external pressures (i.e., government mandates, fiscal issues, testing); (c) direct involvement in daily crisis; and (d) demand for academic leadership (Rafoth & Foriska, 2006).

Burns (2003) stated, “in our day-to-day activities, most of our thinking is reactive. We can either cope with things or alter them; we seek solutions or changes that are significant and lasting. To think this way is to think transformationally” (p. 52). Many times, leaders must think in-action, or reflect on a situation, to get the best results for the given circumstances. Effective leaders must work to understand the values and opinions of the staff with whom they work to empower them for the benefit of the organization, as in the transformational style of leadership (Reicher et al., 2007).

Views as Transformational Leaders

Without question, strong leadership is an essential ingredient in any thriving organization. Despite volumes that have been written on the topic, leadership remains an elusive concept for many leaders, including early childhood administrators (Bloom, 2003). Leaders represent the values of the group and also determine the values of the group (Sergiovanni, 2005). Perhaps most important are subordinates' reactions to inept leadership: high turnover, insubordination, sabotage, and malingering. Much of the research revealed that leadership incompetence is associated with arrogance, untrustworthiness, overcontrol, exploitation, micromanagement, emotional instability, aloofness, and an inability to delegate or make good decisions (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004). Leaders know that to be successful in an organization, they must learn the most effective leadership techniques so they are not perceived as incompetent.

Transformational leaders want to understand the environment they are in and influence others to achieve the collective goals of the organization (Bloom, 2006). One example is a study conducted by White-Smith and White (2009) of four principals of a high school and college collaborative project in New York and California suggested they viewed their position as leaders as (a) understanding of their roles, (b) their interactions, and (c) the strategies and skills they develop. This study (White-Smith & White, 2009) suggested that principals also felt they needed to bridge alliances throughout their settings. Another study conducted by Devos and Bouckenooghe (2009) in Belgium of 46 principals, of which three principals were used as case studies, explored their self-

perceptions as leaders. The study revealed the principals, as leaders of their organization, felt they were visionary, included their team in goals, and understood the importance of relationships (Devos & Bouckenooghe, 2009). The findings of both studies are consistent with the relational aspect of transformational leaders.

Transformational leaders feel communication flow is an integral part of a healthy organizational climate because there is an uncompromising respect for the need of people to have some say in the decisions that directly affect them (Bloom, 2006). By having organizational structures and processes in place where staff and other stakeholders are actively engaged and empowered, they will have the capacity to actively participate in decision-making ventures within their environment (Bloom, 2000). When involvement is broadened, directors usually find that staff feels a greater commitment to a program (Bloom, 2006).

To illustrate this, a study conducted by Smith and Bell (2011) of approaches to leadership of head teachers in northern England revealed those who used transformational leadership stated they felt, “extremely vision-driven, acting as change agents with the intention of bringing about long-term, sustainable improvements, placing great emphasis both on their core values and on the collaboration and involvement of others” (p. 60). The study also suggested that staff favored transformational leadership based on the ideas of supportive staff, collaboration, and participation.

In the field of early childhood education, many new transformational leaders view themselves as managers and focus on administrative tasks within their organization

(Bloom, 2006). As they become more knowledgeable in their role, greater emphasis is placed on their leadership functions in areas such as vision, motivation, and communication (Bloom, 2006). This emphasis on leadership functions is demonstrated in two studies by Nupponen (2006a; 2006c) of early childhood administrators in Australia. Through interviews in both studies, the administrators viewed leaders as having a vision, but more importantly building a team through interpersonal qualities and communication within their organization was of critical importance in their early childhood settings (Nupponen, 2006a; 2006c). These administrators viewed themselves as transformational leaders.

Transformational Leadership in Early Childhood Education

Leadership is one of the strongest predictors of high quality early childhood programming (Bloom, 2006). High quality early childhood settings is correlated with administrators who focus on the importance of relationships and how this can influence the organizational climate, or how staff perceive their work environment, as well as providing professional development and continuing education opportunities for all staff (Lower & Cassidy, 2007). In early childhood organizations, the administrator is the gatekeeper of quality, which is critical because this person is responsible for not only creating a positive climate, but also for implementing systems that ensure quality is maintained in their organization (Bloom & Bella, 2005). Much of the leadership research is written for business and is often not relevant for the area of early childhood administration, which causes difficulty for administrators to apply the lessons of

leadership from other disciplines to this field (Bloom, 2006; Woodrow & Busch, 2008). Additionally, underdeveloped models of organizational and educational theory remain stagnant (Burke, 2010). Resources to strengthen and update a distinctive early childhood leadership culture are sparse (Woodrow & Busch, 2008). Early childhood administrators need to learn and find out what style of leadership works best in their environment. These administrators need to acquire a flexible approach to leadership that will enable them to influence and work effectively with people of all levels (Rodd, 1994).

Effective leaders help their school community succeed by personally defining their core, making meaning for their organization around core values and core purpose, and continually clarifying and focusing on priorities that are aligned with that purpose (Blankstein, 2004). The responsibilities and practices of effective leaders include attention to vision, but the details of follow up and building collaborative cultures within the school are equally important (Sergiovanni, 2005). Leadership that bubbles up and leadership that trickles down are both critical (Sergiovanni, 2005). Successful, effective schools are ones in which staff are empowered (Wilson, 2007).

The early childhood field is intricate because of its diversity and because of the strong advocacy and community roles required for leaders. Historically, supervision and leadership occurred as a means for administrators to maintain their environments without allowing individual initiative, innovation, or motivation to occur (Glanz, 2007). Because of the complexity in the field of early childhood education, the natural progression is directed towards more collaborative ways of working and leading (Muijs et al., 2004).

Administrators must recognize the value of close partnerships outside the school organization and develop these relationships (Wilson, 2007). Researchers stated key elements of effective early childhood leadership include the leader's ability to provide a vision, communicate effectively, know the culture of the organization, and the ability to set and share goals and objectives (Rodd, 1994).

In any early childhood setting, the administrator plays a critical role in creating supportive work environments through effective supervision and strong leadership (Kagan et al., 2008). Many early childhood administrators are resigned to "doing the best they can" without realizing the possibilities of transformational leadership at even the most basic level (Glanz, 2007). In addition to having effective leadership, organizations must structure themselves in response to their internal and external environments (Sergiovanni & Corbally, 1986). Hard (2006) conducted a study 26 participants from the early childhood sector in Australia suggested that leadership performance was influenced by both external and internal factors with a heavy influence on staff conflict. The study also suggested that the expectation of staff members was that leadership should take place in a nonhierarchical manner, similar to that of transformational leadership (Hard, 2006). Deakins (2007) conducted an action research study on a nonprofit early childhood organization in New Zealand and implied that when leaders took action steps in creating a shared vision between the board, management, and staff, conflicts were reconciled because of communication and as a result staff were empowered and encouraged.

In early childhood settings, job satisfaction seemed to be higher in schools with relatively open climates, which are characterized by a sense of belonging, many opportunities to interact, autonomy, and upward influence (Bloom, 2006). A mismatch between administrators and staff perceptions can have a detrimental effect on the quality of work life for staff. An administrator's leadership style is a major source of influence on how a staff member experiences her job including her efforts, commitment, and support (Nir & Kranot, 2006). Identifying where perceptions differ is an important first step in beginning to structure opportunities to promote convergence in viewpoints (Bloom, 2006). Respecting different perceptions in a work environment is an important step towards promoting the kind of organizational climate that truly values diversity (Bloom, 2006). The administrator as leader plays a pivotal role in both assessing current work attitudes and structuring changes to improve conditions.

A study by Nupponen (2006b) of early childhood administrators in Australia implied many administrators in the field of early childhood education are women. As women gain higher education degrees, this could lead to more opportunities to shape work, working conditions, and the meaning of work, even in the field of early childhood education (Grogan, 2010). There is growing evidence showing that women leaders demonstrate behaviors consistent with both transactional and transformational styles of leadership, with qualities including exchanges, motivation, influencing, empowerment, and skill development (Frey et al., 2009; Nupponen, 2006b; O'Shea et al., 2009). Nupponen (2006b) suggested that transformational leadership may not be the only model

of leadership for this field, but this leadership style merits further research because a high percentage of female early childhood administrators exhibit many qualities of the transformational leadership style.

Early childhood administrators are willing to take on new leadership challenges and develop and consolidate reciprocal relationships (Woodrow & Busch, 2008). However, there is a clear need for more resources to support these challenges because of the lack of research in the area of early childhood administration (Woodrow & Busch, 2008). In addition to these leadership challenges, a study by Nupponen (2005) of six early childhood administrators in Australia implied that administrators of early childhood organizations needed to shift their thinking toward a more business model of operations to become increasingly competitive in this field.

Through transformational leadership, staff may feel like active participants in a change process that is not forced on them, but presented as a collaborative partnership between staff and administrator (Bloom, 2006). The concept of transformational leadership requires a mindset that includes all individuals in the organization and one that encourages collaboration and strives to achieve win/win solutions to problems. Administrators must make a conscious effort to find ways to empower staff and enhance their influence in daily decision-making (Bloom, 2000). Austin and Harkins (2008a) conducted a study of 61 childcare employees in southern New England on measures of organizational learning, school climate, and morale. Results of the study suggested that increased organizational learning was coupled with supportive administrators who clearly

articulated consistent goals and a vision for the organization, positive and respectful staff interactions, and acknowledged employees (Austin & Harkins, 2008a). The results of a study by Nguni et al. (2006) on the effects of transformational and transactional leadership on teachers' job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior in the context of schools suggested, "although transactional and transformational leadership are strongly related concepts, the group of transformational leadership factors had more stronger positive influence of outcome variables, including job satisfaction and organization commitment than the group of transactional leadership factors" (p. 168). All of these studies suggested how transformational leadership could positively affect the organization and motivate employees in their work environment.

As part of the leadership process, decisions can be broadly classified as two types, those that are operational and relate to how staff carry out their respective jobs and those that are strategic and relate to the center as a whole (Bloom, 2000). Effective leaders exhibit passion about their cause and a tenacious focus in the pursuit of their goals. As a group, they are generally risk takers, willing to take an unpopular stance. They are also achievement oriented, setting high but realistic goals for themselves and their organization. They rely on both logic and intuition to make decisions and are unequivocal in the principles, beliefs, and values that guide their behavior (Bloom, 2000).

A study by Epley, et al., (2010) of two early childhood intervention agencies implied that administrators who establish a clear vision, have an organizational climate that fosters collaborative teams, have flexible and adequate resources for staff, and hold

staff accountable are the most effectively run operations. Guided by the principles of transformational leadership, staff will feel like active participants in a change process that is not forced on them but is a collaborative partnership between staff and administrator and perhaps board of directors (Bloom, 2006). Transformational leadership requires a “both-and” mindset, one that encourages collaboration and strives to achieve win-win solutions to problems. This means making a conscious effort to find ways to empower staff and enhance their circle of influence in day-to-day decision-making (Bloom, 2000).

Organizational structures and processes must be adapted so that staff and other stakeholders have the power and capacity to participate actively in decision-making ventures (Bloom, 2000). Effective administrators know what is happening in their organizations, especially if they are working on building relationships, motivating staff, and working as a team (Buckner, 2008). An integral part of a healthy organizational climate is an uncompromising respect for the need for people to have input into the decisions that directly affect them. An approach that equally focuses on the leader, follower, and situation can distribute and share the leadership responsibilities among staff (Talan, 2010). When involvement is broadened, early childhood administrators usually find that staff members feel a greater commitment to the program (Bloom, 2006).

Transformational Leadership and Organizational Climate

Organizational climate is the collection and pattern of the factors that determine motivation in any given environment and the way individuals perceive the personal impact of their work environment on themselves (Sarros et al., 2008; Stringer, 2002). In

every organization, organizational climate exists but can only be described and measured through the perceptions of the members of the organization (Stringer, 2002). Leadership practices are a significant determinant of organizational climate, and the influence of organizational climate is believed to be a function of leadership (Momeni, 2009).

Varying leadership practices within any environment could affect the organizational climate and lead to different behaviors and performances, both desirable and undesirable (Stringer, 2002).

Organizations are built on the unification of people around values (Sergiovanni & Corbally, 1986). The business of being a leader is therefore the business of being an entrepreneur of values (Sergiovanni & Corbally, 1986). Each organization's personality and characteristics affect the quality of work life for the staff. Climate is created in the first instance by the action of leaders, and culture is embedded and strengthened by leaders. When the climate becomes dysfunctional, leadership is needed to help groups unlearn some of its cultural assumptions and learn new assumptions (Schein, 1997). To demonstrate this concept, a study conducted by Halawah (2005) measured school climate and communication effectiveness between principals and teachers. A strong correlation was found between the high values for school climate and the high values of the leader's effective communication. MacNeil, Prater, and Busch (2009) conducted a study in southeast Texas of 1,727 teachers using the Organizational Health Inventory. The results implied that the principal strongly influences the organizational climate and the climate was higher when the principal supported clear goals for the staff (MacNeil et al., 2009).

Both studies suggested that a better organizational climate is expected in schools where there was effective, open communication and support between the administrator and staff. Schools that have a culture of excellent instruction, shared norms and values, and a culture of trust help stimulate staff and improve the general well-being of the organization (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011).

Organizational climate is made up of many dimensions, including the perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and values of all individuals within a given work setting—a composite of personalities and the leadership that guides them (Bloom, 2006). Organizational climate describes conditions that exist in the workplace based on the collective perceptions of workers, and organizational climate is the total environmental quality within an organization (Bloom, 2006). For example, a study was conducted by Yaman (2010) of 12 academic staff at a university in Turkey focusing on unethical behaviors and emotional assaults which is defined as workplace bullying and mistreatment of an individual by another individual. The study suggested that the organizational climate and the personalities of the staff largely influenced and shaped whether competition or cooperation were more dominant within the organization. Staff who was emotionally assaulted felt less loyalty to the organization (Yaman, 2010).

Organizational competence is the sum of everything everybody knows and uses that leads to increased learning (Sergiovanni, 2005). An integral part of a healthy organizational climate is an uncompromising respect for the needs of people to have input into the decisions that directly affect them (Bloom, 2006). However, a study by

Tobin, Muller, and Turner (2006) of 679 teachers and 734 other school staff members who were not teachers (e.g., principals, administrators, paraprofessionals) indicated that organizational climate was not a useful predictor of staff efficacy. The study results suggested that school organizations should broaden their focus beyond climate to include organizational learning and participation in organizational learning (Tobin et al., 2006). In a similar study, Nir and Kranot (2006) examined the relations between administrator leadership style and staff self-efficacy. The results of their study suggested that staff efficacy and leadership style are directly linked if transformational leadership is involved, although different leadership styles differ in the way they influence and shape the organizational climate.

Studies of organizational climate revealed qualities of leadership, motivation, communication, and job satisfaction (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004; Momeni, 2009). The climate within any school organization, which is created by different leadership styles, has a powerful impact on the job performance of employees (Stringer, 2002). Organizational climate can be considered subjective; however, collectively the concept of climate is a response to the actual characteristics, including the history or feel of the organization (Stringer, 2002). Stringer conducted research with a variety of organizations and identified five determinants, or causes, of climate: (a) external environment, or those that are outside the organization; (b) strategy, or what an organization is trying to do; (c) leadership practices, or the level of motivation and performance within an organization; (d) organizational arrangements, or how the

organization is structured; and (e) historical forces, or the history of the organization (p. 77). Successful organizations, including schools, recruit and retain strong leaders (Wilson, 2007). Stringer suggested the most important cause of organizational climate was leadership practices because it was the most useful determinant to describe in terms of specific practices. Additionally, Stringer suggested that organizational climate can be better understood when described and measured in terms of six distinct dimensions: structure, standards, responsibility, recognition, support, and commitment. These factors were determined because Stringer's study showed they had the most impact on people's motivation and performance.

A study by McGinty et al. (2008) of the concept of school community (defined as staff collegiality and staff influence) among 68 preschool teachers revealed there was a large difference between leadership characteristics, organizational structure, and regulatory policies depending on the size of the program types. The study results suggested that staff members who worked in larger programs that were not close in proximity perceived a lack of collegial support. This finding is consistent with Stringer's (2002) that external environment and organizational arrangement are determinants of organizational climate.

To illustrate the influence of organizational climate, Momeni (2009) conducted a study to examine the emotional behavior of managers and the effect on the organizational climate. The results suggested that employees' observations of organizational climate are directly formed by the leadership style of the manager or administrator. The results also

suggested that the mood, behavior, and self-awareness skills, such as good communication, interpersonal, and mentoring skills, were most influential with staff the manager or administrator supervised in creating a positive organizational climate. A similar study by Wang and Walumbwa (2007) of bank branches in China, Kenya, and Thailand investigated the relationship between family-friendly programs, organizational commitment, and work withdrawals. They found that programs produced a higher level of organizational commitment and reduced level of work withdrawal when the employees perceived their manager or administrator as inspiring and considerate, which are some of the traits of a transformational leader.

A leader's behavior is defined as his or her daily leadership practices (Stringer, 2002). A study by Sarros, Cooper, and Santora (2008) examined relationships between climates for organizational innovation in Australian private sector organizations. Sarros et al. (2008) found a strong correlation between leaders who articulated a clear vision for their organization and the likelihood of innovative work practices; in organizations where leaders who lacked a clear vision there was a lack of innovation and follower engagement. Another study by Willumsen (2006) of six managers in a residential care unit in Norway concluded that both leadership and collaboration are significant factors to organizational interaction and directly affect the climate of an organization. Willumsen (2006) also suggested that the leaders of an organization can motivate and influence their follower's willingness to collaborate. Key contributors to a positive, productive organizational climate include building and learning the vision and mission of the

organization and ensuring that all staff understands, knows, and believes in the vision and mission (Wilson, 2007).

Stringer (2002) noted there were three reasons why the most important cause of climate within any organization was due to the leader's behavior. First, leadership permeates throughout any organization. Second, research showed that leadership has the greatest impact on climate. Third, leadership style is the one factor that is easiest to change, or at a minimum work on, to make changes in organizational climate and work performance most readily achieved by changing leadership practices. Stringer's findings acknowledge the association of transformational leadership where clear articulation of a vision, setting high performance expectations, and supporting workers are strong factors in the leadership-climate relationship (Sarros et al., 2008). Leadership practices strongly influence organizational climate. If there is a change in leadership, there tends to be a change in the organizational climate, which then leads to different behaviors and performance within the organization (Stringer, 2002).

A collaborative environment, which includes effective communication between administrator and staff, is a critical factor for a successful organizational climate (Halawah, 2005). A study by Johnson and Chrispeels (2010) of 60 leadership and administrative staff in a school district suggested that this staff recognized how relationships, teaming, and professional development could support the district's efforts to improve teaching and learning. Interactions within a school organization, both internally and externally, are supported by a positive organizational climate (Tobin et al.,

2006). If staff are actively involved in assessing the climate within any organization, they are more apt to support recommended changes (Bloom, 2006). A significant factor in successful organizations is the leader sharing the power with staff and creating a feeling of influence and ownership among the staff (Leech & Fulton, 2008). When staff are consulted and their ideas taken seriously, when their concerns are heard, and when the channels of communication are open, isolating barriers decrease (Bloom, 2006).

Organizational Climate in Early Childhood Education

Bloom (2006) defined organizational climate in early childhood settings as “the distinct atmosphere that characterizes work settings--it is the total environmental quality within an organization” (p. 1). Often, organizational theorists refer to organizational culture and climate within any environment as overlapping concepts (Bloom, 2006). Bloom suggested the concept of organizational climate in early childhood settings is made up of many aspects, including the perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and values of all individuals within a work setting. This aspect, along with a fusion of personalities in the work environment and the leadership that guides them, makes up the organizational climate (Bloom, 2006).

