

UTILIZING FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE THEORY TO ANALYZE THE INFLUENCE
OF LEADERSHIP STYLES ON CULTURE AND CLIMATE IN CHILDCARE
PROGRAMS

Neffitina Thompson, M.S. HRM

A Dissertation in Practice Submitted to
The School of Education and Health Sciences
of the UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for The Degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON
June 2025



APPROVAL OF THE DISSERTATION

Name: Thompson, Neffitina, Odessa

APPROVED BY:

Aaliyah Baker, Ph. D.
Committee Chair
Professional Title (if desired)

Shauna Adams, Ph. D.
Internal Committee Member
Professional Title (if desired)

Patricia Welch, Ph. D.
External Committee Member
Professional Title (if desired)

Copyright by
Neffitina Odessa Thompson
All rights reserved
2025

Executive Summary

Culture and climate are key topics in child care settings, and this participatory action research study aims to explore effective ways to support leaders and professionals in the childcare industry. Using the Funds of Knowledge (FoK) framework, this study gathered insights from leaders and childcare workers through surveys and interviews to better understand their perspectives. The findings indicate a strong demand for increased support that is tailored to their unique needs. To address this, an intervention-based model of leadership training and collaboration is proposed, with the goal of enhancing career development for childcare professionals and improving interpersonal skills to strengthen relationships between leaders and staff.

The primary goal of this research is to examine the impact of applying the Funds of Knowledge framework to explore leadership styles and its influence on the culture and climate within childcare programs. Cultivating an inclusive and positive culture in these programs is essential for creating a diverse and supportive environment, where the knowledge, skills, and expertise of childcare workers are valued. Through qualitative research, this study investigates leadership styles through the FoK lens, identifying key factors that promote motivation, inclusivity, and collaboration. The aim is to foster strong working relationships and enhance the delivery of high-quality childcare services.

The study focused on the affinity of positive workplace relationships, that abdicate a positive culture and climate, ultimately leading to high quality childcare programs. The methodology employed involves a comparative analysis of user data from lived experiences of childcare workers, coupled with in-depth surveys and interviews.

Findings revealed a clear relationship between social factors of leadership and staff roles & perceptions. Further revealing a multifaceted set of challenges and opportunities associated with adverse feelings, behaviors, and factors that stifle intrinsic motivation and collaboration amongst childcare staff. Furthermore, this study findings underscores the importance of developing strategies that promote informed and inclusive workplace environments by connecting the Funds of Knowledge framework to intimate settings such as childcare programs.

In conclusion this study contributes to the gap in literature and research in developing effective leadership strategies in childcare programs, by utilizing a Funds of Knowledge approach, to create a more positive workplace culture, reduce staff turnover, and support child care organizations in providing high quality childcare.

To my mom, siblings, my beautiful children and grandchildren, family and close friends,
who supported me along this journey, I thank you, and I love you!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my uncle Dr. Fred Burton, PhD, and Dr. Patricia Welch, PhD, who recognized my potential early on, and manifested this momentous accomplishment in my spirit, I give a heartfelt thank you. As I culminate this journey, I must pay homage to the healing power of daily affirmations and God's mercy and forgiveness..... Psalm 32 "I love you Isief Grand Thompson" you will live forever in my heart.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPROVAL OF THE DISSERTATION	ii
DEDICATION	iii
LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES	ix
CHAPTER I STUDY PROPOSAL	1
Statement of the Problem	1
Leadership	2
Interpersonal Relationships	3
Culture and Climate	4
Funds of Knowledge	5
Wages and Turnover	6
Overview of framework, methods, and general research questions	7
Integrated Literature Review - Framework Informing the Study	10
Roles and Perceptions of Practitioners	15
Labels	16
Motivation	17
Self-efficacy	18
Job satisfaction	18

Social Factors & Teacher Attrition	19
Workplace Dynamics	20
Attitude	22
Action Research Design and Methods	23
Positioning of study	23
Site or population selection	24
Researcher role and positionality	24
Workplace Dynamics	26
Ethical & political considerations	27
Data Collection Methods	28
Interviews	30
Data analysis procedures	30
Procedures to address trustworthiness, validity, credibility, and transferability	32
CHAPTER II RESULTS OF RESEARCH	34
Reporting Qualitative Results	34
Credibility	35
Transferability	36
Confirmability	37

Qualitative Data Collection Tools	39
Survey	40
Semi-structured interviews	40
Journal entry	40
Research Question 1 How do relationships and expectations contribute to or reinforce staff motivation and inclusiveness between leaders and staff?	40
Research Question 2 How can leaders help staff feel included and valued in the program?	40
Research Question 3 How can leaders intentionally develop relationships with staff that encompass and expand on the experiences and expertise of the team that aligns with the Quality Assurance program goals?	40
Research Question 4 How can Funds of Knowledge be utilized to improve staff career development and quality assurance in childcare settings?	40
Data Analysis by Themes	42
Roles & Perceptions	42
Social Factors	44
Feelings	45
Collaboration	45
Behaviors	46
Self-Concept	47

Intrinsic Motivation	49
Summary of Analysis	49
Action Plan	51
CHAPTER III DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION/ INTERVENTION/CHANGE PROCESS	53
Objectives & Outcomes	54
Analysis of Implementation to Date and /or future implementation	57
Results of action/intervention/change process	60
Connecting Theory to Practice	62
Implications for Practice and Future Research	64
Conclusion	65
APPENDIX A: TIMELINE OF DISSERTATION IN PRACTICE COMPLETION	68
APPENDIX B: GUIDELINES FOR EXTERNAL COMMITTEE MEMBER	72
APPENDIX C INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR SEMI- STRUCTURED INTERVIEW (FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE)	74
APPENDIX D SEMI-STRUCTURED (FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE) INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	75
REFERENCES	76

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 2.1 <i>Research Questions and Data Collection Tools</i>	39
Table 2.2 <i>Participant Quotes, Emerging Themes, Assertions</i>	41
Figure 2.1 <i>Thematic Data Analysis</i>	52
Figure 3.1 <i>Fund of Knowledge</i>	62
Figure 3.2 <i>Fishbone Diagram of Culture and Climate/Child Care Programs</i>	65

CHAPTER I

STUDY PROPOSAL

The success of childcare programs are directly linked to culture and climate, and the quality of relationships within these educational settings. How individuals interact with each other, and their level of trust and autonomy with each other, are building blocks for providing a nurturing environment for young children to thrive and develop socially. A healthy and productive working environment for staff, in childcare settings, aligns naturally with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, by providing physiological, safe space, to develop a sense of belonging, improve one's self esteem, and improve the quality of life for childcare workers.

Statement of the Problem

As a former early childhood educator, I have had the privilege of supporting and engaging staff in various childcare settings in my career. The building blocks for establishing safe and supportive child care environments are the result of having a highly effective leader. The purpose of this dissertation in practice is to examine organizational leadership styles in childcare settings and the role childcare program leadership plays in creating safe and supportive environments for all. Instructional and organizational issues often appear in the interpersonal relationships in the workplace, staff turnover, culture, climate, and issues of diversity in childcare educational settings. The gap in the current research does not account for studies on the impact of effective leadership in childcare educational settings and there is minimal focus on professional development of

leadership roles in childcare workers, as it relates to improving the culture and climate in childcare settings. This study seeks to make a significant contribution to this area of research by giving voice to childcare professionals who work under the leadership of senior childcare professionals in their place of employment. This study looks at the dynamics of interpersonal relationships between childcare staff and leadership, then contributes to the current body of literature by providing possible solutions to theoretical systemic issues that contribute to the quality of life for childcare workers and plays an important role in the quality of care provided to children and their families.

Leadership

Leaders in childcare settings are often promoted from within, based on years of experience, continued education, and organizational needs. When workers in these professions are promoted, they assume the responsibilities of leading others, and are often not formally trained in leadership skills. The lack of formal leadership training supports a negative culture and climate, fuels staff turnover, and contributes to poor quality of care.

Leadership Styles and interpersonal relationships play a critical role in the culture & climate of childcare programs (Nupponen, 2006). Effective leadership creates a positive, nurturing, and stimulating environment for children to grow and flourish. How leaders relate to the staff and how teachers and support staff feel about their professional role are essential factors in improving morale and creating a collaborative and inclusive working environment for educators in this profession (Takagi et al., 2020). Effective leadership is the key ingredient in the success of organizations, contributing greatly to performance of staff, and culture and climate (Truskie, 2002). As Kivunja (2015: p.1171) says:

Leadership is important because it is responsible for calling for a commitment and passion from every member of the childcare setting to make a contribution which results in a positive difference in the lives of the children and will help lay the foundation which will help children develop into productive citizens who will be able to live and work productively in increasingly dynamically complex societies.

Leadership is the driving force behind operational excellence in organizations where staff are motivated to action and inspired to pursue opportunities with courage, passion and resilience. In my efforts to contribute to the body of knowledge in leadership within the childcare educational setting, I focus the reader to consider the social building blocks of interpersonal relationships in childcare, and the need to provide space for childcare workers to see themselves as leaders and be seen by others as leaders (Ashford & DeRue, 2012). Effective leadership is essential for a healthy organizational culture and working environment, laying a solid foundation for the employees' happiness (Kujur & Ye, 2018). To effectively learn together, the construction of meaning and knowledge should collectively and collaboratively merge succinctly (Lambert, 1998).

Interpersonal Relationships

The link between interpersonal relationships and leadership skills creates problems in child care settings between the staff's relationships and are contributing factors that impact collaboration and impede the focus on quality assurance program goals that support students and teachers in educational settings (Akaba et al., 2022).

Positive interpersonal relationships support greater clarity of program policies, improve innovativeness, encourage professional growth and development, and lays the foundation for a higher perceived level of decision-making influence (Bloom, Sheer, 1992).

Socially and emotionally supportive working environments make staff feel valued and appreciated (Takagi et al., 2020). This justifies the need to advance research into the benefits of retaining a professional, skilled, and engaged workforce child care educational program setting, which is vital to the economic and social productivity and trajectories in the field of child care (McDonald et al., 2018). Verbal and nonverbal body language, rapport, response reaction in stressful situations, and delivery of feedback are behaviors that create barriers in child care workers' quality of work life, and justifies the need to explore the dynamics of leadership styles, and how these dynamics erode relationships and impact team collaboration, self-determination, and job satisfaction and contribute greatly to the quality of care provided to children.

These contributing factors lay the foundation and create a need to explore relationships in childcare educational settings, focusing on ways that leadership can engage, collaborate, and build lasting relationships with staff that help to combat teacher turnover and ultimately change the culture and climate in childcare settings.

Culture and Climate

Childcare workers work in dynamic environments in a variety of settings within the childcare industry, and the climate that makes up a childcare setting directly impacts the well being of the staff caring for children. When childcare workers have a higher perception of workplace climate, such as supportive relationships with their colleagues, they are more likely to initiate child centered practices and beliefs, (Hur, et al. 2015). The Data from this research will be used to develop future training programs for childcare program staff to reduce staff turnover and improve the culture and climate within the

profession. Surveys will be used as a tool to capture descriptive qualitative data from childcare staff in before and after school programs.

There is a need to improve the culture and climate in childcare programs, therefore justifying this study, designed to tap into the funds of knowledge and human resources within these childcare environments, that succinctly align childcare programs, with quality assurance goals and outcomes, (McDonald et al., 2018; Hur et al., 2022).

Funds of Knowledge

Funds of Knowledge originated in the early 1980's, to dismantle deficit thinking in education (Gonzalez et al., 2005). The dynamics of diverse leadership styles, interpersonal relationships, staff motivation, and culture and climate, contribute towards the interconnectedness and commitment of childcare workers' interest in achieving and maintaining high quality childcare programs.

This study will attempt to apply the conceptual framework of Funds of Knowledge, to explain the value of childcare workers' idiosyncratic characteristics that shape their personality. The knowledge captured from a person's beliefs, values, preferences, opinions, ideas, past experiences, future goals, and work ethics, help shape a person's sense of self-actualization, and help childcare workers carry out the work of the organization effectively each day (Ambile, et al. 2004).

Funds of Knowledge (FoK) in childcare settings can have both positive and negative impacts on the career trajectories of childcare workers and is often threatened by the added burden of low wages, and challenging working conditions. These dynamic circumstances provide a plausible explanation to some of the turnover and challenges experienced within these settings. However, the steady baseline of the workforce that

chooses to stay in childcare suggests that employees in these settings do so regardless of low pay and difficult working conditions, because they are committed to the children and families they serve (Hur et al., 2023).

Prior researchers (Recchia & McDevitt, 2018; Volman & Gilde, 2020; Moll, et.al, 1992; Dugan, et. al, 2012; Moll, et. al, 2013; Macias & Townsend, 2021), have applied a Funds of knowledge approach to studying the effectiveness of teaching strategies, of educators, when working with children from disadvantaged backgrounds and children with learning barriers such as language, different cultures represented in the home, parents' socioeconomic status, education levels, and the child's exposure to prior skills necessary to excel academically in school. However, I am curious to study the positive impacts of implementing funds of knowledge theory into the dynamics of childcare workers' lived experiences in their professional lives, to which I believe that adopting a funds of knowledge approach to leadership training, and the development of interpersonal skills, will contribute to better quality of care.

Wages and Turnover

It is no secret that wages for non-degreed childcare workers is subpar, and contributes to a negative culture and climate. Lower working wages and teacher turnover contribute to poor instructional pedagogy, such as classroom management and relationships between the teacher and the child (Hur et al., 2023). Teacher turnover rates in various childcare educational studies indicate that teacher experiences, working conditions, and program quality, are equally as important as wages and benefits (Gruenwald et al., 2022).

This study expands on traditional research, to focus on childcare settings, where professional certifications are not a baseline requirement for advancement and promotions. In these professional settings, staff's perceptions of their roles can be improved through intentional focus on leveraging FoK as a framework for professional development inside the community of childhood educational settings.

Overview of framework, methods, and general research questions

Phenomenology will describe the phenomena researched in this study (Hesse-Biber, 2017) and frame the Funds of Knowledge conceptual framework underpinning this research. The study seeks to identify the importance of utilizing Funds of Knowledge in leadership by fostering staff motivation and improving the culture and climate in childcare settings. Recognizing the importance of culture and environment in childcare settings, Funds of Knowledge provides context and frames this study, utilizing methodologies that allow several iterations of research, where each stage in the process involves reflections from participants and which I believe are vital to improving the culture and climate in childcare settings.

Funds of Knowledge (FoK) theory raises several research questions about leadership styles and how these styles impact motivation and increase inclusiveness within childcare settings. The questions this study will address are:

1. How do relationships and expectations contribute to or reinforce staff motivation and inclusiveness between leaders and staff?
2. How can leaders help staff feel included and valued in the program?

3. How can leaders intentionally develop relationships with staff that encompass and expand on the experiences and expertise of the team that aligns with the Quality Assurance program goals?
4. How can Funds of Knowledge be utilized to improve staff career development and quality assurance in childcare settings?

A secondary focus of this study is on understanding how these dynamics contribute to motivation, culture, and climate and form collaborative work ethics among workers.

The philosophical assumption framed within this qualitative study is an Interpretivist realist epistemology, derived from the understanding that people conceptualize being happy or unhappy based on how "they" interpret or see situations and not on the actual concrete facts of the cases, generating meaning based on their reality (Payne, 1974).

