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Female African American Childcare Teachers in Milwaukee: Construction of Professional Identity

Venner Joyce Alston

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

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FEMALE AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILDCARE TEACHERS IN MILWAUKEE:
CONSTRUCTION OF PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

by

Venner J. Alston

A Dissertation Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
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ABSTRACT

FEMALE AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILDCARE TEACHERS IN MILWAUKEE: CONSTRUCTION OF PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

by

Venner J. Alston

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee 2017
Under the Supervision of Professor Gary Williams

The purpose of this study is to understand how African American women working in center-based childcare programs in Milwaukee describe their professional identity. In Milwaukee, approximately 1,500 women who identify as African American are employed as childcare directors and teachers. At least 45% of them are reported as meeting only basic education requirements. This is problematic as Milwaukee experiences the highest number of children and families receiving childcare subsidies through the Wisconsin Shares Program. How can low-income minority children enrolled in childcare programs in Milwaukee expect to be prepared to enter kindergarten without having access to teachers who have sufficient education to prepare them? Professionalization includes a specialized body of knowledge and competencies. Do teachers who meet only basic education requirements have this knowledge? Without it, can they be considered professionals? If they are not considered professionals, what are they considered? How do they consider themselves? Does their description of themselves differ from the way the childcare field describes them? Relying on written surveys, focus groups and one-on-one interviews, this qualitative study yielded a sample size of eighty (N=80) respondents working in center-based childcare programs in Milwaukee County. Challenges to this study were evidenced in the difficulty of obtaining responses from a population comprised primarily of low-wage

workers and diverse communities. Study findings revealed that African American women working in center-based programs in Milwaukee County describe themselves as professionals, which is not different from the way the childcare field describes them. Despite their self-perceptions of being professionals, respondents reported low wages, tuition costs and work schedules as barriers preventing them from degree attainment.

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To my beloved husband Bill who believed in me and supported me in this journey in
phenomenal ways,
my spiritual sons and daughters who cheered me on,
and my family who believed in me.

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“Starting strong is good. Finishing strong is epic.” Robin Sharma

Completing a doctoral program and writing a dissertation are milestone achievements in the life of those who choose the path of academia. We become our best selves when we have the opportunity to connect with others who have the capacity to encourage us through the process, stimulate us to think bigger and to think with clarity. This connection with others is a reminder that achievements in life are not accomplished alone. I was fortunate to connect with four wonderful individuals who chose to join me on my journey toward completion of my dissertation. I would like to thank my committee: Professors Gary Williams, Cheryl Baldwin, Barbara Bales and Pamela Boulton. Your comments and encouragement provided the support necessary for me to finish this important work. I was not alone in my process; you were there helping me to experience the rigors and enlightenment of research, encouraging me toward the necessary level of clarity in my writing.

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difficult I could look to you for encouragement. Thank you. You are indeed my colleague and friend. I look forward to our continued discussion of possibilities for young children.

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Chapter One

The purpose of this study was to examine how African American females working as teachers in center-based childcare centers understand and describe themselves as professionals. For this study, professionalization was defined as the degree to which an occupation makes claim to special competencies regarding the quality of its work and benefits to society.

Professionalization includes an established unifying framework for career pathways, knowledge, qualifications, standards and compensation.

African American women were selected as the population of study for several reasons. First, in Wisconsin's childcare workforce, women dominate, with 98% of teachers reporting as female. While eighty-three percent of the childcare workforce in Wisconsin identify as white, in Milwaukee forty-one percent of the childcare workforce identify as African American (Dresser, Rodriguez, Meder, & COWS, 2016). Second, Milwaukee has the largest number statewide of children participating in the Wisconsin Shares Program, a state subsidy for childcare (P. Deakman, e-mail March 2, 2016). Third, forty-five percent of teachers in Milwaukee do not hold a bachelor's degree but only a high school diploma (P. Deakman, e-mail March 2, 2016). Fourth, there is a positive link between early childhood teacher education and children's school readiness. Birth through age 8 are considered the critical years during which children's learning foundations develop (Iruka, Morgan, 2014; Fenech, Waniganayake, Fleet, 2009; Sanders, Deihl, Kyler, 2007; Rushton, Larkin, 2001). If a large number of Milwaukee's childcare teachers are underprepared, what is the impact upon the city's children in these critical years of development?

Given the link between the quality of care and outcomes for learning throughout the school years, and the one between teacher education and quality of instruction, there is a need to better

understand the link between educational background and professionalism (Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2015). How can teachers who are not knowledgeable about children's development be expected to be responsive and supportive?

To further highlight the issue of early childhood educators' educational qualifications, professionalism, and child outcomes, it is important to consider the population impacted. Recent reports reveal that Wisconsin has the worst black-white achievement gap in the nation (Becker, 2015). Given the number of children in Milwaukee childcare centers with teachers meeting only minimal educational requirements, this is a significant problem.

Research supports a positive connection between teacher education and student outcomes (Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2015; Barnett, Epstein, Freidman, Stevenson-Boyd, Hustedt, 2009; Kostelnik, Grady, 2009). However, within the overall childcare industry, fewer than half of preschool teachers hold a Bachelor's degree, and many have never attended college at all (NAEYC, 2013). Current literature reflects upon the necessary framework, which must be implemented if early childhood education is to claim its place alongside upper echelon teachers, physicians, lawyers and other recognized professional groups. Problematic for the field is the question why, despite financial supports for education, so many early childhood educators do not earn their degree? To answer this question, since African American women make up a large proportion of early childhood educators in urban communities, it is important to understand their perception of education and professionalism.

Concern for quality has resulted in systemic supports for credentials and earning Bachelors' degrees, but the actual participants may not view implementation of these programs as collaborative partnerships. Why? The question has to be referred back to the participants – the

African American women working in childcare. Understanding their voices is vital to moving the field toward professionalization. A critical issue is whether the current dominant model of early care and education professionalism is meaningful to urban African American early childhood teachers. Without more understanding of how African American women who dominate the childcare workforce in cities like Milwaukee perceive this model, this population of teachers will continue to meet only basic entry level qualifications.

Problem Statement

Considerable research focusing on center-based childcare programs' efforts toward professionalization has been done (National Research Council, 2015; Boyd, 2013; Feeney, 2012; Martin, Meyer, Caudle, James, Nelson, Ting, 2010; Gable, Haliburton, 2003). Although much of the literature focuses on policy implications, brain development in children, and the relationship between quality childcare and teacher education (Luby, Belden, Botteron, Marrus, Harms, Babb, Nishino, Barch, 2013; Palley & Shdaimah, 2011; Fox, Levitt, Nelson, 2010; Barnett, 2008; Early et al., 2007; Zambo, 2007; Rushton, Larkin, 2001; Hofferth, 1996), African American early childhood educators in urban communities are still not accessing educational pathways at a rate comparable to other ethnic groups. As yet, little work has been done to explore *why* more urban African American early childhood education teachers are not enhancing their professional status.

Brock (2012) does point to the problem of the absence of practitioners' voices, and Coker (2003) indicates the scarcity of literature on African American women teachers in center-based programs. Brock (2012) argues that practitioner voice has been markedly absent from debates regarding what constitutes professional behavior and practice. Beker's (2001) study is a case in point. It argues for the development of a professional identity for the childcare worker, but

includes no voices of the study's participants. Baum and King (2006) take this further. They stress the need for creating a climate of self-awareness in early childhood teacher preparation programs. They feel that such programs should be marked by teacher self-assessment and identification of the beliefs and attitudes that make them who they are. Teachers need to ask themselves how these beliefs and attitudes influence their own teaching and learning (Baum & King, 2006, p. 217).

The research by Martin et al. (2010) analyzes perceptions of professionalism among three groups of childcare professionals: childcare directors, childcare caregivers, and family childcare providers. However, the exclusion of practitioners' voices is clearly evident in previous professionalization research. Inclusion of their voices, especially those of African American women who make up such a large proportion of the urban early childhood workforce, is essential. They are the ones to underscore the need for federal policy that will result in increased financial equity, as well as social respect, that should follow professionalization in the field.

Significance of the study

Research supports a positive connection between teacher education and student outcomes (Hildebrandt & Eom, 2011; Early, Maxwell, & Burchinal, 2007; Torquati, Raikes, & Huddleston, 2007; Shriver, 2006; Neumann & Bennett, 2001). It also indicates that children from low-income minority families are more likely to enroll in programs that employ non-degreed directors and teachers, which places students at an academic disadvantage from the start (Barnett, 2003). In 2004, the National Association for the Education of Young Children reported that nationally only 30% of child care educators and administrators had four-year college degrees, while only 40%, including those with Associates' degrees, had some college credits

(Critical Facts About the Early Childhood Workforce). In their 2016 report, the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association indicates that in 2013, sixty-six percent of Wisconsin's childcare teachers had education beyond high school. Not only that, at least twenty-one percent of Wisconsin's childcare teachers had a four-year degree, and nine percent had a Master's degree (Dresser, Rodriguez, & Meder, 2016). In reviewing these statistics, it is important to note that eighty-three percent of Wisconsin's childcare workforce is white. The statistics among African American childcare teachers in Milwaukee are quite different. First, only forty-three percent of the childcare workforce in Milwaukee is white (Dresser, Rodriguez, & Meder, 2016), while The Registry of Wisconsin reports that 1440 African American women represent forty-one percent of Milwaukee's childcare workforce (P. Deakman, personal communication, March 2, 2016). Within this population, twenty-five percent have earned college credits; nine percent have an Associate's degree, five percent hold a Bachelor's degree, and three percent hold a Master's degree (P. Deakman, personal communication, March 2, 2016). These are significantly lower figures than Wisconsin's statewide statistics for this population. They reveal that in spite of more group center teachers in Milwaukee having college credits, many of which are through credentialing programs, there are still too many teachers who meet only basic educational requirements. This raises the issue of whether or not resistance to education and professional upgrading exists. If it does not exist, what is impeding teachers from getting it? What perceptions or circumstances are getting in the way?

Focusing specifically on the perceptions of African American females in center-based programs, with all these questions in mind, may provide valuable information that can help to inform professional development programs, expand teachers' knowledge base, more effectively

prepare children for kindergarten, give teachers access to increased wages and benefits, and include teachers in efforts toward change in the field. In a field so beset by problems, it is worth asking these fundamental questions.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to examine how African American women working as teachers in center-based childcare programs describe and understand themselves as professionals. The theories that inform this work are identity theory and social identity theory.

Research Questions

This exploratory study focused on how African American women employed in center-based childcare programs construct their professional identity. Using paper surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one personal interviews, this study investigated how childcare teachers describe themselves as professionals in the context of a center-based childcare program. Further, interview questions probed the factors that impact the construction of their professional identity. It examined the influence of Wisconsin's YoungStar Quality Rating Improvement System (YoungStar) upon their interpretation of professional identity. YoungStar was designed as a quality rating improvement system for licensed childcare programs operating in Wisconsin. It placed emphasis on credentialing and professional development of directors and teachers. The central research question that this study aimed to answer was: *"How do African American women employed in early childhood education settings perceive the meaning of professionalization?"* This study included the following additional research sub-questions:

1. How do teachers describe themselves as professionals – i.e., their professional identity?

2. What perceived barriers might exist which prevent or impede African American females working in center-based programs as teachers from participating in continuing education?

Population of Study

Teachers working in enter-based programs in Milwaukee County providing services to children aged birth through eight, and licensed by the Wisconsin Department of Children and Family Services were selected. Teachers were selected from programs ranked by Wisconsin's YoungStar Quality Rating Improvement System ("YoungStar") as two, three, four and five stars. Programs ranked by YoungStar as two stars receive a five percent reduction of their Wisconsin Shares tuition reimbursement. Three-star programs, on the other hand, do not receive a reduction of their Wisconsin Shares' reimbursement. However, since they have not been able to meet higher quality standards, they are ineligible for additional Wisconsin Shares' financial incentives above their tuition reimbursement. Centers having four or five-star ratings receive up to an additional ten to twenty-five percent respectively above their tuition reimbursement. What are teacher perceptions of these rankings and the demands the rankings make upon them? How do they affect their experiences and the way they perceive barriers and opportunities as they move toward professionalization? This study sought to provide some answers to these questions.