Talan and Bloom (2004) noted the importance of administrative practices for high-quality outcomes for children and families. The organizational norms, school climate, and unwritten rules of the organization are all reflections of the culture and climate (Lindsey, Roberts, & CampbellJones, 2005). Creating a positive organizational climate is first among ten traits of a successful school environment (Wilson, 2007).

Creating a positive school climate is something many administrators strive to achieve. School leaders must develop and maintain positive values and a shared vision is essential to creating a positive organizational climate (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004).

The results of a study by Lower and Cassidy (2007) of 30 early childhood administrators suggested that program administration and organizational climate are critical for quality early care and education. This study also found that administrators have an intangible role in setting the tone for the program and that more attention is needed on the quality of leadership and management practices in early care and education organizations (Lower & Cassidy, 2007). A leader's responsibility is to create the climate of the organization by having a clear mission, setting standards of program quality, and having a vision for the future (Wolff et al., 2005). Administrators must have a clear, informed vision of what they want from their early childhood setting and know how to transform that vision into realistic goals and expectations for their staff and families (Bloom, 2006).

There are other influences affecting the organizational climate besides leadership. For instance, three studies by Nupponen (2005, 2006a, 2006c) of child care centers in Australia revealed that early childhood administrators felt a critical influence on the organizational climate in their setting was the ownership or sponsorship of their center. The administrators believed this factor influenced the policies and structure within their early childhood setting, the roles and responsibilities of the administrator, and determined how they went about their work day, thus affecting the staff and families they served.

The results of a study by Hujala (2004) of leadership in a Finnish childcare center suggested similar findings; leadership differed depending if the early childhood organization was administered by a large municipality or a private childcare. Both studies revealed that early childhood centers that were part of a larger organizational structure had more hierarchical processes in policy development and implementation as opposed to independently owned centers where the administrators felt they had more autonomy in policy development and processes (Hujala, 2004; Nupponen, 2005).

The early childhood administrator as leader plays a pivotal role in assessing current work attitudes and structuring changes to improve conditions (Bloom, 2000). One way to address organizational climate issues is to work towards the development of a team within the early childhood setting (Grabwoski, 2008). The quality of administrative practices helps to support the creation of a coherent and collegial working environment which focuses on organizational goals and objectives (Nupponen, 2006c). Democratic principles, as in transformational leadership, are a strong influence in the climate and mission of great schools that include significant participation by staff and parents (Wilson, 2007).

In early childhood settings, Bloom (2006) suggested that when there is a relatively open climate characterized by a sense of belonging, many opportunities to interact, autonomy, and upward influence, there was a higher rate of job satisfaction. Having a clear vision and goals that are shared by followers are the basis of transformational leadership and fundamental in the development of a positive

organizational climate. Leaders who share initiatives and decisions affecting the organization help create a sense of collaboration among staff (Carr et al., 2009).

Supervisors strive to develop in their programs a climate of caring and a place where staff members and children grow in their capacity to care. Supervisors are also advocates for policies based on attitudes of caring (Caruso & Fawcett, 2007).

The technical, human, and conceptual skills that define effective leadership can be categorized into four areas: (a) communications skills, (b) decision making and problem solving skills, (c) interpersonal skills, and (d) organizational skills (Bloom, 2000). The quality of supervision and leadership provided to early childhood teachers can have a great impact on teacher quality and effectiveness. Administrators set the tone for a workplace by implementing and enforcing program policies (Kagan et al., 2008).

Administrators who incorporate the principles of transformational leadership and provide coaching and support, empowerment, constructive feedback, and recognition for good performance help in the development of a positive organizational climate. Therefore, they help their employees provide high-quality early childhood education services to the community (Kagan et al., 2008).

The relational aspects of leadership are key elements in the description and explanation of transformational leadership (Burns, 1978). Leaders in any organization must understand the significance of positively influencing their followers in a way that enables them to work together to create an organizational culture and climate where all people involved want to achieve the best possible outcomes (Nupponen, 2006b).

Transformational leaders must not only define processes and expected outcome for their followers, but also build good relationships to help foster a positive organizational climate (Larson, 2009). People have a tendency to want to participate if they have a say in the development of ideas and practices that directly affect them (Glanz, 2007).

In early childhood organizations, as in all organizations, things tend to get done because of relationships, not because of job descriptions or formal roles (Bloom, 2006). The willingness of staff to participate in the decision making process is influenced primarily by their relationships with their administrators (Bloom, 2000). Administrators need to provide communication, guidance, and feedback to staff so they feel as if they are a valuable part of the organization (Hale-Jinks et al., 2006). An effective school leader who utilizes transformational leadership and seeks the participation of the staff in the development of a vision and purpose will likely get the valued input, participation, and collaboration he/she is seeking (Glanz, 2007). A study by Knutson, Miranda, and Washell (2005) of 70 principals and 219 teachers evaluated how leaders in learning organizations exhibited social interest. The study results suggested in learning organizations, both planned and unplanned personal interactions facilitate organizational effectiveness. This produced a level of cooperation and trust necessary for leaders to engage in continuous self-examinations and provide feedback to followers. It is crucial that leaders cultivate a sense of unity and togetherness within a school community which includes staff, parents, and community (Wolff, Eanes, & Kaminstein, 2005).

Hackman and Wageman (2007) suggested that relationships in a situation are important; however, the interaction between a leader's traits and the reaction to the situation counts most in leadership. There are instances when a leader's actions can determine the success or failure within an organization (Hackman & Wageman, 2007). For example, if a leader models negative leadership, the followers might show less motivation, performance, and positive affect which, in turn, could intensify the negative behavior of the leader (Schilling, 2009). In contrast, if a leader models positive interactions and is accessible, approachable, and encouraging with staff, this contributes to a positive interpersonal environment (Nupponen, 2005).

Cooperation and collaboration among all staff within any school organization is something that is expected (Psunder, 2009). In many cases, behavior patterns and the dynamics of interpersonal relationships are well established or firmly entrenched within an organization. Transformational leadership is one of the most renowned approaches to leadership and is widely recognized by researchers throughout the world (Nguni et al., 2006). Because of the high relational aspect of transformational leadership, this style significantly enhanced satisfaction among followers and was perceived as effective leadership beyond levels achieved with transactional leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Additionally, this type of leadership requires an enormous amount of energy and commitment to positively affect the organizational climate (Sarros, Cooper, & Santora, 2008). In many instances, transformational leadership is positively related to group cohesiveness (Wang & Huang, 2009).

Leaders who develop positive relationships and empower staff are more likely to encourage trust and respect among staff (Chen et al., 2007). Effective leaders who establish trust in their organization foster relationships and positive work environments (Carr, Johnson, & Corkwell, 2009). In a study by Pashiardis, Costa, Mendes, and Ventura (2005) of a Portuguese public school the perceptions of secondary school teachers regarding their principal and his leadership style were explored. The results of the study revealed that the cooperative relationships among colleagues were an important feature was essentially influenced by the principal (Pashiardis et al., 2005). Jennings (2010) conducted a study of three small high schools in New York City to determine the administrator's roles of accountability. The study's results suggested that social relationships have both a dark and bright side where a positive relationship increased sharing of strategies (Jennings, 2010). A leader has the responsibility to build positive relationships within the organization and also to develop relationships within the community. A study by Austin and Harkins (2008b) consisting of a management team in an early childhood center in southern New England implied that increased collaboration and participation were developed when accepting, respectful, and more open relationships among team members occurred. Positive transformation of an early childhood environment begins with developing relationships, empowering staff, and effectively communicating both within and outside the organization (Nupponen, 2006c). Supportive relationships include all team members create a shared understanding within the organization (Austin & Harkins, 2008b).

The subject of collaborative cultures is prominent in the education literature, but collaborative cultures are much less visible in schools (Murphy, 2005). The first step towards establishing a collaborative culture in schools requires knowing and understanding the importance of mutual collaboration and cooperation among staff (Psunder, 2009). McGinty, Justice, and Rimm-Kaufmann (2008) suggest there is evidence that staff who work collaboratively and create a cohesive organizational climate through relationships may be critical components of a high-quality school environment. In schools, administrators are responsible for creating the climate that promotes optimal growth and development of children and for implementing the systems to ensure that quality is maintained (Bella & Bloom, 2003). An additional key element in constructing a cohesive, participative climate is building and maintaining relationships within communities of practice. By cultivating communities of practice, organizations can do a great deal to create environments where they can prosper: valuing the learning they do, making time and other resources available for their work, encouraging participation, and removing barriers (Wegner, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002).

Phenomenological Methodology

The research approach for this study was qualitative. This study explored the lived experiences of early childhood administrators through interview questions to gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon which was best experienced through the qualitative approach. The qualitative approach is used to study human behavior and habits. This approach was chosen because it describes the meaning for several

individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Merriam (2002) suggested the qualitative approach could be used if a researcher is interested in understanding a phenomenon; therefore the most common traditions are grounded theory, phenomenology, narrative, ethnography, case study, or basic interpretive study. Hatch (2002) suggested the dimensions of qualitative work to include: (a) natural settings; (b) participative perspectives; (c) researcher as data gathering instrument; (d) extended firsthand engagement; (e) centrality of meaning; (f) wholeness and complexity; (g) subjectivity; (h) emergent design; (i) inductive data analysis; and (j) reflexivity. These factors contribute to the overall picture of qualitative research in that the researcher collects open-ended, emergent data with the purpose of developing themes from the data (Creswell, 2003).

To understand these meanings, I chose to view the data through the paradigm of postpositivism, which encapsulates close approximations of reality (Hatch, 2002). This paradigm was chosen because assessing the perspective of early childhood administrators requires understanding multiple perspectives on multiple levels of analysis (Creswell, 2007). Through this paradigm, I elicited detailed descriptions from the experiences of early childhood administrators to create patterns or themes from the data (Hatch, 2002).

Taking into consideration the purpose of the study, I carefully considered the qualitative traditions of grounded theory and phenomenology as the most appropriate approaches. The grounded theory develops a theory of social processes in an

environment, while phenomenology contributes to the deeper understanding, thick description, and analysis of lived experiences (Starks & Trinidad, 2007).

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of early childhood administrators to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences opposed to generating a theory from their experiences. Grounded theory attempts to create a theory of a process which is generated from the participants who have experienced the process (Creswell, 2007). The grounded theory would allow me to better understand the meaning of the experiences of early childhood administrators, however, this tradition would require a theory be generated from the data (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology attempts to explain and explore the way people view the world through their own experiences (Davies, 2007). Additionally, phenomenology studies focus on the structure of an experience (Merriam, 2002). Phenomenology was the preferred tradition because it allowed in-depth data collection through interviews to explore the lived experiences of early childhood administrators. Interviewing consists of two persons exchanging information and ideas to construct meaning about a particular topic (Janesick, 2004). Through interviews, questions elicited various responses to gather the data needed for the study.

Limited research has been conducted on the lived experiences of early childhood administrators and transformational leadership. There is much literature on transformational leadership, but little research on transformational leadership in early childhood education. Prior research in leadership, administration, and organizational

climate focused on public schools, businesses, nonprofit and for-profit agencies (Burke, 2010; Shilling, 2007; van Eeden et al., 2008; Webb, 2007; Willumsen, 2006).

Furthermore, many of these studies were quantitative in nature and few used the qualitative approach.

Of the literature reviewed, there were few studies related to this area of research and many of the studies were conducted outside of the United States (Austin & Harkins, 2008a, 2008b; Deakins, 2007; Hard, 2006; Lower & Cassidy, 2007; Mims, Scott-Little, Lower, Cassidy, & Hestenes, 2008; Nupponen, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c). Austin and Harkins (2008b), Lower and Cassidy (2007), and Mims et al. (2008) used a quantitative approach in their research in the United States to explore the relationship between child care program administration, organizational climate, program quality and the education levels of teachers and administrators. Common to all these studies was the inclusion of a survey methodology specific to early childhood administrators, their leadership, and organizational climate. The results suggested the need for improving administrator preparation programs in order to improve the quality of early childhood environments (Austin & Harkins, 2008b; Lower & Cassidy, 2007; Mims et al., 2008). Although these studies were specific to the area of early childhood administration, none of the studies used interviews to allow the administrators to further expand or explain their experiences in their early childhood settings.

Additionally, a small number of qualitative studies in the area of early childhood administration were conducted in the United States, New Zealand, and Australia. A

qualitative approach was used by Nupponen (2006a; 2006c) for two studies conducted in Australia focusing on leadership and management of early childhood administrators. Both studies interviewed eight early childhood administrators and data was collected through semi-structured interview questions. In one study, Nupponen (2006a) used a case study tradition and in another study Nupponen (2006c) used a narrative tradition. Deakins (2007) also researched leadership practices of early childhood administrators in New Zealand and used an ethnographic tradition. These studies consistently suggested the need for further research in the areas of professional education and development for early childhood administrators as well as a need for administrators to better understand leadership and administration within their environments (Deakins, 2007; Nupponen, 2006a; 2006c). Austin & Harkins (2008a) and Hard (2006) conducted qualitative studies in the United States. Both research studies used the case study tradition. The qualitative studies conducted enabled a slight look into the area of early childhood administration through case study, ethnography, and narrative tradition. However, these findings indicate a need for further exploration of the lived experiences of early childhood administrators in further detail by using the phenomenological tradition (Lower & Cassidy, 2007; Mims et al., 2008).

Summary

In this section Burns' (1978) transformational leadership theory as the conceptual framework was reviewed. This theory posits that transformational leaders are capable of motivating others more than they thought was originally possible. The literature

illustrated that, in collaborative organizations are three common principles of transformational leadership: (a) the whole is greater than the sum of its parts; (b) people have a right to be involved in making decisions that affect their lives; and (c) people involved in making decisions have a greater stake in carrying out those decisions than do individuals who are not involved (Bloom, 2000).

The concepts of organizational climate (Stringer, 2002) and how transformational leadership influences and affects the climate in any organization were also examined. After a broad overview of transformational leadership and organizational climate were discussed, the topics were then discussed in the relation to the field of early childhood education as well as the educational paths of early childhood administrators. Regardless of the setting, administrators in early childhood programs who embrace a philosophy of transformational leadership and empowerment uniformly believe that their staff has the potential to be leaders (Bloom, 2000). When transformational leadership is successful, there are different levels of participation depending on the issues, the people, and the external constraints affecting a program (Bloom, 2000).

The intent of transformational leadership in early childhood settings is not to micromanage but to empower staff and build trust and relationships (Buckner, 2008). Key factors to the success of a positive organizational climate depend on the leadership style of the early childhood administrator (Bloom, 2000). Administrators who make it part of their leadership style to understand the culture and climate of an organization take

the first step towards a successful collaborative partnership between themselves and their staff (Bloom, 2000).

There were limited studies that look specifically at the experiences of early childhood administrators regarding their educational path, their views of themselves as transformational leaders, and how they see their leadership influencing the organizational climate. Organizational climate is made up of many dimensions, yet it has such a strong presence in each early childhood organization (Bloom 2006). The administrator plays a large role in influencing the climate within their setting (Bloom, 2006). The restricted amount of research suggested that transformational leadership, which reflects a participative, collaborative style, in early childhood settings was the most successful model (Bloom, 2000; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004), but there still is much more research necessary on this subject within the field of early childhood administration.

Leaders are highly dependent on their followers and both must be connected by a shared identity (Reicher et al., 2007). The literature reviewed suggested that the transformational leadership positively influenced the organizational climate in a variety of settings (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2007), yet it was still unclear whether this is true in early childhood settings. By interviewing skilled early childhood administrators in their settings, this study explored the educational path of early childhood administrators, their views as transformational leaders, and the influence their leadership has on organizational climate.

Section 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of early childhood administrators regarding their educational paths, their views of themselves as transformational leaders, and the influence of their leadership on their organizational climate. This section described the postpositivist, phenomenological, qualitative research design employed for this study. It also described the transformational leadership framework used as a focus for interview questions with early childhood administrators (Burns, 1978; Nupponen, 2005).

Research Design

The qualitative approach was used for this study. Holloway and Biley (2011) stated, “qualitative inquiry is the most humanistic and person-centered way of discovering and uncovering thoughts and actions of human beings” (p. 974). Additionally, qualitative research makes stories interesting to others by having the researcher collect, transform, and interpret the data (Holloway & Biley, 2011). Chenail, Cooper, and Desir (2010) encouraged qualitative researchers to be passionate about learning what is known and not known about the phenomenon in question. The qualitative approach was used to gather the insights and experiences of early childhood administrators.

For this qualitative study, numerous traditions were reviewed including grounded theory, ethnography, case study, and phenomenology to find which would be most

appropriate for the research topic. Grounded theory attempted to develop a theory from the lived experiences of individuals, while ethnography focused on the experiences of a lived group or culture, and case study involved focusing on the exploration of a study of one or more cases through a specific context or setting (Creswell, 2003). While all of these traditions could be used to explore the lived experiences of early childhood administrators, they were not able to focus specifically on describing the common experiences of a phenomenon through the perceptions of the study participants. Phenomenology was the best suited tradition because it focused on the specific experience of the participants and how they felt and perceived their experiences.

Phenomenological research allows the research participants to share their lived experiences (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Creswell (2007) stated the focus of a phenomenological study was “describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon” (p. 58). Moustakas’ (1994) transcendental phenomenological approach, which focuses on participants’ described experiences more than the interpretation of the researcher, was used. This tradition allowed me to gain a fresh perspective of the phenomenon under examination (Creswell, 2007). Additionally, this tradition allowed me to progress through systematic steps of data analysis including both textual and structural descriptions from the participants (Creswell, 2007).

The phenomenological tradition of this study allowed each early childhood administrator an opportunity to thoroughly discuss and describe their educational paths, their views as transformational leaders, and the influence of their leadership on their

organizational climate within their setting. This tradition allowed me to identify a phenomenon to study, bracket out, or disregard my personal experiences, and gather data from participants who have experienced the chosen phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). The phenomenon was explained and explored through the experiences of the study participants (Davies, 2007). Moustakas (1994) suggests the use of bracketing to set aside any personal experiences and view the phenomenon with a fresh perspective. This could be achieved by bracketing out any personal views prior to exploring the experiences of study participants (Creswell, 2007).

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of early childhood administrators regarding their educational paths, their views of themselves as transformational leaders, and the influence of their leadership on their organizational climate. The following research questions were generated for this study:

- How do study participants describe their educational paths to becoming transformational early childhood administrators?
- How do early childhood administrators view themselves as transformational leaders?
- How do early childhood administrators describe the influence of their transformational leadership on their organization?

Context of the Study

In this study, I intended to focus on eight early childhood administrators. However, only six early childhood administrators met the selection criteria for the study. I focused on six select early childhood administrators in northern New Jersey who were employed at NAEYC-accredited child care centers and exhibited traits of a transformational leader based on their responses of the MLQ Leader Form (Bass & Avolio, 2000). Their insights and lived experiences were recorded through semi-structured interviews using a prescribed series of questions. The interview questions that were used were open-ended to give me an opportunity to elaborate on any of my questions. This approach also allowed me to use probes to gain any additional information from the interview. Moreover, the use of the interview protocol depended on the interaction with the participant. The objective was to solicit responses of the lived experiences of the participants. Although there were specific questions intended to seek the perceptions of early childhood administrators, I did not need to use all the probes to obtain the information needed to answer each research question.