Rooted in Interpretivists' philosophical assumption and framework, seen through the lens of the Funds of Knowledge framework (FoK), the focus on identifying effective leadership styles using Funds of Knowledge theory, will be used to support the culture and climate within childcare settings. The research seeks to determine the underlying factors that adversely affect collaboration, attitude, behavior, self-concept, and intrinsic motivation of staff, then attempts to understand how these dynamics affect the quality of care in childcare programs.

Funds of Knowledge theory will be used to examine the interconnectedness of the characteristics and dynamics of different leadership styles and behaviors.

Power and agency of teachers, in professional settings such as elementary school teachers has been the primary focus of research into using Funds of Knowledge to better

understand teachers' perceptions of industry specific dynamics, including professional development, and work/life balance, and how that plays out in their professional careers (Rodriguez, 2013). The relationships that shaped my career in childcare were shaped through the experiences in childcare, from a top-down conundrum of relationships and its impact on my level of agency behavior and citizen interactions (Lipsky, 2010).

This philosophical approach was a seamless and natural connection to understanding that biases and preconceived notions acquired through observations in childcare programs and previous professional roles in childcare regulatory compliance, and quality assurance of childcare settings frames my ontological perspective of FoK, through the lens of an interpretivist.

Qualitative data collection methods will use descriptive methods that analyze different aspects of leadership in educational settings (Amtu et al., 2020; Falender & Mehrabian, 1979). An author's positionality, reflects one's ethics, values, and ideas supporting the appropriateness and usefulness of surveys, Hesse-Biber (2017). Justification for aligning the results to specific, measurable, actionable, relevant, and time bound SMART goals (Wiggins, 2005) and frames the participatory action research project, conducted later in this study, designed around improving collaboration, attitude, behavior, self-concept, and increasing intrinsic motivation in childcare settings, using a similar methodology (Duval et al., 2020; Merrill et al., 2020; Drange & Ronning, 2020; Simpkins et al., 2016; Hotz & Xiao, 2011; Mampane & Mapane, 2022).

The use of the S.M.A.R.T. goals strategy in other populations and contexts and creating practical relevance through advancing theory in education (Bahrami et al., 2022).

The SMART goals framing the quality assurance component of this study are tied directly to outcomes that:

- Increase collaboration, teamwork, and strengthen relationships between staff.
- Improve the quality of care provided to the children in care.

Integrated Literature Review - Framework Informing the Study

High quality, positive adult relationships help to develop children's social and emotional needs. Childcare workers are instrumental in the social and emotional development of children, and therefore the relationships that they build within childcare settings should be genuine, positive, uplifting, and rewarding for the adults who supervise the children, within these settings. The relationships that adults in childcare develop with the children, lay the foundation for children to feel safe, and reinforce their sense of security, allowing them to think critically and creatively.

Prior research on culture and climate in childcare educational settings was robust, with respect to prior research on the external factors, such as historically low wages, high turnover rates, and a plagued sense of employee satisfaction in the workplace. Alma Harris reported of her research during a systematic literature review on the same topic reported that “*published work on leadership in early education is sparse and difficult to locate*” (Bush, 2012). Yet, prior research inadequately addresses systemic problems within the childcare settings, such as interpersonal relationships with coworkers, career advancement, effective team management, and high-quality leadership training in childcare settings. Adding to the dynamics of career advancement in childcare professions are the few formal qualifications required of this sector of workers, (Bush, 2008).

This literature review, written from an Interpretivist perspective, and through the lens of a former childcare worker, woman of color, and emerging social justice leader, is designed using a funnel method to synthesize prior empirical, and qualitative data.

Understanding why people do what they do, how they interact with the world around them, and what makes up their “truth” will help future leaders in child care to understand how they perceive their reality amid the culture and climate in early childhood education, moving beyond the mindset of the “*what works*” agenda most often favored, by empiricists to consider works, under certain conditions and in certain circumstances, and why, Tikley, (2015). The thematic literature review starts with critically analyzing the “why”? Why do *we* stay in childcare? I know why I stayed; however I now know that my circumstances were quite different from my brethren and those who follow in my footsteps. As a social justice leader, I hope to change the narrative of “why” we stay in childcare, through participatory based participatory action research projects that repaint the portrait of the lived experiences of childcare workers.

The Funds of Knowledge theoretical framework guides the literature review for this study by acknowledging the uniqueness that childcare workers bring to the field from their cultural background, educational trajectories, linguistics, family structures, and life circumstances. These characteristics shape who they are as present-day childcare workers and express the importance of recognizing different perceptions of leadership from a holistic perspective (Macias, Townsend, 2021).

The literature revealed specific ways in which leaders can tap into the knowledge hidden within the walls of their organization, suggesting in part an informal and relational approach to using funds of knowledge (FoK) to bridge the gap between leaders and their

staff and foster authentic, interpersonal relationships that build upon a positive culture and climate in childcare settings. Women disproportionately make up more than one-half of all workers in frontline industries, such as childcare. According to a recent survey by the Center for Economic and Policy Research, Analysis of American Community Survey (2014-2018), a 5-year estimate showed that 85.2% of childcare and social service workers are women, people of color, and immigrants (Rho et al. 2020).

Preservice educators from varying backgrounds in childcare explain to some extent why there are different views of child care practices (Recchia & McDevitt, 2018). Cultural perspectives on how to keep children safe, cultural perspectives around feeding children, varying perspectives on what constitutes the role of a teacher, language used in childcare, age-appropriate materials used in child care, communicating with families, and cultural attitudes are vital to forming relationships with other adults (Garavuso, 2016; Gupta, 2006).

Teacher mentors often try to identify ways to support and acknowledge the diversity of teacher identities in the childcare setting but miss opportunities to connect with childcare workers more intimately by developing practices that recognize the funds of knowledge these individuals bring to the classroom. The need to create a safe and supportive environment for immigrant teachers and build on prior teaching pedagogy that these workers come into the profession having already developed, as part of their pedagogy, create barriers to developing tools necessary to negotiate conflicts while simultaneously being able to acquire current childcare techniques typically used in childcare in the United States.

These techniques often differ from childcare settings with which the teacher may be more familiar (Macia & Townsend, 2021; Moll, Soto-Santiago & Schwartz, 2013) because of the sociocultural aspects of historical experiences that were unique and intimate to the teacher. Seeking funds of knowledge as compliments to teaching philosophies will empower and motivate childcare workers by allowing them to be authentic to their culture while developing new teaching practices.

Funds of Knowledge (FoK) within childcare settings need to be more intimately researched from a historical context, as it relates specifically to childcare workers from different cultural backgrounds, because child-rearing beliefs and practices differ widely across cultures and are often different from the Western culture of child care (Recchia & McDevitt, 2018) and ideally seeks to understand Funds of Knowledge from a cultural perspective and highlight the need for creating intentional space for reflexivity in teacher education programs that allow immigrant pre-service teachers to seamlessly bring their funds of knowledge to developing a dominant and formal education in child care pedagogy.

As part of a multidisciplinary case study, researchers found that immigrant preservice teachers could benefit from a hybrid approach to reflecting on their teaching practices while developing their own teaching identities (Moll & Santiago, 1998). Focusing on differences in cultures and with respect for the dominant discourse on how to best teach and care for children, enabled the researchers to develop key research questions that specifically address nuances in how immigrant teachers integrate their cultures and identities into their prescribed pedagogy. (Recchia, and McDevitt, 2018).

Teacher engagement, interactions between childcare staff, attitudes and interpersonal relationships between teachers and child care center directors, collaboration between teachers, and teacher assistants, self-confidence of teachers and aids, and positive outlook on teaching in the childcare profession, create motivation and self-efficacy and are attributed to using funds of knowledge in the social and personal domain (Volman & Gilde, 2021).

Shifting gears to the Funds of Knowledge that teachers, support staff, and families bring from their life skills and career goals to their professions in child care creates a basis for understanding the households that childcare workers *migrate* from. The resulting dynamic debunks myths of preconceived notions that childcare workers are less educated than professionally trained teachers with formal undergraduate degrees in education based on their acceptance of lower wages and social norms (Moll et al. 2009).

How can one understand childcare workers' lived experiences migrating from these communities without a thorough understanding of the sociocultural building blocks of experiences, resources, and knowledge of people, especially those from changing communities where the image is codependent on income and education level, creating a blurred and unrealistic picture of the whole person. (Moll et al. 2013) this romantic picture of the “whole” person creates a culturally deficient culture and climate in childcare. This contributes greatly to a lack of culturally responsive leaders in the childcare industry and alienates communities that account for much of the talent pool matriculating into leadership roles in childcare (Dugan et al. 2012).

The following themes emerged from the review of related literature on Funds of Knowledge, (1) Roles and Perceptions of Practitioners, (2) Social Factors that contribute to teacher attrition, and (3) Feelings and Perceptions of Leaders and Staff.

Roles and Perceptions of Practitioners

Leadership styles in childcare settings cannot correct inequities, such as reducing attrition rates and increasing pay (Macias & Townsend, 2021); however, if viewed from a Funds of Knowledge perspective, the second (2) research question: How can leaders help staff feel included and valued in the childcare program? Leaders can tap into various skill sets and capitalize on the human resources available from a bottom-up approach (Lipsky, 2010). Reshaping of culture and climate will happen through systematically addressing workplace dynamics that contribute to teacher burnout and feelings of devaluation.

I believe that social capital in the workforce is of importance when considering the current pulse of childcare workers. Conflict and power functions are emphasized by Bourdieu's concept of social capital, suggesting that positions and the division of resources, namely cultural resources, legitimize the need to focus on developing trust, creating moral obligations, social norms, and values, in addition, expectations and relationships serve no purpose when there is a lack of confidence among individuals or the collective groups of individuals (Siisiainen, 2003).

The enthusiasm displayed by childcare workers often presents itself in varying degrees, such as shared values and trust between local networks (Klocke & Stadtmüller, 2019; Siisiainen, 2003). Labels used to represent childcare workers range from specialists to child-minders, and babysitters, causing an inconsistency in defining a professional identity in the childcare profession (Harwood & Tukonic, 2016) and, creating divisions

between educational programs mandated by the government (Prochner, 2000, p. 20). The research focuses on supporting childcare facilities by supporting practitioners in identifying roles and perceptions, building trust between childcare staff and their leaders, building trust between childcare teachers and parents, and fostering trust between childcare workers working collectively to provide exceptional care to children.

Labels

Labels matter to professionals working in child care, therefore shifting the focus slightly to shed light on professionalism suggests that developing social norms and values within social networks, such as child care facilities and the surrounding community, by debunking labels used to describe child care works, will hopefully erase the perception that child care professionals lack professionalism when compared to other educators in different types of educational settings, often supporting the claim that child care professionals have the lowest sense of professional self (Schachter et al. 2022; Chong & Lu, 2022). Labels such as these provide context to the research questions identified in the review of related literature.

The perception of the field of childcare from external stakeholders often negates respect for childcare roles and duties. If used strategically, social capital will contribute to the childcare program's overall success and is advantageous if used as a tool for developing children and mitigating attrition in the childcare industry (Kocke & Stadtmuller, 2019). Most childcare workers transition from providing home-based child care, where their roles were associated with a negative connotation and give rise to the importance of learning more about home-based child care providers (HBCC) and their perceived roles in working with children and families as a way to build value and

self-concept by providing access to resources, and professional development opportunities (Hooper, 2020).

These resources resonate with childcare workers who often feel that their roles are not respected by leadership, parents, and the community, and these feelings can provoke a lack of motivation, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction, often leading to burnout and turnover.

Motivation

Motivation from a childcare workers' perspective, refers to acting in the child's best interest, while they are in your care. Childcare workers are often faced with two types of motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation involves doing something because one finds it interesting and enjoyable, such as a teacher who finds joy in working with children (Deci & Ryan, 1985). On the contrary, extrinsic motivation involves tangible activities, hourly wages, and workplace culture, which can directly impact motivation in childcare workers. Recognition, admiration, and respect from others, as the autonomy to act through self-determination, are ways childcare workers gain intrinsic motivation from childcare settings (Gagne & Deci, 2005), occurring naturally through assimilation (Ryan & Deci, 1999).

Childcare workers must navigate childcare duties while dealing with social factors such as job-related stress and negative beliefs about children and teaching practices, which contribute to professional demotivation in childcare workers; additionally, teachers who develop depressive symptoms are more likely to harbor negative thoughts about children and teaching practices. In contrast, teachers who develop career-oriented and positive attitudes are more likely to engage in developmentally appropriate teaching

practices. Teachers' psychological well-being is a key indicator of professional motivation, and the association between the impact of job-related stress and how these stressors play an important role in understanding the relationship between the importance of research, that seeks to find mitigating factors that prevent teacher stress, teacher self-efficacy, and efforts to combat teacher attrition (Jeon et al. 2019).

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is highly related to effective decision-making in child care. Teachers who exhibit significant self-efficacy toward teaching are more likely to collaborate with their colleagues and demonstrate a positive relationship with the children in their care (Guo et al., 2011). Female teachers make up the majority of childcare workers currently working in childcare facilities, thus contributing to the need to explore mediating factors that support teachers' self-efficacy due to gender differences (Elaldi & Yerliyurt, 2016). When teachers feel a lack of motivation to go above and beyond in their duties on the job, a lack of self-efficacy often presents feelings of dissatisfaction in one's work or profession, thus contributing to teacher burnout and turnover in childcare. As teacher self-efficacy impacts the way that educators feel about their jobs in childcare, efforts that address internal factors within the child care facility that contribute to a lack of self-efficacy will help to support teachers in improving their overall sense of job satisfaction and self-confidence in their roles, as child care workers (Guskey, 1987).

Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction can be attributed to poor co-worker and supervisor relationships, mundane childcare duties, pay, and few opportunities for career growth and promotion (Jorde-Bloom, 1988). Job satisfaction has distinct intrinsic characteristics, such as a genuine love for children, and extrinsic factors, such as co-worker relationships and pay (McClelland, 1986). The literature

describing ways to address feelings that negatively affect childcare workers is limited in that they must account for professional development programs designed around building positive relationships between staff and supervisors.

Social Factors & Teacher Attrition

Better pay and less challenging work in other professions may explain turnover in the childcare profession. However, contrary to statistics on attrition rates, many childcare workers continue to work in the childcare industry. This fact raises the question of why some educators stay on the job (McDonald, Thorpe, Irvine, 2018) and view descriptively the voice of early childhood educators and focus research into ways that childcare workers can become empowered, motivated, and develop feelings of value and self-worth.

High turnover rates compromise the quality of relationships, creating a loss in the human resources and funds of knowledge available to the children, families, and remaining staff left to pick up the slack and carry the torch (Hur et al., 2022). Prior research indicates that compensation and working conditions are indicators of teacher turnover and seeks to understand “why” childcare professionals leave the industry (McDonald, Thorpe, Irvine, 2018; Hur, Ardeleanu, Satchell, Jeon, 2022), thus creating a sudden change in routines for the children that they cared for.

There is very little known about the health status of childcare worker social and emotional well-being (Amabile et al. 2004). Culture and climate in childcare settings impacts the well-being of adults that care for the children and, as a result, contribute to poor quality of care. Maintaining a high-quality childcare program improves the lives of children (Amond & Currie, 2011).

Baseline data from a randomized controlled sample were used to ascertain the health conditions and impact of child-care-based worksites' wellness, through intervention programs (Linnan et al. 2017). This study focused primarily on the physical health conditions, such as rate of physical activity, dietary intake, and sleep duration, however I did see a substantial link into understanding how interpersonal relationships and differences in leadership styles impact childcare workers' sense of collaboration, motivation, and quality of care provided.