Identity Theory

Identity theory and social identity theory represent two similar perspectives on the dynamic mediation of the socially constructed self, between individual behavior and social structure (Hogg, 2001; Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). Hogg et al. (1995) found that while there are similarities in these two constructs, there are also unique distinctions. Identity theory explains the individual's role-related behaviors, while social identity theory is a theory in social psychology

that sets out to explain group processes and intergroup relations (p. 255). Variation in self-concepts is due to the different roles people occupy (p. 256). Role identities can be self-conceptions, self-referent cognitions, or self-definitions that people apply to themselves as a consequence of the structural role positions they occupy (Hogg et al., 1995, p. 256). This study uses the lenses of both constructs to focus upon the definition, as both work-related and self-referent identities, African American women working as teachers in center-based childcare programs apply to themselves.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

Research literature related to professionalization reflects the lack of a consistent definition. There is, however, some agreement regarding criteria that organizations seeking professional status should meet. One consistently accepted criterion across the literature is that every profession has its own specialized body of knowledge. Establishing an agreed upon body of knowledge for early childcare professionals presents problems. So far, research literature within the context of early childhood education professionalism reveals a pattern similar to the literature on professionalization in general. In early childhood education, the term “professionalization” encounters a variety of definitions. However, while the perspectives do vary, what it means to be a professional in this field is basically similar to the rules for professional status in any other field. Professionalization is the degree to which an occupation meets certain accepted criteria. It can include credentials, licensure, mentoring new entrants, professional development, specialization, authority, compensation and prestige (Ingersoll & Perda, 2008). In spite of the basic adherence to professional definition, however, the importance of bringing teachers to a professional level, especially for the pre-school stages, is a much-debated and complex issue.

Kinos (2008) defines professionalism as the ideology of a professional group, according to which the group acts purposefully and in an organized manner to pursue its own interests within the rules of any given society. Furthermore, “Professional status is backed up by the state and the educational system in particular” (p. 224). Kinos (2008) describes the process of professionalization as a development over a period of time, and notes, moreover, that each

country has features of professionalization unique to itself. Kinos (2008) theorizes that the ongoing process of professionalization is bound to encounter both support and opposition along the way (p. 224).

In their study, Martin et al. (2010) discuss the factors that contribute to an individual's feelings about being a childcare professional. They cite *Careers Serving Families and Consumers*, authored by Sproles and Sproles (2000), which defines professionalism as a commitment to a career, enjoying the work you do, and receiving, using, and sharing knowledge (p. 341). Anne Grey (2011) cites Macpherson's (2010) definition of professionalization as the social and educational process used to transform those who can earn their living by educating to justify specialist expertise and moral integrity appropriate to their chosen profession (p. 22). In more recent studies, Thomas (2012), in agreement with Feeney (2012), echoes these definitions. Thomas defines professionalization in the childcare workforce as teacher education evidenced by obtaining a degree in early childhood education, continued professional development in the field, and a subscription to a certain code of ethics.

Professionalization among early childhood education teachers has stimulated recent discussion, both within the industry as well as among community agencies responsible for the oversight of preschool and childcare programs. As stated above, Kinos (2008) describes the concept of professionalism as the ideology of a professional group. It derives from the way in which a group acts purposefully and in an organized manner to pursue its own interests within the context of a given society. This purposefulness becomes the agent through which organizations intentionally act to "maintain the advantages obtained and to strengthen their position by allying themselves with the elite of the society" (p. 224). Unfortunately, while

advances have been made, group-care center teachers are still waiting to be welcomed as professionals within society. It also appears that they tend not to see that they themselves should belong to this category. As long as this holds true, their alignment in the ranks of other professionals will not be easily obtained, to their own detriment and that of the children they serve.

Increasing Demand for Childcare

The increased demand for childcare services, the percentage of low-income minority children enrolled in childcare, the black-white student achievement gap, the lack of participation in credentialing programs and the reduced wages and benefits for childcare workers, which contribute to staff turnover, suggest a clear need for a new vantage point in research. This research should be focused on the African American childcare teachers who constitute such a major group among urban childcare workers, and it needs to allow the voices of the participants to emerge. Why is there such a discrepancy between the qualifications of this population of teachers, and the qualifications of teachers in other elements of society? Are the opportunities for further education available to them? There seem to be more opportunities than ever before. So what impediments do exist? Can they be identified? Is there a resistance to education? And if this population is not resisting education, what might they be resisting instead? Without the inclusion of practitioners' voices in much of the research, these questions receive only theoretical answers.

The need for answers is growing more critical every day. Citing data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau, Forbes (Biery, 2014) reports that studies indicate an enormous increase in the number of childcare facilities over the last several decades. The number of childcare facilities increased from 262,511 in 1987 to 766,401 in 2007. This demand has been driven by surging

numbers of women in the workforce. With large numbers of working mothers, there are many more young children in childcare. These children don't need care that is something less than teaching. They need quality care. Thus, improving school outcomes, teacher qualifications, and quality programming for children have become the focus in framing the discussion around professionalization (Boyd, 2013, p. 2).

The increased demand for childcare, the large number of low-income minority children enrolled in childcare, and Wisconsin's black-white student achievement gap signal a pressing need to study programs with high minority enrollments as well as the practitioners with whom children spend a significant amount of time each day. Data indicates that in 2011, approximately eighteen percent of children aged birth to 4, and in 2012, sixty-one percent of children aged 3-6 spent approximately 25-50 hours per week in childcare programs (Forum on Child and Family Statistics). Given the demand for childcare services, and Wisconsin's black-white student achievement gap, which becomes evident in kindergarten assessments, it does not appear that many children are being adequately prepared for kindergarten (Forum on Child and Family Statistics).

The perception of childcare teachers regarding their role in student school readiness efforts requires additional study. Many of the underprepared kindergartners come from childcare programs in less affluent parts of Milwaukee. Their teachers often come from the same or similar environments. This can be both an advantage and a disadvantage, as childcare teachers may understand the environments from which the children come. However, they themselves may also be locked into the same environments. Many of the teachers are African American females, and their position needs understanding as they take on the difficult and demanding role of mentoring

and caring for children. Incentivizing earning of credentials as a pathway to an undergraduate degree strengthens program quality and child outcome. However, if a large proportion of African American childcare teachers in an urban community like Milwaukee are not taking advantage of these incentives, nor taking in and endorsing education as professionalism, how will the field move forward? Paying attention to these teachers' perception of their role is a key component of this study. Do they see themselves as educators or something less than an educator? How does their self-perception inform their classroom practice? How do they regard opportunities for further education as teachers? Are the available opportunities ones they can take advantage of? If not, why not? What stands in their way? The individuals who are actually engaged in teaching within group childcare centers are the only ones who can answer all these questions. These are questions that need to be asked, and hopefully resolved, if prevailing levels of teacher education and student outcomes are to improve.

Organization of the Literature

The literature in this study is organized into two sections. The first section examines the literature on professionalization from a general historical perspective. It goes on to review the literature regarding professionalization of women in cross-sections of society as well as the specific professionalization of African American women. Section two examines the literature devoted to professionalization efforts and problems within the childcare field itself. It includes studies on past and present policy, social perceptions, issues of teacher education and its impact on classroom quality and school readiness, problems with professionalization efforts in the field, and suggestions made to move childcare toward professionalization. This literature also examines the impact of childcare professionalism on the childcare field.

Terminology Relevant to the Literature

Professionalization, professionalization of women, professionalization of African American women, professionalization of childcare, professionalism, childcare teachers, early childhood teacher education, African American women in childcare, construction of professional identity, black epistemology, childcare classroom quality and teacher education, U. S. policy and trends in childcare education, U. S. policy and trends in early childhood education, teachers as researchers, childcare and parent support, preschool teacher preparation, African American children and childcare outcomes.

Selection of the Literature

Using the terms listed above, I searched Educational Research Studies, University of Wisconsin Library system, and Google Scholar for existing research in professionalization, childcare, early childcare education, African American childcare teachers, and preschool teacher education.

Exclusion of Literature

Since the focus of this study is upon center-based teachers, literature concerning elementary, middle and high school teacher education is excluded as irrelevant. Because African American women working as teachers in center-based childcare centers constitute the focus of this research, literature dealing with male teachers is also excluded.

Professionalization in Review, Section I

Defining professionalization

To reiterate, previous research reveals the lack of a consistent definition of professionalization. There are no specific criteria for a group's acceptance as a professional

organization. The lack of a consistent definition becomes problematic for groups seeking professional status. As exemplar, in *Professionalization*, edited by Howard Vollmer and Donald Mills (1966), Herbert Blumer describes professionalization as an indigenous effort to introduce order into areas of vocational life, which are prey to the free-playing and disorganizing tendencies of a vast, mobile, and differentiated society undergoing continuous change (xi). Blumer (1966) argues that professionalization seeks to set standards of excellence, establish rules of conduct, develop a sense of responsibility, create a set of criteria for recruitment and training, and ensure a measure of protection for members in order to establish collective control over the area and elevate it to a position of dignity and social standing in society (p. xi). Antler (1987) describes the process of professionalization as one involving a gradual transformation of self, supported by new associations and new rewards (p. 204). This reference to rewards has been discussed in studies prior to and after Antler (1987) by Feeney, 2012; Freidson, 1994; Sokoloff, 1992; Kultgen, 1988; Vollmer & Mills, 1966.

Similarly to Blumer (1966), Freidson (1994) defines professionalization as a process by which an organized occupation, usually but not always by virtue of making a claim to special esoteric competence and to concern for the quality of its work and its benefits to society, obtains the exclusive right to perform a particular kind of work, control training for and access to it, and control the right of determining and evaluating the way the work is performed (Freidson, 1994, p. 62). Historically, physicians, lawyers, professors and clergy were the earliest occupations considered as professions (Freidson, 1994; Vollmer & Mills, 1996; Marshall, 2004).

In considering the issue of professionalization, Freidson (1994) argues that although professionalization has been considered worthy of special attention in the English speaking

world for at least a century, in this country the concept of profession was largely taken for granted, with little systematic thinking about it, until academic sociology expanded in the United States after World War II (p. 2). More recently, Debra Bassett (Bassett, 2005, p. 726) has argued that the development of an occupation to the status of a profession accords that occupation a distinct mantle of honor, respectability, and membership in the intelligentsia.

Stephanie Feeney (2012) concurs with Bassett (2005) in noting the lack of agreement among scholars and the overlap of significant criteria that can be used to determine if an occupation is a profession (Bassett, 2005; Cooper, 2003; Nash, 1996; Kultgen, 1988). According to Feeney (2012), these criteria include the existence of a specialized body of knowledge and expertise, prolonged training, rigorous requirements for entry to training and eligibility to practice, standards of practice, commitment to serving a significant social value, group autonomy, and code of ethics (p. 11). In seeking to define professionalization, there has been consistent agreement that specialized knowledge and autonomy within the organization must be evident before elevation to professional status can be granted. Autonomy could be seen in the inclusion of practitioners in federal and state policy initiatives that affect the work their group does each day. By extension, in addition to acquiring specialized knowledge in the early childcare field, inclusion in policymaking initiatives could certainly serve to encourage teachers' professional self-determination within the classroom.

As early as 1973, Bennett Jr. and Hokenstad made a distinction between “people workers” and other professionals, and the different kinds of auspices under which the service is performed (Bennett Jr. & Hokenstad Jr., 1973). Bennett Jr. & Hokenstad Jr. (1973) make the distinction that unlike private groups or practices of law, medicine (in

the U.S.), and engineering, these people workers are employed in total-person functions largely in bureaucratic settings as salaried employees rather than entrepreneurs (p. 23). They say: “Although such an organizational base for their activity limits professional autonomy, it at the same time accentuates the gate keeper role and, thus, the political meaning of the work” (Bennett Jr. & Hokenstad Jr., 1973, p. 21). We can see agreement with this argument in Feeney’s (2012) inclusion of autonomy in her description of professionalization.

The Social Implications of Professionalization

Considering the need for consistent definition and criteria for professionalization, we must also consider the social implications of professionalization. Some scholars maintain that professions serve an important social function, and that professionals should use their expertise for the good of all, should be knowledgeable and competent, and do their jobs according to high moral standards. According to Feeney (2012), these professional ideals are not always followed. Although expected, service and altruism are not always primary motivating factors in the behavior of professionals (Feeney, 2012, p. 11). Feeney (2012) notes the increase of criticism among scholars (Freidson, 1994; Kultgen, 1988; Vollmer & Mills, 1966) who point out that while some scholars believe that the concept of profession is itself fundamentally flawed, others argue that the professionals themselves are interested in furthering the status of prosperity of the profession as much or more than they are in serving humanity (Freidson, 1994; Kultgen, 1988; Vollmer & Mills, 1966).

There is also disagreement over the subjects of male domination of the professions, the presence of a strong middle-class orientation, the reinforcement of the existing social system by

asking for training and licensure available to only a chosen few, and whether more and better services are provided to the upper classes than to the poor (Feeney, 2012, p. 11). Critical scholars such as Feeney (2012) also argue that professionals purposely and unnecessarily maintain a distance from clients and receive undeservedly high status and rewards (p. 11). This ideology has resulted in the continuance of social stratification evidenced by resistance to acceptance of other groups by previously recognized professional groups. Another result is the continued financial inequality of women in professional roles in organizations recognized as professional.