Because I have extensive knowledge of and access to many resources in the field of early childhood education in my current role as a program administrator, the interview questions and probes were drafted to solicit the needed information for the study. I referred to the few recent previous studies in the field of early childhood administration that were conducted in the United States and other countries (Austin & Harkins, 2008a, 2008b; Bloom & Bella, 2005; Deakins, 2007; Hard, 2006; Lower & Cassidy, 2007; Muijs

et al., 2004; Nupponen, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c; Sciaraffa, 2004) and used the language and terminology from these studies to create the interview questions and probes. The interview questions were designed specifically for early childhood administrators and were designed to be open-ended, few in number, and stated in straightforward language (Hatch, 2002). Hatch (2002) recommended that effective interview questions be offered as such: (a) be open-ended; (b) use language that is familiar to informants; (c) be clear; (d) be neutral; (e) respect informants and presume they have valuable knowledge; and (f) generate answers related to the objectives of the research. For the purpose of the study, Burns' (1978) transformational leadership theory was used to design the interview questions.

Selection of early childhood administrators for my study began based on criteria of the study. Because this was a phenomenological study, it was essential that all participants share the experience of being an early childhood administrator. The criteria I used for the selection of early childhood administrators are detailed below in the section, *Criteria for Participant Selection*.

Interviews were conducted in person, one-on-one, and in a semi-structured format. They were audio-recorded with the participant's consent. The interviews were transcribed immediately upon completion. I asked each of the early childhood administrators a series of three main questions with relevant probes (Appendix A). This method was used to obtain an in-depth perspective of their experience of their leadership style and the organizational climate in their setting. The data that emerged from the

interviews was descriptive, focusing on the detailed description and understanding of how things occur in an early childhood setting (Creswell, 2003). The data was analyzed for themes that emerged to create the findings and discussion sections of the study.

Measures for Ethical Protection of Participants

Potential ethical dilemmas for both the participants and me were addressed prior to the start of the research (Creswell, 2003). The rights of the participant and the research site were respected which included not putting participants at risk and respecting vulnerable populations (Creswell, 2003).

All Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines for informed consent and confidentiality were followed. Initially, I obtained IRB approval from Walden University prior to the beginning of the study. Following IRB approval (01-04-12-0066198), I sent all participants an in-depth explanation of the research study and their rights, which included: the purpose and procedures of the study, the benefits of the study, the right to participate voluntarily, the right to withdraw at any time, the right to ask questions, the right to have their privacy respected, and the right to obtain copies of the study. I obtained a signed consent form. I kept a copy and the participant kept a copy. Additional safeguards put into place for this study included: (a) the anonymity of the individuals, roles, and incidents of the study, (b) the accurate interpretation of the data by using member checking and peer debriefing, (c) the use of unbiased language, (d) a description of the anticipated repercussions of conducting research on certain audiences, and (e) the shared results of the research with participants. I ensured the participants that

the information they share was confidential and their identity was not revealed during any point of the study. These measures were discussed prior to the interview with the participant and also stated on the signed consent form.

Role of the Researcher

I have worked in the field on early childhood education for nearly 25 years in a variety of capacities, including teacher aide, teacher, center director, and currently as a program administrator. Because I have worked as an administrator in a variety of early childhood programs for 15 years, I understand the workings of early childhood administration. It was possible that each administrator experiences their educational path, their transformational leadership, and organizational climate differently in her own early childhood setting. Through the use of open-ended questions with select early childhood administrators, I discovered through their experiences the insights and views of early childhood administrators regarding their educational paths, their views of themselves as transformational leaders, and how they see their leadership influencing the organizational climate. Researcher-participant relationships remained professional and were established after initial contact of the MLQ survey. It was important that I remain neutral and objective throughout the entire process so I can get a fresh perspective of the phenomenon being studied. If at any time during the data collection I felt biased, I discussed this with my chairperson so that I can move back to a more neutral position.

Criteria for Participant Selection

Six early childhood administrators in northern New Jersey were selected to participate in this study. The study was limited to six administrators so that deep, rich, detailed information can be obtained during the interviews. This also allowed ample time to interview the participants and talk to them about their actions and intentions (Hatch, 2002). The specific criteria for selecting these administrators were: employed at an early childhood program with accreditation from the NAEYC, employed in a leadership capacity for at least 5 years, exhibit characteristics of a transformational leader according to the pre-screening tool used, and located within northern New Jersey. The administrators in this study were employed at a variety of early childhood settings including Head Start /Abbott District, for-profit, nonprofit, and religious-affiliated organizations. Selecting participants who were employed in various settings allowed me to gather various insights, viewpoints, and perceptions because of the diverse work environments of each administrator. I assessed the insights and lived experiences of each early childhood administrator through formal, audio-recorded interviews by using a prescribed series of open-ended questions. Interview data was transcribed, analyzed, and themes emerged to create the findings and discussion for the study.

Creswell (2007) suggested the number of participants in a phenomenological study range from five to 25 participants. Six participants were selected for this study, which was a manageable number of early childhood administrators with an assortment of administrative experiences. Because eight participants did not qualify for the study or

were unwilling to participate, I lowered the number of participants to six within the northern New Jersey area.

Specific selection criteria were used for the purposeful selection of participants in this study. First, the administrators were employed at NAEYC-accredited early childhood centers. Second, administrators were in a leadership capacity for at least five years. Third, the location of the early childhood setting was in northern New Jersey within a specific geographical area, including areas codes 201, 908 and northern areas of 973. Fourth, potential participants completed the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) Leader Form (Appendix B) which measured self-perceptions of leadership behaviors (Bass & Avolio, 2000). This short questionnaire was emailed to the potential participants with directions for completion. They were asked to return the completed questionnaire to me by email.

This screening was a simple method to select participants who identify their style of leadership as transformational. Those administrators whose scores indicated they exhibit characteristics of transformational leaders based on the scored results of the MLQ Leader Form were asked to participate in the study. Scores were compiled by using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Scoring Key Short (Bass & Avolio, 2000). Potential participants who answered Fairly Often or Frequently in the areas of *idealized influence* (Attributed), *idealized influence* (Behavior), *inspirational motivation*, *intellectual stimulation*, and *individual consideration* were eligible to participate further in the study.

I used the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Scoring Key Short to score the survey. After scoring was completed, I determined which administrators exhibited characteristics of transformational leadership in the areas of *idealized influence* (Attributed), *idealized influence* (Behavior), *inspirational motivation*, *intellectual stimulation*, and *individual consideration*. The first six administrators who exhibited characteristics of transformational leadership on the survey were contacted for potential participation in the study. The responses from the first group of six administrators determined whether other potential participants were needed to be contacted in order to obtain the administrators needed for the study. I contacted the first six administrators who completed the survey and I secured the six administrators to participate in the study. Other administrators who did not qualify for the study were notified by email.

Northern New Jersey is a diversified area with urban, suburban, and rural communities. The early childhood centers chosen each represent a different geographical location within the northern New Jersey area. Due to the range of ethnicities and geographical locations chosen, I anticipated that administrators would be able to articulate the diversity of their early childhood settings.

The administrators in this study were employed at a variety of early childhood settings, including Head Start/Abbott District, for-profit, nonprofit, and religious-affiliated organizations, which was collected from the NAEYC website. Having early childhood administrators from an array of early childhood settings elicited the thick, rich data needed in a qualitative study. Vital data was obtained because each administrator

was able to bring a wide range of experiences to each interview because of the array of organizational structures established at each early childhood location. I anticipated that each administrator would be able to explain the uniqueness of her early childhood setting as it pertained to program delivery, leadership style, and organizational climate. Once the potential interview participants were determined through the selection criteria, I contacted them via telephone to discuss the study more in depth, to further get to know each participant, and to arrange a convenient time and location to do the interviews.

Data Collection

After approval by the Walden IRB, data collection began. The data collection method I used for this qualitative study was interviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with early childhood administrators using a prescribed series of questions. From the NAEYC website, approximately 90 administrators from the area codes of 201, 908, and northern areas of 973 were initially contacted by email. I tracked the number of reproductions that were disseminated to administrators to ensure it did not exceed the number purchased with the MLQ Leader Form survey agreement. I emailed the Introduction Email (Appendix C) as the body of the email explaining my study and asked them for their participation. Additionally, I sent the MLQ Leader Form survey as an attachment to the introduction email along with the Consent Form (Appendix D). I requested the completed survey and consent form be returned to me within two weeks using the enclosed email address. All potential participants were sent an email reminder one week after the initial invitation reminding them to respond (Appendix E). I began the

selection of administrators from the ones who responded back to me. The short survey was scored immediately upon receipt to determine if the administrator exhibited characteristics of a transformational leader.

Once the six administrators were determined through the selection criteria, I contacted each administrator via telephone to discuss the study in depth and to further get to know each administrator. I used this initial phone contact as an opportunity to begin establishing rapport with the administrator by clarifying and reviewing the results of the MLQ Leader Form survey, discussed how they were identified as having characteristics of transformational leaders, and discussed the administrator's interpretation of the results. Additionally, this was a time where I further discussed the study, gained further insight on their views as transformational leaders, and gave the administrator a chance to ask any relevant questions of me. Through this phone contact, I arranged a time to do the interview. Prior to the initial meeting, I ensured I had the signed Consent Form from each potential participant. Participants were encouraged to ask questions at any time during the study. I told all administrators that the interview consisted of three open-ended questions and should take approximately 1 hour to complete. All interview appointments were arranged during the first phone meeting. I interviewed each early childhood administrator at a convenient time for him or her. I emailed and called each administrator to confirm the interview dates one week prior to the actual scheduled dates and times. All interviews took place at a convenient location chosen by each early

childhood administrator on the scheduled dates. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed.

I asked each administrator a series of open-ended questions and used probes if there was a need to clarify the response or obtain more information. The open-ended questions gave each participant the chance to elaborate. Once the interviews were completed, I transcribed the audiotaped recordings and stored them on both the researcher's password protected computer and a flash memory stick kept in a locked drawer. After the interviews were transcribed, I used member checking with each participant to ensure accuracy of the transcription.

Data Analysis

This research was based on a qualitative approach. This research was exploratory and interpretive, thus a qualitative approach was most appropriate to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of early childhood administrators regarding their educational paths, their views of themselves as transformational leaders, and how they see their leadership influencing the organizational climate. Qualitative researchers are continuously making interpretive judgments because interpretation is about giving meaning to the data (Hatch, 2002). Phenomenology is both a descriptive and interpretive process in which the researcher interprets the meaning of the lived experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2007). The data from the transcripts were analyzed by first reducing the information to significant statements to find similar or related themes (Creswell, 2007) and to create categories that emerged from the participants' responses.

From these categories, themes were identified in the data. The transcripts were read several times and color-coded according to the themes that emerged from the data. Clusters of meaning were developed from the statements and themes that emerged (Creswell, 2007). Bracketing was used so that I set aside my personal experiences, focused solely on the research topic and question, and took an original, unmarked viewpoint of the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994).

Once the significant themes emerged from the data, textural description, including verbatim examples from the transcribed interview, was used to create narratives of early childhood administrators' experience (Moustakas, 1994). Structural description was also used to write a description of the setting that inspired how the early childhood administrators experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Using the textural and structural descriptions from the research, a composite narrative description that focused on the common experiences of the participants, called the essential, invariant structure, emerged from the data (Creswell, 2007). Hatch (2002) suggested reading the data, rereading the data and continuing coding, writing a draft summary, and writing a revised summary. From this analysis, an overall picture of the experiences of the early childhood administrators was illustrated so the phenomenon could be better understood.

Validity

In qualitative research, validity refers to the attempt to find accuracy in the findings as well as credibility, dependability, reliability, and authenticity in the study (Creswell, 2007). Because this study was qualitative, the data collected needed to be

checked for consistent patterns of themes and accuracy (Creswell, 2003). Below are the definitions of the types of validity to be used for this study (Creswell, 2003):

- *Member checking*: determined the accuracy of the qualitative findings or descriptions by using the participants to establish accuracy of the data.
- *Peer debriefing*: involved an outside individual who reviews and questions the qualitative study.
- *Rich, thick description*: conveyed a detailed description of the setting being researched so the reader understands the experience.

Various types of validation strategies were used in this study. First, member checking was used because once the interviews are transcribed from the audiotaped recordings the participants were asked to review them for accuracy. Member checking was also a way to bring validity to the transcriptions (Hatch, 2002). Secondly, peer debriefing was used because it asked the researcher hard questions about the methods, meanings, and interpretations of the study (Creswell, 2007). One individual was used to review the data to ensure consistency. Third, because this was a phenomenological study that required a detailed summary of the experiences of the early childhood administrators, thick, rich description allowed the reader to make decisions concerning transferability, which described the process of applying the results of research in one situation to other similar situations (Creswell, 2007).

Summary

The goal of this research study was to explore the experiences of early childhood administrators regarding their educational paths, their views of themselves as transformational leaders, and how they saw their leadership influencing the organizational climate. Through the use of a phenomenological paradigm, the outcome of this study was a deeper understanding of the factors that contributed to their development and adaptability of early childhood administrators as transformational leaders and how it influenced their organizations. In section 4 the findings and outcomes of this research study were discussed.

Section 4: Results

The research approach for this study was qualitative and the tradition was phenomenological to explore the insights of six early childhood administrators. The participants were employed at NAEYC-accredited centers in northern New Jersey. The intent of the interview was to better understand the administrators' lived experiences regarding their educational paths in becoming transformational leaders, how they viewed themselves as leaders, and how their leadership practices influenced the organizational climate in their early childhood settings. Qualitative data was collected in January and February of 2012 through semi-structured interviews by using a structured series of questions. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. The data were analyzed to answer the following research questions:

- How do study participants describe their educational paths to becoming transformational early childhood administrators?
- How do early childhood administrators view themselves as transformational leaders?
- How do early childhood administrators describe the influence of their transformational leadership on their organization?

In this section, I will describe the data collection process including the selection of participants, interviews, and analysis; the management of data and emerging understandings; the findings derived from the data including data from the research

questions and themes; discrepant or nonconforming data and the description of patterns, relationships, and themes; evidence of quality including how the data was analyzed to ensure quality; and the summary.

Data Collection Process

Selection of Participants

After receiving IRB approval (01-04-12-0066198), the process for selecting potential participants began. Criterion sampling took place in this study to ensure that all early childhood administrators in the sample represented people who had experienced the phenomenon, working as a leader in an early childhood organization. The specific criteria for selecting these administrators were: employed at child care centers with accreditation from the NAEYC, employed in a leadership capacity for at least five years, exhibited characteristics of a transformational leader according to the MLQ Leader Form survey pre-screening tool, and located within northern New Jersey.

I purchased the license for the MLQ Leader Form survey to administer a maximum of 100 surveys. An Introduction Email (Appendix C) explaining my study was emailed to 88 early childhood administrators asking them for their participation. Additionally, I sent the MLQ Leader Form survey as an email attachment to the introduction email along with the Consent Form (Appendix D). I requested the completed survey and consent form be returned to me within two weeks using the enclosed email address. All potential participants were sent an email reminder one week after the initial invitation reminding them to respond (Appendix E). The study was

initially intended for eight administrators. However, of the early childhood administrators who responded to the emails, there were six administrators who exhibited characteristics of transformational leaders as indicated after conducting an analysis of MLQ Leader Form data. These six were asked to participate in the study.

The potential participants were contacted via telephone to clarify and review the results of the MLQ Leader Form survey, discuss how they were identified as having characteristics of transformational leaders, and given an opportunity to ask any relevant questions. Through this phone contact, I arranged a mutually convenient time and location to conduct the interviews with the administrators. The participants were contacted via telephone or email prior to the meeting to confirm their interview appointments. I ensured I had a signed copy of the consent form from each participant prior to the start of the interview. Those who did not qualify for the study were notified by email.

Semi-structured Interviews

Audiotaped interviews were scheduled during a 3-week period in January through February 2012. Each administrator was asked a series of three open-ended questions using probes if there was a need to clarify the response or obtain more information. The open-ended questions gave each participant the chance to elaborate on their personal, lived experiences as an early childhood administrator. All interviews took place in person with each administrator and lasted from approximately 30 to 75 minutes in length.

Additionally, each participant had the opportunity to preview the interview questions prior to the initial meeting if they chose to.

After completion of each interview, I transcribed the audiotaped recordings within one day and stored the transcriptions on both my password-protected computer and a flash memory stick in a locked drawer. I sent the transcriptions to each administrator via their email address after each transcription was read through several times for completeness. I used member checking to ensure accuracy of the transcription by asking each administrator to read the written transcript and email me with her approval upon completion of her review. No participant asked me to alter any of the completed transcripts.

Data Analysis

Once all interviews were transcribed, I began the analysis process by first reducing the information to significant statements to find similar or related themes or discover patterns (Creswell, 2007) and to create categories that emerged from the participants' responses. I used a color-coded system where similar patterns were highlighted according to groupings of emergent categories. From these categories, themes were identified in the data. This process allowed me to see how the administrators perceived themselves as transformational leaders and how they influenced the organizational climate in their setting. Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological approach was used which focuses on participants' described experiences more than the interpretation of the researcher. Additionally, this tradition

allowed me to progress through systematic steps of data analysis including both textual and structural descriptions from the participants (Creswell, 2007). The data that emerged from the interviews was descriptive, focusing on the detailed description and understanding of how things occurred in an early childhood setting (Creswell, 2003).

I manually transcribed all the data and stored the data on my personal, password-protected computer and on a flash memory stick. All of the transcriptions were printed so I was able to use the hard copy to color-code the potential themes within the data. I read and reread hard copies of the transcripts thoroughly and began sorting the data according to the research questions. I used the color-coding process to differentiate the potential ideas within each research question and categorized the significant statements of the administrators according to how they experienced the phenomenon. Once color-coded, these data were then organized and compiled on a separate Microsoft Word document titled *Interview Analysis* (Appendix F) to keep the organization of the potential ideas and themes systematic and structured. The data were typed into the *Interview Analysis* document and was printed for review. After each transcript was meticulously reviewed, color-coded, and the data were extracted, I reviewed the data for common threads in order to create and develop the ideas and thematic units for each research question.

The participants in the study were all early childhood administrators who worked as an administrator for at least 5 years in an NAEYC-accredited center and viewed themselves as transformational leaders as indicated by the MLQ Leader Form survey. The six participants selected for the study collectively had a median of 6.5 years'

experience as an administrator of an early childhood program. Each administrator was assigned a code as Administrator A through Administrator F to provide anonymity throughout the process of the study. The participants worked in a variety of settings in northern New Jersey so they were able to articulate the uniqueness of each of their early childhood programs through the interviews.

Administrator A worked in an early childhood program located on a campus of an urban university. She worked in her position for 6 years and had a total of 17 years' experience in the field of early childhood education. She earned an undergraduate degree in early childhood education and possessed a graduate and doctorate degrees in school psychology.

Administrator B worked in a religious-affiliated early childhood program located in a suburban area. She worked in her position for 5 years and had a total of 25 years' experience in the field of early childhood education. She earned her undergraduate degree in art and possessed New Jersey teaching certifications as an elementary teacher and a nursery school teacher.

Administrator C worked in a privately owned, for-profit early childhood program located in a suburban area. She worked in her position for 5 years. She earned her undergraduate degree in information technology and possessed the New Jersey Administrator's Credential and her non-degree certification from the Director's Academy at New York University. She was pursuing her graduate degree in leadership, policy, and politics.

Administrator D worked in a for-profit, hospital-affiliated early childhood program with multiple locations in both suburban and rural areas. She worked for the company for 18 years and held her current position for 10 years. She earned her undergraduate degree in French and possessed New Jersey Teaching Certifications as an elementary teacher and a nursery school teacher. She was pursuing her graduate degree in management with a concentration in human resources management.