Workplace Dynamics

To analyze this question as a facet of this study, relationships, feelings, behaviors, and classroom climate become the focus of the literature review as themes are funneled into a participatory action research project to design transformational leadership training programs that align the program mission and vision to staff motivation and self-determination. Job-related stress, low morale, and disproportionate beliefs about children and teaching practices are analyzed through questionnaires investigating how these symptoms adversely impact motivation in childcare educational settings. It is important to note that while teachers are highly motivated and committed to their jobs in ideal situations, other less ideal conditions are equally impactful on the opposite end of the spectrum. Research into identifying outliers that create ecosystems for disproportionate and negative beliefs about children and developmentally appropriate practices in childcare duties explains how self-image is negatively impacted by the way a person is perceived by others (Jeon, Kwon, Burnham, Choi, 2019, pg. 132). The quantitative study addressed job-related issues and shows that poor communication with

families, colleagues, and administrative staff explicitly contributes to subpar culture and climate in childcare settings.

Teacher burnout, self-efficacy, perception, self-concept, and identity crisis in childcare educational settings, frame the review of the related literature and hone in on extant research and empirical evidence, to support a critical appraisal of interpersonal relationships and leadership styles in childcare settings. Teacher burnout is not new; countless studies have been conducted on teacher burnout in the social sciences relating to student behaviors, adverse student outcomes, and increased risk of emotional and behavioral disorders, EBD. (McCullough, Granger, Sutherland, Conroy, & Pandey, 2022) added to this body of research in their study of self-efficacy, burnout, the attributions of long-term academic and social interactions, and ways in which behavioral outcomes surface in the early years of school. Their findings were vital to teacher self-efficacy, burnout, and addressing problems that lay dormant in educators until societal factors come into play, and further developed and refined the problem of practice in childcare settings.

Fostering interpersonal relationships that span across various levels of leadership, using Funds of Knowledge as a theoretical framework to change the narrative of culture and climate, in childcare settings. Pushing forward in the body of research into teacher burnout (Manju, 2018) transforms the lens of focus from burnout from the daily routines of childcare workers to burnout from problems of practice in professional settings with childcare workers. Citing attitudes, job satisfaction, and mental health issues as critical focal points of study, the research in this study zeros in on the low prestige of teaching in childcare educational settings, citing educational reform's attempts to combat these

perceptions with little success (Manju, 2018). The study looks at options for reversing the mass exodus of teachers leaving the profession. It provides intervention strategies for reducing burnout, such as targeted professional development training in time management and self-organizational skills (Manju, 2018). Manju's research provides suggestions for improving teacher retention, such as setting realistic goals, delegating responsibilities, and tapping into the knowledge base within the organization, plainly put, utilizing the human resources in-house to achieve positive outcomes.

Attitude

Attitudes toward the teaching profession are another area of research that legitimizes this need to advance research into the culture and climate of childcare workers. It is not enough to simply reduce teacher burnout by addressing workplace processes; personal development is vital to a holistic approach to providing optimal childcare, as children need well-rounded, self-motivated, caring teachers to aid in their social development and the quality of care they receive.

Attitudes influence their daily roles and job-specific duties, especially in childcare workers' settings, where the dynamics of the job and the income diminish the extrinsic motivation in teaching within these settings (Elaldi, Yerliyurt, 2016).

Until professionals' narratives are changed systematically, the perception of roles within these educational environments will require an intentional focus on empowering and motivating child care professionals in center- and home-based settings where childcare professionals are equally as important (Hooper, 2020).

This literature review integrated various aspects of childcare, in multiple environments, and validates the need to study leadership styles in childcare settings,

focusing specifically on participatory action research that addresses social change achieved theoretically through acquisition of knowledge, and redefining and removing the ambiguity of poorly defined roles of leadership (Ressang-Wildschut et al., 2021).

Future research should include studies on ways that culture and climate play a role in the retention of employees and how to change the culture and environment in positive ways. Educational practitioners can control child care organizations' health and working conditions by adopting a Funds of Knowledge approach to utilizing the experiences workers bring to the childcare setting, providing leadership training on collaboration, attitude, behavior, self-concept, and intrinsic motivation. This study aims to narrow in on ways leadership can positively impact the culture and climate in childcare settings and directs the reader to the first of several key research questions. How can Funds of Knowledge be utilized to improve career development in childcare workers?

Action Research Design and Methods

This practical action research project will empower individuals in childcare settings to utilize the funds of knowledge within their centers, and apply the skills to their professional careers through the development of an in-house leadership training workshop to enhance the culture and climate through safe space focus groups within a collaborative learning community, designed to reduce ambiguity around licensing regulations, enhance team collaboration, and improve the quality of care provided by the organization through a Funds of Knowledge framework.

Positioning of study

Participatory practical action research positions this study around the third research question, (3) how can leaders intentionally develop relationships with staff that

encompass and expand on the expertise of the team, that aligns with the quality assurance goals of the corporation analyzing the culture and climate of childcare programs, designed to gain insight into teacher and leader experiences, perceptions, and personal beliefs, by applying Funds of Knowledge to utilize the competencies of the human resources, of the staff, expanding on existing research into FoK of students (Volman & Gilde, 2021) and extending the analysis by applying it to a team setting, then looking at the effect on the culture and climate in the site and population studied.

Site or population selection

The site and population of this study will randomly select participants from 44 extended before and after school programs in Baltimore County, Carroll County, and Harford County, childcare programs, holding positions as program directors, school-age teachers, or teacher assistants, to participate in this study. The selection of participants are solicited using a proxy not affiliated with the study and a randomized selection, using an online number generator to select participants.

Researcher role and positionality

As a former preschool teacher, I slowly developed my own individual ontological pedagogy, which was shaped through a series of real-life experiences, lasting more than a decade, as an early childhood educator. Today my role as Quality Assurance manager, in the organization's site brings to light, a certain level of biases, such as a deep connection to the social and emotional care provided to children and could have a bearing on codes generated through the data analysis process, (Hesse-Biber, 2017). To mitigate biases, the research will be conducted from an outsider's perspective, and through a nonjudgmental lens. The intent is to capture the voice of the participants' verbatim and use their lived

experiences to identify root causes to changes that have no bearing on prior experiences, beliefs, and values of the researcher.

The main objective of this practical approach is to immediately contribute to the body of knowledge within my organization, using real time, firsthand knowledge through the voice of the participants, and continuously reflecting on outcomes around data retrieved from interviews and surveys (Gay, Airasian, 2003. pp.184-185), used interchangeably, to design educational SMART goals that increase collaboration, encourage teamwork, and strengthen relationships between staff (Wiggins et al., 2005).

The conceptual framework, Funds of Knowledge shapes this study, from the lens of the community of childcare workers. As a community of childcare workers, we have a collective set of core values that drives the intrinsic motivation of the work that we do. Funds of Knowledge theory provides a baseline for adult interaction that is organic, collaborative, team oriented, and essential to operating a quality child care center, by identifying the contributing factors that adversely affect staff collaboration, attitude, behavior, self-concept, and intrinsic motivation within childhood educational settings. The gap in the current research highlights a need to explore the intrinsic reasons that childcare workers stay in the profession, given the negative connotation of low wages and disparate workplace culture and climate, and further expand on the distinguishing elements related to the study's purpose (McDonald et al., 2018; Hur et al., 2022). I believe educators stay committed to the childcare profession, because of their deep love and dedication to children. This study will give voice to childcare workers and foster positive relationships through effective leadership training, and ultimately impacts the quality assurance in childcare.

The purpose of quality assurance in childcare involves maintaining effective school-community relationships through implementing campus and program engagement, student and family recruitment and attendance, planned activities, and sustainability planning along a continuum supporting the company's mission, vision, and goals. In my role as the researcher, I have direct access to the participants of this study.

The high expectation to provide quality child care is embedded into my role as the manager of Quality Assurance, however, it has minimal impact on the participants and their willingness to authentically provide their candid responses to the research questions that frame the survey questions, presented to the participants.

Workplace Dynamics

The sheer nature of the study opens lines of communication in a way that examines relationships seeking opportunities, to build stronger relationships and promotes collaboration and kinship between leaders and staff and seeks to analyze how these relationships can create a more inclusive culture and climate within the organization.

These positive relationships will ultimately lead to higher levels of quality assurance metrics for the program in totality. According to Mertler (2019), if organized collaboratively, action research can impact improvement on a systemic and significant scale. Through careful reflection, I found the influence to be consistent with the impact of the Hawthorne experiments and reaffirms Homans social exchange theory (SET), which exposes the core assumptions that the benefits of the study outweigh the costs in terms of relationships, often leading to positive outcomes (Homans, 1958).

I intend to conduct a schoolwide collaborative action research project rooted in practical action research (PAR) to eliminate hierarchical network structures, which often explain a diverse range of problems associated with clusters of independent thought processes and actions (Clauset et al., 2008). Through the development of focus groups and anonymous surveys, research activities involve consistent reflective inquiry, where individuals conduct self-analysis on themselves throughout the process (Cresswell, 2002). Using a spiral and cylindrical approach to acquiring knowledge will paint an original picture of abstract opinions of leadership within the organization, creating a platform for professional development training. John Rawls (1921-2002) coined the term “*original position*”, where he questioned what acceptable terms of social cooperation for free and equal citizens would involve. He expressed that the construct of reasoning that models abstract ideas about justice intends to focus power together into a collective choice of principles. Rawls envisioned that people would see the outcome of the “original position” herein, the study at the center of this practical process, as justified in that it uses transparency and continuous feedback to encapsulate the convictions about social justice, that impacts the entire group from all levels of management and staff working towards a unified set of principles.

Ethical & political considerations

Relying heavily on Patton's checklist for conducting an ethical research project (Hesse-Biber, 2017, p. 96), I will reflect on the following guiding questions to mitigate bias with this study, and as a tool for self-reflection, as I consider the last of the four research questions, *How can Funds of Knowledge be utilized to improve staff career development and quality assurance in child care settings?*

1. Why should the participants participate in the research study?
2. In what ways will conducting this research put the participants at risk of psychological, legal, political, and ostracization by others?
3. What reasonable promises for confidentiality will I be able to make?
4. What kind of informed consent will provide mutual protection to the participants?
5. Who will access the data, and for what purposes?
6. How will the study's outcome likely affect me and the participants?
7. Who will be the researchers' confidant and counselor on ethics matters during the study?
8. How hard will I push for data?
9. What ethical framework will inform the study?

I will address Patton's list of ethical questions in a way that does not pose any ethical considerations that impact the integrity of participants at any level and at any time during the practical action research process. To ensure ethical and political considerations while conducting the study, I will engage in reflective practices and adopt a transparent approach to explaining the purpose of the inquiry and data collection methods used in the study.

Those who agree to participate in the survey will sign an informed consent clearly outlining how I will use the data and how the data will affect the culture and climate of the organization. All participants will remain fully abreast of existing and newly appointed confidants used to manage the raw and scrubbed data retrieved in the study. This study intends to promote team spirit, collective bargaining of social awareness, and

efforts to rebrand the program, thus improving the quality of care provided to the children, families, staff, and all external stakeholders impacted by this research.

Data Collection Methods

The initial data collection method will involve knowledge-producing conversations, defined by Hesse-Biber (2017) as conversations between participants, essential to the ontological and epistemological position ingrained in my beliefs and values. In doing so, I will peel back the layers of knowledge that have been ingrained and weaved into the context of the culture and co-created over time, to eliminate the preconceived hierarchy between me in my role as the researcher, and the researched (Hesse-Biber, 2017). Data collection methods for this study will include surveys, semi-structured interviews, observations, reflective journaling and memoing.

Semi-Structured Surveys. will be administered to a random selection of participants, with the support of a supervisor. Who is not directly related to the research study being conducted. Unbiased conversations, personal observations, vignettes, and research journal entries will add context to the phenomenon under investigation.

Survey Questionnaire. Survey Monkey, www.surveymonkey.com, a cloud-based online survey tool, will be used to create a 35-question, multichoice, open-ended, survey questionnaire sent to approximately 50 randomly selected participants, using a non-biased proxy to randomly select the participants from a pool of 200 regular employees in the organization, through electronic email to send, collect, analyze, store, and protect participant data (Mills, 2010). Questionnaires will establish trust and rapport with the stakeholders' voices and concerns to create candid and reflexive interview questions using scientifically backed focus protocols (Cresswell, 2002). At each stage of the research project, participants will receive feedback that builds trust from the implementation stage to the analytical analysis of the results.

Anonymity and confidentiality of this study require that written informed consent is provided to all study participants, outlining the purpose of the study. There are no known risks or monetary compensation for participating in this study. Theoretical sampling will guide the collecting, coding, and analysis of data contained in this study (Hesse-Biber, 2017). Participants' names and other identifying information markers will not be collected, and all responses will remain anonymous and completely confidential. Confidentiality will be further supported by limited exposure of participants' survey responses and semi-structured hand-coded interview transcriptions, transcribed using the cloud-based online paid transcription service, Rev.com, www.rev.com.

Interviews

From the pool of 50 survey participants, approximately 25 participants will be asked to participate in 30-minute semi-structured recorded interviews using Zoom or Microsoft Teams' online video conferencing platform as the discussion medium, using semi-structured interview protocol questions, to generate dialogue on the leadership styles of program directors and leaders of childhood educational settings, based on the codes generated from the data collected.

Iterative rephrasing of questioning will be used as a safeguard to avoid contradictions. Upon completion of interviews, transcripts will be scrubbed for identifying data, and redacted before sending to study participants for added transparency and trustworthiness.

All transcripts will be stored in a key-locked file cabinet, only accessible to me and the dissertation chair upon request.

Data analysis procedures

The data will be analyzed with the intent to develop intervention efforts to support the professional development of leaders in childcare settings, foster a positive culture and climate and development of an internal staff training that utilizes the conceptual Funds of Knowledge framework as a basis for leadership development for child care professionals in the before and after school program setting, using real-world situations resulting from robust and substantive theory, emerging from a set of predefined in vivo code categories, will add life to the data collected, and interpreted in the findings section of this study (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Merriam & Grenier, 2019;).

Bracketing themes from the narrative data, will provide the phenomenological framework for understanding the problem of practice from a conceptual perspective of the participants themselves. Practicing reflexivity, and reconnaissance at each stage of the practical action research process. Gaps that emerge from the data, such as well-established relationships that have developed as a result of staff members who have been promoted or given additional responsibilities, and have established a rapport with leadership that involves a deeper level of trust and communication, will be used to consider further research questions and facets of investigation (Kenny & Fourie, 2015), into how best to support staff, as they become acclimated with the unique, long standing relationships and benefits that incoming staff have to work to achieve.

A bottom-up inductive, exploratory approach while using the qualitative coding software, (www.delve.com), will be used in the iterative fashion and coding process, by looking at the data from my survey to determine if more in-depth coding will be required, to fully capture the voice of the participant (Hesse-Biber, 2017).

Although this study uses a thematic analysis approach, process codes will be developed based on my observations as a researcher, and from reflective journaling and memos kept as a reflective practice, as I continue to analyze the results of leadership styles, personality characteristics, and communication styles that, while unique to the individual possessing them, may create barriers to developing meaningful relationships with others who may not understand a person's approach and intent. These nuances may derive from cultural differences and may emerge from the data. As a result, the Phenomenology approach should explain the phenomena under investigation, and from a theoretical perspective (Miriam & Greiner, 2019).