Professionalization of White Women

The 1960s and early 1970s were a time of expanding political, social, and economic opportunities in the United States (Sokoloff, 1992, p. 1). The civil rights and women's movements strongly advocated for legislation prohibiting discrimination of any kind in employment, housing, and voting rights. The civil rights movement and expansion of the economy were seen as benefitting women from all backgrounds, including minority groups. With the growth of the U. S. economy and the expansion of government, more and more white collar and public sector jobs were created (Sokoloff, 1992, p. 1). Increased employment opportunities were seen to exist, including those at the highest levels of the professions (Sokoloff, 1992, p.1). As a result, more women were entering the professions of medicine, law and science (Sokoloff, 1992, p.1).

White women in the 1960s held 38.3% of all professional positions, although they were concentrated in such female-dominated professions (81%) as nursing and elementary education. In contrast, only 3.8% of white females were represented among the elite male-dominated professions of law, medicine, clergy, or higher education (Sokoloff, 1992, p. 75). Women

working as nurses or in elementary education were not only among the lowest paid of any professionals, but were also considered of lower professional status (Sokoloff, 1992, p. 75). This was a tumultuous time as women sought to find their places in the professional world.

Women's Changing Identities

The adoption of a professional identity was not without its sacrifices. Women were forced to confront the reality that by adopting a professional identity, one not based on gender attributes, they were foreclosing other options (Antler, 1987, p. 204). Basically, the emergence of a woman's professional identity, resulting in new associations, new memberships, colleagues and lifestyle, could create insulation from families and society in general. This insulation was a direct result of the disapproval of, and hostility against women in professional occupations (Antler, 1987, p. 204). The forging of a new identity meant that women would need to gain access into professions traditionally held by men.

In considering the increase in the number of women in the professions, Sokoloff (1992) questioned the degree to which women have been able to desegregate white male-dominated professions, and whether white women have been able to gain access to white male-dominated professions as successfully as white men have gained access to white female-dominated professions (Sokoloff, 1992, p. 28). Sokoloff (1992) points to the increased number of women in the workforce in comparison to white men, and attributes the discrepancy to the large number of women who first entered the workforce during the 1960s and 1970s:

Numerically, white women increased slightly more throughout the professions/technical fields than did white men: almost 3.8 million new jobs compared to 3.6 million for white men...And yet, because so many women entered the labor force between 1960 and 1980,

this represents only one-fifth (21.6 percent) of all new jobs for white women. White men's gains in the professions were more substantial, as thirty-five percent of all their new jobs were in the professions (p. 28).

To sum up the data, reports show that while a larger proportion of women are entering the workforce, uneven representation across occupations and industries still persists. Women are disproportionately represented within the numerous professional and technical occupations, with high concentrations in some occupations and far below average in others (Women in the Professional Workforce, 2015). Although white women have made progress in gaining access to the professions, much work remains to be done.

Financial Inequality

The entrance of women into the professions during the Progressive Era signaled a departure from more traditional roles. Many women began to forge new identities, discover new values and develop new ideas about their roles as educated females (Antler, 1987, p. 203). The field of education was the first to feel the force of the American woman's growing concern for self-development (Antler, 1987, p. 23). The growth of public schools sparked a demand for teachers, which men, more interested in new industrial and professional opportunities, failed to meet. Furthermore, male teachers commanded salaries as much as four times those paid to women, thereby making female teachers cheaper to hire. This resulted in more female teachers than male, a trend that has continued (Antler, 1987, p. 27). The National Center for Educational Statistics reports that as recently as in 2011-2012, seventy-six percent of teachers were female (Teacher Trends).

Considering this trend of increasing numbers of women entering the professional workforce, current statistics show that women make up more than half of the professional and technical workforce in the United States (Women in the Professional Workforce, 2015). However, while the status for women in the workforce has improved over the last several decades, women still struggle for equality in many occupations. Back in 1987, Antler argued that female teachers were paid less than men. Current statistics show women are earning post-secondary degrees at a faster rate than men, yet a wage gap persists (Women in the Professional Workforce, 2015). Feeney (2012) has developed Antler's (1987, p. 204) argument that while women's entrance into the professions has given them a new professional identity, it can also insulate them from families and society. Beyond these factors, however, many still face overt or subtle employment discrimination, contributing to continued inequality (Women in the Professional Workforce, 2015). The inequality faced by white women is not totally dissimilar to the inequality faced by African American women in the professions. White women have made progress in gaining access to the professions, but just as it is for African American women, gaining financial equity is another matter. Much work remains to be done to equalize the pay gap between professional men and women across all ethnic lines.

African American Women and Professionalization

In the distant past, unmarried women or widows, immigrants, or indigents who were forced to work relied on the social reformers of the Progressive Era who established public nurseries to provide childcare services in the 1840s (Conley, 2010, p.173). Conley (2010) notes that although historically African American women were long employed in disproportionate numbers, their children were excluded from these childcare services (p. 174). The emergence of the early

members of the black professional class therefore defied the historical ostracism, separatism, and subordination of African Americans (Clark Hine, 1996, p. xviii).

An inherent characteristic of professionalization is exclusion. Black professionals, denied membership in such organizations as the American Medical Association, the American Nurses' Association, and the American Bar Association, and unwelcome at the American Historical Association, had no alternative than to pursue a separate but parallel course of professionalization (Clark Hine, 1996, p. xxii). One result of this systematic exclusion was the formation of the National Medical Association in 1895 for black physicians. In 1908, nurses organized the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses, while lawyers organized the National Bar Association in 1925 (Clark Hine, 1996, xxii).

The first African American women professionals were teachers (Clark Hine, 2005). The guardians of American slavery outlawed teaching slaves to read and write because they knew that education was an important avenue toward freedom, even if it was only freedom of the mind (Clark Hine, 2005, p. 545). In *The Psychology of Black Women: Studying Women's Lives in Context*, Thomas (2004) argues that among members of multiple oppressed groups in American society, no group has been so victimized by racial stereotyping and hegemonic domination within the hierarchical power structure as black women have been (p. 286). Considering the argument that professionalization must include specialized knowledge, and the continued inequities existing among minorities and other oppressed groups, such stereotypes and stigmatization cannot be ignored.

Stereotypes and Stigmatization

Coker (2003) addresses social perceptions of African American adult learners, raising the issue that the motivations for returning to college of non-traditional African American adult learners – i.e., those in their late 30s or older – can be perceived as having little to do with intrinsic reasons such as a human desire for self-actualization or growth. Rather, there can be speculation that a non-traditional student is a welfare recipient receiving a government entitlement funding her education, and that she is back in school for that reason alone. Coker (2003) describes these issues as stereotypical perceptions and challenges that often obstruct an individual's journey toward intellectual, personal, financial, and political power (p. 658).

Considering the experiences of minority women and black women in the workplace, Sokoloff (1992) argues: “While discrimination on the basis of gender has been (and continues to be) directed against women of all races, racial discrimination is at least as important a factor in the work lives of racial/ethnic minority women. In short, the experiences of minority women and white women are not the same” (Sokoloff, 1992, p. 3). In *Our Separate Ways*, Ella Edmondson Bell and Stella Nkomo (2001) form a similar consensus as they examine the life and career struggles of successful black and white women in corporate America. Edmondson, Bell and Nkomo (2001) examine prejudices that create problems for black women in executive careers while examining similar issues faced by white women in comparable positions. The authors conclude that there are crucial differences in experiences shared by black and white women.

Black Female Identity

The similarities suggest that the prevalence of a patriarchal ideology subjects both black and white women executives to gender discrimination in the workplace and to gender biases

(Edmondson, Bell, & Nkomo, 2001). The experiences of black women, however, are clearly intersectional and cannot be adequately explained with an isolated emphasis on either race or gender. For example, whereas racism is inevitably a prominent factor in the life experiences of black women, it is mediated through the interconnections of gender, class, age, sexual orientation, etc. All these elements are interconnected. Whereas sexism is also a significant aspect of black women's realities, it too is mediated through various other types of oppression like race, class, and sexual stereotyping (Thomas, 2004, p. 287). Thomas offers critical insights into understanding how these factors influence the construction of professional identity in female African American childcare teachers.

In essence, femaleness and blackness are articulated differently through various contexts of intersecting marginalization and interlocking identities. Because of this, neither gender nor race has independent centrality in the lives of black women at all times (Thomas, 2004, p. 287). According to Thomas (2004) then, a central issue is the question of self-perception among black women as a group (p. 287). How do black women see themselves? Since neither gender nor race has independent centrality in their lives, do black women see themselves as part of a group? If not, in what social context do they see themselves?

Critical Race Issues

The research in *Professionalism and Professionalization* (Clark Hine, 2005) contends that professionalism, as it pertains to African American women, entails three distinct ideas:

- The significance of African American women's participation in the professions throughout history,
- The notion of a professional approach to their work,

- The idea that professionalism must include the attempts by African American women professionals to increase the skills and expertise of their members while being challenged by the attempts of white organizations to exclude African Americans by changing standards for inclusion in professions (p. 545).

Thomas (2004) further argues that a distinctive Afro-centric epistemology makes the case for an Afro-centric consciousness. It derives from a shared history of racial oppression among peoples of African descent through centuries of colonialism, imperialism, slavery, apartheid, and other systems of racial domination. This brings up the issue of critical race theory. The lens of critical race theory can illuminate the connection between being both black and female (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). In ongoing discussions about childcare teacher professionalization, which concern many teachers who are both black and female, these theories can provide valuable insights into the impact of continued racial and gender denigration upon the construction of professional identities. Coker's earlier argument (2003) had already confirmed these characteristics of denigration on the basis of gender: The practice of minimizing, obscuring, and making invisible the lives of women in general contributed to their being set on the periphery in the larger adult education discussion (p. 657).

Thomas (2004) later expands upon Coker's (2003) idea that in the social and behavioral sciences, for the purposes of understanding and describing human behavior, racism, sexism and classism make invisible or nonexistent individuals who are not members of the dominant group – i.e., white males (p. 286). The contemporary professions might be regarded as an educated, middle-class variant of the occupation principle of organization already represented by the working class crafts. The difference between the two is that the claim for autonomy and self-

control among professions is usually based on formal “higher education” rather than trade school or long apprenticeship in practicing some manual skill said to require complex judgment (Freidson, 1994, p. 63).

According to Coker (2003), African American women are making tremendous strides on college campuses across America. However, little of the literature discusses motivating professionalization among this population. Furthermore, as Coker (2003) points out: “Many African American female adult learners must confront challenges of balancing work, family, and academic demands” (p. 657). Beyond these immediate issues, Coker (2003) submits the challenges of racism and points to the fact that the latter are often ignored in the literature on adult learners. Because women’s issues are largely presented in a generic way, as further evidence of their marginalization, there is a scarcity of literature focusing on the experiences of African American women (p. 657). Even though they are making great strides, they remain absent from much of the literature. Balancing work, family and academic demands, along with the scarcity of literature focusing on these experiences, constitutes real challenges, which must be overcome by African American females if they are going to succeed in their efforts toward professionalization.

Professionalization within Early Childcare, Section II

The problems facing early childhood education and childcare in our country have inspired a wide range of discourse and research. Among current literature is the 2015 study conducted by the Institute of Medicine and the National Research Council, which was commissioned to focus on the implications of the science of development for early learning care and education professionals (p. 2). The authors argue that a troubling disconnect exists between the particularly

disjointed nature of the systems serving children from birth through 8 years. This is the period when they are rapidly developing, and their experiences profoundly shape their long-term trajectories (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, 2015, p. 2). The focus of the study was on the competencies and professional learning that needed to be shared among care and education professionals across professional roles and practice settings in order to support greater consistency (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, 2015, p. 3). This study (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, 2015) sets forth the argument that children's health, development, and early learning provide a foundation on which later learning – and lifelong progress – is constructed. Young children thrive when they have secure, positive relationships with adults who are knowledgeable about how to support their development and learning, and who are responsive to their individual progress. Thus, the adults who provide for their care and education bear a great responsibility (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, 2015, p. 1). The following review seeks to classify the studies and literature according to the questions they address, as well as the attitudes their authors bring to the research process.

Current National Educational Trends

Some fairly recent research has linked the lack of professionalization of childcare teachers with poor educational outcomes among low-income minority students (Institute of Medicine of the National Academy, 2015; Barnett, 2008; Barnett, 2003; Rushton, Larkin, 2001). As early as 1988, the researcher Jorde-Bloom showed that formal training in early childhood learning and child development had a stronger impact on teacher behavior in the classroom and student achievement than teacher experience (Barnett, 2003, p.1). This represented a shift away from equating a year of experience with a year of college, which was commonly accepted at that time.