Administrator E worked in a private, nonprofit community early childhood program in a suburban area that was partially funded by the State of New Jersey. She worked in the public schools as a preschool administrator for 1 year prior to accepting her current position, which she held for 4 years. She earned her undergraduate degree in psychology and her graduate degree in education and possessed a New Jersey principal certification.

Administrator F worked in a blended Head Start / Abbott District early childhood program with multiple locations in an urban area. She worked for the agency for 11 years and held her current position for 8 years. She earned her undergraduate degree in psychology and her graduate degree in education with a concentration in infant and parent development. She was pursuing her doctorate degree in administrative educational leadership.

The sample of six administrators represented a small sector of the 218 NAEYC accredited centers, approximately 6%, in New Jersey (“Accredited program search,” 2011). The administrators in this study were all women who each worked in varied

settings including privately owned, for-profit, nonprofit, Head Start/Abbott, state funded, university-affiliated, hospital-affiliated, and religious-affiliated. The wide-ranging diversity of early childhood settings and experiences of the administrators allowed each one to describe the distinctness of each program.

Management of Data and Emerging Understandings

I used journaling and field notes to manage and keep track of the emergent data. Once I was given IRB approval, I started the process of journaling in my personal, password-protected computer. I kept track of all my progress using a Microsoft Word document titled *Journal* to write down all significant appointments and achievements. The journal contained information such as contacting potential participants for the study, progress towards obtaining clients and consent forms, dates for contacting potential participants, scheduling of interviews, interview notes, and how the data were color-coded and analyzed according to research question and potential themes. As Hatch (2002) suggested, I read the data, reread the data and continued coding, and wrote several draft summaries. These steps were all noted in my *Journal*.

I used a manual system of color-coding the data from the transcribed interviews using yellow, blue, and green highlighters. After I completed this process, I typed the data into a Microsoft Word document titled *Interview Analysis*, which was also color-coded according to emergent patterns and themes. On the original hard copy of this document I wrote many of the field notes in pencil to better manage and organize the data. This document guided me in the analysis of the data because the data was color-

coded and I wrote the field notes which helped me navigate the data and organize it most effectively.

The Findings

The goal of this study was to explore the lived experiences of early childhood administrators regarding their educational paths, their views of themselves as transformational leaders, and the influence of their leadership on their organizational climate. Additionally, I wanted to explore the common experiences of a phenomenon through the perceptions of the study participants. Each research question was addressed by using the sorted and coded data elicited from the interview protocol. The findings as they relate to each research question will be discussed in detail.

Research Questions and Themes

Through the analysis of transcribed data, themes emerged from the clustering of topics. Similar responses to interview questions from the participants became the basis for the themes. The specific experiences of the participants and how they felt and perceived their experiences emerged from the data and thematic units were created from these data. The participants were able to describe their lived experiences and gave me a fresh perspective of the phenomenon. The viewpoint of each early childhood administrator allowed her to describe her own educational path, her own views as a transformational leader, and the influence her own leadership had on the organizational climate. Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological approach, which focuses

on participants' described experiences more than the interpretation of the researcher, was also used.

Hatch (2002) suggested reading the data, rereading the data and continuing coding, writing a draft summary, and writing a revised summary. Through the data analysis process, nine main themes emerged from the transcribed interview questions. Research Question 1 addressed how administrators described their educational path to becoming transformational leaders. The themes that emerged were educational backgrounds and journey, and meaning of the position. Research Question 2 addressed how administrators viewed themselves as transformational leaders. The themes that emerged were educational and leadership philosophy, transformational leadership style and characteristics, views as a transformational leader, and barriers and supports in the program. Research Question 3 addressed how administrators viewed the ways transformational leadership influenced the organizational climate. The themes that emerged were involvement and assessment of staff, organizational climate, and influence as transformational leaders on the organizational climate. Each of the themes described the common experiences of a phenomenon through the perceptions of the study participants. Textural description, including verbatim examples from the transcribed interview, was used to create narratives of early childhood administrators' experience (Moustakas, 1994). Structural description was also used to write a description of the setting that inspires how the early childhood administrators experience the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007).

Research Question 1

The first research question asked how do study participants describe their educational paths to becoming transformational early childhood administrators. From this question, two themes emerged from the data: educational backgrounds and journey, and meaning of the position which will be discussed in further detail.

Educational background. Each of the six participants described a different educational background leading to their positions as early childhood administrators. There was no consistency in the educational backgrounds of any of the participants. All of the participants earned an undergraduate degree; however, each person's concentration was in a different area except for two: one in early childhood education, one in information technology, one in art, one in French, and two in psychology. Three of the participants earned a graduate degree, two were in pursuit of a graduate degree, one participant earned a doctorate degree, and one was in pursuit of a doctorate degree. Three of the participants possessed certification to work in public schools in New Jersey. All the participants received some type of management or leadership training related to administration of early childhood program, though some were more formal than others.

Some of the more formal trainings for the administrators included Military High School, which was described as, "a lot of military training under that", and the New Jersey Administrator's Credential and a non-degree certification from New York University's Director's Academy. One administrator described her training by stating, "The Director's Academy taught management of the program including marketing our

business, administration of early childhood programs, and human resources for early childhood programs”. Less formal training for the position included on-the-job training as a camp director for 10 years and working in the field of business for 8 years. All the participants stated they attended some type of workshop or training to enhance their role as an early childhood administrator during their career at least biannually. Many of them stated they learned much about their role as administrator by working and experiencing the daily routine of their job. Administrator F described her training as, “I think I’ve done more on-the-job training. Like after you have the job, you kind of learn it rather than to have formal education”.

The participants’ responses varied slightly on how educationally prepared they felt when they started their positions as administrators. All administrators’ felt prepared in some respect, but through varying degrees of preparation. Administrator A described her preparation for her position as, “I felt I learned more through the school of hard knocks, not college classroom. And I also learned through informal training”, while Administrator C described being prepared educationally as:

Yes, I felt prepared as far as running a business, managing money, and scheduling people. No, for curriculum and teaching and early childhood, I was a novice.

Learning the industry was a learning curve because the socioeconomic and financial status is very different from the people I used to work with in the information technology field.

Another response from Administrator D described her educational preparation as:

Yes, what I didn't feel prepared was this piece of doing business plans and opening new centers. I really didn't feel like I could say I didn't want to do this; I said I'll try. I'll see what happens. That is where I didn't feel prepared.

Journey and meaning of the position. Each participant shared a different experience of their journey to and arrival at their current placement. The participants each described a different journey of how and why they got into their position; there was no uniformity in their responses. Varied responses included one administrator describing her journey to her position as, "I saw an ad for this job in the newspaper and I thought I would apply", while another administrator described the reason she was an administrator as, "I bought the school because I wanted a good quality program and it took me 4 ½ years to find it". Another stated, "My boss left to do something different and I was promoted into this position". Administrator A described how she arrived in her current position as:

Sort of by accident. I worked in the center in a different position and they asked me to take the director position when the director left. I declined it. They asked me again to take it for a little while and I did, and 6 years later, I'm still here.

Each participant suggested that she takes her role very seriously and wanted the best environment for the children and staff in her program. All of the participants discussed their responsibility to provide a quality educational setting for young children. Administrator A described her role as, "an extremely important position. I have the responsibility to the little ones and educating them and making sure their teachers are

leading them in the right direction”. Administrators B, C, D, E, and F shared similar responses in that “there is a need for quality education in a warm, friendly, learning environment” and “I’m the voice of the kids. My job is to know what the early childhood research is and implement it in my program through the staff” and “making sure these children have healthy, happy lives” and “It’s exciting to have an impact on so many families, not just the families we serve, but our staff. To me, it’s like being a teacher, a mentor, an example”. Common to all the administrators was the dedication they felt towards the children and families they served in their program and the need to continually improve the environment for the children.

Research Question 2

The second research question asked how do early childhood administrators view themselves as transformational leaders. From this question, four themes emerged from the data: educational and leadership philosophy, transformational leadership style and characteristics, views as a transformational leader, and barriers and supports in the program which will be discussed in further detail.

Educational and leadership philosophy. Each participant had a different perspective on their assessment of their personal philosophy on education. While most administrators suggested they felt the need to work either collaboratively or alongside staff and children, other administrators’ philosophies were aimed at the development of the children in their early childhood setting. One administrator stated her educational philosophy as “play-based, center-based. I believe when you’re playing with the children

and working alongside the, you're teaching them", while another administrator stated her educational philosophy as, "childhood is a journey, not a race. Bring up a whole child. It has to be social, emotional, physical, spiritual" and similarly another stated, "We are here to educate the whole child". Conversely, one administrator's educational philosophy described it as "working collaboratively and gain the respect and opinions of staff, and give a lot of credit to the people you hire". One administrator addressed both children and staff in her philosophy by describing, "We have to take the child or the person where they're at and just move with them at their rate. We can't have a set plan. That's the same with staff".

All of the participants acknowledged at least one aspect of transformational leadership when defining their philosophy on leadership. Select administrators used terms such as collaborative, working together, democratic, setting expectations, and hands-on to describe their leadership philosophy. Administrator B stated, "I don't expect them to do something that I wouldn't do" and Administrator F said, "I lead by example". Administrator C responded:

The entire school knows my vision and where I am going with it. I set my goals and how I want to do them, which direction I want to lead to, what our goals and things are. Then I leave it up to the staff to make it happen.

Administrator D described her philosophy as:

I like to talk with you about what needs to get done and then allow you to do it however you see fit as long as it's not harmful to the program or children or

employees. I like to have people understand what the goal is and recognize there's different ways to get to that goal.

Transformational leadership style and characteristics. All the administrators described attributes of a transformational leader when communicating how they lead their program. All of the administrators explained that the final decision lies with them when it comes to their early childhood program, but each administrator illustrated different methodologies leading to her decision-making practices which included getting some type of input from staff prior to the final decision. Administrator D described, "Our business is all about relationships. Communication is even more important than it ever was". One administrator explained, "It's about getting the right people in, but that's part of management if you get the right people in. I try to gain input from as many people as I can. I think that type of collaborative, working together within reason". Another administrator stated, "It's about setting the expectations with staff". Administrator C described the process of decision-making as:

I ask everybody because they all have an equal right to say what they want, everybody will vote on it. If it's a financial decision, then it's my word is the last word because at the end of the day I know I have to meet the numbers. But if they are general things, then everybody has a say.

Administrator F accurately described her internal processes as:

Being respectful of each other's ideas. Everybody's voice is heard. Everybody contributes to the agenda. Everybody's opinion is respected. Information

sharing, really seeing that being a manager is being informed, having the right information to make the right decisions at the right time

The participants collectively felt they lead their program consistently as transformational leaders by being fair and consistent, being hands-on, forming relationships, not being judgmental, being informed, and leading by example. One administrator described her approach as, “Don’t do what you’re not willing to do. I should lead by example” and another stated, “Everybody needs to be involved at anything that happens because it is everybody’s job.”

In terms of participants’ views of characteristics as a transformational leader, the participants used terminology consistent with the definition of a transformational leader. The administrators used action words as part of their views as transformational leaders including high achieving, visionary, respectful, hands-on, fair, consistent, and leading by example. All of the administrators described their personal character as being motivating towards their staff, thus making the staff want to team and work cohesively. Administrator A illustrated this by stating, “I think I motivate them to want to work as a team and be together. I want the best that there is, so I think that part of my personality comes across as a manager”, while Administrator C stated, “I think because I start something and I want to see it finished and my staff should be able to do that also”. Moreover, Administrator F also agreed by stating, “I always have vision that’s clear and that can always pull people in that direction”.

Views as a transformational leader. All the participants described their

relationships with their staff as very good, excellent, close, and respectful. One administrator explained how the positive relationship with staff took time to develop and stated, “Once they realized I was on their side, I think they would stick up for me. But it took a long time” and another administrator stated, “Respectful. We respect each other in our jobs and how we do our jobs” and “Knowing that I’m here to support them if they need me to”. Each participant was asked what influenced her as a transformational leader and each administrator described a different influential factor whether it was a personal, educational, or professional. The common pattern between all the responses of the administrators is they felt they were only somewhat educationally prepared to take on the role as early childhood administrator and described another type of influential factor helped prepare them as transformational leaders. One administrator stated, “My education was over 35 years ago and things have changed since then”. Administrator C described her view on being educationally prepared for her administrative position as, “My education in the information technology field helps a lot because it’s very meticulous in many ways: it’s accounting, and it’s a paper trail, you have to have certain documentation to prove yourself as I have to in my program. I had to learn the early childhood piece”. Conversely, Administrator F described her view on being educationally prepared as, “I had a lot of experience in the educational component, but not in the area of fiscal or budgets. I had to learn that”.

Common to the participants was the reference to something in their personal lives that influenced their management techniques as a transformational leader. Answers from

the administrators were varied including military background, her upbringing, and modeling her style after another administrator. Administrator B stated, “My former director was very...it was her way or no way. I think that influenced me a lot to be this way as hands-on and flexible”. Administrator A explained her view into her position as, “I think everything just fell into place. It’s not like it’s necessarily something that I said I’m working towards being an administrator”. Administrator E described her influence as:

The women in my previous job had a big influence. They were powerful, strong, smart women in high positions and they could handle their job. I remembered some of their qualities and I wanted to use some of those qualities in being a leader.

Barriers and supports in the program. Each administrator viewed her own obstacle in a different manner. Each administrator shared a different viewpoint with responses to barriers as “just the politics of things and that’s anywhere”, “the typical bureaucracy”, “dealing with the bureaucracies that don’t see eye to eye”, financial barriers, and competition of other early childhood programs in the immediate vicinity of her early childhood program. In terms of participants’ supports in her program, each of the administrators stated they felt supported in some capacity. All of the administrators felt they were very supported either by a larger organization, a Board of Directors, or a personal family member. Administrator B described her level of support as:

Usually. I know the Executive Director has my back. The Board does not always support what I do because they don't understand what I do. It's getting better because I think I'm more confident in being able to tell them what it is I need and the reasons why.

Research Question 3

The third research question asked how do early childhood administrators describe the influence of their transformational leadership on their organization. From this question, three themes emerged from the data: involvement and assessment of staff, organizational climate, and influence as transformational leaders on the organizational climate which will be discussed in further detail.

Involvement and assessment of staff. All administrators responded that they have staff involved in their programs at multiple levels. Four of the administrators stated that staff are involved in every aspect of the program, are encouraged to take ownership and responsibility of any initiative or project within the program, and are part of the decision-making process. When asked how administrators encouraged staff involvement in their programs, all responded with various types of activities to encourage inclusion and engagement among staff. One administrator stated how she shared information through playing games at meetings, another administrator stated that the staff shared information by training other staff members internally, while another administrator stated, "We do encourage them to be involved in the whole learning process through

trainings. That helps to encourage them professionally”. Administrator F described staff involvement as:

They are involved at every level. They are part of decision making at every level.

I think I’m a leader who just shares. I may have the power, but the more people who know, the more power we have as a group, not just one person has to hold the information. Everybody brings something to the table.

All the administrators described a systematic method towards the assessment of staff and how they used that information within their program. Six of the administrators stated they have either a staff evaluation form or professional development plan in place while four of the administrators stated they use both types of assessment with staff. Two of the administrators described how they use the observations and suggestions from the parents in their program as an assessment for staff and for themselves. Administrator C described the process of parent assessment within her early childhood program:

Parents are my customers and parents have to evaluate my program. We have come up with our own evaluation form where parents are observing staff each month. We will discuss it at staff meetings what the feedback was.

All the administrators described how their assessment process influenced the climate within their organization as positively impacting their early childhood setting. One administrator stated, “Staff evaluations are reviewed mid-year and updated once a year. We use that data to make sure everyone keeps moving forward” and similarly, another administrator stated, “We look at evaluations mid-year to see how staff are

progressing”. Administrator D described her process as, “I have an evaluative conversation with each director every year and I use that as an opportunity for them to tell me what they’ve accomplished in the past year” and Administrator F similarly described her process as, “We have an evaluation process and we set specific goals. I meet with all the people I directly supervise at least once a month”.

Organizational climate. All six administrators used positive phrases when describing the organizational climate in their program. The administrators used a variety of terms to label the organizational climate in their program including cooperative, collaborative, laid back, informal, friendly, happy, welcoming, inviting, forward-thinking, respectful, and flexible. Administrator B described the feeling as, “It’s very laid back, very informal, very open to parents, warm classrooms. It’s all in the perception. We’re very open to their needs, we’re very flexible. They come here because of our flexibility”. Administrator A responded similarly describing her climate as:

It’s very cooperative and collaborative. It’s very cooperative, and very friendly.

It’s very comfortable, very welcoming and inviting. We’re very lucky. Our staff is very collaborative, and so are our families, but I think it stems from our staff.

When asked what were some of the behaviors that characterize the climate in their setting, the administrators continued to use a variety of phrases including respect, collaboration, dependability, informal, flexible, always evolving, playful, happy, professional, consistent, invested, and fun. Administrator C described the behavior as,

“collaborative. That would be one big thing and I think it makes staff feel invested and they take ownership of the project when they are involved in the process”.

Influence as transformational leaders on the organizational climate. All of the administrators described how their leadership influenced the organizational climate in some respect. Five of the administrators described how they set the expectation and vision for the program and they empower their staff to take ownership and carry out the process. One administrator described the climate of the organization as a reflection of her leadership, “We are happy and laid back because that’s who I am” and another stated, “I do think that I do have an impact on the climate, I think I do try to keep everybody calm about what’s going on, and let’s manage this in a professional, thoughtful way”. Administrator C commented, “I always feel that staff need to take the message back to their class, to your team. They are the biggest extension of me”, while Administrator A stated:

I think I’ve put forth the expectation that’s how we will behave. There was definitely a shift when I took over as administrator. So I would definitely say a lot of what is going on has something to do with the leadership.

Administrator F described her influence as:

I think because I’m always thinking three steps ahead. I’m visionary. I’m always thinking two or three years ahead of time. I give them just the start and let them take it. Everybody has great ideas. I don’t necessarily have to come up with the

final plan, I just have to see what they come up with and they come up with great stuff.

When asked how they thought their organizational climate was collaborative, all six administrators described the numerous ways they involved staff within their early childhood setting. They described some methods of collaboration as getting input from staff, gaining different perspectives, bringing ideas to staff meeting, sharing ideas with other staff, and taking ownership of a project. As described by Administrator E, “I try to help people have the responsibility and take ownership of whatever their role is in the school is. Clear expectations”. One administrator detailed how collaborative efforts are accomplished in her program:

Nothing happens here without internal input. I think because that’s how I do things. We try to get some input and get some ideas and other perspectives of the consequences of all positions. We try to think it through. If it’s going to affect you, at least we want to get your input before it happens.

The participants were then asked how they felt their transformational leadership style impacts the daily operations of their program. Three administrators stated their presence and visibility in their early childhood setting played a large part in the impact of the organizational climate. One administrator described the reason as, “They see me. And they see me in the classrooms too, so they know I’m in there. They see me as visible and out there so that affects the climate”. Another administrator stated, “I think it’s my presence. I’m very hands-on with staff and that makes a big difference. I don’t

micromanage. That's what makes it a better partnership" and yet another stated, "Staff seeing me, having them to be able to ask questions, having them feel that I noticed", and yet another stated, "I'm committed to the program. I never see anything as something we cannot attain".

All of the participants explained the variety of methods used to positively impact the climate in their program including working with the teachers and families, understanding the needs of the staff, and demonstrating flexibility with staff.