Procedures to address trustworthiness, validity, credibility, and transferability

As the researcher, I intend to use the data collected to frame collaborative activities and professional development initiatives and highlight stories of positive interactions between all stakeholders, supporting interpersonal relationships, a positive culture and climate, and utilize the funds of knowledge within the organization to uplift, empower and motivate team members towards providing high quality child care. I have adopted a reflective approach to ensuring credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, by consistently abiding by social norms of data collection already adopted within the organization, which consist of third-party verification and a vetting and voting process for all survey questions. This vetting process has proven effective in the organization because all members have a say in the questions and how individuals may interpret the question's intent. This process also creates synergy and a collaborative environment where respect for individual perceptions is honored and remains a focus,

and ensures that diversity and inclusion are embedded in the design and creation of attainable S.M.A.R.T goals.

I have acquired familiarity with the participants and the organization under investigation through a decade as a childhood educator in various roles working directly with children, leaders, and other stakeholders within the organizations surveyed in this study (Shenton, 2004). I will carefully consider the demands of the participants and gatekeepers who agree to participate in the research study to circumvent deterrent cooperation. Random sampling and triangulation of site locations and data sources will allow all participants from different locations the ability to express their viewpoints, perspectives, experiences, and childcare dynamics in various settings, outlined in the site and population studied, and is a useful way to apply Dervins's concept of "circling reality," and the funds of knowledge each participant brings in the form of experiences, how they view situations, their "why" on unique situations that may not fit with the majority of the group (Shenton, 2004).

The main goal is to include all voices, perspectives, and ideologies at each stage of the study and provide a safe space for authenticity and transparency. I will ensure that rapport is developed and fostered between participants with the highest level of integrity, while applying the understanding that even with the measures in place to prevent confusion about the research, by reminding the participants' of, the benefits of the study from a broader perspective, and reestablishing buy-in from all levels of the organization. Lastly all participants have the option to withdraw from any part of the study at any time they choose.

CHAPTER II

RESULTS OF RESEARCH

Reporting Qualitative Results

This study looked at the funds of knowledge acquired in childcare settings to analyze its impact on leadership, culture, and climate by giving voice to childcare workers in this profession. As a leader in this profession, my dedication to the field of childcare and fighting for social just in efforts to maintain sustainability and viability of high-quality childcare programs nationwide, coupled with my lived experience in this field, framed my interpretation of the data and infuses researcher memos, vignettes of leadership challenges, and moments of reflection, that demonstrate how Funds of Knowledge Theory can be applied to the complex problem of practice faced by leadership in childcare settings.

It is my belief as the researcher that the silver lining to providing high-quality childcare and changing the culture and climate in childcare settings is twofold: attracting and maintaining high-quality staff and fostering effective leadership skills that support intrinsically motivated and dedicated staff by utilizing funds of knowledge to help childcare workers as they navigate through their lived experiences in childcare settings.

“Human behavior, unlike that of physical objects, cannot be understood without reference to the meanings and purpose attached by the human actors to their activities” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994)

Credibility

The use of multiple modes of data collection allowed for saturation and triangulation of meanings and themes that emerged from the survey data, and raw personal accounts, vignettes, and recollections of the participants' lived experiences as a childcare worker and their experiences with leadership at different levels within their career, added context and credibility to the survey data.

Using the Survey Monkey software program, owned and operated by the Director of Operations at the site selected in this study, the Director of Operations served as an external auditor at the initial data collection phase (Cresswell, 2002). The survey questions were reviewed and approved by the Director of Operations before selecting 50 randomly selected study participants. Participants who agreed to participate in the study were asked to participate in a semi-structured virtual interview.

The interviews were conducted using Zoom.com, and each participant was advised that recording would be requested as part of the credibility, and for member checking at several phases in the data collection process, and two phases after the interview and survey collection process. Member checking was conducted in several iterations from participants who agreed to both the survey and the semi-structured interview. In these instances, themes that emerged from the survey responses were cross-checked for accurate researcher interpretation and thorough and detailed descriptions of meaningful memories in childcare that impacted and changed outlooks and perceptions of leadership. As a final step in the initial phase of member checking, the participants were allowed to confirm or refute misinformation.

Member checking and triangulation of the raw data resulted in four themes that remained consistent throughout the study.

- Collaboration is vital to the success of childcare programs.
- Attitude erodes the social fabric of childcare programs and stifles collaboration.
- Behavior impacts the day-to-day operations of childcare programs.
- Self-concept and intrinsic motivation are the fundamental building blocks of a positive culture and climate in childcare programs and among childcare workers.

The credibility of the five emerging themes was supported through the analysis of research field notes and reflexive journaling of the participants' rich descriptions of actual accounts and past lived experiences, and were transferred through body language, facial expressions, pitch and tone of voice, and candid elaboration of feelings, perceptions, and social factors experienced in the childcare workers' lived experiences working in various childcare programs throughout their careers (Hesse-Biber, 2017, chapter 7).

Transferability

Ensuring transferability of the research study was achieved by intentionally cross-checking the research questions to the survey questions, to ensure that the questions were clearly understood, transparent, and open-ended to allow for context and elaboration. The results of the study paint a clear picture of how each research question aligns with multiple sources of data in unique ways that explain its connection to Funds of Knowledge Theory and apply the practice to the research questions in this study.

RQ #1: How do relationships and expectations contribute to or reinforce staff motivation and inclusiveness between leaders and staff?

RQ #2: How can leaders help staff feel included and valued in the program?

RQ #3: How can leaders intentionally develop relationships with staff that encompass and expand on the experiences and expertise of the team that aligns with the Quality Assurance program goals?

RQ #4: How can Funds of Knowledge be utilized to improve staff career development and quality assurance in childcare settings?

Confirmability

My position as researcher in this study, which looked at leadership styles in childcare settings to see what factors contribute to turnover, staff engagement, quality of care, and the overall culture and climate of childcare centers, contributed to the confirmability of the study, as it sought to understand how culture and climate in childcare settings were directly impacted by the lived experiences of the childcare workers, and directly impacted organizational goals.

This study was approached from a Social construction theoretical perspective framed from my intimate history as a former child care worker, who matriculated through different forms of leadership throughout her career, has provided me with an understanding of both realms of reality, as it relates to understanding the current state of intersubjectivity and the experiences that occur between childcare workers that ignite a sense of shared history, culture, and climate in childcare settings from a leadership perspective, and then from the perspective of childcare workers managing the day to day care of children within those settings (Hatch, 2018, p. 39).

As a leader, my perspective on maintaining a high level of integrity in the childcare industry required a multidisciplinary approach to both leadership and

management of childcare facilities, a high degree of emotional intelligence and awareness of the meaning and purpose of human behavior, and hindsight and through indulgence and evolution, the social practices began to shape the significance of fostering and developing a fine-tuned organization of committed and goal-oriented workforce.

The experiences that I was able to indulge in as a researcher, with a positionality from within the organization, are guided and framed from a Symbolic perspective, specifically from a modernist viewpoint, intentionally weighing the odds in situations that I experienced as the researcher while working in leadership guided my interpretation of the phenomena I experienced trying to find a balance between maintaining the social fabric of the organization, through critique and criticism of myself and the participants in this study, often grappling with understanding others' reality, being empathic, and forming recursive meaning from memoing and journaling as I settled firmly into my ontological and epistemological perspectives on fixing the problem of practice in childcare informed through an interpretivist epistemology, (Hatch, 2018).

Qualitative Data Collection Tools

Table 2.1 *Research Questions and Data Collection Tools*

Research Questions	Tools to Collect Data
RQ #1: How do relationships and expectations contribute to or reinforce staff motivation and inclusiveness between leaders and staff?	• Survey on Funds of Knowledge • Semi-structured Interview • Journal notes
RQ #2: How can leaders help staff feel included and valued in the program?	• Survey on Funds of Knowledge • Semi-structured Interview • Journal notes
RQ #3: How can leaders intentionally develop relationships with staff that encompass and expand on the experiences and expertise of the team that aligns with the Quality Assurance program goals?	• Journal notes • Informal observations
RQ #4 How can Funds of Knowledge be utilized to improve staff career development and quality assurance in childcare settings?	• Action Research Data ○ Themes ○ Codes ○ Meaning

Survey

The purpose of using the survey was to gain insight into... My survey questions are located in the Appendix

Semi-structured interviews

The purpose of the semi-structured interview was used to ask open-ended questions, allowing the participants to further elaborate on their responses to the questions presented in the survey (Cresswell, 2010).

My semi-structured interview questions are located in the Appendix.

Journal entry

My journal entries are located in the Appendix

Research Question 1

How do relationships and expectations contribute to or reinforce staff motivation and inclusiveness between leaders and staff?

Research Question 2

How can leaders help staff feel included and valued in the program?

Research Question 3

How can leaders intentionally develop relationships with staff that encompass and expand on the experiences and expertise of the team that aligns with the Quality Assurance program goals?

Research Question 4

How can Funds of Knowledge be utilized to improve staff career development and quality assurance in childcare settings?

Table 2.2 Participant Quotes, Emerging Themes, Assertions

Participant Quotes	Emerging Themes	Assertions
<i>“The directors don’t know what it’s like to be in the classroom with screaming babies all day”</i>	Roles and Perceptions	The lived experience of a childcare worker differs greatly from the role of a director. Perceptions of one’s role change as duties and responsibilities change within the realm of that role.
<i>“Having a personal relationship with my employees and being able to bond with them is important to me as an educator.”</i>	Relationships	Interpersonal relationships are vital to the social fabric of the organization.
<i>“The director is unprofessional and has been friends with some of the teachers since elementary school.”</i>	Social Factors	Social connections can be utilized as a form of Funds of Knowledge, in strategic ways. Leadership training designed to identify effective ways of utilizing FoK in childcare settings is critical for conceptualization.
<i>“It hurts so much when you have management that doesn’t see your worth.”</i> <i>“If you go to her with a concern, within days everyone knows.”</i>	Feelings	Feelings fester within childcare settings and stifle childcare workers. Culture and climate are impacted with staff becoming disenfranchised in the workplace.
<i>“You can have friendships with employees, but there’s a difference between work friendships and personal friendships.”</i>	Collaboration	Childcare workers understand the dynamics of effectively communicating in the childcare setting. Collaborative workplace activities can be used to leverage aspects of personal and professional relationships.

Participant Quotes	Emerging Themes	Assertions
Q8: I let others know what is expected of them.	Behavior	80% of survey respondents reported a strong desire to have clear expectations from leadership. Leadership training on effective communication skills will support transformational leadership goals.
Q4: Seeing the big picture comes easy to me.	Self - Concept	Funds of Knowledge can be utilized to develop self-concept and a shared vision.
Q1: I enjoy getting into the details of how things work.	Intrinsic Motivation	Leaders can help staff feel valued and included in the social fabric of the childcare setting.

Data Analysis by Themes

I came into the data collection with a particular level of bias on what themes may emerge from the data analysis, however through each iteration of reflective journaling and triangulation of the data, I found that roles perceptions, and social factors contribute to negative feelings, behaviors, and impact motivation in childcare settings,

Roles & Perceptions

The act of hiring and developing the right people for the right roles all comes down to possessing the courage to sit down and embrace the rewards of teams who embrace their roles regardless of societal trends that bring forth separation and feelings of isolation (Lencioni, 2002).

The data revealed that teachers in childcare settings often feel that their roles are misunderstood in the day-to-day operations of and duties in childcare. The levels of management in childcare settings can often become blurred when collaborating

effectively and accepting responsibility at every level of leadership, regardless of one's role (Quinn, 2015).

Childcare workers with more than ten years of experience in childcare, were considered as subject matter experts and valued their level of responsibility in comparison to the funds of knowledge they brought to the childcare industry (Beijaard, et. al. 20000), and the adversarial impacts of perceived roles and perceptions of peers within the childcare profession that are exaggerated based on one's perception and understanding of what constitutes a subject matter expert (Hattie, 2003). Participant A (34-year-old female childcare worker) described her feelings when asked to take on new responsibilities in the childcare center, *"I like when I am allowed to step up and take the lead"*. The feelings reinforce the assertion that maintaining collaborative workplace activities can be used to leverage aspects of personal and professional relationships. When leaders are hesitant to empower their employees in the workplace, these feelings manifest themselves into feelings of reduced self-concept when, *"other leaders don't see your prior experience as an asset to the company"*, says a male childcare worker with over a decade of work experience. The role of childcare professionals requires a unique set of skills and abilities and does not often conform to one set of static routines and is based on the developmental needs of the students in care, and the strengths and weaknesses of the individuals operating within. Early childhood professionals play an important role in shaping the social and emotional development of the children in care, and teachers' behaviors are affected by their attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs regarding roles and perceptions (Mulvihill et. al. 2002). The impact of negative attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs in childcare can create a negative atmosphere in the classroom and are the unfortunate building blocks of a negative culture and climate in childcare settings.

Social Factors

The study looked at ways that leaders can intentionally develop relationships with staff that encompass and expand on the experiences and expertise of the team and simultaneously align with Quality Assurance program goals in childcare that are directly tied to the social factors contributing to the staffing crisis in childcare professions (Granger, 1989). In short, as described in the "Law of the Inner Circle ", as the power of recognizing the social makeup of your inner circle (Maxwell, 2007).

The survey data showed that 60% of survey respondents agree that they enter interactions by showing interest in the other person by asking questions, sharing something personal, and inviting the other person to share as well, supporting prior research into developing interpersonal relationships in the workplace and manifesting moral power, and the inquisitiveness to operate from a viewpoint rooted in principle, and not simply from social and political pressures (Quinn, 2015).

Among several factors listed as positive indicators of high-quality childcare programs, were reasonably stable staff from year to year, and provisions for ongoing staff development and training (Granger, 1989). The study participants provided rich descriptions of the social, emotional, physical, and intellectual environments that teachers create daily, and ultimately alter and disrupt the social fabric of the culture and climate within the school. Effective collaboration plays an integral role in fostering positive working relationships, and as one study participant conveyed the importance of developing a bond with one's coworkers, *"Having a personal relationship with my employees, and being able to bond with them is important to me as an educator."* Developing and maintaining effective relationships creates a space in the childcare environment that is empathetic, understanding, and supportive for childcare workers is essential to providing a high-quality learning environment for children. The social factors in childcare settings are quite

different from the social factors in other settings and the relationships that impact the children in care are essential for building children's self-esteem and helping children develop their ability to interact with their peers in positive ways.

Feelings

The feelings of childcare workers are dynamic and contingent on staff feeling included and valued. The feelings of childcare workers often go unheard because of systemic processes within the childcare setting that conflict with expectations and cross lines of interpretation. The data revealed childcare workers constantly feeling disconnected from leadership, even though these same workers bring a wealth of knowledge to the organization, by their prior experience and expertise. As a researcher and educator in the childcare sector, how feelings present themselves in the day-to-day routines directly affect the children in care in multiple ways.

“I know that I have cared for infants and toddlers for years, therefore my opinions on food temperature matter and are valid.”

“My love for children brought me into childcare.”

“I come from a family of childcare professionals.”