Currently, states are increasingly equating levels of experience to formal education processes. As they do so, however, the statistics they are gathering show significant gaps in teacher preparedness. Among teachers and caregivers (including teachers, assistants, and aides) in childcare, thirty-nine percent have at least a Bachelor's degree (BA) whereas about nineteen percent have only a high school diploma or less. Approximately twenty-eight percent have some college credit but no degree, and seventeen percent have an Associate's (AA) degree (NAEYC: National Association of Education for Young Children, 2013). There is, moreover, a striking difference in educational levels in regard to the age of child served. For those working with children aged 3 to 5 years, forty-five percent have a Bachelor's degree, compared to nineteen percent of those working with infants and toddlers. Conversely, twenty-eight of those working with infants and toddlers have a high school diploma or less, compared to just thirteen percent of those working with 3 to 5 year olds.

Within the overall childcare industry, fewer than half of preschool teachers hold a Bachelor's degree, and many have never attended college at all (NAEYC, 2013). Similar findings were reported in the National Survey of Early Care and Education Research Brief (NSECE, 2013). Educational attainment among early childhood teachers in center-based programs was reported as fifty-three percent of teachers having college degrees, and approximately thirty-five percent reported as having graduate/professional degrees (Bandon et al., 2013, p. 21), the latter being higher than the number reported by NAEYC (2013). From a professionalization standpoint, these figures denote serious professional inadequacy in the early childcare field.

Studies suggest (Bogard et al., 2008; Barnett, 2003) that policymakers and educators should consider the following items about early childhood professionalization: teacher qualifications,

professional development, certification/regulation, wages and benefits, and early childhood teacher preparatory programs. Bogard et al. (2008) provide a critique of previous research in the area of teacher education and child outcomes. They note that policy debates will continue to focus on teacher degree and credential requirements as the number of publicly funded state pre-kindergarten programs increases (p. 1). Raising the issue of teacher education and children's outcomes, Bogard et al. (2008) observe that while previous research linked preschool children's outcomes to teacher education, it did not provide specific directions for researchers and policymakers who had to decide on the minimum requirements for teacher qualifications in preschool programs (p. 1). Challenging the notion that pre-school education is separate from K-12 education, Bogard et al. (2008) question the validity of the construct of teacher education. They ask how the influence of teachers on student learning should be measured – i.e., which child outcome measures are appropriate to examine, and when should they be examined? Beyond this, what can be concluded from research that finds few significant relationships between teacher preparation variables and cognitive outcomes of preschool children? Bogard et al. (2008) use these questions to formulate a new direction for policy-relevant research, which examines how programs can prepare teachers to construct learning experiences of higher quality for children (Bogard et al., 2008, p. 6).

Similarly, the 2015 study conducted by the Institute of Medicine and the National Research Council concurs with previous research studies on the need for competency-based requirements for education professionals and greater coherence in qualification requirements across professional roles. Beginning with mutual alignment with the 2015 study, agencies across national, state, and local levels would lay the groundwork for “greater coherence” in the content

of processes for qualification requirements, such as those for credentialing (p. 6). Seen as a way to improve the consistency and continuity of high-quality learning experiences for children from birth through age 8, the study recommends that competency-based qualifications be strengthened for all care and education professionals working with children in this age group (pp. 6-8).

The Need for Diversity in Teacher-Training Programs

Early & Winton's (2001) quantitative study focuses on preparation programs for early childhood educators and find several challenges facing preparation programs. For instance, it has proved difficult to provide students with challenging new content and practical experiences appropriate to the changing population of children in early childhood programs (p. 287).

Early & Winton's (2001) findings conclude that a need for a more diverse faculty within higher education institutions is needed in response to the challenges of preparing teachers to work with an increasingly diverse population of children. Early & Winton (2001) view the lack of diversity in institutions of higher learning as problematic for students pursuing early childhood education as a career (p. 299).

Conclusion

We can see that within early childhood education, as with professionalization in general, the field is fragmented. While there is agreement upon some characteristics of professionalization, as well as some overlap, there is no clear and consistent delineation of the term professionalization. If the field is uncertain about its own definition and framework, how are those within the field to understand and make meaning of their own identity within the field? Moreover, how will early childhood educators attain "professional" status without a consistent definition that is capable of addressing the needs of the wide diversity of children they teach? These are difficult questions

involving many different points of view. Nevertheless, they must be answered if practitioners in the field are to gain acceptance among other professional organizations, as well as change the perceptions of policymakers and stakeholders.

Implications of Inconsistent Terminology

Although there is a shared knowledge base within the childcare and youth work fields, Beker (2002) insists that there is not a conscious perception of either a shared practice base or professional aspirations shared with a broad range of colleagues. As he says: "...We tend to orient ourselves within a more limited, setting-specific frame of reference, day care for preschoolers, residential care for disturbed youth, and childcare in non-psychiatric medical settings" (p. 357). This limited perception has resulted in fragmentation wherein those within the field do not speak with a common voice, although they are saying and seeking many of the same things for themselves and the children they serve.

Citing the lack of a consistent and accepted definition of professionalism within the field of early childhood education and the concomitant challenges to researchers and policymakers (Martin et al., 2010, p. 342) argue that language should be considered foremost. Buysse et al. (2009) suggest that a definition of professional development should embrace the whole early childhood workforce – childcare, early education and intervention – creating a consensus of professional development competencies or standards (p. 236). Martin et al. (2010) disagree with the use of the term "workforce" by Buysse et al. (2009), viewing it as contradictory to the task of caring for and "nurturing" young children. In their view, it is a term more suitable for the industrial analogue (Martin et al., 2010, p. 342). On their side, Buysse et al. (2009) use the term "workforce" when they suggest a definition of professional development that embraces everyone

working within the context of early childhood care and education (p. 236). With such tension in the literature, consensus on language and terms is a critical issue that must be resolved if early childhood education is going to move successfully toward professionalization.

Terminology and Policy Emphasis

In addition to researcher and policymaker difficulties with language challenges – i.e., the use of terms – workers in the field of early childhood education are also confronted by the struggle to find a universal language for professionals who are on the front lines caring for children. This perplexity adds validity to White’s (2004) question concerning the extent to which the shifts in language signal substantive changes in the way policy-makers conceive of these issues, and whether substantive policy effects have resulted (p. 666). Martin et al. (2010) raise the question of whether or not those on the front lines caring for children can be termed teachers, practitioners, or caregivers (p. 342). To these authors, the issue of language is by no means the only challenge facing early childhood education. Comparing different policies, agendas and reports pertaining to professionalization can be equally challenging (p. 342).

White (2004) brings up a new and significant issue in the early childhood care discourse. In her study, she discusses the significance of a new terminology in the U.S. and Canada where “early childhood education and care” replace the older term of “childcare.” To White (2004), these new terms reflect a shift in meaning and perception of the responsibilities involved. They have been followed by a shift in public discourse and are also being reflected in government documents. In her study, White (2004) questions to what extent the shift in language signals substantive changes in the way policy-makers conceive of these issues. She asks whether they have resulted in any tangible policy innovations. In light of the 2001 OECD report, she has

further questions: Have governments in each country learned from each other's experience or are these trends emerging independently of each other? And from country to country, what are the substantive policy implications for childcare program development, and are there also substantive policy implications for women's equality (p. 666)?

As Conley (2010) is later to do, White (2004) hypothesized that "the shift in language reframed the issue in the United States from a focus on 'childcare,' typically seen as a social welfare issue or a parental responsibility to education, which connotes a public role or public responsibility" (p. 673). White (2004) does not examine the issue of professionalization of early childhood workers but limits her findings to the larger shifts in public discourse and the pursuant policy changes.

In scrutinizing the impact of language and policy emphasis within the United States, White (2004) points to the clear-cut effects at the state level. By 2004, forty-six states had introduced some kind of state funded pre-kindergarten program for four-year-olds. White (2004) further points out the fact of increased support by twenty state governors, both Republican and Democrat, for proposed programs to enhance early childhood education through improved or expanded preschool programs, pre-kindergarten programs, and full-day kindergarten programs, even at a time of severe fiscal crisis at the state level (White, 2004, p. 674). However, Barnett's (2003) review of the NIEER Report on the state of preschools in the United States revealed that the vast majority of states did not commit enough resources to ensure high quality programs for children and that the vast majority of programs were underfunded (pp. 4-5).

Implications

The need for answers is growing more critical every day. Citing data provided by the U.S.

Census Bureau, Forbes (Biery, 2014) reports that studies indicate an enormous increase in the number of childcare facilities over the last several decades. The number increased from 262,511 in 1987 to 766,401 in 2007. This demand has been driven by surging numbers of women in the workforce. Some of the literature addresses the growing demands for childcare in our time. In *Childcare: Welfare or Investment?*, Conley (2010) argues that childcare serves to provide care for children whose parents are employed outside the home, as well as provide early childhood education for, and to meet the needs of, poor and disadvantaged children. Basing her observations upon secondary data, Conley (2010) contends that childcare, with enriched services for disadvantaged children, is more than welfare. It represents an investment in their capacities well beyond welfare. Conley's (2010) intention is to stimulate debate concerning the role of childcare in social welfare. She points out: "Historically, care provided for children has transformed in concurrence with societal changes" (p. 173). With large numbers of working mothers, there are many more young children in childcare. These children do not need care that is something less than teaching. They need quality care. Thus, improving school outcomes, teacher qualifications, and quality programming for children have become the focus in framing the discussion around professionalization (Boyd, 2013, p. 2).

Research conducted by the United States Census Bureau (Laughlin, 2011, p. 2), indicates the growing necessity for the accommodation of young children. In a typical week during spring 2011, 12.5 million, or sixty-one percent of the 20.4 million children under 5 in this country were in some type of regular childcare arrangement. The study further showed that the trend of family members serving as an important source of childcare for preschoolers has continued to be substantial. That trend is borne out by a 2013 U.S. Census Bureau report:

In 2011, 24 percent of preschoolers were regularly cared for by their grandparents, 18 percent by their fathers (while their mothers worked) and 10 percent by a sibling or other relative in 2011. The percentage of preschoolers cared for by grandparents has risen from 1997, when it was 21 percent. Similar percentages of preschoolers with employed black or non-Hispanic white employed mothers were cared for by grandparents (32 percent and 31 percent, respectively). (p. 2)

Conclusions

The shortage of funding as well as the percentage of low-income minority children enrolled in childcare will perpetuate the persistent black-white student achievement gap. These issues suggest a clear need for a new vantage point in research, and it needs to be directly focused upon the viewpoints of African American women who teach in low-income urban centers. Their voices might tell us why, for instance, there is such a discrepancy between the qualifications of African American teachers, and the qualifications of teachers in other elements of society. Are the opportunities for further education available? They seem to be more so than ever before, yet they are under-used. So what impediments do exist? Can they be identified? Are African American childcare teachers resistant to education? And if this population is not resisting education, what might they be resisting instead? For the new research to have validity, the voices of the participants need to emerge. Because they are on the front lines of childcare, their point of view is uniquely valuable. They offer some of the best resources for understanding the issues, yet their voices have been largely ignored. Unless their perceptions and experiences are validated, answers to questions will continue to be theoretical.

The Absence of Practitioners' Voices

Boyd (2013) is a strong advocate for inclusion of practitioners' voices and argues that without them, there is a vacuum in the information necessary for reevaluation of programs. The information that can only be provided by those affected by policy changes is invaluable, and without it, no more than minimal improvement can be achieved. The voices of practitioners can provide insights into solutions from a practitioner's perspective. If practitioners are heard in their own right, it can lead to an increased sense of inclusion as opposed to a perception of the loss of autonomy when everything they do is mandated from above. Failure to seek out and pay attention to their voices automatically invalidates them. With invalidation, practitioners can too easily disregard their own work. If professionalization is seen as a means to increase student outcomes, and to raise the standards of programs and increase teacher education, inclusion and validation of practitioners' voices in the research is an effective method to further these goals.

There is no question that a positive link exists between teacher education and student outcomes (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, 2015; Hildebrandt & Eom, 2011; Early, Maxwell, & Burchinal, 2007; Torquati, Raikes, & Huddleston, 2007; Shriver, 2006; Neumann & Bennett, 2001). The increased demand for childcare, the large number of low-income minority children enrolled in childcare, and Wisconsin's black-white student achievement gap signal a pressing need to study programs with high minority enrollments as well as the practitioners with whom children spend a significant amount of time each day. Data indicates that in 2011, approximately eighteen percent of children aged birth to 4, and in 2012, sixty-one percent of children aged 3-6 spent approximately 25-50 hours per week in childcare programs (Statistics, 2012). Given the demand for childcare services, and the evidence of

Wisconsin's black-white student achievement gap in kindergarten assessments, it appears that many children are being inadequately prepared for kindergarten (Statistics, 2012).