Administrator B explained her view on involvement at her programs as, "I'm hands on, the fact that I'm visible, that I show leadership because I'm there doing and with them and know where they came from because I came as a teacher. I understand the needs of the staff", while Administrator D described her view as, "I do always try to know about the employees, something about them so I can start a conversation when I see them".

The participants' answers varied on what they would like to change about their organizational climate in their early childhood setting. Three administrators wanted their program to either be bigger or would like a more secure financial status which relates to more of how they would like to change their program internally, not about changing the organizational climate. One administrator wanted to see "a little more structure, but it's not the makeup of the community" while another administrator wanted to see "the different programs within our agency be more in sync".

Discrepant and Nonconforming Data

Although I did not find any data that did not conform to the interview questions or the thematic units that emerged, I did note some minor discrepancies in a few portions of the data. After reviewing the transcribed interview questions, it was evident that one or two of the answers to the probes were answered in the context of the administrator's personal life and not in the context of them being a transformational leader as their professional career. All the participants thoroughly answered all the interview questions. However, there were three participants in particular who were very thorough in answering the questions by giving lengthy examples of situations in their personal lives. Two participants gave examples of their own children being in early childhood settings many years ago and one participant gave a lengthy example of her sibling's work ethic, which did not conform to the data needed. For these three instances, I bracketed this information and did not use this data in the study because it was not relevant.

Description of Patterns, Relationships, and Themes

Through the process of data analysis, patterns and relationships between the data emerged creating categories and themes. The patterns, relationships, and themes were discussed in detail in the Findings section. The interview questions and probes guided the solicitation of relevant information from the participants during the interviews. The participants discussed their educational paths and how they received training as an early childhood administrator. The administrators all described their early childhood programs with pride and took responsibility for the staff and children at each of their locations.

Equally important, all of the participants described at least one aspect of their leadership style as being transformational. Each administrator described her way of involving staff in her program. Although the methods used to engage staff varied with each administrator, the common patterns among all administrators suggested that there was involvement in many ways including decision-making, taking ownership, and initiating leadership.

Evidence of Quality

To ensure accuracy of the data, I used various strategies. The data collected needed to be checked for consistent patterns of themes and accuracy because it was a qualitative study (Creswell, 2003). After receiving IRB approval, the process for selecting potential participants began. The participants were purposefully selected to ensure they fit the criteria of the study. I emailed 88 potential participants an invitation to participate in the study with a Consent Form and the MLQ Leader Form survey and asked them to email the completed survey and Consent Form to me within 2 weeks. Although invitations were sent out to nearly 90 potential participants and eight responded, six potential participants met the criteria of the study and were asked to participate in the interview process. The study was limited to only six early childhood administrators within one geographic area who worked in NAEYC-accredited programs. A detailed researcher's log titled *Journal* (Appendix G) outlines the specific timelines of the entire doctoral study process.

Three strategies were used as validity and accuracy for this study which included member checking, peer debriefing, and rich, thick description. Each participant was emailed the transcribed audiotaped interview upon completion within one day of the interview. I asked each participant to review the transcription for completeness and accuracy and email their responses upon completion of their review. All participants emailed me within one day of receipt approving the transcriptions and they all stated there were no alterations needed. Member checking was also a way to bring validity to the transcriptions (Hatch, 2002). Peer debriefing was another strategy used to enhance the accuracy of the transcribed interviews and data analysis. One individual was used to review the data to ensure consistency. The peer debriefer was an individual with a graduate degree who has worked in the field of early childhood education for 30 years and as an administrator for 14 of those years. This individual reviewed the data and asked questions about the study so I was not the only person reviewing the data and analysis. This person also asked questions about the data where there needed to be further clarification or elaboration. A third strategy used was thick, rich description which conveyed a detailed description of the setting being researched so the reader understood the experience (Creswell, 2003). This allowed a detailed summary of the experiences of the early childhood administrators to be discussed in a more thorough manner and help explain the phenomenon as an early childhood administrator. The sample of early childhood administrators represented six of the 88 potential participants

who were employed in a variety of early childhood settings and allowed me to get a detailed description of their environments.

Summary

This section included a detailed analysis of the lived experiences of six early childhood administrators regarding their educational paths in becoming transformational leaders, how they viewed themselves as leaders, and how their leadership influenced the organizational climate in their early childhood settings. The six administrators who participated in the study were interviewed and were able to answer all the interview questions and probes without any hesitation or trepidation. Additionally, they were able to elaborate on their answers in many instances without the assistance of the probes. Many of the direct quotes from the participants were included to illustrate and describe the administrators' insights and views as it related to being a transformational leader and how their leadership influenced the organizational climate within their early childhood setting. The following themes emerged from the data analysis: educational backgrounds, journey and meaning of the position, educational and leadership philosophy, transformational leadership style and characteristics, views as a transformational leader, barriers and supports in the program, involvement and assessment of staff, organizational climate, and influence as transformational leaders on organizational climate. The themes derived from similar patterns that were highlighted in the data according to groupings of emergent categories. From these categories, themes were identified in the data. In sum, all participants described qualities of being a transformational leader that was depicted in

the collaborative methods used within their early childhood settings that fostered a collaborative and cooperative organizational climate. Section 5 will include an overview of the study, an interpretation of the findings, the implications for social change, recommendations for action, recommendations for further study, reflections, and a concluding statement.

Section 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Study Overview

The need for a better understanding of the lived experiences of early childhood administrators was the motivating factor for this study. Specifically, this study explored the lived experiences of six early childhood administrators in northern New Jersey in order to better understand their experiences regarding their educational paths in becoming transformational leaders, how they viewed themselves as leaders, and how their leadership influenced the organizational climate in their early childhood settings. The following research questions guided this study:

- How do study participants describe their educational paths to becoming transformational early childhood administrators?
- How do early childhood administrators view themselves as transformational leaders?
- How do early childhood administrators describe the influence of their transformational leadership on their organization?

The qualitative research design and the phenomenology tradition were used for this study. Six early childhood administrators who worked in northern New Jersey, were employed at an NAEYC-accredited child care center, administered an early childhood program for at least 5 years, and exhibited traits of a transformational leader based on their responses of the MLQ Leader Form survey participated in the study. They were interviewed one-on-one and in person by using a prescribed series of questions. The

interviews were audiotaped and transcribed and the data was analyzed for potential themes. Section 5 will include an interpretation of the findings, the implications for social change, recommendations for action, recommendations for further study, reflections, and concluding statement.

Interpretation of Findings

This qualitative, phenomenological study was based on the conceptual background and foundation that examined Burns' (1978) concept of transformational leadership. The transformational leadership framework was selected because it was shown to be a highly effective leadership model and increased organizational effectiveness within school organizations (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004). Moreover, this approach was chosen because the transformational leadership theory embraces the concept of teamwork and shared decision making while incorporating a shared vision for the future (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004). The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of early childhood administrators regarding their educational paths, their views of themselves as transformational leaders, and the influence of their leadership on their organizational climate. The interpretation of the findings as they relate to each research question will be discussed in detail.

Research Question 1

- How do study participants describe their educational paths to becoming transformational early childhood administrators?

The educational background of all the participants were largely varied with no

commonalities between any of the early childhood administrators. While each administrator held a minimum of an undergraduate degree, four of the six administrators held graduate degrees, and one of the six administrators held a doctorate degree. Only two administrators held similar undergraduate degrees in any field. There were varied responses to how educationally prepared the participants felt when they started their position as early childhood administrators because none of them received any formal college education on how to manage, lead, and administer an early childhood program, specifically mentioning no prior knowledge in fiscal or business planning. Each administrator acquired her leadership skills in a different manner: some through training, some through education, and some through experience. The findings of the six administrators supported a study by Nupponen (2006b) noting that early childhood administrators must use their own skill set to adapt and lead their environments and quite often, with little formal training or education in the area of early childhood administration. Moreover, these findings are consistent with studies conducted by Lower and Cassidy (2007) and Nupponen (2006a, 2006c). Both studies suggested that although administrators obtained a four-year college degree, they lacked in college coursework in business and management, early childhood leadership, and management practices.

All of the administrators stated they had the opportunity to take various workshops or trainings in early childhood management and leadership after they secured their current position. The frequency of attending workshops or trainings varied between administrators. Three of the administrators who had more formalized training stated they

did feel somewhat better prepared to lead and manage their early childhood programs. The experiences of the three administrators supported the finding in the study by Bloom and Bella (2005) of 182 students who completed leadership training in early childhood administration. The study (Bloom & Bella, 2005) implied those who completed the training had a sense of empowerment and transformed the way they viewed their role as leaders within their early childhood organization.

Participants described a different path of how they obtained their current position as an early childhood administrator and there were no similarities between participants. One similarity uncovered in the data did show that none of the participants initially set their career goal to become an early childhood administrator. All of the participants acquired their positions in a different manner whether it was by being promoted to the position, acquiring it through purchasing the early childhood program, applying for the position, or being asked to accept the position. These findings suggest the need for colleges and universities to make the career choice as an early childhood administrator a viable and worthwhile employment option viewed equally as significant and valuable as the job of a public school principal.

All the participants discussed great pride, responsibility, and respect for their early childhood program that extended to both the staff and children in the program. They understood the great importance of their job in leading and shaping staff and took their job responsibility seriously. Each administrator described her role as the essential element to ensure a quality early childhood program for her staff and for the children they

served which suggested the dedication and seriousness the administrators felt towards her position.

The varied educational pathways of the six participants suggested that it could be unpredictable how an early childhood administrator might lead and manage their early childhood program due to the inconsistencies in education and training. A streamlined undergraduate degree in early childhood administration or required certification or credentialing coursework should be mandated for early childhood administrators to lead and manage any early childhood program. An administrator who does not make the effort to learn about the processes of administering an early childhood program could be detrimental to both the staff and the children in the program in terms of how the program is managed. The data from the six administrators revealed there were no consistent educational pathways to becoming an early childhood administrator. Some of them implied that on-the-job training was the way they best learned their roles. The literature review found there were few preparation programs or educational opportunities to help early childhood administrators learn the qualities associated with being an effective leader and developing a positive work environment (Lower & Cassidy, 2007). The findings from this study suggest the career path to become an early childhood administrator needs to be a feasible option to include streamlined undergraduate and graduate coursework.

Research Question 2

- How do early childhood administrators view themselves as transformational leaders?

Each of the participants had a different personal philosophy on education including how they should administer their early childhood program or what their expectations were of the children who attended their program. However, the data from all six participants did reveal that all the administrators' philosophies on leadership included at least one characteristic of transformational leadership. This data is consistent with the results of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Leader Form survey, which was the pre-screening survey used to identify administrators who possessed traits as a transformational leader.

The MLQ Leader Form survey identified the participants as having characteristics or traits of a transformational leader. Through the interview process, the administrators were able to specify which characteristics made them transformational leaders within their early childhood program. Bass and Avolio (1994) believed transformational leaders behave in ways to achieve superior results by employing one or more of the *Four I's* of transformational leadership: *idealized influence*, *inspirational motivation*, *intellectual stimulation*, and *individualized consideration*. Many of the administrators stated these values during the interviews. Three of the administrators specifically described themselves as role models for their staff, which Bass and Avolio call *idealized influence*. All of the administrators described themselves as motivating and inspiring to their staff,

which Bass and Avolio call *inspirational motivation*. Four of the administrators looked for innovative and creative ways to look at situations in their setting, which Bass and Avolio call *intellectual stimulation*. Each administrator described their leadership as a coaching model to meet the individual needs of her staff, which Bass and Avolio call *individualized consideration*. Dambe and Moorad (2008) suggested the key traits of transformational leaders include shared ownership, vision, transparency, and the ability to encourage growth among followers, which is consistent with the reports of the administrators.

All of the participants used terminology consistent with the definitions of transformational leadership when they described their leadership at their early childhood settings. Descriptive terms such as collaborative, collective, hands-on, visionary, and democratic were used. The literature reviewed (Paarlberg & Lavigna, 2010; Webb, 2007) suggested that staff are motivated toward extra effort when leaders model behaviors exhibited in the transformational style of leadership. These behaviors include a hands-on approach of high energy, power, assertiveness, self-confidence, and commitment. Although all the participants expressed the collaborative aspect of their leadership and discussed how they encouraged their staff to be part of the decision-making process at their individual locations, there was agreement that the final decision lies with them because they were ultimately responsible for what happens at their early childhood program because of the commitment they felt. All the administrators described the relationship with their staff as excellent, very good, close, or respectful

which is a significant aspect of transformational leadership. The literature (Devos & Bouckenooghe, 2009; White-Smith & White, 2009) suggested that the relational aspect of transformational leaders is critical to the success within any setting.

The six participants each described a different influential factor as to what inspired them to become transformational leaders. Some felt it was a personal experience while others felt it was professional or educational training that helped them become transformational leaders. The common pattern between all the responses of the administrators was they felt they were only somewhat educationally prepared to take on the role as early childhood administrator and they described something in their personal lives as influencing their management practices to become transformational leaders. Most of the administrators described a positive experience influencing them in becoming transformational leaders such as an encouraging relative or another inspiring individual. This is consistent with literature (Ruggieri, 2009; Schyns & Sanders, 2007) that implied the correlation between leadership traits and individuals who are visionary, optimistic, purposeful, and trustworthy as successful transformational leaders. The participants were consistent in naming the various barriers to administering their early childhood program including the politics within the organization, bureaucracy, financial barriers, and competition of other programs. Conversely, although all the participants stated they had some type of obstacle in the administration of their program, all six stated they were supported in some capacity whether it was organizationally or personally.

Although there were inconsistencies on how each participant described her preparation in becoming a transformational leader, all of the administrators described some type of influence in their lives that helped shape them in becoming transformational leaders. All of the participants were able to articulate and describe at least one characteristic of a transformational leader and explained how transformational leadership was implemented in their early childhood setting. All of the administrators understood the relational aspect of transformational leadership and how this is an underlying factor to the collaborative efforts they put forth. Each participant stated she ultimately had the final say in any decisions or policy that occurred in her setting, but they all solicited contributions from their staff to help them make their decisions. This finding suggests each administrator understood the core meaning of being a transformational leader. They all sought out the input of their staff while understanding their role as the final decision maker. Another common factor among most of the participants was their need to be motivating toward staff, respectful, visionary, hands-on, and lead by example, which are key descriptors of transformational leaders.

Research Question 3

- How do early childhood administrators describe the influence of their transformational leadership on their organization?

Each of the participants discussed the various ways they involve their staff in their early childhood programs. Additionally, all of the administrators described the various activities they used within their settings to encourage inclusion and engagement among

staff. This is a critical aspect of transformational leadership because transformational leaders motivate and influence others and energize, empower, and engage others to pursue common goals (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bloom, 2003). All of the participants described the use of some type of assessment process within their setting, either a staff evaluation form or professional development plan, and described how they used this data with staff to improve their early childhood programs. Stringer (2002) suggested the climate within any school organization, which is created by different leadership styles, has a powerful impact on the job performance of employees. The participants implied that their assessment process was an integral part of the climate in their organization because it influenced how policies and goals were carried out in their programs. If staff were actively involved in assessing the climate within any organization, they were more apt to support recommended changes (Bloom, 2006), which all six of the administrators described when utilizing their assessment process.

All the administrators used positive phrases when describing their organizational climate. Terms such as cooperative, collaborative, laid back, informal, forward thinking, friendly, happy, always evolving, welcoming, inviting, and flexible were used to describe the organizational climate within each of their early childhood settings. Parallel responses were used by each of the participants to describe the behaviors that characterized the climate in their organization as dependability, informal, flexible, playful, happy, invested, respectful, and collaborative. Lower and Cassidy (2007) found that administrators have an intangible role in setting the tone for the program, which is

consistent with how each of the participants described the climate in their organization. A significant factor in successful organizations is the leader sharing their power with staff and creating a feeling of influence and ownership among the staff (Leech & Fulton, 2008), as did the six administrators in this study because they all described how they created a feeling of collaboration within each of their early childhood settings and how this positively influenced the climate in their organization in a positive manner.

Each of the participants described how their transformational leadership style influenced the climate in their organization by setting their expectations and vision with staff and expecting them to work collaboratively with each other. As the participants described their expectations from their staff, cooperation and collaboration among all staff within any school organization is something that is expected (Psunder, 2009). Bloom (2000, 2006) suggested the willingness of staff to participate in the decision making process is influenced primarily by their relationships with their administrators.

All the administrators described their organizational climate as being somewhat collaborative and described some of the methods they used to increase collaboration as getting input from staff, gaining different perspectives, bringing ideas to staff meeting, sharing ideas with other staff, having them involved, and taking ownership of a project. Some of the administrators described their presence, visibility, and availability in the program as being an essential element in their success as transformational leaders. They explained that if staff knew they were present and willing to model actions and behaviors, this positively influenced the organizational climate in their program. The

participants described a variety of methods used to positively impact the climate in their program including working directly with the teachers and families, understanding the needs of the staff, and demonstrating flexibility with staff as would be for any transformational leader. Grabowski (2008) suggested one way to address organizational climate issues is to work towards the development of a team within the early childhood setting. All of the participants of this study explained how they achieved the development of a team within their settings.

The participants were all able to articulate and describe how they as transformational leaders influenced the climate in their early childhood setting. The administrators' responses were consistent with the literature review (Austin & Harkins, 2008b; Chen et al., 2007; Jennings, 2010; Pashiardis et al., 2005) as cooperative relationships among colleagues were an important feature that was essentially influenced by the leader. Leaders who develop positive relationships and empower staff are more likely to encourage trust and respect among staff. The participants described their responsibility to build positive relationships and collaborations within their organization and understood that participation among staff was fostered when accepting, respectful, and more open relationships among team members occurred. The participants also understood the importance of using assessment data within their program to improve collaboration of staff, build positive relationships, and to continually improve the quality of their early childhood programs.

When describing the organizational climate, only one participant specifically mentioned communication among and between staff as a descriptor, although all the administrators did imply this occurred at their programs through the examples they gave such as communicating at staff meetings and sharing ideas among staff. This finding is also consistent with those of MacNeil, Prater, and Busch (2009) and Halawah (2005), whose studies suggested a better organizational climate is expected in schools with effective, open communication and support between the administrator and staff.

Practical Applications of the Findings

This qualitative, phenomenological study focused on the lived experiences of early childhood administrators regarding their educational paths, their views of themselves as transformational leaders, and the influence of their leadership on their organizational climate. My goal was to explore the lived experiences of six early childhood administrators in northern New Jersey who were transformational leaders and how their leadership influenced the organizational climate in a variety of early childhood settings. The participants shared their experiences, knowledge, and opinions through a semi-structured interview concerning their educational path, their views as transformational leaders, and how their leadership influenced the organizational climate.

Although each participant possessed traits of a transformational leader as indicated on the MLQ Leader Form survey, each administrator described a different educational path to get to their current position. Some stated they took workshops or trainings to help them learn about managing and leading early childhood programs which

helped in some ways. Muijs et al. (2004) concurred suggesting that disparities in formal education and training for early childhood administrators may result in inconsistencies in administrator roles which additionally could impact the organizational climate. Although the six participants in this study were academically advanced and demonstrated qualities of transformational leaders, the findings in this study suggested there is a need to have streamlined educational systems and coursework in place for all potential early childhood administrators. Consistencies in the development and delivery of specific coursework in the area of early childhood administration including managing and leading a business, human resources development, fiscal and budgeting skills, and staff relations are all areas where administrators in this field need more education and training.