Collaboration

Collaborative themes emerged from the data and demonstrated the need to utilize a Funds of Knowledge mindset to improve staff career development and quality assurance in childcare settings, and served as a springboard to analyze the third research question, which sought to understand ways that leaders can intentionally develop relationships with staff that encompass and expand on the experiences and expertise of the team that aligns possibilities creating collaborative spaces between ideas, actions, and behaviors that help childcare programs achieve their organizational goals (Zander &

Zander, 2000) Muij, et. al. 2004) and helps to understand the theoretical perspectives that leadership theories do not work well in childcare settings (Muijs, et. al. 2004), and is influenced heavily by cultural congruence, defined as the cultural differences of childcare workers' home and professional settings (Genzuk, 1999).

"I would say more like different learning styles."

"I like to collaborate with my coworkers to get new ideas for lesson planning."

Behaviors

Behaviors such as simple acts of kindness, admiration, and respect for others were evident in the descriptive data and emerged through bracketing of recurring themes that emerged from the interviews conducted in this study. Feelings that exist in childcare settings, between staff fester and build over time. These emotions impact learning and behaviors between teaching relationships, and relationships between leaders and their staff. In childcare settings, there are children's lives at stake, in both a holistic and idealistic perspective. Holistically we create routines in our behaviors that become ingrained in the day-to-day routines of children. These emotions impact brain function in children and contribute to Neuroplasticity, the brain's capacity to rewire and pivot, by strengthening a sense of connection, and consequently weakening the same sense of connection (Desatchel, 2016). The participants in this study lived similar experiences as my own, and I recall moments in my career where I could sense a connection between a child and a staff member that was reinforced by daily routines and the development of connections. These relationships were fostered through a combination of task and relationship behavior, combining the two in ideal ways that considered the children's

development of their brains' Neuroplasticity, and also strengthening the relationships between staff, in intentional ways that develop their brains' Neuroplasticity.

“I think that at the end of the day, the teachers did not like me because of my unique ability to connect with the children.”

How we behave as leaders impacts the organization as a whole, causes feelings of isolation and contributes to a negative culture and climate within these settings. The data revealed behaviors within childcare settings that I could reflect on, to see the symbolic perspectives and supported the analysis of data, from being overgeneralized, by concluding based on one-sided descriptions (Hatch, 2016), and gives insight into ways that behaviors can be learned and answered the first of four research questions, how relationships and expectations contribute to or reinforce staff motivation and inclusiveness between leaders and staff? The data showed an overwhelming need to focus on fostering positive relationships, using Funds of Knowledge Theory, and Situational Leadership (Northhouse, 2022), as a means of utilizing human resources and developing internal social networks that help maintain sustainability in childcare organizations (Emery, et. al, 2013).

Self-Concept

Considering the dearth of perception in oneself, a person can understand themselves in multiple ways, and from multiple perspectives that encompass their conceptual resources, their language and discourses, and their familiar ways of seeing things (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). How one sees themselves is vital to the way that they “show up” daily in the workplace and drive the work that staff members carry out in the childcare setting daily (Amabile, et. al, 2004).

“In all walks of life a leader who feels superior is likely to suppress the voices of the very people of whom one must rely on to deliver his vision alive and kicking.” (Zander & Zander, 2000, p.67).

“I’ve worked at schools where the leadership did not recognize my full potential.”

The data explained the dynamics of relationships and explains how specific influences of the leaders’ behaviors become either effective or ineffective in achieving organizational goals that are built on utilizing one’s full potential, in all aspects of life, including the childcare setting where culture plays an important role in how we see ourselves, and provides context into exploration into the second research question that expands this study to analyze ways that leaders can help staff feel included and valued in the childcare setting? Feelings of inclusiveness and value are the social factors that contribute to intrinsic motivation, and as the data showed, a direct connection between the leadership themes described in chapter one and the results of the study described here.

Inclusive Leadership in childcare settings can present conflict, as leaders in this position are already operating with a full load of responsibilities, and it becomes cumbersome to be responsible for guiding others through a revolving door of opportunities for growth and competitiveness (Northhouse, 2022, p. 323). The impact of teams is described as four core conditions that dictate how adults engage in learning. The presence of a hospitable space, a felt sense of presence from others, adopting meaningful experiences, and a firm belief in transcendence (Myers & Myers, 2012). The data from the study revealed that intrinsic motivation is constructed through events and activities that apply context and aid in effective and significant interactions that motivate childcare

workers to establish social contexts that enable the transfer of funds and utilization of knowledge-building activities in childcare settings (Genzuck, 1999).

Intrinsic Motivation

The themes that emerged from the data conveyed the interconnectedness of quality relationships and expectations that contribute to and reinforce staff motivation and inclusiveness between leaders and staff. The interview participants conveyed their experiences of going above and beyond when they felt valued and appreciated in the workplace.

“Working with children of all ages motivates me and encourages me to give my best everyday”

“People who go above and beyond to do for others, to me that defines great leaders.”

Belief in our excellence (Quinn, 2015) explores the power of tapping into the intuition of one’s greatness and ability to self-coach professionally and proactively while focusing on additional ways to develop intrinsic motivation, and a shared vision (Quinn, 2015).

Summary of Analysis

The data supported the utilization of a Funds of Knowledge theoretical framework and the positive impact it can provide by utilizing professional development among childcare staff, to develop self-concept, and shared vision, and train leaders to help staff feel valued and included in the social fabric of the childcare setting. The study sought to identify trends in leadership styles that contribute to the creation of labels such as “glorified babysitters”.

These labels are damaging to childcare workers’ self-efficacy and impact their job satisfaction, ultimately contributing to staff turnover. The survey and semi-structured interview questions were designed to invoke feelings and recount unique experiences that

vividly describe the lived experiences of childcare workers in intimate ways. The data revealed that the lived experience of childcare workers differs greatly from the role of a leader, in terms of responsibility, ownership, and accountability for the work being conducted.

Perceptions of one's role change as duties and responsibilities change within the realm of that role. Connection in the workplace can be a double-edged sword, and net positive and negative aspects, however, social connections can be utilized as a form of Funds of Knowledge data collection, in strategic ways in childcare settings.

Leadership training designed to identify effective ways of utilizing FoK in childcare settings is critical for conceptualization and a preponderance portion of the data revealed that feelings fester within childcare settings, and stifle the voice of childcare workers, contributing to a negative culture and climate that becomes agitated, when staff become disenfranchised in the workplace, and requires the leaders' ability to conceptualize multiple ideas and the same time, while thinking in complex and adaptive ways (Quinn, 2015).

The data analysis revealed that childcare workers understood the dynamics of effectively communicating in the childcare setting, and benefitted from collaborative workplace activities that could be used to leverage aspects of personal and professional relationships, and explored the fourth and final research question posed in this study, of ways that Funds of Knowledge can be utilized to improve staff career development and quality assurance in childcare settings? Shared vision emerged as an overarching theme from the data collection and analysis; 80% of survey respondents reported a strong desire to have clear expectations from leadership and support a need for internal training in

areas of effective communication skills that support transformational leadership goals across all areas of childcare.

Action Plan

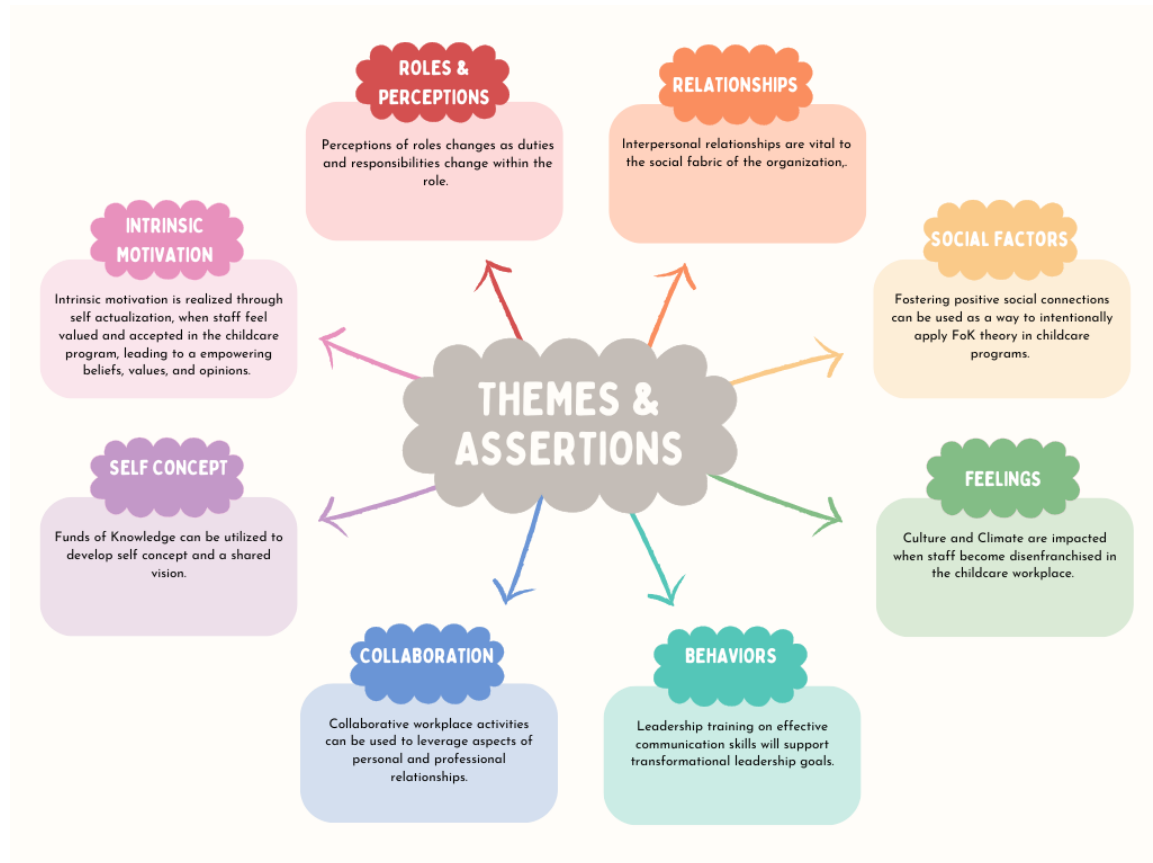
The action research plan for designing an Accreditation Task Force will address the gap in current research, which overlooks studies on the impact of effective leadership in early childhood education settings. It will also highlight the limited focus on the professional development of leadership roles among childcare workers, particularly in relation to enhancing the culture and climate within childcare environments.

This action research study aims to make a meaningful contribution to the field by amplifying the voices of childcare professionals who work under the leadership of senior staff as they navigate the Accreditation process. The study will examine the dynamics of interpersonal relationships between childcare staff and leadership, offering potential solutions to systemic issues that impact the quality of life for childcare workers. These issues, in turn, play a critical role in the quality of care provided to children and their families. The research will address several key questions to frame the action research plan and expand the existing body of literature.

1. How do relationships and expectations contribute to or reinforce staff motivation and inclusiveness between leaders and staff?
2. How can leaders help staff feel included and valued in the program?
3. How can leaders intentionally develop relationships with staff that encompass and expand on the experiences and expertise of the team that aligns with the Quality Assurance program goals?
4. How can Funds of Knowledge be utilized to improve staff career development and quality assurance in childcare settings?

5. The study's secondary focus is on understanding how these dynamics contribute to motivation, culture, and climate and form collaborative work ethics among workers.

Figure 2.1 *Thematic Data Analysis*



CHAPTER III

DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION/INTERVENTION/CHANGE PROCESS

As a former early childhood educator, I have had the privilege of supporting and engaging staff in various childcare settings throughout my career. The foundation for creating safe and supportive child care environments lies in having highly effective leaders and engaged staff working alongside children. My research highlights the significance of childcare workers' perceptions of their roles within the center and how social factors can negatively impact relationships, stifle collaboration, and diminish intrinsic motivation—ultimately creating a detrimental culture and climate in childcare settings.

The purpose of this action research plan is to drive a change initiative that leverages the Funds of Knowledge of childcare workers. By setting clear objectives, the plan aims to establish collaborative spaces where childcare workers can receive leadership support, engage in transparent and frequent communication across all levels of staff, and stay motivated throughout the change process. The research conducted in Chapter Two demonstrates a clear connection between workers' feelings, behaviors, and the formation of their roles and perceptions. The change was seen as positive, enhancing self-concept, increasing buy-in for organizational goals, and fostering more meaningful relationships with peers, children, and families.

The Accreditation Task Force will function as a training and development program implemented across all levels of staff, fostering collaboration, teamwork, and an enhanced quality of care for children. By utilizing teams at various levels within the organization, the program will

provide collaborative spaces for reflecting on how to best implement an exemplary childcare program while simultaneously examining areas for improving organizational leadership practices.

As both a researcher and a former childcare worker, I made every effort to remove biases from my experience in childcare programs throughout my career. I understand the dynamics and routines within childcare settings that shape how individuals perceive and interpret their roles. In Chapter One, I theorized that workplace dynamics are influenced by factors such as attitudes, labels, wages, and turnover, all of which impact the overall culture and climate in childcare environments. The research focused on leadership in childcare settings, specifically aiming to strengthen interpersonal relationships and applying strategies from the qualitative study to assess the impact of leadership styles on the quality of care provided. This action research seeks to implement intentional strategies of effective leadership, using a Funds of Knowledge framework to develop and reinforce interpersonal relationships at all levels within childcare settings. The Accreditation Task Force will redefine the role of childcare program leadership in creating safe and supportive environments for all.

(Duval, et. al. 2020) purported that instructional and organizational issues often appear in the interpersonal relationships in the workplace, staff turnover, culture, and climate, and discovered when dealing with issues of diversity in childcare settings. These issues emerged almost immediately in the feelings and perceptions of the study participants. Staff conflicts and disagreements on teaching practices presented challenges, limited collaboration, and impacted the overall culture and climate.

Objectives & Outcomes

The objectives and outcomes of the plan are to increase collaboration, improve teamwork, and enhance transparency in maintaining a shared vision toward meeting accreditation standards and providing an exceptional level of care to the children and families served.

This action research plan analyzes the positive effects of safe space focus groups, designed to reduce ambiguity around licensing regulations, enhance team collaboration, and improve the quality of care provided by the organization through a Funds of Knowledge framework, to improve the culture and climate the implementation of semi-structured monthly focus groups to discuss their beliefs, values, and experiences in the daily role of caring for children. A second layer of intentionality in the semi-structured monthly focus groups will be geared towards developing a shared vision and buy-in, that the Accreditation Task Force will be seen as an opportunity for growth and improvement on a personal, and professional level in their career, with an additional focus on influencing behavior across the organization.

The action research plan utilized Cycle Goals to design a Learning Community and develop an Accreditation Task Force to tap into the highest-performing staff members' funds of knowledge, expertise, and experience, to study the positive effects of safe space focus groups, designed to reduce ambiguity around licensing regulations, enhance team collaboration, and improve the quality of care provided by the organization through a Funds of Knowledge framework. The long-range goals for the Accreditation Task Force are twofold.

1. Reduce the number of non-compliances issued by the Regulatory agency by 95% within one school year, 10 calendar months by implementing a Funds of Knowledge framework.
2. Reduce staff turnover through the development of processes using a Funds of Knowledge framework.

Step #1: Look

- gain buy-in from four (4) District Directors
- Convey the need to provide a space for dialogue
- Identify special features of each of the four districts
 - Survey needs from each district
 - Analyze survey results with the district director

Step #2: Think

- Identify a working agenda tailored to each district's needs.
- Begin to subtly gain acceptance by gaining public support for the implementation of the focus group.
- Utilize verbal, nonverbal, and casual conversations to frame step #3.