The perception of childcare teachers regarding their role in student school readiness efforts requires additional study. Many of the underprepared kindergartners come from childcare programs in less affluent parts of Milwaukee. Their teachers often come from the same or similar environments. Such teachers may understand the environments from which the children come, but may also be locked into them themselves. Many of the teachers are African American females, and their position needs understanding as they take on the difficult and demanding role of mentoring and caring for children. Paying attention to their perception of their role is a key component of this study. Do they see themselves as something less than teachers? How does their self-perception inform their classroom practice? How do they regard opportunities for further education as teachers? Are the available opportunities ones they can take advantage of? If not, why not? What stands in their way? All these questions can only be answered by the individuals who are actually engaged in early childcare teaching. These are questions that need to be asked, and hopefully resolved, if prevailing levels of teacher education and student outcomes are to improve.

Early Childhood Education Reform Efforts

Head Start

A federally funded program called Head Start was initiated as a summer program in 1964 as an attempt to counteract the effects of poverty on children (Feeney, 2012, p. 38). Later, the program became a full-year program for 4-year olds and expanded again to include Early Head Start, a program for infants and toddlers (Feeney, 2012, p. 39). Head Start focuses on all aspects

of child development, with an emphasis on strengthening the family (Feeney, 2012, p. 39). Head Start utilized first a curriculum similar to nursery schools and then adopted a play-based curriculum with an emphasis on social and emotional development. Play-based programs later came to be seen as not optimal for a population of children who might not have the experiences of being read to at home, or might not have acquired the English language or have experienced group learning (Feeney, 2012, p. 39). Recognizing that this population of children needed a different kind of educational approach than middle-class children, two national research programs were designed to explore the kinds of learning experiences that were best for this population. Research is still ongoing. What is apparent is the need for teachers who can work effectively with low-income children. This recognition led to a new approach in recognizing teacher competence (Feeney, 2012, p. 39).

To address teacher competence, improve the quality of early childhood programs, and in order to prepare practitioners to work in Head Start programs, in 1971 the U.S. Office of Child Development (now called the Agency for Children, Youth, and Families) developed a set of credentials, called the Child Development Associate (CDA) for early childhood educators. The CDA takes a portfolio assessment process approach in awarding candidates the CDA credential based on demonstrated competency in working with children (Feeney, 2012, p. 39). Seen as a first national step in determining what practitioners should know and be able to do, the CDA was designed to help candidates learn to support all areas of child development (Feeney, 2012, p. 39). Earlier, Beker (2002) discussed this national effort to “bring the workers in this amorphous field” together in a common professional effort (p. 356). It was a major step forward. To reiterate earlier arguments, if early childhood education is going to achieve acceptance as a profession,

the goal of an agreed upon knowledge base must be realized.

Wisconsin is home to 39 Head Start and 27 Early Head Start programs. They are operated by 44 unique organizations, which include 9 Native American Head Start programs. There are 14,587 children aged from birth-5 served by our federally supported programs, and 695 children served by state-funded Head Start slots who would otherwise be on waiting lists for services (Head Start In Wisconsin). Despite the number of children enrolled in Head Start, a much greater number of children are denied access due to funding issues.

Head Start in Wisconsin

In reference to Early Head Start programs, Milwaukee has two Early Head Start programs: the Educare Center of Milwaukee, operated by the Next Door Foundation, and the Guadalupe Center, operated by the Council for Spanish Speaking, Inc. Both are five-star programs with accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) or from the National Accreditation Commission (NAC). At least one of them has ratios for infants that are even better than those required for licensing – in this case, a ratio of 1:3 as opposed to 1:4. These programs have also reported that many of the teachers have four-year degrees, and that staff turnover is generally low (Families, 2012). Low student ratios and teacher education are considered vital components of high quality programs.

Significant funding for Milwaukee's Early Head Start Program comes from Early Head Start Expansion Grants awarded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). These two programs serve a total of 344 infants and toddlers. Sadly, less than three percent of 13,419 eligible children are served by Early Head Start in Milwaukee, leaving far too many children without access to the program (Family, 2012). This continues to be an issue for

Milwaukee's disadvantaged children who are denied badly needed services due to Head Start's under-funding. What can and will be done for Milwaukee's children? Without increased funding, we can anticipate the continuance of only a minimal number of low-income children granted access to Head Start's services.

Childcare in Milwaukee

The average child spends 30-50 hours per week in childcare programs. The fact that seventy-five percent of the center-based childcare programs in Milwaukee are rated two or three stars by YoungStar, coupled with Wisconsin's black/white achievement gap, supports researchers' findings of the connection between teacher education and school readiness. In Milwaukee, 1,440 women identifying as African American are employed in childcare. Since seventy-five percent of licensed group programs in Milwaukee are ranked as two or three stars, meaning that they meet only minimal standards of proficiency, we can see the direct impact of inadequate teacher education upon school readiness among children served by these programs.

Conclusions

Milwaukee has many high-quality early care and education programs serving infants and toddlers, but the vast majority of children are in settings that do not measure up to YoungStar's standards of quality (Addendum A). In these centers, staff turnover is high. In contrast, high quality infant/toddler programs rely on economies of scale and fund-raising to maintain quality and retain qualified staff. Due to the high cost of infant-toddler care, the challenge to develop and sustain high quality childcare services is substantial (Families, 2012). What are the perceptions of childcare teachers concerning problems they face in developing and sustaining high quality childcare services? What are the perceptions of childcare practitioners regarding

what they know and are expected to know? How does their perception impact their classroom practice? What kind of commitment can they give to the process of learning and teaching? These questions need answers if Milwaukee's childcare teachers are to be taken seriously as members of the professional community, and Milwaukee's children are to receive optimal care and education.

It is important to note that Neumann and Bennett's (2001) findings that quality early learning experiences promote long-term success in school later in life are contradicted by Conley's report in 2010. Conley observes that significant and sustained gains have been reported for white children who attend preschool, compared to siblings who have not. In contrast, black children, participating in Head Start, have made only temporary gains, which become lost by third grade (p. 177). We must ask ourselves why these gains are only temporary. What can be done to foster long-term benefits of Head Start? In what way can high standards of teaching practice and community understanding be integrated into preschool instruction?

Head Start Funding Issues

Federal/state funding of childcare for disadvantaged families in the form of childcare subsidies has taken the position of providing an entitlement – i.e., welfare benefits to low-income families. Conley (2010) suggests that a shift from a welfare approach to a social investment approach would enhance human and social capital investments among low-income families and communities. It would lead to contributions to wider social development goals (p. 173). Conley (2010) states: "...Governmental involvement with childcare in the USA has been intermittent and focused on the connection to gainful employment" (p. 174). She goes on to discuss how this involvement began during the Great Depression and continued during World War II to facilitate

female employment. Its intermittent nature can be traced through the inauguration of the Head Start Program in 1995. Designed to serve low-income children and families, more than 25 million children have participated since its inception. Eligibility criteria are based on prenatal enrollment by pregnant mothers, with a family income at or below one hundred percent of the poverty line, for their children when they reach 3-6 years of age. In spite of the growing demand for childcare, only about one-third of eligible families receive Head Start services, as the funding allocated by Congress has continued to be inconsistent.

A Growing Need for Effective Policy Change

Palley & Shdaimah (2011) suggest the country's need to develop more comprehensive policies directed toward the growing demand for childcare and the education of the teachers in the childcare system. Neumann and Bennett (2001), drawing from *Starting Strong: Early Childhood Education and Care* (2001), a report from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), come to similar conclusions. (The OECD reviews childcare policies and services in 12 countries, including the United States. It suggests several areas in need of attention in the countries within its sphere. Some areas are shared with other countries; other implications are particular to the U.S.) OECD findings indicate three major contextual trends that have shaped recent development of policy for young children in OECD countries:

1. Research shows that high quality early learning experiences for young children serve to promote children's short-term cognitive, social, and emotional development, as well as their long-term success in school later in life.

2. Equity concerns have led policy makers to focus on how access to high-quality early childhood services can mediate some of the negative effects of low income on children and form part of a long-term strategy to break the cycle of disadvantage.

3. Many governments have acknowledged a need for affordable and reliable care (p. 246).

In the United States itself, Palley & Shdaimah (2011) argue that professionals who work with children have a role to play in shaping childcare policy. Drawing from the fact that federal policy places both an emphasis on and influences the cost of childcare without considering such equally important childcare related issues as quality and age appropriateness of care (p.1159), Palley & Shdaimah (2011) conclude that not only must the United States develop more comprehensive policies, it must also address the need to care for our children. Suggestive of including the voices of practitioners in the field, Palley & Shdaimah (2011) argue that the professionals who work with children and their families should be at the forefront of advocating for such policies (p. 1163).

Conclusion

Unless there are significant policy changes, resulting in additional funding, these services will continue to be unavailable to low-income families. This funding problem will result in dismal outcomes for these children. The outcomes for children who are eligible for Head Start, but who are locked out due too few slots for too many children, are of serious concern. Many of these children will receive services in childcare programs lacking the necessary skills to adequately prepare them for kindergarten.

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, there has been increasing awareness of the positive connection between childcare teacher education and children's academic outcomes.

Numerous studies have established the validity of this connection, among them those undertaken by Sanders, Deihl, Kyler (2007); Fenech, Waniganayake, Fleet (2009); Iruka, Morgan (2014); Rushton, Larkin (2001). Complementary research has concentrated upon childhood brain development to establish developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood education programs (Bogard, Traylor, Takanishi, 2008; Karp, 2005; Zambo, 2008). Other research revolves around studies about teacher preparedness in early childhood education programs.

These studies have examined the need for professionalization not only in terms of better outcomes for the children, but also in view of better outcomes for their teachers. The two issues are inextricably bound together, as increased wages and benefits and respect as professionals in their field add significantly to teacher motivation (Hildebrandt, Eom, 2011; Blank, 2010; Cavaliere, 2004; Beker, 2001; Llorens, 1994). Studies in professionalization have consistently included education as a required component for organizations seeking professional status (Feeney, 2012; Basset, 2005; Cooper, 2003; Nash, 1996; Kultgen, 1988). Literature in professionalization of early childcare education has followed the same line of thought, including education as a required component for professionalization (Boyd, 2013; Feeney, 2012; Goffin & Washington, 2007). The study by Martin et al. (2010) suggests that education in itself does not lead to an increased sense of being a professional. Their study finds that feelings of perceived professionalism also increase with age and experience. Martin et al. (2010) still believe that education is valuable, and that it should certainly not be devalued on the basis of their study's findings.

Both Martin et al. (2010) and Buysse et al. (2009) suggest that more attention needs to be directed to reinforcing childcare professionals' realization that they are indeed part of a vital

profession. Buysse et al. (2009) argue that a conceptual framework of professional development, which would include all caregivers and individuals working in childcare settings, could contribute to a greater sense of professionalism for the childcare field as a whole (p. 348). In most of the studies, however, the voices of the study participants largely remain silent. They are not given a chance to speak for themselves, which leaves much of the research at a theoretical instead of a practical level. The gap in the literature regarding actual childcare teacher perceptions of professionalization and what it means to be a childcare professional demands attention (Brock, 2012; Hogg, Terry, White, 1995). As current literature on childcare professionalization stands, there remains a vital need for the voices belonging to the individuals with the greatest stakes in the outcome to be heard.

A Fragmented Workforce

In “*Preschool Education and Its Lasting Effects: Research and Policy Implications*” (2008), Barnett discusses the benefits of degreed teachers with specialized training in early childhood education. Teacher qualifications in state pre-K programs range from little more than a high school diploma to a four-year college degree with specialized training in early childhood education (p. 4). Studies have shown that children benefit significantly in learning environments with teachers who have specialized education in early childhood education. Since it is not unusual for directors to also find themselves in the role of teacher, the data then becomes applicable to directors as well. There is no question that better-educated preschool teachers with specialized training are more effective in the classroom.

Not only do the children benefit, but also preschool programs employing teachers with four-year college degrees have been shown to be beneficial economic investments for the taxpayer.

Low educational qualifications and lack of specific preparation in preschool limit the educational effectiveness of many preschool teachers. Unfortunately, in seventeen states, educational requirements for pre-kindergarten teachers continue to be lower than they are for kindergarten teachers (Barnett, 2003).