The administrator plays a critical role in creating supportive work environments through effective supervision and strong leadership (Kagan et al., 2008). Having administrators who are well prepared and well educated only enhances the quality of the early childhood program. Lower and Cassidy (2007) and Mims et al. (2008) also suggested that lack of knowledge on part of administrators and staff alike concerning administrative responsibilities could result in lower quality early childhood settings including high staff turnover, low morale, and/or a lack of motivation. The six participants were all highly educated and understood the importance of working collaboratively in their environments. Three participants described how it took them years to change the climate in their organization to a collaborative one by them working as transformational leaders and earning the trust and respect of the staff.

The findings in this study also suggested the need for leadership training in early childhood settings to learn the importance of working collaboratively and developing positive relationships within their environment. The six administrators in this study all possessed characteristics of transformational leaders, but there are many early childhood programs with administrators who possess minimal higher education coursework and do not have any education or training in leadership. Mandating a minimal amount of leadership training or coursework for all early childhood administrators could help streamline how programs are administered throughout the United States. The findings of this study suggest that early childhood administrators who possess at least an undergraduate degree and some type of leadership training in the area of transformational leadership could understand the value of working collaboratively within their early childhood program and how working in collaboration with others could positively influence the organizational climate.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for positive social change of this study included an awareness of the disparity in the educational paths of early childhood administrators. Yet, the results also demonstrated that individuals who are academically advanced and motivated could be transformational leaders and have a positive impact on the organizational climate within their settings. The results of this study demonstrate the need for the betterment of administrative systems specifically for administrators in early childhood programs.

The participants all showed characteristics of transformational leadership as indicated on the MLQ Leader Form survey. Through interviews, all administrators clearly described how they implemented transformational leadership in their early childhood settings through collaboration and democracy. Equally important, all administrators clearly described how they involved their staff in the activities and policies that occurred in their early childhood settings. From these results, the social change impact could be large because the improvement and development of stronger administrative and leadership systems could positively affect the administrators, children, and families of children attending early childhood programs. Having a better understanding of administrative practices in early childhood programs could lead to improved quality of programs and supports needed for early childhood leadership. If any colleges or universities explore the results of this research, it may lead to larger social change in the way undergraduate and graduate level coursework is designed by tailoring the coursework and curriculum to reflect the great need in society for quality and qualified early childhood administrators.

Recommendations for Action

My personal motivation to complete this study lied in the fact that administering any early childhood program is totally unique. Early childhood administrators need to wear many hats including one of a businessperson, accountant, teacher, social worker, therapist, and handyman. There is a need for more formalized education with specific classes in early childhood administration. As in formal education programs for public

school administrators, early childhood administrators have a need for formal leadership training or education because effective leadership can assist in creating a coherent, collegial working environment where staff are motivated and engaged in working toward organizational goals (Nupponen, 2006b). There are few preparation programs or educational opportunities to help early childhood administrators learn the qualities associated with being an effective leader and developing a positive work environment (Lower & Cassidy, 2007). In the State of New Jersey, Professional Impact New Jersey sponsors a Director's Academy and the New Jersey Administrators' Credential which specifically targets leaders of early childhood programs to obtain professional preparation offering a sound knowledge base for leadership in early childhood education. This could be a helpful start for new administrators in the field of early childhood education, but there is a continued need for more college level coursework in early childhood administration.

The value of this research was to gain further insight into how early childhood administrators who exhibit qualities of transformational leaders perceived their educational paths and leadership influenced the organizational climate in their settings. The results of this study suggested that there are definite disparities in the educational paths of early childhood administrators. Nevertheless, there are academically advanced administrators who understand the value of transformational leadership and how this style of leadership influences their organizational climate. Administrators who made decisions with the input of their staff created a more cohesive work environment.

Not all early childhood administrators have the formal education and background to be leaders and administer their early childhood programs as collaboratively as did the six study participants. The six administrators in this study exhibited characteristics of transformational leaders and each one stated a different path to learning their leadership style. To help foster the uniformity that is necessary in this area, there is a need for a credential or certification in early childhood administration along with streamlined classes throughout the United States. There are some states that are beginning this process of streamlining, but there is a need for more uniformity and consistency. The job responsibilities of an early childhood administrator are so varied, but the one similarity between any administrator's job is the ability to manage and lead their staff. The results of this study suggest the need for uniformity starting at least at the undergraduate level in the area of early childhood administration. I will continue to advocate for this change at the college and university level by staying involved at the local and state levels of NAEYC and bringing this issue to the forefront. Various representatives from local colleges, private and public childcare centers, and other early childhood stakeholders participate in these organizations and I will continue to advocate for this very real concern. Additionally, my plan is to present the findings of this study at local and state early childhood conferences so that the appropriate stakeholders are aware of this issue.

Recommendations for Further Study

The results of this study stimulated many conversations and questions in the area of early childhood administration. As noted previously, there is limited literature in the

area of early childhood administration and this presented a slight challenge when looking for peer-reviewed articles suitable for my study. This prompted me to deliberate about how there is a requisite need for more research in this area because early childhood administrators play a critical role in creating supportive work environments through effective supervision and stronger leadership skills (Kagan, Kauerz, & Tarrant, 2008). As our society enters the twenty-first century, over nine million children under the age of five attended a formal early childhood organization called either a child care center or preschool for at least part of each day (Fuller, 2007). This large number of children in early childhood settings helps demonstrate the need for high-quality administrators and the need for more research in this area.

This study demonstrated the need for a well-established educational path for early childhood administrators. Because of this, one recommendation for further study is to look at the types of coursework that could be established in order to streamline the completion of an early childhood administrator undergraduate or graduate degree. This recommendation is consistent with the findings of the study in which the six participants had no uniformity in their undergraduate or graduate coursework or their training as transformational leaders.

This study was limited to only six early childhood administrators within one geographic area. Although invitations were sent out to approximately 90 potential participants, only six participants met the selection criteria for the study. Further recommendations for studies could include broadening the scope of the study to include

early childhood programs in other geographic areas. Additionally, if the study were to remain in the same geographic area as this study, the selection criteria could be altered to attract a different set of early childhood administrators for the study such as those who only work only in publicly funded early childhood settings.

This study only looked at one type of leadership style, which was transformational leadership. The literature review revealed that transformational leadership has shown to be beneficial in educational settings (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004). In the future, other types of leadership that might be beneficial in early childhood settings could be looked at for further studies. Additionally, a study comparing transformational leadership with another style of leadership within early childhood programs might also be another area that could be further researched.

Reflections

As I reflect on the course of my doctoral study, I have many thoughts about the process of where I started five years ago to where I am today. Initially, I never understood the true importance of having a solid problem statement, solid research questions, and a solid literature review which all were aligned and worked hand-in-hand with each other. I now realize how important it is to have all of these items in alignment. My coach always used the example of “think of each piece of your doctoral study as flags. If you look back at the flags and they are not aligned, it will not work. All the flags must be in alignment to make it work”. I now thoroughly understand what she means by this analogy.

I encountered some fundamental discoveries during my doctoral study journey. First, I realized that the development of the appropriate research questions and relative probes led the direction of the study. Second, I realized how the appropriate research questions and probes directly correlated with the data analysis, coding, and development of themes. Third, I understood how the quotes of participants from the interviews were a key factor in the development of themes. Fourth, I realized how the importance of being organized could help with a smoother transition to writing the final sections of the doctoral study.

After I completed my first interview, I understood how critical and important each of the interview questions and probes were to getting the right information I needed for my study. Actually, I was pleased with the questions after I reviewed the transcripts from the first interview and each subsequent interview. The one factor that was astounding to me was how different each administrator's educational path was and how differently they acquired their leadership skills. Each administrator acquired her leadership skills in a different manner: some through training, some through education, and some through experience. Although there was a vast difference in their personal education and training experiences, the similarity in how they all managed and lead their early childhood program was similarly astounding.

Completing this study gave me insights into the lived experiences of six early childhood administrators who worked in six different types of early childhood settings. I found each of their stories compelling and interesting and I gained some personal insights

into their jobs as early childhood administrators. The interview process was fascinating to me because I never knew what to expect when asking the interview questions. The transcription and validity processes were very labor intensive and time consuming, but necessary. Coding of the data was an integral part of the doctoral study and quotes from the six participants became a critical part of the research. The phenomenological design enabled me to better understand the lived experiences of six early childhood administrators in northern New Jersey.

Concluding Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of early childhood administrators regarding their educational paths, their views of themselves as transformational leaders, and the influence of their leadership on their organizational climate. Six early childhood administrators were interviewed who were employed at NAEYC-accredited centers in northern New Jersey in order to better understand their lived experiences regarding their educational paths in becoming transformational leaders, how they view themselves as transformational leaders, and how their leadership influences the organizational climate in their early childhood settings. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with early childhood administrators by using a prescribed series of questions. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. Data were analyzed to create an overall picture of how participants experienced the phenomenon. Transcriptions were then analyzed to discover significant statements that were developed into themes.

The findings of the study and the recommendations for action and further study were also presented. Although the study was delimited to six participants in northern New Jersey, each of the participants gave a meaningful illustration of the importance of early childhood administrators and how varied their educational paths were. The participants from this study do exemplify that transformational leaders do positively impact the organizational climate within their setting by working collaboratively with staff, empowering staff, and involving staff in the decision making process.

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Appendix A: Research Questions

Early Childhood Administrator Interview Protocol

Q1: How do study participants describe their educational paths to becoming transformational early childhood administrators?

Q2: How do early childhood administrators view themselves as transformational leaders?

Q3: How do early childhood administrators view transformational leadership influencing the organizational climate?

Question 1:

How do study participants describe their educational paths to becoming transformational early childhood administrators?

Probes:

- Tell me about your journey into this administrative position.
- What does it mean to you to be an Early Childhood Education (ECE) Administrator?
- Tell me about your formal education. How long have you been in this field?
- Tell me about any management or leadership training you have received.
- How and why did you get into the position?
- Tell me about how educationally prepared you felt when you started this position.

Question 2:

- a. Transformational leaders and followers are united in pursuit of higher level goals that are common to both. How do early childhood administrators view themselves as transformational leaders?

Probes:

- What is your educational philosophy?
- What is your management/leadership philosophy?
- What type of leadership or management style do you feel works best in early childhood programs? Why?
- In what ways do you feel your leadership style is transformational?
- Tell me about decision-making practices in your career as an administrator.
- How do you describe your relationship with your staff?
- What do you feel has influenced your administrative style and practice?

- What characteristics do you possess that influences your administrative practices?
- b. During the selection process, the MLQ Leader Form you completed suggested you see yourself as having characteristics of a transformational leader.

Probes:

- What characteristics would you use to describe yourself as a transformational leader?
- Tell me how you would label your administrative style? How would you describe it?
- How do you think your education and training influenced the way you administer your program?
- How are your management techniques influenced by your individuality, personality, and /or temperament?
- How do your experiences, likes, and dislikes influence what you do as an administrator?
- Is there anything else that presented barriers to your administration of the program?
- Is there anything else that supported your administration of the program?

Question 3:

- a. How do early childhood administrators view transformational leadership influencing the organizational climate?

Probes:

- Tell me about the way staff is involved in your program.
 - Tell me what you do to encourage involvement in your organization. How do you feel this is related to the way you lead and manage your staff?
 - How do you assess the progress and achievement of your staff? How did you use that information? What are some of the specific behaviors that occur?
 - How do you assess your progress and achievement? How do you use that information?
 - How does this progress and achievement impact your organization? How does it impact staff?
- b. Organizational climate is defined as the distinct atmosphere that characterizes work settings and the conditions that exist in the workplace based on the collective perceptions of workers.

Probes:

- Tell me about the climate of your organization.
- How would you describe the organizational climate in your program? What would make you think this way about your program?
- How do you think your administrative style influence the overall climate in your early childhood organization?
- What are some of the behaviors you would say characterize the climate in your setting?
- In what ways is it collaborative? Tell me how you view the camaraderie in your program or about times staff do not get along? Why is this happening?
- How do you think your administrative/leadership style impacts the daily operations in your program? Why do you think this way?
- Why do you think that your transformational leadership influences the organizational climate in your setting? How do you think this occurs?
- Tell me if there is anything you would like to change about the organizational climate of your program? If so, how would you go about changing it?
- Give me examples of things you do as an administrator that you would say positively impacts the climate in your organization.

Appendix B: Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Leader Form

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**Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire
Instrument (Leader and Rater Form)
and Scoring Guide
(Form 5X-Short)**

by Bruce Avolio and Bernard Bass

Published by Mind Garden, Inc.

info@mindgarden.com
www.mindgarden.com

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MLQ Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Leader Form (5x-Short)

My Name: _____ Date: _____

Organization ID #: _____ Leader ID #: _____

This questionnaire is to describe your leadership style as you perceive it. Please answer all items on this answer sheet. **If an item is irrelevant, or if you are unsure or do not know the answer, leave the answer blank.**

Forty-five descriptive statements are listed on the following pages. Judge how frequently each statement fits you. The word “others” may mean your peers, clients, direct reports, supervisors, and/or all of these individuals.

Use the following rating scale:

Not at all	Once in a while	Sometimes	Fairly often	Frequently, if not always
0	1	2	3	4

1.	I provide others with assistance in exchange for their efforts.....	0	1	2	3	4
2.	I re-examine critical assumptions to question whether they are appropriate.....	0	1	2	3	4
3.	I fail to interfere until problems become serious.....	0	1	2	3	4
4.	I focus attention on irregularities, mistakes, exceptions, and deviations from standards.....	0	1	2	3	4
5.	I avoid getting involved when important issues arise.....	0	1	2	3	4
6.	I talk about my most important values and beliefs.....	0	1	2	3	4
7.	I am absent when needed.....	0	1	2	3	4
8.	I seek differing perspectives when solving problems.....	0	1	2	3	4
9.	I talk optimistically about the future.....	0	1	2	3	4
10.	I instill pride in others for being associated with me.....	0	1	2	3	4
11.	I discuss in specific terms who is responsible for achieving performance targets.....	0	1	2	3	4
12.	I wait for things to go wrong before taking action.....	0	1	2	3	4
13.	I talk enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished.....	0	1	2	3	4
14.	I specify the importance of having a strong sense of purpose.....	0	1	2	3	4
15.	I spend time teaching and coaching.....	0	1	2	3	4

Continued =>

	Not at all	Once in a while	Sometimes	Fairly often	Frequently, if not always
	0	1	2	3	4
16. I make clear what one can expect to receive when performance goals are achieved	0	1	2	3	4
17. I show that I am a firm believer in "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."	0	1	2	3	4
18. I go beyond self-interest for the good of the group	0	1	2	3	4
19. I treat others as individuals rather than just as a member of a group.....	0	1	2	3	4
20. I demonstrate that problems must become chronic before I take action.....	0	1	2	3	4
21. I act in ways that build others' respect for me	0	1	2	3	4
22. I concentrate my full attention on dealing with mistakes, complaints, and failures.....	0	1	2	3	4
23. I consider the moral and ethical consequences of decisions	0	1	2	3	4
24. I keep track of all mistakes	0	1	2	3	4
25. I display a sense of power and confidence	0	1	2	3	4
26. I articulate a compelling vision of the future	0	1	2	3	4
27. I direct my attention toward failures to meet standards.....	0	1	2	3	4
28. I avoid making decisions	0	1	2	3	4
29. I consider an individual as having different needs, abilities, and aspirations from others.....	0	1	2	3	4
30. I get others to look at problems from many different angles	0	1	2	3	4
31. I help others to develop their strengths.....	0	1	2	3	4
32. I suggest new ways of looking at how to complete assignments.....	0	1	2	3	4
33. I delay responding to urgent questions	0	1	2	3	4
34. I emphasize the importance of having a collective sense of mission	0	1	2	3	4
35. I express satisfaction when others meet expectations.....	0	1	2	3	4
36. I express confidence that goals will be achieved.....	0	1	2	3	4
37. I am effective in meeting others' job-related needs.....	0	1	2	3	4
38. I use methods of leadership that are satisfying	0	1	2	3	4
39. I get others to do more than they expected to do.....	0	1	2	3	4
40. I am effective in representing others to higher authority.....	0	1	2	3	4
41. I work with others in a satisfactory way	0	1	2	3	4
42. I heighten others' desire to succeed.....	0	1	2	3	4
43. I am effective in meeting organizational requirements	0	1	2	3	4
44. I increase others' willingness to try harder.....	0	1	2	3	4
45. I lead a group that is effective	0	1	2	3	4

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MLQ Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Scoring Key (5x) Short

My Name: _____ Date: _____

Organization ID #: _____ Leader ID #: _____

Scoring: The MLQ scale scores are average scores for the items on the scale. The score can be derived by summing the items and dividing by the number of items that make up the scale. All of the leadership style scales have four items, Extra Effort has three items, Effectiveness has four items, and Satisfaction has two items.

Not at all	Once in a while	Sometimes	Fairly often	Frequently, if not always
0	1	2	3	4

- | | |
|--|---|
| Idealized Influence (Attributed) total/4 = | Management-by-Exception (Active) total/4 = |
| Idealized Influence (Behavior) total/4 = | Management-by-Exception (Passive) total/4 = |
| Inspirational Motivation total/4 = | Laissez-faire Leadership total/4 = |
| Intellectual Stimulation total/4 = | Extra Effort total/3 = |
| Individualized Consideration total/4 = | Effectiveness total/4 = |
| Contingent Reward total/4 = | Satisfaction total/2 = |

1.	Contingent Reward	0	1	2	3	4
2.	Intellectual Stimulation	0	1	2	3	4
3.	Management-by-Exception (Passive)	0	1	2	3	4
4.	Management-by-Exception (Active)	0	1	2	3	4
5.	Laissez-faire	0	1	2	3	4
6.	Idealized Influence (Behavior)	0	1	2	3	4
7.	Laissez-faire	0	1	2	3	4
8.	Intellectual Stimulation	0	1	2	3	4
9.	Inspirational Motivation	0	1	2	3	4
10.	Idealized Influence (Attributed)	0	1	2	3	4
11.	Contingent Reward	0	1	2	3	4
12.	Management-by-Exception (Passive)	0	1	2	3	4
13.	Inspirational Motivation	0	1	2	3	4
14.	Idealized Influence (Behavior)	0	1	2	3	4
15.	Individualized Consideration	0	1	2	3	4

Not at all	Once in a while	Sometimes	Fairly often	Frequently, if not always
0	1	2	3	4

16.	Contingent Reward	0	1	2	3	4
17.	Management-by-Exception (Passive)	0	1	2	3	4
18.	Idealized Influence (Attributed)	0	1	2	3	4
19.	Individualized Consideration	0	1	2	3	4
20.	Management-by-Exception (Passive)	0	1	2	3	4
21.	Idealized Influence (Attributed)	0	1	2	3	4
22.	Management-by-Exception (Active)	0	1	2	3	4
23.	Idealized Influence (Behavior)	0	1	2	3	4
24.	Management-by-Exception (Active)	0	1	2	3	4
25.	Idealized Influence (Attributed)	0	1	2	3	4
26.	Inspirational Motivation	0	1	2	3	4
27.	Management-by-Exception (Active)	0	1	2	3	4
28.	Laissez-faire	0	1	2	3	4
29.	Individualized Consideration	0	1	2	3	4
30.	Intellectual Stimulation	0	1	2	3	4
31.	Individualized Consideration	0	1	2	3	4
32.	Intellectual Stimulation	0	1	2	3	4
33.	Laissez-faire	0	1	2	3	4
34.	Idealized Influence (Behavior)	0	1	2	3	4
35.	Contingent Reward	0	1	2	3	4
36.	Inspirational Motivation	0	1	2	3	4
37.	Effectiveness	0	1	2	3	4
38.	Satisfaction	0	1	2	3	4
39.	Extra Effort	0	1	2	3	4
40.	Effectiveness	0	1	2	3	4
41.	Satisfaction	0	1	2	3	4
42.	Extra Effort	0	1	2	3	4
43.	Effectiveness	0	1	2	3	4
44.	Extra Effort	0	1	2	3	4
45.	Effectiveness	0	1	2	3	4

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Appendix C: Introduction Email

I am a doctoral student at Walden University and am conducting a research study to explore the experiences of early childhood administrators regarding their educational paths, their views of themselves as transformational leaders, and the influence of their leadership on their organizational climate. I am specifically interested in administrators who have a minimum of 5 years experience in a leadership position. I would like to invite you to participate in the research study if you have worked in a leadership capacity for 5 or more years.