Step #3: Act

- Are they showing interest in participating in a focus group?
- Is the interest being shown, authentic?
- Do they have the physical time to participate in a focus group?

- How can I maintain a safe environment for dialogue, while maintaining my professional boundaries as a manager and member of the leadership team?

Autonomy, competence, and relatedness will be used to inform the action intervention plan and strategize efforts using iterative and incremental action steps, which I believe to be vital to the development of an Accreditation Task Force (Bahrami, et. al. 2022). The task force will take the funds of knowledge from the cultural and professional careers of childcare workers, and then utilize that expertise to ensure that childcare workers in the organization achieve the highest quality in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS). The Quality Rating and Improvement system assesses the learning environment, qualified professionals, program safety, and administrative practices in state-funded educational programs that follow quality standards and rating systems (Merril, et. al. 2020). The Accreditation Task Force will utilize their time and resources to ensure that childcare programs are equipped with a wide range of diverse and multidisciplinary resources that allow teachers to develop effective communication and leadership strategies, based on a 360° feedback system that will serve a dual purpose of identifying obstacles that could hinder the Accreditation process, such as lack of resources, inadequate planning, and external factors. The Accreditation Task Force will work collaboratively to foster a culture of continuous improvement within their focus group and implement short-term goals that can be reasonably achieved using the iterative

process of implementing the look, think, and act steps into accomplishing measurable goals.

Analysis of Implementation to Date and /or future implementation

My study employed the Funds of Knowledge framework to examine the impact of leadership inequities on the culture and climate within childcare settings. The emerging themes highlighted the significance of roles and perceptions, relationships, social factors, feelings, behaviors, and a lack of intrinsic motivation. These were identified as key consequences of ineffective leadership, which directly influenced the culture and climate of these communities and, in turn, affected the routines and social-emotional development of the children in care.

As an educational practitioner, I share the perspective of researchers who assert that the climate in childcare settings is deeply influenced by the culture of the community. I firmly believe that a community is a coordinated group of individuals with diverse roles who share common traditions, understandings, and practices (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003, p. 21).

Gaining a deeper understanding of childcare staff's Funds of Knowledge can enhance the culture and climate within childcare settings by recognizing and valuing the skill sets, experiences, and areas of expertise of childcare workers. This recognition enables leaders to effectively leverage these skills to achieve organizational goals.

Initial research and reflective analysis of childcare workers revealed an overarching theme emphasizing the importance of developing a task force that amplifies their voices. This task force would focus on foundational skills and processes that foster collaboration and sustainability, grounded in practice and aligned with standards for children's growth and development (Diamond & Powell, 2011).

The Funds of Knowledge approach asserts that institutional learning is enriched when educators gain a deeper understanding of students' cultures, beliefs, and values (Moll & Gonzalez, 1997). Applying this concept to leadership styles and their impact on the culture and climate within childcare settings will require several interrelated initiatives. These include real-time relationship building to analyze the staff's Funds of Knowledge, as well as the creation of collaborative spaces where staff can share their knowledge with peers and colleagues.

To achieve these goals, intentional leadership development must be fostered within the organization. The creation of an Accreditation Task Force will enhance collaboration, strengthen self-concept, boost intrinsic motivation, and provide the framework necessary to attain Accreditation status from the Maryland State Department of Education.

The Action Research outcomes were designed to utilize the funds of knowledge from staff members with different skill sets, to collaborate and create a culturally responsive program while simultaneously developing the internal structure to meet the

needs of the individual students in the programs. To do this we must first look at developing internal quality practices and encouraging the participation of all stakeholders (Bugday & Gounko, 2014).

As part of this process, we will conduct a thorough review of our policies and procedures to ensure they are up-to-date and reflect the image and vision that align with our core values and beliefs. By operating within the framework of these values, everything we do will ultimately benefit our youngest and most vulnerable stakeholders—our children. Children thrive in quality childcare programs where they are nurtured, develop life skills, learn routines, cultivate effective decision-making abilities, and are academically prepared for the future.

Accreditation plays a crucial role in ensuring the delivery of high-quality care by holding us to established standards (Winterbottom & Piazza, 2015). The Accreditation team will continue to leverage their skills and expertise in the coming years to mentor new program directors, teachers, and aides through the Accreditation process. This will be achieved through the development of learning communities, which foster interactions such as cross-training and informal mentoring. These professional development activities are proven to enhance interactions in childcare programs and promote learning and development among children (Duval et al., 2020).

Results of action/intervention/change process

The results of the participatory action intervention plan, in the field of culture and climate in childcare settings highlighted two important themes, (1) the quality of

relationships is highly contingent on leadership styles, and (2) childcare programs require culturally responsive staff and leadership who are loyal and committed. These two goals can only be achieved through participatory action research and change intervention that specifically analyzes childcare workers' practices, beliefs, and behaviors, which become socially constructed and bound by collective understandings and perspectives of everyone involved and impacted (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). Research has shown that organizational culture also plays a role in mediating and contributing to leadership and organizational commitment, which in turn contributes to intrinsic motivation and empowerment of employees to work together to accomplish goals (Amtu, et. al 2020).

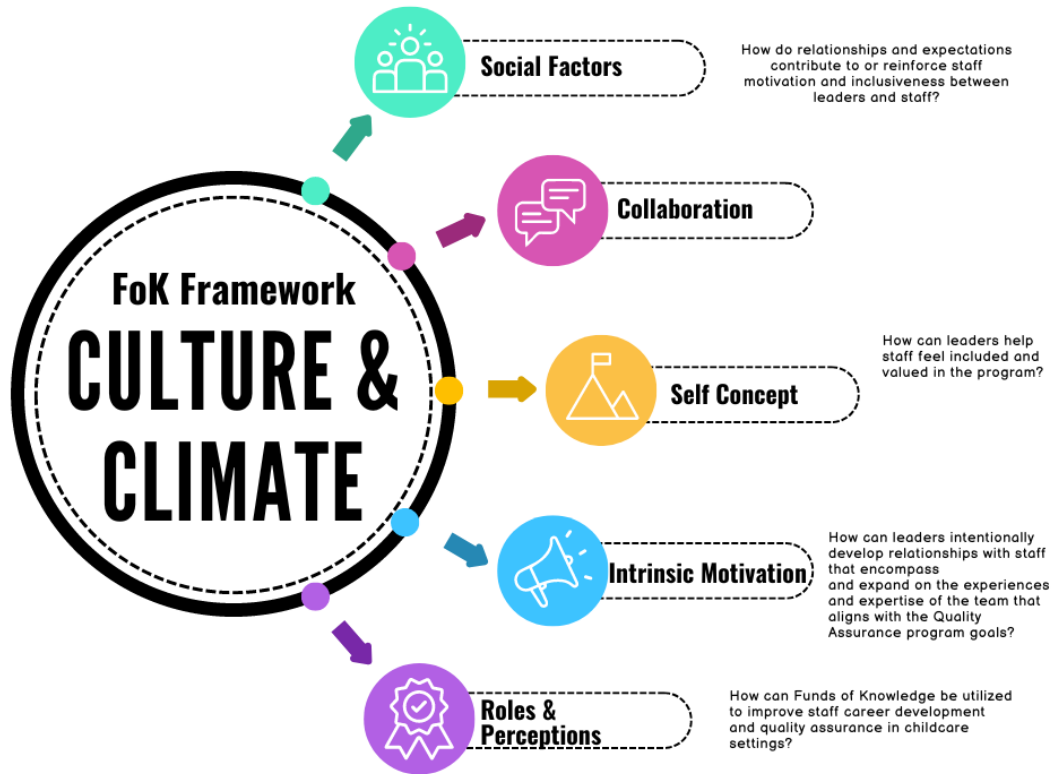
The Accreditation Task Force will set goals that align with the development of leadership courses designed to enhance childcare workers' ability to communicate effectively and intentionally. Research has shown that intentional professional development practices empower staff to perform at their highest potential, while also fostering emotional intelligence skills such as self-regulation, empathy, and interpersonal awareness. Moreover, these practices will increase intrinsic motivation among childcare workers, strengthen relationships, and ultimately lead to an improved quality of care for children.

Analysis Of Organizational Change and Leadership Practice

The steps utilized in the look, think, act, and the SMART goals implemented in chapter two helped to examine the components that of the study results that proved to be the reason behind the creation of the Accreditation Task Force, and kept the focus on the

mission, vision, and values of the organization, throughout the duration of each stage in organizing the Accreditation Task Force. The strategic change focused on transforming the way staff received feedback by fostering a two-way dialogue among all members. The Accreditation Task Force eliminated hierarchical barriers, empowering staff to both give and receive constructive criticism through focus groups and other collaborative methods. This shift refined the culture of the childcare program by enabling staff at all levels to engage with one another, build friendships, and improve the overall culture and climate almost immediately. By facilitating open dialogue, all staff—regardless of position or tenure—were given the opportunity to reflect on each other's strengths, weaknesses, values, and personal leadership styles and techniques.

Figure 3.1 *Fund of Knowledge*



Connecting Theory to Practice

Using Funds of Knowledge as the foundational framework, we can develop intentional processes that shape leadership styles, values, and best practices to cultivate future leaders in the childcare profession by embracing their thoughts, desires, talents, and contributions (Maxwell, 2019). As current leaders, we must embrace and nurture the leaders of tomorrow in meaningful ways, celebrating their differences in the same diverse ways we see in the personalities, strengths, abilities, desires, opinions, cultures, and traditions of the children we care for and nurture every day.

They will one day grow into adults who may choose careers in childcare. Over the past decade, I have witnessed loving, committed, and nurturing young teachers enter the field at various stages of their education. As a former preschool teacher, I developed my own skills and teaching style by emulating the leadership I admired and looked up to within the profession.

Throughout the years, I have been privileged to attend several childcare conferences, where dedicated professionals in the field have helped solidify and channel my energy into reflecting on the benefits of advancements in childcare at all levels. These experiences have also deepened my alignment with the vision and mission of the Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Professional (Calderon, 2024).

As I apply theory to practice in my educational journey, I aspire to become a seasoned leader, standing in solidarity with organizations such as the Maryland State Family Childcare Association (MSFCCA) and the Maryland Childcare Association (MCCA). Both of these esteemed organizations have shaped who I am today by sharing best practices and maintaining a strong presence in the communities they serve.

In my pursuit of advancing in the field of education, the Family Childcare Alliance of Maryland (FCAMD) has provided invaluable resources supporting all levels of childcare, from family home daycare providers to large brick-and-mortar facilities. They will always hold a special place in my heart due to their bottom-up approach to services (Lipsky, 2010).

Lipsky (2010) states that street-level bureaucrats operate with greater efficiency and complexity than subject matter experts (Chapter 3, p. 29). The significant impact of street-level bureaucrats in childcare programs deserves recognition and appreciation, from the local "mom-and-pop" home daycare providers in the neighborhood where I grew up to the large corporations I work with today. Connecting theory to practice requires a collective effort, and aligning best practices across all levels of childcare is essential. These childcare workers enter the field with a wealth of knowledge, experience, expertise, talent, nurturing, ethics, and values—qualities that often go unnoticed or unappreciated by leadership due to unintentional oversight.

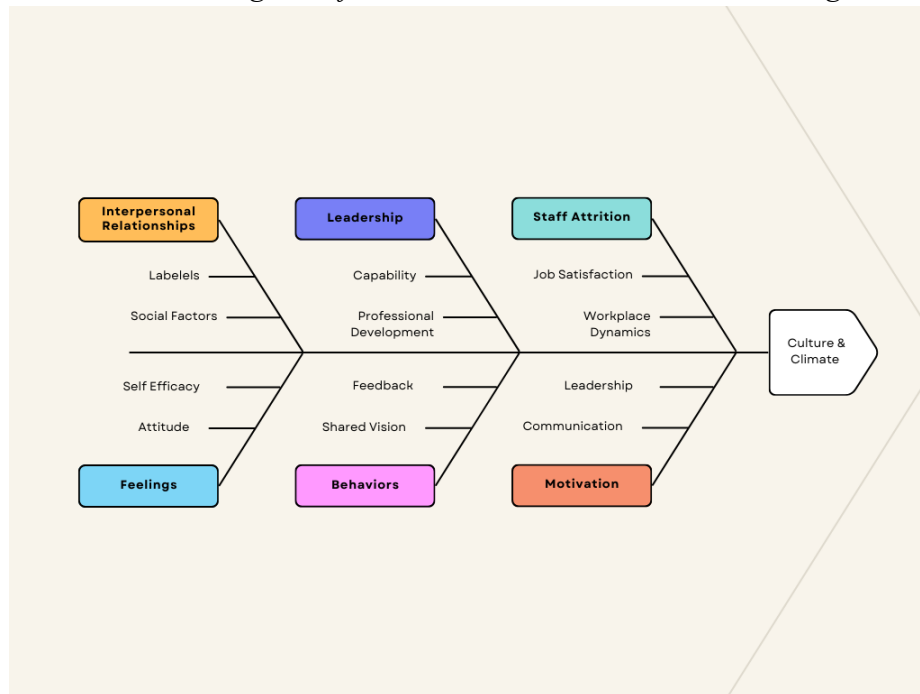
Implications for Practice and Future Research

The goal of this study was to identify areas where training, collaboration, teamwork, and respect can thrive in positive ways within the childcare setting, where real-time routines are developed both with the children and between staff and families. We have only one opportunity to impact children as they enter our care and eventually transition into society. Therefore, it is imperative that, as advocates for social justice, we unite to find ways to keep childcare workers dedicated to this essential field (Nupponen, 2005).

The career trajectory of Early Childhood Educators has historically fallen short in terms of longevity and job satisfaction for childcare professionals. The Unifying Framework for Early Childhood Education (ECE) professionals provides a solid structure and a shared understanding of roles, responsibilities, and standards across the field. It also

paves the way for future research using Funds of Knowledge as a foundation to develop professional development training aligned with the standards outlined in the Unifying Framework, testing its effectiveness in various settings. Future research could explore innovative ways to implement leadership training in small home-based programs, ensuring that all children, regardless of family income or status, can benefit from high-quality early childhood education.

Figure 3.2 *Fishbone Diagram of Culture and Climate/Child Care Programs*



Conclusion

I developed much of my leadership style through trial and error and have dedicated my research to creating a space where teachers can express their knowledge

and share information freely, without fear of rejection or judgment. This space values diversity—not only in how educators view themselves but also in how they are perceived by others. It is carefully constructed and enriched by shared perspectives and contributions that advance the profession of childcare. This approach lays the foundation for future research into innovative ways that Funds of Knowledge can be leveraged to develop leadership training, setting prescriptive implications for practice and research aimed at redefining the culture and climate of childcare programs.

It is crucial to remember that perspectives on caring for children vary, and what may be effective for one individual may not feel natural to another. These differences foster leadership diversity, promote equality within the childcare community, and facilitate dialogue for growth and development. Heikkinen et al. (2022) argue that learning occurs in a reciprocal process that involves communication and participation.

The steps in my research project brought together various stakeholders—both internal and external—to create learning communities within childcare programs. These communities focused on addressing issues from within while intentionally building partnerships that met the diverse needs of those involved in the childcare environment (Lenning et al., 2013).

Historically, childcare professionals have been marginalized compared to other career fields, where formal training, years of experience, and educational qualifications typically determine financial compensation.

The fundamental principle of this action research project was to bridge the gap between the roles and perceptions of childcare workers, which hinder collaboration, foster negative feelings and assumptions, and impact the overall culture and climate. To halt the ongoing turnover in childcare settings, we must focus on what we can control—our attitudes, behaviors, self-concept, and overall leadership within these organizations.