The skills and competencies needed to effectively administer early childhood education programs vary according to the age and background of the children enrolled, the services provided, the philosophical orientation of the program, the local sponsorship of the center, and the program size. Directors of very small programs may have few administrative tasks and may serve as a classroom teacher part of the day, while directors of large programs may have to coordinate multiple sites and funding sources and a large staff. In either case, teachers carry extraordinary responsibilities for the children in their charge, and it is not enough to trust “experience.” As Jorde-Bloom stated as long ago as 1988, “In the past, states often equated a year of experience with a year of college. But research has shown that education in early childhood or child development has a far stronger positive impact than years of experience on teacher behavior and student achievement. States are increasingly linking levels of experience to formal educational requirements” (p.3). The resulting inefficiency and fragmentation within the field ultimately puts a burden upon taxpayers.

Fragmentation within the Childcare Field.

Most recently, the Institute of Medicine and the National Research Council (2015) has explored the science of child development, particularly looking at its implications for the professionals who work with children from birth through age 8 (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, 2015, p. 2). The study concurs with previous studies, which indicate the

importance and complexity of working with children from infancy through the early elementary years. Despite the critical nature of this work and the shared objectives of practitioners within the field, the field remains fragmented (p. 3). There is not a cohesive workforce unified by the shared knowledge and competencies needed to do the jobs well (p. 2). Considering African American women working in childcare, the population studied in this project, the fragmentation within the group and the lack of cohesiveness can create feelings of isolation resulting in an adverse impact on sharing critical knowledge. Additionally, how can practitioners in the field be expected to develop professional identity, without full understanding of what it means to be a professional in the field? Professionalism would bring a sense of cohesion within the group, with shared knowledge and commitment, and would result in better outcomes for the children as well as enhancing the lives of the practitioners themselves.

Constructing Professional Identity

Dealing with uncertainty: challenges and possibilities for early childhood professionalism. Urban (2008) argues that the prevailing conceptualism of the early childhood professional is constructed out of a particular hierarchical mode of producing and applying expert knowledge that is not necessarily appropriate to professional practice in the field. Urban (2008) feels that this conceptualization, even though it is inappropriate to early childhood education, contributes all too effectively to forming a professional habitus that contradicts the relational core of early childhood practice (Urban, 2008, p. 135). Exploring an alternative paradigm of a relational, systemic professionalism that embraces openness and uncertainty, and which encourages co-construction of professional knowledge and practice, Urban argues that early childhood practitioners are expected to not only give children a good start but to “achieve predetermined,

assessable outcomes” (Urban, 2008, p. 139). Within this framework practitioners are increasingly told what to do, what works, and what counts. This approach, according to Urban, should be questioned, as it subjects practitioners to powerful pressure to perform according to a particular view of professional practice. Consequently, practitioners are exposed to professionalism as an effective means of controlling individual practice through dominant knowledge (Urban, 2008, p.140).

Stratification within the Field

The effect of this control has resulted in a highly stratified professional system. This stratification, according to Urban (2008), exists between governmental agencies responsible for introducing new policies, which “hardly ever reach the individual practitioner who is supposed to be working towards realizing the policies” (Urban, 2008, p. 141). Stratification is also clearly visible within the professional system itself. “Scholarly discussions about what it means and entails to be ‘professional’ often express expectations towards the individual practitioner, but seldom acknowledge the inequities of the knowledge producing and processing structures within the system that are highly effective as tools of regulation and self-regulation” (Urban, 2008, p. 141). Urban (2008) also argues that an epistemological hierarchy containing several layers exists. Within this hierarchical structure, the professional body of knowledge is produced, transferred and applied. A powerful top-down stream of knowledge presented as relevant for practice is accompanied by a downstream of expectations and advice about what needs to be done at the practice level of this hierarchy (Urban, 2008, p. 141). It leaves little scope for teachers to formulate their own professional identities.

Issues of power inevitably occur within the classroom. These issues threaten the learning

process and well being of teachers and the students who are learning to become teachers. Baum & King (2006) suggest the creation of emotionally and intellectually safe environments that allow for students in teacher training programs to authentically examine their personal belief systems and construct their personal knowledge. In other words, the classroom must be a place where students and teachers trust each other, if learning is to take place. Baum & King's (2008) argument could be seen as a path to begin the development of autonomy and identity while student teachers are completing their training. Only if both students and teacher educators deliberately examine their own reactions and responses can students feel free to express their beliefs or opinions (Baum & King, 2006, p. 222).

Teacher Autonomy and Identity

In discussing the issues of professional autonomy and identity, Urban (2008) continues: "Evidence-based practice, as something derived from educational science as a means of knowledge production, and to be implemented, disqualifies practitioners and deprives them of their professional autonomy. Moreover, it actively hinders a practice that is consistently developed by asking critical questions" (Urban, 2008, p. 142). Early childhood practitioners must construct and communicate a professional identity, Urban says (2008), in order to achieve recognition both in the public domain and the one they are working in.

In contrast to Urban (2008), Martin et al. (2010) suggest more attention be paid to reinforcing childcare workers' realization that they are part of a vital profession by assuring that their training is of the highest caliber, relevant, practical and immediately applicable to the childcare workforce. There are tensions in this study. While Martin et al. (2010) express support for education, there is little discussion of practitioners' involvement in framing their own

professional identity. In addition, much of the research presented here focuses on practice and policy and largely omits issues of autonomy.

Teacher Education Programs

Baum & King (2006) argue it is essential for teacher educators to have an understanding of the developmental needs of student teachers. They need to comprehend how students regard themselves, but they also need to lead students to engage in evaluative thinking in regards to their role as teachers. This argument points to the importance of many opportunities for self-assessment activities within the context of teacher preparation coursework (p. 219). Baum & King (2006) propose that the educators of teachers engage in a co-constructive process that encourages students to explore and answer self-evaluative questions such as: “Who am I as an individual? How am I different from others? How do my individual characteristics influence my beliefs and attitudes, which in turn, impact my behavior in the classroom?” According to Baum & King (2006), this can be accomplished by helping students understand the meaning of their individuality through activities that aid them in the explorations of their own personalities, temperaments, and learning styles (p. 220). Knowing oneself and understanding how one’s individual characteristics influence and inform classroom practice is seen by Baum & King (2006) as a critical component of becoming an effective early childhood teacher.

The rationale behind Baum & King’s (2006) suggestion is that educators with self-awareness can better help students understand the meaning of their own individuality. Baum & King (2006) do not, however, connect their findings to the larger issue of professionalism. They concentrate upon the need for teacher education programs to help pre-service teachers develop self-

awareness. In their view, only through self-awareness can teachers establish emotionally safe classrooms and environments of trust (p. 222).

Conclusion

Given these challenges faced by policymakers and others, we must conclude that a similar struggle exists among female African American childcare workers in Milwaukee who may or may not understand the connection between teacher education, self-awareness, and classroom practice. As early childhood education struggles to gain recognition as a professional community, can these teachers conceive of the benefits of education, which leads to the rewards of professionalization, such as increased wages, benefits and better work environments? How can they be helped to grasp that professionalism, with all its demands, will ultimately enhance their lives? The next section tries to address this question.

Teacher Education and Compensation

Boyd (2013) explores the relationship between educational qualifications and experience with teacher pay and conditions of employment (p. 1). Boyd asks:

1. As early education and care workers obtain more education and training, are they experiencing an increase in their wages and benefits?
2. Has the move towards professionalization changed their work roles and responsibilities and, if so, in what ways?
3. Have further education and training increased job satisfaction and their intent to remain within the profession? Has the move towards professionalization changed the work roles of early education and care workers, and, if it has, in what ways (p. 1)?

Boyd (2013) concurs with much of previous research (Hyson, Tomlinson, Biggar, Carol, 2009; Bogard, Traylor, Takanishi, 2008; Early, 2006; Hofferth, 1996), which generally found a positive relationship between teacher qualifications with quality programs (p. 3). According to Boyd (2013):

Teachers with a 4-year college degree and a teaching certificate in early childhood were rated as creating a more positive emotional climate and providing more activities on the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R) than were teachers with no formal training in early childhood. (p. 3)

Boyd's (2013) research suggests that while the movement towards professionalization of early education and care workers has resulted in better education, training, and skills for the workforce, low wages, few if any benefits, and poor working conditions remain unchanged (p. 4). These factors reveal the continued devaluing of educators, especially those working with young children, and this issue is extensively documented throughout the literature (Karp, 2005; Beker, 2002; Neumann & Bennett, 2001). For the early childhood education workforce, the relationship between education, training and compensation continues to be problematic (p. 1).

Current information reported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that the average annual income for childcare workers in 2014 was \$19,730 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016), which was well below the national poverty level of \$23,850.00 annual income for a family of four (HealthCare.gov) in that same year. This information indicates continued economic inequity from the underfunding of childcare programs. Underfunding of childcare is in itself an indicator of the ongoing lack of policy support with its inherent devaluing of care work, which is primarily done by women.

Like the much earlier research (Hofferth, 1996; Culkin, 1999), Boyd's (2013) study explores the relationship between teachers' education and pay, and questions whether or not wages have increased with the upgrade of teacher educational levels (p. 10). Boyd (2013) reviews the 1995 position statement issued by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the major professional organization for the early childhood education workforce. According to Boyd (2013), NAEYC revised their position statement on quality, compensation, and affordability in early childhood programs when they stated that compensation and affordability in early childhood programs remained inadequate for most early childhood educators. NAEYC argued for salaries and benefits to be linked to qualifications and responsibilities (p. 1).

Program Quality and Children's Outcomes

As early as 1999, Culkin made a connection between quality early childhood education and children's future success. Programs adhering to higher standards lay the foundation for students' future academic outcome. Culkin's work (1999) offers the perspective that both program and policy issues are important parts of the discussion of the economics of early care and education. According to Culkin (1999), the significance of a child's early care and education in laying the groundwork for future success is finally becoming better understood by researchers and policy makers:

New understanding of the importance of early development and learning supports local and state community investments in childcare services as a social investment similar to public investment in primary, secondary, and higher education. As the demand for early care and education services expands, understanding and solving economic problems

related to the professional status of ECE service providers is a part of preparing a strong workforce of teachers and caregivers who will be able to provide good quality services.

(p. 45)

Earlier, Beker (2002) explained that the establishment of a professional status and commensurate influence required public awareness and political power, both of which could be better obtained as a collective group as opposed to working in isolation: “In short, an alliance and perhaps even a merging of our fields, with appropriate recognition of and opportunity for specialization, seem to make sense on both practical and intellectual grounds” (Beker, 2002, p. 357).

Neumann & Bennett Jr. (2001) state: “Current qualification levels and working conditions are uneven across states, and quite low by international standards” (p. 253). Neumann & Bennett (2001) propose the establishment of an agreed-upon national framework of early childhood certification across the mixed-section and support a knowledge base of pre-service training programs that includes key competencies for meeting the multiple needs of an increasingly diverse population of children and families. To accomplish this, Neumann & Bennett Jr. (2001) suggest that in-service training should fit into a nationally recognized, articulated system for vertical and horizontal career mobility, and a radical reassessment of the wages and benefits for early childhood workers should be implemented (p. 253). They go on to argue that career mobility and wage and benefit assessment could combat the high rate of staff turnover, without raising parents’ fees, another problematic area in the childcare field.

According to Neumann & Bennett Jr. (2001), childcare policy in the United States needs to be revised as follows: A comprehensive, coordinated, and stable system of early childhood

education and care should be created. It should comprise a comprehensive policy framework with clearly defined roles for government at the federal, state, and local levels. It should adopt a more universal approach to early childhood education and care through collaboration with public education, partly by developing and improving access to an effective staff training and professional development system (p. 252).

Conclusion

Examining the relationship between educational qualifications and experience in the light of teacher pay and conditions of employment, Boyd (2013) suggests that one solution for improving program quality while increasing salaries and benefits would derive from professionalizing staff. Professionalization would include enhancing knowledge, skills, and training of staff and expanding their educational standards to require post-secondary education and certification. With greater knowledge and training, workers would achieve professional status along with its higher wages and benefits (p. 2).

According to Boyd (2013), earlier studies (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Goffin & Washington, 2007; Culkin, 1999) showed that the need for improved child outcomes, quality programs, and teacher qualifications have continued to frame the discussion around professional status. Darling-Hammond argued that preschool teaching, as a profession, must settle what teachers need to learn and how they should learn it to achieve professional status. However, wages and benefits continue to be left out of the debate or sidelined into a separate campaign. Following previous researchers, Boyd (2013) identifies the critical issue that regardless of education level, childhood certification or professional development training, early childhood educators continue to be among the most poorly paid professionals: “Early education and care work is dominated by

women paid low wages and receiving few if any work related benefits” (p. 3). In other words, successful efforts to professionalize early childhood education, and thus to raise its standards, must include increased wages and benefits for workers in this field. As in all the other issues addressed in early childcare literature, the workers’ voices are again largely missing in this discussion (Boyd, 2013, p. 2).