Please review the enclosed Consent Form. If you would like to give your consent to participate in this study, please electronically sign and return the enclosed electronic survey via email (emailed in a separate email) to me within one week from the receipt of this letter.

I want to stress that your participation in this study is voluntary and all efforts to protect your identity and keep the information confidential will be taken. Please read the enclosed Consent Form and feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns about the study or regarding your participation in the study at **908-XXX-XXXX** or **lori.hayes@waldenu.edu**.

I look forward to learning about your experiences as an early childhood administrator. Your participation will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Lori Hayes
Walden University Doctoral Student

Appendix D: Consent Form

Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study exploring the experiences of early childhood administrators regarding their educational path, their views of themselves as transformational leaders, and the influence of their leadership on their organizational climate. You were chosen for the study because your early childhood center is NAEYC accredited and listed as one of the programs in the accreditation search on www.naeyc.org. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Lori Hayes who is a doctoral student at Walden University. My professional role is an administrator of an early childhood program in New Jersey. Your early childhood center is listed on the www.naeyc.org site under Accredited Program Search in New Jersey and this study will be selecting administrators from NAEYC accredited programs.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of early childhood administrators regarding their educational path, their views of themselves as transformational leaders, and the influence of their leadership on their organizational climate.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Complete the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) Leader Form and return it to me via email within two weeks. This survey should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.
- Upon completion of the MLQ Leader Form survey, you may be contacted for potential further participation in the study to include an interview that would last approximately one hour and will be audio-recorded and transcribed. You will be asked to review the completed transcription of the interview to ensure it is accurate and complete. The time needed to review the completed transcription should take approximately 30 minutes.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want to be in the study. No one at www.naeyc.org will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind during the study. If you feel stressed during the study you may stop at any time. You may skip any questions that you feel are too personal.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

There are minimal risks in this study. Potential participants will email the completed MLQ survey to one email address that will only be viewed by the researcher. The researcher may share results of the MLQ survey with her chairperson although these data will not contain any personal identifiers. Benefits of being in the study could improve the quality of programs and supports needed for early childhood leadership in northern New Jersey.

Compensation:

There is no monetary compensation for voluntary participation in this study.

Confidentiality:

Any information you provide will be kept confidential and your identity will not be revealed. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the study.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via 908-XXX-XXXX or lori.hayes@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 612-312-1210 or email at irb@waldenu.edu. Walden University's approval number for this study is this study is **01-04-12-0066198** and it expires on **January 3, 2013**.

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By clicking below, I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant

Date of Consent

Participant's Written or Electronic* Signature

Researcher's Written or Electronic* Signature

Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Legally, an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically.

Appendix E: Reminder Notification

Approximately one week ago, you were invited to take part in a research study exploring the experiences of early childhood administrators regarding their educational path, their views of themselves as transformational leaders, and the influence of their leadership on their organizational climate. You were chosen for the study because your early childhood center is NAEYC-accredited and is listed as one of the programs in the accreditation search on www.naeyc.org. If you have worked in a leadership capacity for 5 or more years, once again I invite you to take part in this research study.

This contact serves as a reminder that if you would like to give your consent to participate in this study, please electronically sign and return the electronic survey via email that was sent to you last week along with the signed Consent Form at your earliest convenience.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns about the study or regarding your participation in the study at **908-XXX-XXXX** or **lori.hayes@waldenu.edu**.

I look forward to learning about your experiences as an early childhood administrator. Your participation will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Lori Hayes
Walden University Doctoral Student

APPENDIX F: Interview Analysis

Early Childhood Administrator Interview Protocol: Analysis**Question 1:**

How do study participants describe their educational paths to becoming transformational early childhood administrators?

THEMES: variety of educational backgrounds; journey to the position; meaning of the position

Probes:

- **Tell me about your journey into this administrative position. How and why did you get into the position?**
-
- **Sort of by accident:** I worked in the center in a different position and they asked me to take the director position when she left. I declined it. They asked me to take it for a little while and I did and 6 years later, I'm still here – A
- **Saw an ad for this job** in the newspaper: I think I'll apply – B
- **I bought the school:** I wanted a good quality program and it took me 4 ½ years to find it – C
- **My boss left to do something different and I was promoted into this position** –D
- **I looked and found this job and applied** - E.
- **So after being here for 3 years, the CEO recommended to the Policy Council that I become the Head Start Director** - F

- **What does it mean to you to be an Early Childhood Education (ECE) Administrator?**
- **It's an extremely important position:** I have the responsibility to the little ones and educating them and making sure their teachers are leading them in the right direction – A
- **There's a need for quality education:** a warm, friendly environment; we are also a learning center – B
- **I'm the voice of the kids:** my job is to know what the early childhood research is implement it in my program through the staff – C
- **We get to really get in on the ground level** of making sure these children have healthy, happy lives- D
- **It's exciting to have an impact on so many families,** not just the families we serve, but our staff. To me, it's like being a **teacher, a mentor, an example** - F

- **Tell me about your formal education. How long have you been in this field?**
- **Bachelors in ECE, Masters and Doctorate** in School Psychology - A

- **Art major:** I found a job in a nursery school and I fell in love with it and went back to get my certification in elementary ed and nursery school – B
 - Bachelors in Information Technology, NJ Administrator's Credential, non-degree certification from NYU's Director's Academy – C
 - Bachelors degree is in French; NJ Certification in elementary education and nursery school – D
 - Bachelor's degree in psychology; Masters in Education and my NJ Principal's Certification – E
 - Bachelor's degree in psychology; Masters in Education in Infant and Parent Development – F
-
- **Tell me about any management or leadership training you have received.**
 - **Military high school:** a lot of military training under that. Also workshops – A
 - Kindergarten teacher and camp director for 10 years – B
 - NJ Administrator's Credential, non-degree certification from NYU's Director's Academy: Director's Academy taught management of the program: marketing our business, administration of an ECE program, HR for an ECE program – C
 - Things on my own to take workshops. I've done some train-the-trainers and some communications and management workshops though the community college. Have 21 credits towards a masters in management with 15 credits in HR- D
 - I have taken workshops on leadership. When I worked in the school district, many times during the staff development days there were workshops and trainings on leadership and management and they really were helpful – E
 - **Johnson and Johnson Fellow:** It felt like I was doing an MBA in 2 weeks' time; New Jersey Director's Academy. I take workshops with administrative tracks. I've done a lot of courses for my doctorate to do the leadership, administrative educational leadership doctorate - F
-
- **Tell me about how educationally prepared you felt when you started this position.**
 - **Educationally prepared:** more through the school of hard knocks, not college classroom, more though informal training – A
 - **Educationally prepared:** mostly. I've taken a lot of classes in infants/toddlers - B
 - **Educationally prepared:** yes for business (managing people, managing money, scheduling). No for curriculum and teaching, early childhood, I was a novice Learning the industry was a learning curve because the socioeconomic and financial status is very different from the people I used to work with in the information technology field- C
 - **Educationally prepared:** Yes, I didn't feel prepared was this piece of doing business plans and opening new centers. , I really didn't feel like I could say I didn't want to do this I said I'll try. I'll see what happens. That is where I didn't feel prepared – D

- Yes, I felt prepared in some ways, but in other ways I did not. psychology really made me look internally and analyze how I did things and how the people around me did things, so that helped me. – E
- Educationally prepared: I think I've done more on the job training. Like after you have the job you kind of learn it rather than to have formal education. I had a lot of experience in the educational component, but not in the area of fiscal or budgets. I had to learn that. - F

Question 2:

- c. How do early childhood administrators view themselves as transformational leaders?

THEMES: educational and leadership philosophy, transformational leadership style and characteristics, views as a transformational leader, and barriers and supports in the program.

Probes:

- **What is your educational philosophy?**
- I think you need to work collaboratively, gain the respect and opinions of your staff. I also think you need to have a certain limit where there is no more negotiation. I think you need to definitely set down limit, but aside from those limits, I think you need to give a lot of credit to the people you hire. – A
- Play based, center based. I believe you're in there and you're playing with the children, you're working along side them when you're teaching them. We've centered everything around a play-based curriculum.- B
- Childhood is a journey, not a race. I truly believe it's not just education that matters; it's a lot more to life. And I think life experience. It has to be social, emotional. To me, it's not a whole child. To me, that's what my program philosophy I'm going to say is bring up a whole child. It has to be social, emotional, physical, spiritual – C
- I really believe in the philosophy and process of NAEYC. We are here to educate the whole child. We have to make sure that our program is such that children are able to be successful and they are able to be themselves – D
- We are here for the children. The children need to be prepared for what lies ahead of them in public school – E
- We have to take the child or the person where they're at and just move with them at their rate. We can't have a set plan. That's the same with staff - F
- **What is your management/leadership philosophy?**
- I think that type of collaborative, working together within reason – A
- Very laid back, very tolerant. I'm hands on, so I just don't expect them to do something that I wouldn't do: change diapers, if the child is sick, they are in here. I'm more the

teacher/director. I'm the person with the business background who came here, there's no grey: it's black or white. – B

- The entire school knows my vision and where I'm going with it. I set my goals how I want to do, which direction I want to lead to, what our goals and things are. Then I leave it up to them to make it happen. – C
 - I like to talk with you about what needs to get done and then allow you to do it however you see fit as long as its not harmful to the program or children or employees. I like to have people understand what the goal is and recognize there's different ways to get to that goal – D
 - I need to set the expectation for all the staff. I let the staff know the expectations and they have some authority to do it how they like – E
 - You can't ask anybody to do something that you don't know how to do because you won't know if they are going to do it right. I think it's more about really being a leader by showing that - F
- What type of leadership or management style do you feel works best in early childhood programs? Why?**
- get the right people in but that's part of management if you get the right people in. I think that type of collaborative, working together within reason. – A
 - So, they have to follow all safety rules. The parents have to follow the rules and parents weren't ready for rules yet. So, they appreciate that's changed now. Parents are used to it now. They know what to expect. They have expectations. And they have a handbook that's very clear. – B
 - I think it's a combination. Earlier, I used to say democracy for some, others you have to direct them, and redirect them and reinforce them. – C
 - Our business is all about relationships. I don't think you can have that same kind of an outlook if you're working with people because everybody, and particularly now, because when have we ever talked so much about engaged employees. You need to engage people. People need to feel like their part of the solution. Communication is ever more important than it was - D
 - Setting the expectations for staff. They have a curriculum they have to follow and they can run their classrooms how they like as long as they adhere to the curriculum – E
 - Being respectful of each other's ideas. Everybody's voice is heard. Everybody contributes to the agenda. Everybody's opinion is respected. Information sharing, really seeing that being a manager is being informed, having the right information to make the right decisions at the right time - F
- In what ways do you feel your leadership style is transformational?**
- I think that type of collaborative, working together within reason – A
 - I'm very hands-on. – B
 - It's democratic, but sometimes you have to lay down the law – C

- It's about **relationships, engaged employees and communication** – D
 - It's always **being informed**. Everybody's **voice is heard**. Everybody **contributes to the agenda**. Everybody's **opinion is respected**. **Information sharing** I think you have to be **very clear, very honest** with people when they need it.. - F
- **Tell me about decision-making practices in your career as an administrator.**
 - **I make the decision**. I think that's part of my responsibility. But I definitely, for almost every decision, **get as much input as I can**. So, I'll survey the parents, I'll survey the teachers, I'll have working group meetings to **brainstorm ideas**. The **final decision lies with me**. But I try **to gain input from as many people as I can**. –A
 - My conferences/evaluations that I do with the teachers, I learned the first couple years when I did them they don't like my criticism. So, I do a survey with the parents and I **give them the parents criticism and they take that to heart and they change and follow** – B
 - **I ask everybody** because **they all have an equal right to say what they want**, everybody will vote on it. If it's a **financial decision, then it's my word is the last word** because at the end of the day I know I have to meet the numbers. But if general things, then **everybody has a say**. – C
 - **I am pretty much responsible for every decision** related to the daily operations. I'm not somebody who needs to have everything fixed yesterday. I usually **pull in my team**. So, **based on feedback I get from everybody, I'll then decide** how I think we should handle it – D
 - Staff **need to know what is expected** of them – E
 - **Everybody is involved**. Everybody shows up, everybody **supports**. Even if they have to her things to do, everybody needs to be involved at anything that happens because it **is everybody's job** - F
- **How do you describe your relationship with your staff?**
 - **It's excellent**. I'm very fortunate here. We are a small school; we have 2 classrooms and 4 main teachers and **we are very, very close and we work very well together** – A
 - Now it's **very good**. And once they realized I was on their side, I **think they would stick up for me**. [And I would say no, I just want to see what's going on. I'm not here to evaluate how you teach, I just want to make sure that you're teaching and your style is your style, but **it took a long time**] - B
 - Most of them, it's **very good**. Of course, when I **lay down the law with a couple, I'm not the favorite**, but other than that, I'm okay – C
 - My staff feel that **I respect their opinions** and they think that **I'm fair**. I'm friendly but I'm not someone who easily crosses the line and hangs out with them. So I really **try to be fair** and that's really important to me – D
 - **Respectful**. We respect each other in our jobs and how we do our jobs. I think they would stick up for me as I would stick up for them - E

- I think we are **very close**, but at the same time we are **very respectful** of our personal lives. Knowing that **I'm here to support them** if they need me to - F
 - **What do you feel has influenced your administrative style and practice?**
Combination of the **military background**, it's ingrained in me and **it's part of who I am at this point, in combination with experience**. So I have that as a **foundation**, but it's definitely been modified by the experience – A
 - I worked with a director at in camp and I saw her style and kind of **modeled mine that after**. Although she's a **very professional**, she's **firm**, ,but **loving, wonderful**, and **very hands-on**, and I **said that's what I want** – B
 - **My upbringing**. Don't do what you're not willing to do. I should **lead by example** and that's what I feel **my background plays a big role in this**. - C
 - I had a couple of **bad administrators**: treating employees differently, moody. You need to know what to expect from people. My work ethic, my fairness, my hard working nature, I really have to contribute that to **my parents**. If something is worth doing, then it's worth doing right and that's **the philosophy I've lived by my whole life** – D
 - The women in my **previous job** had a big influence. They were **powerful, strong, smart women in high positions** and they could handle their job. I remembered some of their qualities and **I wanted to use some of those qualities** in being a leader. - E
 - I think the **great supervisors** that I had and the **horrible ones**, too. Taking from people **what I value in that person** and admire that and **being able to internalize** it - F
 - **What characteristics do you possess that influences your administrative practices?**
 - I think I'm **motivating to the staff**. I think **I motivate them to want to work as a team and be together**. I want the **best that there** is, so I think that **part of my personality comes across as a manager** – A
 - **I'm hands-on**. I guess I'm **very informal**, I'm **not judgmental**, but I'm a **rule follower** – B
 - **I work way too hard**. I think because I **start something** and I want to **see it finished**. If I can handle and manage my life, they should be able to also. – C
 - I am **hard working**; I will jump in the breaches anytime, anywhere. I am **committed**. I'm very **loyal**. I think a sense of **fairness** – D
 - **I am a risk taker and I set expectations** – E
 - **Extremely organized**. **Flexibility**. Always remember that I may have my idea of what my ideal is, but **reality may be very different** - F
- d. **During the selection process, the MLQ Leader Form you completed suggested you see yourself as having characteristics of a transformational leader.**

Probes:

- **What characteristics would you use to describe yourself as a transformational leader?**
- I think I am **high achieving** and also my **military background** – A
- I'm **hands-on**, I guess I'm **very informal**, I'm **not judgmental**, but I'm a **rule follower** – B
- Don't do what you're not willing to do. I should **lead by example** – C
- I am **hard working**; I will jump in the breaches anytime, anywhere. I am **committed**. I'm very **loyal**. I think a sense of **fairness** – D
- **Respectful** to staff- E
- Extremely **organized Flexible**. I think **I'm fair**. I'm always thinking **of the next 3 steps**. I always have **vision that's clear** that can always **pull people in that direction** – F
-
- **Tell me how you would label your administrative style? How would you describe it?**
- I think I would go with **fair and consistent** – A
- I'm **hands-on**, I guess I'm **very informal**, I'm **not judgmental**, but I'm a **rule follower** – B
- Don't do what you're not willing to do. I should **lead by example** – C
- **Fair, loyal to staff, consistent**. I feel that I'm **consistent**. When you become a manager, you give up the right to become angry. And I really do try, and sometimes you really do have to try and keep that in your head because it's too easy sometime- D
- **Respectful** – E
- Extremely **organized Flexible**. I think **I'm fair**. I'm always thinking **of the next 3 steps**. I always have **vision that's clear** that can always **pull people in that direction** - F
-
- **How do you think your education and training influenced the way you administer your program?**
- I think it did **some**. Here I'm an administrator and I'm a manager and **that's what I need to be** - A
- My education was **35 years ago and very different**. I've learned that kids get bored very quickly and you have to amuse them. – B
- My **IT field** helps a lot because it's **very meticulous** in many ways: it's **accounting**, and it's a **paper trail**, you have to have certain **documentation to prove yourself** as I have to in my program - C
- Being a psychology major I look at the whole person. That has **helped me with being a leader** in my program by **looking at the whole person**.- E
- I think absolutely so. I think going to [name of college] which is very liberal school, a lot of **empowering women, being supportive of women in different fields**. Then going to [name of college] which is very **nurturing environment**.- F
-
- **How do your experiences, likes, and dislikes influence what you do as an administrator?**

- I think everything just fell into place. It's not like it's necessarily something that I said I'm working towards being an administrator – A
 - My director was very...it was her way or no way. I think that influenced me a lot to be this way as hands-on and flexible. – B
 - I love kids and they are ones who we should be focused on. My biggest dislike is today's parent's rat race – C
 - I was always the peacemaker in my family. I'm sort of the great organizer. I'm a Capricorn: steadfast, hardworking, determined, consistent – D
 - It absolutely influences. And I think that is a direct influence from their director. Same style, absolutely trickles down - F
- Is there anything else that presented barriers to your administration of the program?**
- Just the politics of things and that's anywhere – A
 - There's financial barriers – B
 - Yes, because on my one-mile radius there are 5 programs I'm competing with. It's huge competition- C
 - The whole generational thing is tough for me. That's a barrier – D
 - There is the typical bureaucracy, but I think it would be lacking financial resources as the biggest barrier – E
 - I think the barriers and dealing with the bureaucracies and very different bureaucracies and what they see it as they are the most important thing and they don't necessarily see eye or eye or on the same page of what they want - F
- Is there anything else that supported your administration of the program?**
- Definitely. But just being a university, the whole university campus is so supportive of the work we do and the children and everything going on here, we are very lucky to be here. – A
 - Usually. I know the Executive Director has my back. The Board does not always support what I do because they don't understand what I do. It's getting better because I think I'm more confident in being able to tell them what it is and why – B
 - Yes, because my husband and I run it together. We support each other – C
 - Absolutely. Through my Board. Autonomy they give us is pretty amazing. I also feel supported by the directors as well-D
 - Yes, definitely. The Board is a big supporter. I even feel the staff supports me – E
 - I think I have great support from the Board and great support from the President /CEO and from our team is excellent. Sometimes I think at the state level should use the power of their position to have a bigger impact especially between Abbott and Head Start - F