By engaging in reflective processes and sharing knowledge intentionally through learning communities, childcare workers will, over time, demonstrate the effectiveness of utilizing the Funds of Knowledge theory and framework in navigating the daily responsibilities of their roles. The intrinsic motivational factor for me, as both a researcher and practitioner in Early Childhood Education, is to keep childcare workers passionate about teaching children and to remind young adults that working in childcare is both financially and professionally rewarding. I drew on my own experiences as a childcare professional to frame the research questions in this study, using this approach as a method of advocacy for the field of ECE. My research serves as a tool for advocates of Early Childhood Education (ECE) like myself and encourages new practitioners to enter the field of childcare, experiencing the intrinsic rewards of being an educator. The research questions in this study were designed based on intimate experience in the field of early education and were derived from my personal journey as a childcare worker progressing through various types of childcare programs.

As I consider future implications for study, I aim to keep the four core research questions at the forefront of future educators' minds, with the goal of encouraging reflective practices within childcare programs.

APPENDIX A:

TIMELINE OF DISSERTATION IN PRACTICE COMPLETION

Read each item carefully and decide whether the item describes you as a person.

Please indicate your response to each item by selecting one of the five options.

The purpose of this set of survey questions is to consider your own leadership strengths and weaknesses.

1 = Not true 2= Seldom true 3= Occasionally true 4= Somewhat true 5: Very true

1. I enjoy getting into the details of how things work.
2. As a rule, adapting ideas to people's needs is easy for me.
3. Technical things fascinate me.
4. Seeing the big picture comes easy to me.
5. Understanding the social fabric of the organization is important to me.
6. I am good at completing the things I've been assigned to do.
7. I am concerned with how my decisions affect the lives of others.

The next set of survey questions analyzes individual leadership styles and preferences. Please indicate how often each statement is true of your own behavior.

1: Never 2: Hardly ever 3: Seldom 4: Occasionally 5: Often 6: Usually 7: Always

1. I let others know what is expected of them.
2. I maintain a friendly working relationship with others.
3. I listen receptively to other's ideas and suggestions.
4. I act without consulting others.
5. I ask for suggestions from others concerning how to carry out assignments.

6. I behave in a manner that is thoughtful of others' personal needs.
7. I encourage continuous improvement from others' performance.
8. I encourage continuous improvement in my own performance.

The next series of survey questions will describe your relationship with either your leader or the people that you lead.

1: Strongly Disagree 2: Disagree 3: Neutral 4: Agree 5: Strongly Agree

1. I know where I stand with my leader, and usually know how satisfied my leader is with my performance.
2. I know where I stand with my staff, and usually know how satisfied my staff are with my performance.
3. My leader recognizes my potential.
4. I have enough confidence in my leader that I would defend and justify their decision if they were not present to do so.
5. I have enough confidence in my staff that I would defend and justify their decision if they were not present to do so.
6. I have an extremely effective working relationship with my leader/staff.

The next set of questions are related to inclusivity and are designed to reflect on inclusive behaviors in a variety of settings meeting one-on-one with others.

Please answer the following questions with a Yes or No.

1. I enter interactions by showing interest in the other person (e.g. asking questions, sharing something personal, and inviting the other person to share as well).

2. I make eye contact with the person.
3. I face the individual I am speaking with.
4. I put away all distractions such as my cell phone.
5. I ask open-ended questions to learn about the other person.
6. I identify unique skill sets of team members.
7. I use the full range of talents on my team to achieve work objectives.
8. I ask everyone on the team for input and through different means (in person, via email, pulse checks, etc.).
9. I ask everyone on the team what and how they want to contribute.
10. I provide different members on the team with different leadership opportunities.

The next set of questions are related to your style as a team member.

0 = Rarely 1 = Almost rarely 2=Seldom 3=Occasionally 4=More often than not 5=Often
6=Almost always

1. Does your work help you fulfill a personal dream that is important to you?
2. Are your personal work goals aligned with the organization's goals?
3. Are you highly committed to and energized by your work and organization, giving them your best ideas and performance?
4. Does your enthusiasm also spread to and energize your coworkers?
5. Instead of waiting for or merely accepting what the leader tells you, do you personally identify which organizational activities are most critical for achieving the organization's priority goals?

Interview Protocol for

Funds of Knowledge Interview

Thank you for meeting with me today! The purpose of this interview is to hear more about your experience with leadership in childcare settings as a childcare worker. As a participant in this study, I consider you to be an expert on this topic and want to know about your experiences and thoughts regarding the questions I'm going to ask.

I will be recording this interview with my desktop computer, using the recording feature in the platform or medium of your choice. After our interview is over, I will make a transcript of what you said, but I will replace your name, as well as those of anyone you mention and any places you mention, so that nothing you say can be traced back to you. I will be the only one that has access to this data and will keep it locked away and safe until it is time to erase the data entirely.

If you want to stop participating in this interview or not respond to any specific questions for any reason, you may do so without fearing my judgement or disappointment. Before we begin, I can answer any questions you may have.

This interview is expected to take 30 minutes, and I will only press record once you have given me your full consent to proceed. After I start recording, I will ask you to reaffirm that you understand and consent to having your words recorded as part of this interview.

APPENDIX B:
GUIDELINES FOR EXTERNAL COMMITTEE MEMBER

Dear Participant:

My name is Neffitina Thompson, and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Dayton.

I am examining leadership styles and interpersonal relationships in childcare educational settings, and its impact on culture and climate.

I would like to invite you to participate in this research by responding to a short survey and inviting you to participate in an interview later, and at your convenience.

The survey will take approximately 12-15 minutes. There is no known risk for participating.

Participant names and other identifying information markers will **not** be collected to keep all responses confidential.

Copies of this research will be provided to my dissertation chair and the committee of the University of Dayton.

If you choose to participate in this project, please answer all questions as honestly as possible and submit the survey. I will coordinate a date to conduct a 15-minute interview with you.

Participation is strictly voluntary, and you may refuse to participate at any time during the process.

The data collected will help develop future professional development in childcare settings.

If you would like a summary copy of this study, please email me at thompsonn15@udayton.edu.

By continuing to participate in this survey you are indicating that you are 18 years or older and consent to participating in this survey.

If you are not satisfied with the manner to which the study is being conducted, you may report (anonymously if you choose) any complaints to Dr. Aaliyah Baker (my advisor).

The transcripts of your interview will have a randomly assigned number for reference to protect your identity.

Pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity, colleagues, and students identified in the interview.

After my dissertation has been successfully defended, the interview recording will be deleted.

Copies of this research will be provided to my dissertation chair and committee members at the University of Dayton

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW (FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE)

Thank you for meeting with me today! The purpose of this interview is to hear more about your experience with leadership in childcare settings as a childcare worker. As a participant in this study, I consider you to be an expert on this topic and want to know about your experiences and thoughts regarding the questions I'm going to ask.

I will be recording this interview with my desktop computer, using the recording feature in the platform or medium of your choice. After our interview is over, I will make a transcript of what you said, but I will replace your name, as well as those of anyone you mention and any places you mention, so that nothing you say can be traced back to you. I will be the only one that has access to this data and will keep it locked away and safe until it is time to erase the data entirely.

If you want to stop participating in this interview or not respond to any specific questions for any reason, you may do so without fearing my judgment or disappointment. Before we begin, I can answer any questions you may have.

This interview is expected to take 30 minutes, and I will only press record once you have given me your full consent to proceed. After I start recording, I will ask you to reaffirm that you understand and consent to having your words recorded as part of this interview.

APPENDIX D

SEMI-STRUCTURED (FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE) INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What motivates you to work in childcare?
2. Can you describe a time when your motivation was challenged as a result of leaders in childcare?
3. What would you describe as your leadership style and how does your leadership style differ from prior leadership styles you've encountered throughout your career?
4. How do you feel childcare is impacted by adverse leadership styles?
5. What makes you continue to stay in childcare?
6. Given your responses from the survey, would you consider elaborating on how you feel collaboration is impacted by leadership style?
7. What type of cross training in leadership would you like to see occur in childcare settings?

REFERENCES

- Akaba, S., Peters, L. E., Liang, E., Graves, B. S., (2022). *Pre-K Teachers' Professional Identity Development at Community-Based Organizations During Universal Pre-K Expansion in New York City*. Vol 16(6). International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40723-022-000999-9>
- Almond, D., Currie, J., (2011). *Human capital development before age five*. Handbook of Labor Economics, pg. 1315-1486, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0169-7218\(11\)02413-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0169-7218(11)02413-0).
- Amabile, M. T., Schatzel, B. G., Moneta, B. G., Kramer, J. S., (2004). *Leader behaviors and the work environment for creativity: Perceived leader support*. The Leadership Quarterly, Vol.15, pg. 5-32.
- Amtu, O., Fakhruddin, F., Haryono, H., & Muhsin, M. (2020). Revitalization of internal quality assurance through leadership, commitment, and organization culture. *Dinamika Pendidikan*, 15(2), 215–229. <https://doi.org/10.15294/dp.v15i2.26771>
- Ashford, S., J. DeRue, S., D. (2012). *Developing as a leader: The power of mindfulness engagement*. Organizational Dynamics.
- Avolio, B. J., Bass, B. M., & Jung, D. I. (1999). Re-examining the components of transformational and transactional leadership using Multifactor Leadership. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 72(4), 441–462. <https://doi.org/10.1348/096317999166789>
- Bahrami, Z., Heidari, A., & Cranney, J. (2022). Applying smart goal intervention leads to greater goal attainment, need satisfaction, and positive affect. *International Journal of Mental Health Promotion*, 24(6), 869–882. <https://doi.org/10.32604/ijmhp.2022.018954>
- Bahrami, Z., Heidari, A., & Cranney, J. (2022). Applying smart goal intervention leads to greater goal attainment, need satisfaction, and positive affect. *International Journal of Mental Health Promotion*, 24(6), 869–882. <https://doi.org/10.32604/ijmhp.2022.018954>
- Baldwin, D., Gaines, S., Wold, J. L., Williams, A., & Leary, J. (2007). The health of female childcare providers: implications for quality of care. *Journal of Community Health Nursing*, 24(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07370010709336582>
- Beijaard, D., Verloop, N., & Vermunt, J. D. (2000). Teachers' perceptions of professional identity: An exploratory study from a personal knowledge perspective. *Teaching and teacher education*, 16(7), 749-764.

- Blomqvist, C., Donohoe, T., Kelo, M., Linde, J. K., Llavori, R., Maguire, B., Metz, D., Sanchez, T., (n.d.). Quality Assurance and Qualifications Frameworks: Exchanging Good
- Bloom, P. J., (2010). *Measuring work attitudes in the early childhood setting*: Technical manual for the Early Childhood Job Satisfaction Survey and the Early Childhood Work Environment Survey.
- Bondy, Mary Jo DHEd, PA-C; Fletcher, Sara PhD; Lane, Steven MA, MPP. PAEA Accreditation Task Force Briefing Paper: Moving Toward Profession-Defined, Outcomes-Based Accreditation. *The Journal of Physician Assistant Education* 28(4):p 201-204, December 2017. | DOI: 10.1097/JPA.0000000000000176
- Brown, B. (2018). *Dare to Lead: Brave work, tough conversations, whole hearts*. Random House.
- Bugday, Ince, S., & Gounko, T. (2014). Quality assurance in Turkish higher education. *European Journal of Higher Education* 4(2), 184-196.
- Bush, T. (2012). *Leadership in Early Childhood Education*. Educational Management Administration & Leadership. 41(1).
- Calderon, M. V. (2024b, May 2). Unifying framework. Power to the Profession. <https://powertotheprofession.org/unifying-framework/>
- Carsen, J., Tesluk, P., & Marrone, J. (2007). *Shared Leadership in Teams: An Investigation of Antecedent Conditions and Performance*. Academy of Management Journal of Management.
- Chong, S., Lu, T., (2022), “*I’m a Teacher.*” - *Preschool Teachers’ Sense of the Professional Self*, Educational Research Association, The International Journal of Research in Teacher Education, Vol. 13(1): pp. 17-31.
- Chowdhury, F. M., (2014). *Interpretivism in Aiding Our Understanding of the Contemporary Social World*, Open Journal of Philosophy. Vol. 4, pg. 432–438. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4236/ojpp.2014.43047>.
- Clauset, A., Moore, C., Newman, J. E. M., (2008). *Hierarchical structure and the prediction of missing links in networks*. Nature Publishing Group, Vol 4531(1). <https://doi.org/10.1038/nature06830>.

Conferences

- <https://anprojectact.org/2024conference/>
- Corbin, J., Strauss, A., (2015). *Basics of qualitative research* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Cresswell, J. W. (2002). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating qualitative and quantitative research*. Pearson.
- Creswell, J. W., & Guetterman, T. C. (2025). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Pearson Education.
- Creswell, J. W., & Guetterman, T. C., (2021). *Educational research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*. Pearson.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2011). Levels of analysis, regnant causes of behavior and well-being: The role of psychological needs. *Psychological Inquiry*, 22(1), 17–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1047840x.2011.545978>
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2013). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. Springer Science & Business Media.
- Delgado-Gaitan, C. (1993). Researching change and changing the researcher. *Harvard Educational Review*, 63(4), 389–412. <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.63.4.b336053463h71081>
- DeRue, D. S., & Ashford, S. J. (2013). Mindful engagement: Learning to learn from experience. *Experience-Driven Leader Development*, 145–150. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118918838.ch23>
- Desautels, L. (2016). How emotions affect learning, behaviors, and relationships.
- Diamond, K. E., & Powell, D. R. (2011). An Iterative approach to the development of a professional development intervention for Head Start teachers. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 33(1), 75-93.
- Duval, S., Bouchard, C., Lemay, L., & Cantin, G. (2020). Examination of the quality of interactions as observed in childcare centers and reported by early childhood educators. *SAGE Open*, 10(2), 215824402093291. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020932914>
- Duval, S., Bouchard, C., Lemay, L., & Cantin, G. (2020). Examination of the Quality of Interactions as Observed in Childcare Centers and Reported by Early Childhood Educators. *SAGE Open*, 10(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020932914>
- Elaldi, S., Yeriyyurt, N. S., (2016). *Preservice Preschool Teachers' Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Attitudes Toward Teaching Profession*. Educational Research and Reviews. Vol. 11(7), pp. 345-357. <https://doi.org/10.5897.ERR2016.2648>

- Emery, C., Calvard, T. S., & Pierce, M. E. (2013). Leadership as an Emergent Group Process: A Social Network Study of personality and leadership. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 16(1), 28–45.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430212461835>
- Fligstein, N., & Freeland, R. (1995). Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives on Corporate Organizations. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 21, 21-43.
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.21.080195.000321>
- Gagne, M., Deci, E., (2005), *Self-determination theory and work motivation*. Journal of Organizational Behavior, Vol. 26, pp. 331-362. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.322>.
- Garavuso, V., (2016), *Reimagining teacher education to attract and retain the early childhood workforce: Addressing the needs of the “nontraditional” student*. In L. J. Couse & S. L. Recchia (Eds.), *Handbook of early childhood teacher education*. pp. 181-194.
- Gay, L. R., Airasian, P., (2003). *Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Application* (7th ed.).
- Genzruk, M. (1999). Tapping into community funds of knowledge. *Effective strategies for English language acquisition: Curriculum guide for the professional development of teachers grades kindergarten through eight*, 9-21.
- Granger, R. C. (1989). The staffing crisis in early childhood education. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 71(2), 130-134.
- Grunewald, R., Nunn, R., Palmer, V., (2022). *Examining teacher turnover in early childhood education*, Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis,
<https://www.minneapolisfed.org/>
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. *Handbook of qualitative research*, 2(163-194), 105.
- Guo, Y., Justice, M. L., Tompkins, V., (2011), *Exploring factors related to preschool teachers’ self-efficacy*. Teaching and Teacher Education, Vol. 27, pp. 961-968.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2011.03.008>
- Gupta, A., (2006), *Early experiences and personal funds of knowledge and beliefs of immigrant and minority teacher candidates dialog with theories of child development in a teacher education classroom*. Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education, Vol 27, pp. 3-18.
- Guskey, T. R., (1987), *Context variables that affect measures of teacher efficacy*, Journal of Educational Research, Vol. 87, pp. 41-47.