Continued Professional Development

Culkin (1999) describes professionalization as a step above an occupation. Some occupations become professions through the development of their knowledge base combined with a rigorous approach to training new professionals (p. 46). According to Culkin (1999), certain factors are evidenced as a field moves forward from being an occupation and becomes a profession. Evidentiary factors would include a theoretical knowledge base, relevance to social values, long and established training periods, autonomy, long-term commitment by practitioners, and a sense of community. These factors, when applied to professionalization of childcare, indicate that expansion of professional development opportunities is the only way to go.

Key Competencies

Nicholson and Reifel (2011) concur with previous studies (Bogard et al., 2008; Barnett, 2001; Neumann & Bennett, 2001; Hofferth, 1996) about the need for continued professional development opportunities for early childhood workers. They also feel that those opportunities should be assessed by key competencies that address the needs of a diverse and changing population.

Exploring the perceptions of entry-level training experiences among childcare teachers in Texas, Nicholson & Reifel (2001) conclude that a need definitely exists for state regulatory

agencies to set reasonable expectations for pre-service and in-service training requirements based upon research and teachers' articulated needs. Such expectations should incorporate appropriate oversight to insure program compliance with state-mandated regulations. In addition, state-regulated agencies should continue to better address professional development for childcare teachers (p. 20). Nicholson & Reifel (2011) present the thesis that professional development of childcare workers is very multifaceted. It consists of a variety of components, which include participation in organized training classes. However, it also relies heavily on experiences in the classroom. Interactions with others in the work environment play a crucial role in learning to be a teacher (p. 20).

In Milwaukee, many programs depending primarily on childcare subsidies paid through the Wisconsin Shares Program are underfunded. Programs meeting minimal standards for licensure through the Department of Children and Family Services, the agency responsible for childcare program oversight, are often understaffed, and workers earn only minimal wages. These programs might lack the capacity to engage in such crucial interaction with other practitioners. With only minimal education requirements, how would they identify the most vital training?

Pirard & Barbier (2012) acknowledge three different cultures of education and training in the Western world: (a) the culture of teaching, (b) the culture of training (c) the culture of professionalization. In French speaking countries, these three cultures are perceived as frameworks that have adaptability. This allows them larger scope as they each relate to the profound inherent tenet: "In teaching culture, knowledge is a central reference for educational work, based on the hypothesis of the transformation of identity through the appropriation of predefined knowledge" (p. 173). This transference of knowledge creates hierarchical space

headed by the teacher, the transmitter of knowledge. The training culture is a parallel development to the traditional educational model, which has the teacher as the arbiter of knowledge. The training culture centers itself upon the formation of abilities or skills, often best served through mentoring or accompaniment. In the process of acquisition or transfer (through accompaniment) of new skills, a transformation becomes possible (p. 173).

As in the culture of teaching, hierarchical space is created and headed by the organizer of each of these specific learning situations. Their interaction leads to a further level. According to Pirard & Barbier (2012), the dialectic between the educational cultures of teacher and the acquisition of skills contributed to the emergence of a third culture in the 1990s, that of professionalization. Professionalization considers competence as its central reference. The authors consider “The notion of competence as the theme for educational work, based on the hypothesis that action and actors can be jointly and simultaneously transformed...” (p. 173). Pirard & Barbier (2012) view this three-culture model as a vehicle not to compel professionals to act in a certain way, but to open new perspectives for understanding. It offers different and more open ways to transform actors, actions and the learning/working environment. To quote again, “The challenge is to refrain from holding these cultures in contrast to one another: not to organize them into a hierarchy, but rather to use them to bring together traditionally separate frameworks, studying the individual and collective levels holistically, and integrating questions about the development of competencies and services into the process of education design” (p. 180).

Mentorship

Prior to Pirard & Barbier’s 2012 study, Nimmo and Park (2008) and Hargreaves and Fullan

(2000) were already suggesting mentorship for teachers as part of the pathway to professionalization. Nimmo & Park (2008) questioned how opportunities to engage in research affected the identities of early childhood teachers, and how teachers shifted their paradigms regarding the nature of research through research mentorship. To paraphrase their question, they asked: What are the implications of a research mentorship team for reflective practice? How does the notion of teacher as researcher support early childhood education teachers in their efforts toward professionalization? Development of mentorship teams could be seen as a way to provide support for teachers in the field and could help teachers move toward a more collaborative process as well (p. 95).

Nimmo & Park (2008) acknowledge the fact that practitioners utilize tools of research such as observing, recording, documenting, and reflecting in their classrooms. These practices give teachers access to skills required to conduct research on a broader scale. The authors see opportunities to engage in more extensive research as a forward moving step. Nimmo & Park (2008) suggest that teachers need intellectually stimulating environments that create a supportive network for being a teacher-researcher (p. 101). The authors conclude that such an environment can not only impact teachers' research paradigms but can also integrate the perception of teacher-as-researcher into their professional identities (p. 101).

As an example of the second approach, the authors discuss the University of Toronto's implementation of a teacher preparation program wherein cohorts of students, teams of school and university faculty, and partner schools work together. The program is seen as a way to allow schools of education to see themselves as being in the business of school improvement as well as in teacher education. It is mutually beneficial, as in return, partner schools also have the

opportunity to see themselves as being in the business of teacher education as well as school improvement (p. 55).

Mentoring is a means of preparing teachers to become effective agents of change who are committed to making a difference in the lives of young people. Teachers skilled in pedagogical partnership can inspire more success in students. As Hargreaves & Fullan (2000) indicate, mentoring from this perspective would become not just a way of supporting individual teachers but also a mechanism to help build strong cultures of teaching dedicated to improving teaching, learning and caring (p. 55).

In *Barriers to Childcare Providers' Professional Development*, Gable & Haliburton (2003) discuss the link between positive childcare provider education preparation and the quality of children's experiences (p. 175). They state: "The U.S. has yet to adopt minimum educational standards for those who provide childcare to infants, toddlers, and preschoolers" (p.176). This lack of minimal standards of education for childcare workers has resulted in the perpetuation of low childcare quality (p. 176). A stimulating learning environment and supportive care, which follow specialized training and ongoing professional development, are seen by Gable & Haliburton (2003) as predictors of quality (p. 189).

Conclusion

The fact that most of these caregivers are women in what has traditionally been viewed as a woman's field continues to make public consumers question the use of the term "professional" to describe caregivers of young children (Culkin, 1999, p. 45). The public may not understand the links between early childhood education, professional preparation of early childhood education caregivers, and the positive developmental outcomes for children. They may equate childcare

professionals with babysitters. In the face of this lack of understanding and social respect, caregivers have continued their efforts to develop the theoretical knowledge, career development plans, financial and other resources that are required for an increasingly professional status (p. 46).

Gaps in the Literature

Boyd (2013) identified several gaps in the literature. They are the following:

1. Qualitative research allows us to ask and answer a wide range of socially relevant questions and develop theories with both descriptive and explanatory power. There is limited qualitative research that has focused on how professionalization of early education and childcare work has been experienced by those within the field (p. 5).
2. While there is substantial research that links the professional qualification of early educators with quality programs and improved child outcomes, empirical research exploring the relationship between enhanced professional qualifications and improved teacher outcomes is limited (p. 16).
3. Boyd (2013) concurs with The Bessie Tartt Wilson Initiative for Children (2010), with Gable and Haliburton (2003), and with Holochwost, DeMott, Bruell, Yannetta and Amsden (2009), that compensation and benefits remain low and are not consistently related to teacher qualifications. Boyd concludes: “A critical finding here is that additional professional development training and educational credentials may in fact reduce teachers’ income...The relationship between teacher qualifications and work-related expenses warrants further investigation” (p. 16).

4. Boyd (2013) also finds that an increase in professional qualifications and skills without a corresponding increase in professional status, benefits, and wages has led many early educators to consider leaving the early education workforce. Less than half (47%) had definite plans to remain within the early childhood workforce despite saying that they loved their jobs and really wanted to stay. Further educational qualifications gave many of the teachers the opportunity and incentive to look for work with better wages and benefits within elementary schools and social services. Boyd suggests that further research to investigate the relationship between teacher qualifications and retention is necessary.

The findings from Boyd's (2013) qualitative study raise important questions and concerns about the movement to professionalize the early education workforce and its outcomes for children and educators (p. 17). Boyd notes that his research seeks to listen to the voices of early care educators and locate them at the center of the debate on professionalization. He argues that without their feedback, the move towards professional status may have minimal effect or may even exacerbate the problems (p. 2).

In similar manner, the document, *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation* (2015), concludes that local, state, and national changes need to work in synchronicity, and that changes in different aspects of professional learning and workforce development need to work together to lead to quality professional practice, including qualification requirements, higher education, professional learning during ongoing practice, and evaluation and assessment of professional practice (pp. 491-492). These components – inter-professional practice; well-informed and capable leadership; coherent policies, guidance, and

standards; support for implementation, and a connection to the evolving knowledge base – are seen as important elements which make up a frame for workforce development and professional learning. They provide the coherence needed to align specific actions (p. 492).

Conclusion

A fundamental dilemma confronts the early childhood profession today. It is one that has left practitioners in an impossible situation. The dilemma is clear-cut: Practitioners are expected to act professionally within a system that is largely unprofessional (Urban, 2008, p. 146). The lack of federal policy has resulted in early childhood education programs being regulated at the state level, and regulations regarding educational requirements vary from state to state. There are also the issues of inconsistent language and no clear definition of professionalism in the field.

Research has established a positive relationship between teacher education and student outcomes (Institute of Medicine & National Research, 2015; Hildebrandt & Eom, 2011; Early, Maxwell, & Burchinal, 2007; Torquati, Raikes, & Huddleston, 2007; Shriver, 2006; Neumann & Bennett, 2001). There is high demand for quality early education programs and improved child outcomes. This demand has focused on improving teacher qualification, with greater insistence upon higher education and professional training in early childhood education. While the literature links quality programs with the professional qualifications of early childhood educators, empirical research showing the actual relationship between enhanced professional qualifications and improved teacher outcomes remains limited (Boyd, 2013, p. 16). The focus of much of the literature is toward the need for increased policy regulations – i.e., what teachers ought to be doing and how they ought to do it. However, even with policy regulations, programs continue to be underfunded.

Absent from the literature are the voices of practitioners in the field, particularly female African American early childhood educators. Focusing specifically on the perceptions of African American females in center-based programs in Milwaukee can offer valuable information. It can help inform professional development programs and provide inclusion of practitioners in efforts to develop federal policies. This inclusion is vital to resolving the dilemma. It can bring about higher wages and greater benefits and thereby address the issue of staff turnover. Inclusion, however, can do even more than that. Childcare professionals who are in the workplace every day experience the problems firsthand. Consequently, they are in a position to work toward quality standards within the programs and strengthen the educational partnerships between parents and the childcare programs attended by their children.

The voices of Milwaukee's childcare practitioners need to be taken seriously. Milwaukee's black/white achievement gap at the kindergarten entrance level suggests a lack of quality early childhood education opportunities with lasting effect. It also points to childcare teachers who only meet minimal education requirements. These problems demand action.

Chapter III

RESEARCH DESIGN

This qualitative study focused on how African American women employed in center-based childcare programs in Milwaukee County conceive their professional identity. Using paper surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one personal interviews, it investigated how childcare teachers describe themselves as professionals. Further, it probed the factors that influenced their sense of professional identity. Specifically, it examined the impact upon them of Wisconsin's Quality Rating Improvement System (YoungStar).

Population of Study

Individuals selected for this study were employed in center-based programs located in Milwaukee County. Respondents were selected from programs providing services to children aged birth through eight, licensed by the Wisconsin Department of Children and Family Services and ranked by Wisconsin's YoungStar Quality Rating Improvement System ("YoungStar") as two, three, four or five stars. Programs ranked by YoungStar as two stars receive a five percent reduction of their Wisconsin Shares tuition reimbursement. Three-star programs, while they do not receive a reduction of their Wisconsin Shares' reimbursement, are ineligible for additional funding. They have not been able to meet quality standards for a four-star or five-star rating, which would provide up to a ten percent or twenty-five percent increase respectively in their Wisconsin Shares' reimbursement. In order to gain a full perspective, this study deliberately selected respondents from childcare centers within the whole spectrum of YoungStar ratings.

To reiterate, in Milwaukee County approximately 1,500 women who identify as African American are employed as childcare directors and teachers. Only fifty-five percent are reported

as meeting basic education requirements (P. Deakman, personal communication, March 2, 2016).