Question 3:

c. **How do early childhood administrators view transformational leadership influencing the organizational climate?**

THEMES: involvement and assessment of staff, organizational climate, and influence as transformational leaders on the organizational climate

Probes:

- **Tell me about the way staff is involved in your program.**
- They are **involved in every aspect** of everything. Along with me, there is a **co-leader** of the event or the policy so they sort of **co-take ownership** of that along with me so we can **check and balance** each other and make sure things end up where we want them to be - A
- We **meet every month**. I go into their classroom to do a lot of **informal observations**. My **door is always** open and I don't bite – B
- They are **part of the decision-making**. If they are **helping me make the decisions** then **they are responsible to deliver it** –C
- We do **engagement surveys**. We do **regular staff meetings**, teacher meetings, those kind of things because you **need to get feedback from everybody**. We try to let **staff participate** as much or as little as they like – D
- They are **responsible for all the things they do in their classroom**. I let them know what is happening through **classroom meetings**. I tell each lead teacher in the classroom something and they will let their staff know-E
- They are **involved at every level**. They are part of **decision making** at every level. I think I'm a **leader who just shares**. I may have the power, but the more people who know, the **more power we have as a group**, not just one person has to hold the information. Everybody **brings something to the table**.- F
- **Tell me what you do to encourage involvement in your organization. How do you feel this is related to the way you lead and manage your staff?**
- I don't even **know if encourage is the word**. **They need to**. We drag them right in and give them an assignment. **It's important that everyone is involved** – A
- We **play games**. I'm a big **game player at meetings**. I make it into play and they take it seriously but **it's not as intimidating** – B
- We **share information** at staff meetings. We will discuss it as staff meetings what the feedback was. **we train internally**, **we train each other** – C
- When we do **head teacher trainings** once a quarter and we talk about them as leaders. We do encourage them to be involved in the whole learning process. That helps to **encourage them professionally** – D
- We have staff **involved in activities**. Everyone plays a role because everyone sees the families. They're involved pretty much **in every aspect**. On **every level, having them involved** - F

- **How do you assess the progress and achievement of your staff? How did you use that information? What are some of the specific behaviors that occur?**
 - We have 2 things. We have a staff evaluation form and every teacher has a professional development plan that they set up their own goals and objectives for the year and that's also reviewed on an annual basis – A
 - I've gotten them to get their CDAs. I got them wanting to go to classes without them saying I need credit –B
 - Parents are my customers and parents have to evaluate my program, We have come up with our own evaluation form where parents are observing them which monthly. We will discuss it as staff meetings what the feedback was. – C
 - We do an annual program evaluation that we ask the families to participate in. For staff, I assess the skills and performance of the staff which assesses them in a number of categories annually – D
 - We use the parent surveys from NAEYC to gage the progress in the program. I also use the staff surveys from NAEYC to see what staff are thinking and plan from there. Each staff has a professional goal plan they do annually where they set their own goals. We look at that mid-year to see how they are progressing – E
 - We have an evaluation process that we do, but we also set specific goals, not just educational goals, but what do you really want to accomplish this year in your content area. I meet with all the people I directly supervise at least once a month - F
- **How do you assess your progress and achievement? How do you use that information?**
 - I have my goals and evaluations. In addition to that, the university has evaluation forms that we do at the university level – A
 - I've gotten more confident in what I'm doing. I look at the program when I came and I look at the what the program is now, and it's a legitimate program and they (the children) are getting what we call quality education – B
 - For my personal assessment, it's parent's testimonials. I have a private suggestion box, a completely open door policy, anytime, anywhere they can call me, they can sit down and meet with me, they can write me a letter, they can write me an email – C
 - Performance goals for the program: This is a big way to make sure we are meeting whatever the goals are for that year –D
 - I meet once a month formally with the President/CEO. We have other meetings, and we meet with the President on a monthly basis, but we have individual meetings. We touch base to see where we are and what kind of things we need to focus on - F
- **How does this progress and achievement impact your organization? How does it impact staff?**
 - It's reviewed mid-year and updated once a year. We use that data to make sure everyone keeps moving forward. – A

- The teachers getting along better. They trust me more and now the parents now understand where I'm coming from, it's more cohesive. And open doors. I tell the teachers you have to have an open door policy. It's a big achievement - B
 - In spite of so much competition, just surviving this economy is the assessment itself that I use - C
 - I have an evaluative conversation with each director every year and I use that as an opportunity for them to tell me what they've accomplished in the past year. By looking at the staff engagement surveys and the family engagement surveys to see how satisfied they are in the program. And I can tell a lot by the scores that I get -D
 - I take all this information from surveys and I will share it with the staff to see how we can make improvements - E
 - The better I feel about what direction the board wants me to go and as I get feedback then I'm able to better pull the rest of the team in whatever direction - F
- d. **Organizational climate is defined as the distinct atmosphere that characterizes work settings and the conditions that exist in the workplace based on the collective perceptions of workers.**

Probes:

- **Tell me about the climate of your organization.**
- We're very diverse - C
- we are really forward thinking - D
- **How would you describe the organizational climate in your program? What would make you think this way about your program?**
- It's very cooperative and collaborative. It's very cooperative, and very friendly. It's very comfortable, very welcoming and inviting. We're very lucky. Our staff is very collaborative, and so are our families, but I think it stems from our staff - A
- It's very laid back, very informal, very open to parents, warm classrooms. It's all in the perception. We're very open to their needs, we're very flexible. they come here because of our flexibility - B
- We are happy and laid back because that's who I am - C
- Forward thinking. I think the autonomy we have with the parent company that they expect us to run a quality program - D
- Respectful. I try to encourage the teachers to be leaders in their classroom - E
- It's a climate of always changing. It's never status quo. It's always evolving and changing and growing. Change is good, growth is good. We are always thinking of growing and moving in different direction - F

- **How do you think your administrative style influence the overall climate in your early childhood organization?**

- I think I've **put forth the expectation that's how we will behave**. There was definitely a shift when I took over as administrator. So I would definitely **say a lot of what is going on has something to do with the leadership** – A
- I'm **mellow**. But **I'm not formal with them**; it's all about their kids. It's not about me and I think they like that –B
- I always feel that they need to **take the message back to their class, to your team**. They are the **biggest extension** of me – C
- I think that we are **thoughtful**; I think that we're **prepared**; I think we're **consistent**. So I do think that I **do have an impact** on that, I think I do try to keep everybody calm about what's going on, and let's manage this in a professional, thoughtful way – D
- I try to help people have **the responsibility** and **take ownership** of whatever their role is in the school is. . **Clear expectations** – E
- I think because I'm always thinking **3 steps ahead**. I'm **visionary**. I'm always **thinking 2 or 3 years ahead of time**. I give them **just the start and let them take it**. Everybody has great ideas. I don't necessarily have to come up with the final plan, I just have to **see what they come up with and they come up with** great stuff. - F

- **What are some of the behaviors you would say characterize the climate in your setting?**

- **Respect, collaboration, and dependability**. – A
- **Informal, flexible** -B
- **Playful, Happy, Collaborative**; that would be one big thing and I think it makes them feel **invested** and they **take ownership** of the project when they are **involved in the process** – C
- **Professional, Nurturing, Consistent**. You got to get an **element of fun** – D
- **Respectful** – E
- Always looking for **what's new out there** - F

- **In what ways is it collaborative? Tell me how you view the camaraderie in your program or about times staff do not get along? Why is this happening?**

- **Nothing happens here without internal input**. I think because that's how I do things. We try to **get some input** and get some ideas and **other perspectives** of the consequences of all positions. . We try **to think it through**. If it's going to affect you, at least we want to get your input before it happens – A
- I always have them **bring an idea to a staff meeting**. They have to tell what they're doing and **share their ideas with other classes**. – B
- They **take ownership** of the project when they are **involved in the process** – C

- During work, **staff meetings**. These **little contests** that we do. We have a mentor who is a staff member at each center that is identified as a mentor and they help us out with our orientation training for new staff – D
 - I try to help people **have the responsibility** and take **ownership** of whatever their role is in the school is. . Clear expectations – E
 - I think because I'm always **thinking 3 steps ahead**. I'm **visionary**. I'm always **thinking 2 or 3 years ahead of time**. I give them **just the start and let them take it**. Everybody has great ideas. I don't necessarily have to come up with the final plan, I just have to **see what they come up with and they come up with** great stuff - F
- **How do you think your administrative/leadership style impacts the daily operations in your program? Why do you think this way?**
 - We try to **get some input** and get some ideas and **other perspectives** of the consequences of all positions. . We try **to think it through**. If it's going to affect you, at least we want to get your input before it happens – A
 - I'm out there at the door at 9:00 saying good morning to everybody. At 12:00 saying goodbye to everybody. **They see me**. And **they see me in the classrooms** too, so they know I'm in there. **They see me as visible and out there so that affects the climate** –B
 - I think it's **my presence**. I'm very **hands-on** with staff and that makes a big difference. I **don't micromanage**. That's what **makes it a better partnership** – C
 - I think that **going out to the centers** and them **seeing me**, having them to be able to **ask questions**, having them feel that I noticed – D
 - I try to help people **have the responsibility** and **take ownership** of whatever their role is in the school is. . Clear expectations – E
 - People will say **you are always so happy**. When I'm explaining what I do, I'm **passionate about** it and I love what I do and get really into it. They are like; **you can sell that to anybody**. I think that **transcends to other people**. - F
- **Tell me if there is anything you would like to change about the organizational climate of your program? If so, how would you go about changing it?**
 - I would just want to **be bigger**. There's' definitely a **need for it here**. Everything has **grown except for us** and we are in the same exact classrooms – A
 - I would like to see a **little more structure** but it's not the makeup of the community – B
 - **Financial status**. I would like to have **more educated staff**. – C
 - I'd give everybody the **parents perspective** because it's easy to judge them - D
 - I would like to change in this building **are related to facilities because this is an old building** I wish the head teacher had **more leadership**. - E.
 - The **difference between programs in our agency**, if we were **more in sync**. And we are working towards that and everyone is making a conscience effort to really have things transcend more across programs - F

- **Give me examples of things you do as an administrator that you would say positively impacts the climate in your organization.**
- I think it's **working with the teachers and the families** –A
- I'm **hands on**, the fact that I'm **visible**, that I **show leadership** because I'm **there doing and with them** and know where they came from because I came as a teacher. I **understand the needs of the staff**. – B
- For staff, is **education**. Staff has **flexibility with their schedule** – C
- So I do always **try to know about the employees**, something about them – D
- I believe in **professional development** so the teachers get time off and are able to leave – E
- I'm **committed to the program**. I **never see anything as something we cannot attain** – F

APPENDIX G: Journal

Journal

- January 4, 2012: Received IRB Approval
- January 4, 2012: Purchased MLQ online survey from Mind Garden, Inc.
- January 5-6, 2012: Prepared final NAEYC list of administrators who will receive an email invite to participate in study. All email addresses were added to the walden.edu email address book.
- January 7, 2012: Emailed 88 administrators from the final NAEYC list to invite them to participate in the study. Also emailed the 88 administrators from the MLQ survey to complete the survey and to complete the Consent Form.
- January 17, 2012: Sent out reminder emails to all potential participants who did not respond to the initial email about participating in the Study. Asked them to respond by January 23, 2012.
- January 23, 2012: Of the 88 emails sent out, 6 potential participants whose scores indicated they have characteristics of transformational leaders were contacted for the study by email. Three responded immediately. I contacted them by phone and made interview appointments for January 25, 2012 (Administrator A), January 26, 2012 (Administrator B), and January 28, 2012 (Administrator C).
- January 24, 2012: I confirmed the interview appointments with the three participants through email and phone contact.
- January 25, 2012: I interviewed Administrator A at 10:00 am at her early childhood center. I secured the Consent Form. I immediately came home to transcribe the audiotape and emailed the transcript to her to review.
- January 26, 2012: I interviewed Administrator B at 9:30 am at her early childhood center. I secured the Consent Form. I went to work and when I came home, I transcribed the audiotaped interview in the evening and emailed the transcript to her. Administrator A emailed me stating she reviewed the transcript and she approved it without changes.

Two more interviews were scheduled with administrators for the following week on February 8, 2012 at 10:00 am and 12:00 Both interviews will be at the sites of the administrators. They will be titled Administrator D and Administrator E.

- January 28, 2012: I interviewed Administrator C at 4:00 pm at a neutral location. I secured the Consent Form.
- January 29, 2012: I transcribed Administrator C's audiotaped interview and emailed the transcript to her for her review.
- January 30, 2012: Administrator B and Administrator C emailed me stating they reviewed the transcripts and they both approved them without changes.
- One more administrator scheduled an interview for February 13, 2012 at 9:30 am at her early childhood center. This will be Administrator F
- Peer debriefer reviewed interview transcripts from Administrators A, B, and C.
- January 31, 2012: I began the data analysis process by using the transcribed interviews. Data was color-coded and grouped according to interview questions and probes. Similar statements were grouped together to form meanings. The data was transferred to a Word Document titled Interview Analysis to make it easier and clearer to read the color-coded document. A draft of Section 4 was started.
- February 1, 2012: Analysis of the data continued and the draft of Section 4 continued.
- Peer debriefer reviewed initial data analysis.
- February 2-3, 2012 Analysis of the data continued. Drafts of Section 4 were started to configure headings for Section 4. Section 5 headings were also drafted.
- February 4, 2012 Sent 2 email confirmations for interview appointments for Administrator D and Administrator E that are

scheduled with early childhood administrators on Wednesday, February 8, 2012 at 10:00 am and 12:00 pm.

Continued data analysis and drafting Sections 4 and 5.

February 5, 2012 Administrator D confirmed interview appointment via email for February 8, 2012 at 10:00 am at her location.

Continued data analysis and drafting Sections 4 and 5.

February 6-7, 2012 Continued data analysis and drafting Sections 4 and 5. Sent second reminder email to Administrator E about interview appointment on February 8, 2012 at 12:00 pm.

Administrator E confirmed interview appointment via email for February 8, 2012 at 12:00 pm at her location.

February 8, 2012 Interviewed Administrator D at 10:00 am and secured Consent Form. Interviewed Administrator E at 12:00 pm and secured Consent Form. Transcribed both interviews and read each one twice for accuracy. I emailed transcriptions to administrators for review.

February 9, 2012 Administrator D and Administrator E emailed me approving the interview transcriptions without any changes.

Continued data analysis using data from the new interviews.

Sent email to Administrator F confirming out interview at her location on Monday, February 13, 2012 at 9:30 am.

Peer debriefer reviewed interview transcripts from Administrators D and E.

February 11-12, 2012 Continued data analysis, coding, and theme development including interviews with Administrators D and E. Continued Drafts of Sections 4 and Sections 5.

Peer debriefer reviewed the data analysis materials from all five administrators.

- February 13, 2012 Interviewed Administrator F at 9:30 am at her early childhood center and secured the Consent Form. I went back to work after the interview. In the evening, I transcribed the interview and read it twice for accuracy. I emailed the transcription to Administrator F for review.
- February 14, 2012 Administrator F emailed me approving the transcript without any changes. Peer debriefer reviewed the data from the sixth administrator and reviewed the drafts of Sections 4 and Sections 5.

CURRICULUM VITAE

LORI HAYES

EDUCATION

Doctor of Education Major: Administrator Leadership
April 2012
Walden University, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Master of Arts Major: Management
August 1997
National University, San Diego, California

Bachelor of Arts Major: Early Childhood Education
June 1987
Kean University, Union, New Jersey

New Jersey Teacher of Nursery School Certification issued 6/87
New Jersey Elementary School Teacher Certification issued 6/87

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Program Manager
Center for Family Resources
Ringwood, New Jersey
2005-present

Lead and oversee the daily operations of eight Head Start/Early Head Start sites in Upper Passaic County, NJ for 488 children and families. Directly supervise ten staff while working in conjunction with a variety of component areas including social services, education, health, nutrition, and disabilities. Serve as a mentor to staff and parents in all the above-mentioned areas. Provide oversight all grants including grant writing and implementation of grants in the agency. Maintain oversight of the agency's tracking system including analyzing all data and using the information for planning. Provide ongoing training to all staff through workshops, conferences, and one-on-one meetings.

Director of Association Child Care Services*Metropolitan YMCA of the Oranges**Livingston, New Jersey**2004-2005*

Provided leadership and guidance to the day-to-day operations of four sites of the YMCA Child Care Program in Livingston, Maplewood, and South Orange, NJ. Provided oversight of a \$3.8 million program serving over 500 children and families with over 100 staff. Served as an Early Childhood Consultant for all childcare programs to ensure licensing regulations and NAEYC accreditation were met. Substitute Kindergarten Teacher for the Kindergarten program as needed. Wrote and received a \$40,000 grant to enhance the YMCA childcare program.

Head Start Area Director*Neighborhood House Association / North Coastal Area Office**Carlsbad, California**2000-2003*

Provided leadership for the daily operations of the seven North Coastal Head Start Centers in San Diego, CA under the Neighborhood House Association Head Start Program. Directly supervised 14 Area Management staff and worked within the community with local agencies and Head Start parents. Mentor staff on a regular basis and ensured licensing and NAEYC mandates were followed. Ensured all monthly reports were completed in a timely manner.

Head Start Center Director*Neighborhood House Association / St. Leo's Head Start**Solana Beach, California**1996-2000*

Provided the oversight and management of the day-to-day operations of one Head Start location in Solana Beach, CA. Along with education staff, planned and implemented the Creative Curriculum and developed appropriate practices for children 3 to 5 years of age in a multicultural, state licensed, NAEYC accredited program. Worked closely with Head Start parents to increase their understanding of the importance of their role. Provided direct supervision of ten

staff members.

Head Start Preschool Teacher

*Neighborhood House Association / Encinitas Head Start
Encinitas, California
1995-1996*

Provided direction and management of one Head Start classroom in Encinitas, CA including the organization, planning, and implementation of the daily schedule for twenty children 3 to 5 years of age in a full day session. Worked with parents in the classroom on a daily basis. Worked in conjunction with other education and social service staff and supervised one teacher assistant.

Lead Preschool Teacher and Assistant Kindergarten Teacher

*Bethlehem Preschool and Kindergarten
Encinitas, California
1991-1995*

Preschool duties included complete supervision in all aspects of the classroom environment for 2 part-day classrooms each containing 12 children aged 3 to 5 years. Teaching responsibilities included creation and implementation of all lesson plans and coordination of all parent contact. Kindergarten duties included assisting the lead teacher in all aspects of the class of 20 children including reading, math work preparation, and training parent volunteers on a daily basis.

SPECIAL TRAINING

- Management, Administration, and Leadership / Adult Supervision
- Analyzing Data Systems and Grant Writing
- Microsoft Office, Blackboard System, Internet
- Parent and Family Engagement
- Trainer: Infant/Toddler/Preschool, Curriculum and Assessment, Management Systems

RELATED ACTIVITIES

Vice President of the Central Affiliate of NJAEYC

Head Start Monitoring Reviewer for DANYA International since 2005

Professional Impact New Jersey Advisory Board Member
Proficient in Conversational Spanish