- Gutierrez, K. & Rogoff, B. (2003) Cultural Ways of Learning: *Individual Traits or Repertoires of Practice*, Educational Researcher, 32(5), 19-25.
- Harrison, L. J., Hadley, F., Irvine, S., Davis, B., Hatzigianni, M., Mulhearn, G., Waniganayake, M., Andrews, R., & Li, P. (2019). *Quality Improvement Research Project*. Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA).
- Harwood, D., Tukonic, S., (2016), *Babysitter or Professional? Perceptions of Professionalism Narrated by Ontario Early Childhood Educators*. International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education. Vol. 8(4), pp. 589-600.
- Hattie, J. (2003). Teachers Make a Difference, What is the research evidence?
- Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with words: Language, life, and work in communities and classrooms*. New York. Cambridge University Press.
- Heikkinen, K.-M., Ahtiainen, R., & Fonsén, E. (2021). *Perspectives on Leadership in Early Childhood Education and Care Centers through Community of Practice*. <https://doi.org/10.31124/advance.13623884>
- Hesse-Biber, S. N., & Leavy, P. (2011). *The practice of qualitative research*. Sage.
- Hesse-Biber, S.N. (2017). *The Practice of Qualitative Research Engaging Students in the Research Process*. SAGE.
- Homans, G., (1958). *Social Behavior as Exchange*.
- Hooper, A., (2020), "I'm a Teacher, Unofficially": How Home-Based Providers Perceive and Navigate Their Roles. Journal of Research in Childhood Education. Vol. 34(2). pp. 223-237. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02568543.2019.1676847>
- Hsueh, Y., (2002). *The Hawthorne Experiments and the Introduction of Jean Piaget in American Industrial Psychology, 1929-1932*. History of Psychology. Vol. 5 (2), 163–189. <https://doi.org/10.1037//1093-4510.5.2.163>.
- [https://www.vancopayments.com/child-care/blog/leadership-management-in-child care](https://www.vancopayments.com/child-care/blog/leadership-management-in-child-care)
- Hur, H. E., Ardeleanu, K., Satchell, W. T., Jeon, L., (2023). *Why Are They Leaving? Understanding Associations Between Early Childhood Program Policies and Teacher Turnover Rates*. Child & Youth Care Forum. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10566-022-09693-x>

- Hur, H. E., Ardeleanu, K., Satchell, W. T., Jeon, L., (2023). *Why Are They Leaving? Understanding Associations Between Early Childhood Program Policies and Teacher Turnover Rates*. Child & Youth Care Forum. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10566-022-09693-x>
- Hur, E., Jeon, L., Buettner, C. K., (2015). *Preschool Teachers' Child Centered Beliefs: Direct and Indirect Associations with Work Climate and Job Related Well Being*. Springer Science Media. New York.
- Hye, J. R., Brown, H., Fremstad, S., (2020). *A Basic Demographic Profile of Workers in Frontline Industries*. Center for Economic and Policy Research.
- Jeon, J. H., Kwon, A. K., Walsh, B., Burnham, M. M., Choi, J. Y., (2019), *Relations of Early Childhood Education Teachers' Depressive Symptoms, Job-Related Stress, and Professional Motivation to Beliefs About Children and Teaching Practices*. Early Education and Development, Vol. 30(1), pp. 131-144. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2018.1539822>.
- Jorde-Bloom, P. (1988). Factors influencing overall job satisfaction and organizational commitment in early childhood work environments. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 3(2), 107-122.
- Kenny, M., Fourie, R., (2015). *Contrasting Classic, Straussian, and Constructivist Phenomenology : Methodological and Philosophical Conflicts*, The Qualitative Report, Vol. 20(8);
- Kivunja, C. (2015), *Leadership in Early Childhood Education Contexts: Looks, Roles, and Functions*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/ce.2015.616172>.
- Klocke, A. & Stadtmuller, S., (2019), "Social capital in the health department of children". <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-018-9583-y>.
- Kuhnert, K. W. (1994). Transforming leadership: Developing people through delegation. In B. M. Bass & B. J. Avolio (Eds.), *Improving organizational effectiveness through transformational leadership* (pp. 10–25). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Kujur, P., & Ye, Y. (2018). THE RELATIONSHIP OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS LEADERSHIP CAPACITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN THE MARIANIST SCHOOLS, INDIA. *Scholar: Human Sciences*, 10(1), 298. Retrieved from <https://www.assumptionjournal.au.edu/index.php/Scholar/article/view/3332>
- Lambert, L. (1998). *Building Leadership Capacity in Schools*. [ebook]
- Lencioni, P. (2002). *The five dysfunctions of a team*. Jossey-Bass.

- Lenning, O. T. (2013). *Powerful learning communities: A guide to developing student, faculty, and Professional Learning Communities to improve student success and organizational effectiveness*. Stylus Pub.
- Linnan, L., Arandia, G., Bateman, A. L., Vaughn, A., Smith, N., Ward, D., (2017). The Health and Working Conditions of Women Employed in Child Care. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph14030283>
- Lipsky, M., (2010). *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas Of The Individual In Public Services* 30th Anniversary Expanded Edition.
- Lipsky, M., (2010). *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas Of The Individual In Public Services* 30th Anniversary Expanded Edition.
- Macias, A., Townsend, J., (2021), *Funds of Knowledge and Educational Leadership: Recognizing and Leveraging Untapped Leadership Talent*. pp. 70-78.
- Manju., (2018). *Burnout in Teachers: Causes, Consequences, and Interventions*. *Indian Journal of Health and Well-Being*. Vol 9(3), pp.510-512.
- Maxwell, J. C. (2007). *The 21 irrefutable laws of leadership: Follow them and people will follow you*. HarperCollins Leadership.
- Maxwell, J. C. (2019). *LEADERSHIFT, The 11 Essential Changes Every Leader Must Embrace*. Harper Collins.
- McClelland, J., (1986). *Job Satisfaction of child care workers: A review*. *Child Care Quarterly*, Vol. 15, pp. 82-89.
- McCullough, S. N., Granger, K. L., Sutherland, K. S., Conroy, M. A., & Pandey, T. (2022). *A Preliminary Study of BEST in CLASS–Elementary on Teacher Self-Efficacy, Burnout, and Attributions*. *Behavioral Disorders*. Vol 47(2), pp. 84–94. <https://doi-org.libproxy.udayton.edu/10.1177/01987429211010672>
- McDonald, P., Thorpe, K., Irvine, S., (2018). *Low Pay But We Still Stay Retention in Early Childhood Education and Care*. *Journal of Industrial Relations*. Vol. 65(5), 647–668. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022185618800351>
- McDonald, P., Thorpe, K., Irvine, S., (2018). *Low Pay But We Still Stay Retention in Early Childhood Education and Care*. *Journal of Industrial Relations*. Vol. 65(5), pp.647-668. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022185618800351>
- Merriam, B. S., Grenier, S. R., (2019). *Qualitative Research in Practice, Examples for Discussion and Analysis*. Jossey-Bass, Second Edition.

- Merrill, B., Cohen-Vogel, L., Little, M., Sadler, J., & Lee, K. (2020). “quality” assurance features in state-funded early childhood education: A policy brief. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 113, 104972.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.104972>
- Mertler, A. C., (2019). *Action Research Improving Schools and Empowering Educators*. SAGE Sixth Edition.
- Mills, G. E. (2011). *Action research: A guide for the teacher researcher* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Moll, C. L., Amanti, C., Neff, D., Gonzalez, N., (2009), *Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms*. Theory Into Practice. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00405849209543534>.
- Moll, C. L., Santiago-Soto, L., S., Schwartz, L., (2013). *Funds of Knowledge in Changing Communities*. International Handbook of Research on Children’s Literacy, Learning, and Culture, First Edition.
- Moll, L. & Gonzalez, N. (1997) Teachers as Social Scientists: *Learning about Culture from Household Research*. P. Hall (Ed), *Race, Ethnicity and Multiculturalism: Policy and Practice* (New York, Garland Publishing)
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203054598>
- Moll, L., & Diaz, S. (1987). *Change as a goal of educational research*. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, (18), p. 300-311.
- Muijs, D., Aubrey, C., Harris, A., & Briggs, M. (2004). How do they manage? *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 2(2), 157–169.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1476718x04042974>
- Mutual Reflections on Conceptual Frameworks in Qualitative Research. (n.d.). essay.
- Myers, J. W., & Myers, B. K. (2010). Core conditions, conflict, and challenges in early childhood teaming. *Childhood Education*, 87(2), 84-89.
- Northouse, P. G. (2022). *Leadership: Theory & practice*. Sage Publications.
- Northouse, P. G. (2022). *Leadership: Theory & practice*. Sage Publications.
- Nupponen, H. (2005). Leadership and Management in Child Care Services: Contextual Factors and Their Impact on Practice.
- Nupponen, H. (2006). Framework for developing leadership skills in child care centers in Queensland, Australia. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 7(2), 146–161.
<https://doi.org/10.2304/ciec.2006.7.2.146>

Nupponen, H., (2006). *Framework for Developing Leadership Skills, in Child Care Centers in Queensland, Australia*. Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, Vol.7, No. 2.. DOI: 10.2304/ciec.2006.7.2.146.

Payne, E. F. J. (1974). *Parega and PARALIPOMENA: Short Philosophical Essays Of Arthur Schopenhauer*, Oxford University Press.

Prochner, L. (2000). A history of early education and child care in Canada, 1820-1966. *Early childhood care and education in Canada: Past, present, and future*, 11-65.

Professional Organizations

<https://www.msfccca.org/>

<https://mscca.org/>

<https://www.fccamd.org/>

Quinn, R. E. (2015). *The positive organization breaking free from conventional cultures, constraints, and beliefs*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Rawls, J., (b. 1921, d. 2002). *The Original Position*. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, ch. 4.6.

Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (2008a). *The sage handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice*. SAGE Publications.

Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (2008a). *The sage handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice*. SAGE Publications.

Recchia, L. S., McDevitt, E. S., (2018). *Unraveling Universalist Perspectives on Teaching and Caring for Infants and Toddlers: Finding Authenticity in Diverse Funds of Knowledge*. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*. Vol. 32(1). pp. 14-31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02568543.2017.1387206>

Recchia, S. L., & McDevitt, S. E. (2018). Unraveling universalist perspectives on teaching and caring for infants and toddlers: Finding authenticity in diverse funds of knowledge. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 32(1), 14-31.

Ressang-Wildschut, J., Oldenhof, L., & Leistikow, I. (2021). *Can leadership make the difference? A scoping review of leadership and its effects in child and youth care*. *Children and Youth Services Review*.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2023.107017>.

Rev.com. "Transcribe Speech to Text." Rev, www.rev.com/. Accessed 17 June 2023.

Rodriguez, G. M. (2013). Power and Agency in Education: Exploring the Pedagogical Dimensions of Funds of Knowledge. *Review of Research in Education*, 37(1), 87-120. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X12462686>

- Ryan, M. R., Deci, L. E., (1999), *Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations: Classic Definitions and New Directions*. Contemporary Educational Psychology.
<https://doi.org/10.1006/ceps.1999.1020>.
- Schachter, E. R., Jiang, Q., Piasta, B. S., Flynn, E. E., (2022), “*We’re (sic) More Than a Daycare.*”: Reported Roles and Settings for Early Childhood Professionals and Implications for Professionalizing the Field, *Early Childhood Education Journal*, Vol. 50, pp. 1183-1196. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-021-01252-8>.
- Shenton, K., A., (2004). *Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects*, *Education for Information*, Vol. 22, pg. 63-76.
- Siisiäinen, M. (2003). Two concepts of social capital: Bourdieu vs. Putnam. *International journal of contemporary sociology*, 40(2), 183-204.
- Simpkins, S. D., Riggs, N. R., Ngo, B., Vest Ettekal, A., & Okamoto, D. (2016). Designing culturally responsive organized after-school activities. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 32(1), 11–36. <https://doi.org/10.1177/07435584166666169>
- Simpkins, S. D., Riggs, N. R., Ngo, B., Vest Ettekal, A., & Okamoto, D. (2016). Designing culturally responsive organized after-school activities. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 32(1), 11–36. <https://doi.org/10.1177/07435584166666169>
- Smith, A. (2022). *Leadership and Management in Child Care*. VANCO
- Spindler, G. D. (1974). *Education and cultural process: Toward an anthropology of Education*.
- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. (updated 2020)
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/epistemology/>
- Starting, operating, and sustaining an afterschool program*. Starting, Operating, and Sustaining an Afterschool Program | Youth.gov. (n.d.).
<https://youth.gov/youth-topics/afterschool-programs/starting-and-operating-afterschool-program>
- Stringer, E. T., & Aragón, O. A. (2021). *Action research*. SAGE.
- Takagi, Y., Batten, P., Rattenborg, K., (2020). *A Collaborative Exchange To Improve Early Childhood Education Outcomes*. *Problems of Education In The 21st Century*. Vol. 78, No. 6A.
- Tikly, L. (2015). *What works, for whom, and in what circumstances? Towards a critical realist understanding of learning in international and comparative education*, *International Journal of Educational Development*, Vol. 40, pg. 234–249,
<https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2014/11.008>

- Tikly, Leon., *What works, for whom, and in what circumstances? Towards a critical realist understanding of learning in international and comparative education*. International Journal of Education Development, Vol 40 pp. 237-239.
<https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2014.11.008/>
- Truskie, S. D. (2002). *Leadership in High Performance Organizational Cultures*. London: Quorum Books.
- Volman, M., Gilde, J., (2021), *The effects of using students' funds of knowledge on educational outcomes in the social and personal domain*. Learning, Culture, and Social Interaction Vol. 28. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lcsi.2020.100472>.
- Watt, D., (2007). *On Becoming a Qualitative Researcher: The Value of Reflexivity*, The Qualitative Report, Vol. 12 (1).
- Whitley, R., (1984). *The Scientific Status of Management Research as a Practically-Oriented Social Science*. Journal of Management Studies, Vol 21, pp. 369-390. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486-1984.tb00234.x>
- Wiggins, G., McTighe, J., (2005). *Understanding by Design*, 2nd edition.
- Winterbottom, C., & Piasta, S. B. (2015). Does Accreditation Matter? School Readiness Rates for Accredited Versus Non-Accredited Child Care Facilities in Florida's Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Program. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 29(1), 60–72.
<https://doi-org.libproxy.udayton.edu/10.1080/02568543.2014.978918>
- www.delve.com *Qualitative Coding Software*
- Zander, R. S., & Zander, B. (2000). *The art of possibility*. Harvard Business School Press.