In the state of Wisconsin, Milwaukee County has the highest number of children and families receiving childcare subsidies through the Wisconsin Shares Program. Despite the positive link between teacher education and children's school readiness, approximately 33,000 Milwaukee children are enrolled in center-based programs where the teachers meet only basic requirements for educational qualifications. The connection between teacher education and student outcomes, and the number of children enrolled in center-based programs with minimally qualified teachers make this population of teachers central to the study. As principal actors in the field of early childhood education, the perceptions of these individuals are of vital importance.

Programs rated four and five stars have implemented significant changes, which earn them YoungStar rankings that provide additional financial incentives above their tuition reimbursement. The teachers in these higher-ranking centers have reasons to view themselves in a more professional way than teachers in lower ranking centers might. But do they? What have these changes and incentives meant to them, both personally and professionally? What have been their experiences, and how have they perceived barriers and opportunities as they move toward professionalization? Within the context of their work, how do they perceive the meaning and value of the work itself, and what are the challenges and rewards that they encounter in the course of working? These are the critical questions this study seeks to answer. Inclusion of programs rated four and five stars alongside programs rated two and three stars can help to provide answers.

METHODS

My study has followed the qualitative method. Using a narrative approach, I have focused specifically upon the ways female African American childcare teachers in center-based programs with primarily low-income minority enrollments describe their professional identity.

In bringing their voices to the table, the study's immediate purpose has been to engage these teachers in a dialogue that enables them to discern concretely the value and meaning of professional identity as early childhood educators in their lives. The study has an extended vision as well. By exploring the experience and identity of those African American teachers who have opted not to pursue education despite professional and economic incentives, it hopes to encourage their continued education, improve their chances for professional advancement, empower their voices to be heard in the realm of public educational policy-making, enhance their economic status, and inform their classroom practice so that both they and the children they serve can look forward to better outcomes in the future.

Research Questions

The central research question that this study aims to answer is: *“How do African American women employed in early childhood education settings in Milwaukee describe what it means to be a professional in the field, and how do those descriptions differ from the descriptions set out in the field?”* This study incorporates the following sub-questions:

1. How do African American females working as teachers in center-based programs describe themselves as professionals – i.e., their professional identity?

2. What perceived barriers prevent or impede African American female teachers working in center-based programs in Milwaukee from participating in educational/training opportunities directed toward professionalization?

These research questions have called for a qualitative research design of the kind proposed by Horvath (2013, p. 8). This design allows for both description and consequent understanding of the experiences of a particular population. In this case, it gathers first-hand the narratives of Milwaukee African American childcare teachers who have *not* pursued further credentialing or Bachelor's degrees as they make meaning of professionalization. This qualitative research also substantiates how these teachers make meaning of the link between teacher education and child development. Denzin and Lincoln (2013) argue that both quantitative and qualitative researchers are concerned with the individual's point of view, but that qualitative investigators believe that they can get closer to the actor's perspective by detailed interviewing and observations (p. 19). A critical component of this study has been realized through the stories told by the participants, in which they describe professionalization and the way they see its benefits. In telling their stories, they have also had a chance to share their perceptions of the opportunities and barriers they have encountered in the process of professionalization. There is a further possible benefit from this qualitative research method. Sharing their perceptions with a professional who was once in their field may in itself offer validation to these teachers, whose voices have gone largely unheard in early childcare research literature and policy.

The qualitative research methods employed in this study have been appropriate to the given research intention. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to restrict the research to quantifiable elements, given the essential story component offered by the participants. Quantitative studies

emphasize the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, but they cannot measure processes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p. 17). As Denzin and Lincoln (2013) indicate, quantitative research focuses on more remote, inferential, empirical methods and materials (p. 19). Berg and Lune (2012) similarly define quantitative research as an approach referring to counts and measures of things (p. 3). In contrast, they describe qualitative research in terms of meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things. Creswell (2013) describes qualitative research as an activity that locates the observer in the world and consists of interpretive material practices that make the world visible (p. 43). Thus, the qualitative approach allows the voices of individuals to emerge and reveal major structural themes. Hence, the choice of qualitative research for this study: Participants' voices, describing their perceptions of professionalization, with its opportunities and barriers, have been recorded and evaluated.

Data Collection

This study utilized survey collection and two qualitative methods, focus groups and one-on-one-interviews. Survey collection involves gathering information about the current status of some target variable within a particular collectivity (Thomas, 2003) and provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population (Creswell, 2009, p.12). Citing Babbie (1990) and Fowler (2002), Creswell (2009) indicates the purpose of survey research is to generalize from a sample to a population so that inferences can be made about some characteristic, attitude, or behavior of this population (p. 146).

Survey research allows reporting of averages and percentages that are generalized to the

population. However, a limitation of survey research can be seen in the failure to show the unique way that the target variable affects the individual (Thomas, 2003). In other words, questions pertaining to wages and benefits allow for generalization of the average medium wage received by childcare workers but does not allow analysis of the emotional effect of low wages on childcare workers. According to Thomas (2003), quantitative surveys fail to describe the qualitative features that make for the uniqueness of each member of the collectivity that the survey is intended to represent.

In the survey collection the nature of the questions are qualitative as they focus on description and perceptions of professionalization in a sample population. Although this study's ultimate purpose is to define the response of African American female childcare teachers to professionalization, the sample population queried includes childcare teachers across genders and ethnicities for the sake of comparison.

To access the population of teachers for this study, the researcher identified three hundred sixty-eight licensed center-based programs from the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families' website. These programs were located in Milwaukee County and had YoungStar ratings of two, three, four and five stars as of November 20, 2016 (Appendix C). Program directors were encouraged to photocopy the survey and allow as many of their teaching staff as possible to complete it. If every teacher had done so, the sample population would have numbered above three hundred and sixty-eight individuals. The centers had three weeks to return the surveys. Questionnaires allowed for data collection with the intent of generalizing from the sample to the population (Appendix D).

Survey Collection

Survey participants included male, female, white, black, etc. All teachers in licensed center-based programs in Milwaukee County ranked 2-5 stars were invited to participate (Appendix C). Both degreed and non-degreed teachers were included. Lead teachers and assistant teachers were included.

The study conducted three rounds of survey collection. Three hundred sixty-seven surveys were sent in round one (Appendix D). Self-addressed stamped envelopes were included to facilitate the survey return. Twenty-one days were allotted for participants to return the completed surveys. Round one yielded a response of forty-three surveys. This represented a twelve percent response ratio from programs in the study population. In round two, to increase the response ratio, eight days after the response deadline, the study sent out a second round of surveys but augmented response rate with telephone calls. Three hundred twenty-seven phone calls were made to remind unresponsive programs to return the first survey. At least fifty percent of the programs contacted in the second round indicated they had not received the survey but were willing to participate if the survey was resent. Eighteen days was allotted in the second round for return of the survey. The second round yielded an additional four surveys, increasing the total responses to thirteen percent. A third round of survey collection was then conducted within two days of the second deadline. One hundred fifty programs were contacted by phone. Program selection for the third round was based first on previous responses from centers indicating their willingness to participate. The second criterion for the third round survey collection was based on star rating and zip codes and yielded an additional twenty-nine surveys. Sample size presented a drawback to the study. Ensuring that the sample population was

reflective of the overall population of childcare teachers in Milwaukee center-based programs was a key consideration during data collection. This would allow for generalization of data from the sample population to the general population. Selected two, three, four and five-star programs represented a cross section of Milwaukee County. The third round yielded an additional forty-seven surveys, which brought the total program response rate to approximately twenty-two percent (80 respondents).

Focus Group Participant Selection

Focus groups have the ability to explore complex ideas, motivation, and behavior by accessing individual perspectives. At the same time, they leverage conflict and consensuses that emerge naturally during participant interaction. These capacities make them an important component of qualitative research. The current study established a focus group of individuals who had not pursued education beyond basic requirements. The survey included an option to participate in the focus group. Fourteen focus group participants were randomly selected from teachers who opted in through the survey. Focus group volunteers were sent an electronic invitation informing them of the date, time and place of one of two ninety-minute groups. Confirmation of attendance was received by phone call to the researcher. Four persons attended each group, which reflected approximately sixty percent of the fourteen invited respondents. Participants were employed at two, three, four or five-star programs.

Focus group participation was not restricted by ethnicity or gender. Since no males responded, the participants included only white and black females. This study sought to draw meaning from the experiences of participants from various career levels and years of experience in the field. The responders were employed in programs rated two, three, four or five stars by YoungStar, and

their childcare centers represented zip codes from urban and greater metropolitan sections of Milwaukee.

One-On-One Interview Selection

As Berg and Lune suggest as a paradigm for qualitative research (2012, p.112), the researcher relied on a semi-standardized interview process using seven predetermined questions, which were asked of each focus group participant in a systematic and consistent order in a face-to-face environment. Again, as suggested by Berg and Lune (2012), the interviewer allowed the participants freedom to digress, to probe beyond the answers to the prepared questions (p. 112). Individuals participating in the focus group as a whole also had an opportunity to opt into one-on-one interviews. None of the focus group participants opted-in to a one-on-one interview.

Twelve individuals who had opted-in to one-on-one interviews were randomly selected from the survey participants. Unlike the focus groups, interview respondents were employed at center-based programs rated three, four and five stars. Teachers employed at programs rated two-stars were eligible to opt-in to one-on-one interviews but chose not to do so. Interviews were conducted at a secure community site where conversations could not be overheard. One-on-one interviews, using open-ended questions, allowed accurate reporting of each participant's responses.

Because the emphasis of this study is upon African American female childcare teachers, and their response to the question of their professional identity, African American women were the primary participants in the one-on-one interviews. However, some white women also took part in the one-on-one interview process to allow for comparative data between the two ethnicities.

The Registry of Wisconsin is the agency responsible for verification of compliance with the

regulations set forth by the Wisconsin Department of Children and Family Services. It ranks the career levels of childcare teaching staff in Wisconsin (Addendum T). The Registry system of Wisconsin maintains records, including those of educational and professional contributions that surpass basic requirements (The Registry, 2015). In the first round of paper surveys in this study, the researcher included a request for respondents to disclose their Registry Career Level. This information would indicate whether or not respondents had furthered their teaching careers in any way. The majority of respondents opted not to disclose their career levels as designated by The Registry.

Exclusion Criteria

The first exclusion criterion was based on the researcher's assumption that employees of one-star childcare programs could lack sufficient experiences to contribute to the study in a meaningful way. These programs do not receive Shares reimbursement and are recommended for closure. Only teachers from programs ranked two, three, four and five stars were invited to participate in the study. Two-star programs are subjected to a five percent decrease of their tuition reimbursement since fifty percent of their teaching staff meets only minimal education requirements as set forth by YoungStar. Three-star programs, while they receive full Wisconsin Shares tuition reimbursement, are ineligible for further financial incentives. Since their teachers represent a middle ground, however, between poor and superior performance, they were included as a valuable component in the study. The researcher assumed that four or five-star ratings were not easily attained, and that teachers from these quality programs might provide particularly meaningful insights into the issues and problems in the professionalization process.

The second exclusion criterion barred childcare center directors from participation in the focus groups and interviews. In the course of their working hours, directors have more opportunities than teachers to participate in professional development. In addition, directors are more likely to be a program's owner, which means that they have both more time and autonomy to take advantage of development opportunities. Classroom teachers, who are bound to their students, are rarely offered such opportunities. That is why the researcher chose only classroom teachers and assistant teachers for the in-depth group study and personal interviews. The researcher felt that they could provide rich stories of the missed opportunities, as well as the rare successes that they encountered as they tried to move toward professionalization.

The third exclusion criterion excluded individuals with less than two years' experience from participating in focus groups and one-on-one interviews. Only teachers with more than two years' experience were included. Having worked in the field for an extended period of time, these teachers had sufficient experiences that could be storied and evaluated in light of this study. Their stories would provide contextual insights into influences, perceptions, opportunities, challenges, and barriers in the construction of their professional identity.

The fourth exclusion criterion was applied to the individual one-on-one interview respondents. Since considerable research has been conducted concerning men working as childcare teachers, males were excluded. Almost none has focused upon African American women childcare teachers. Therefore, participants in the one-on-one interviews for this study were primarily limited to the latter population. A total of twelve one-on-one interviews were conducted. Ten of the one-on-one interviews were conducted with African American women

childcare teachers. To provide comparative data, two interviews were conducted with white women.

Study Limitations

A drawback to this study is the sample size. Race, class, and gender are societal issues that are conjoined particularly in discussions about social justice. This study has engaged with all three issues and has limited its focus to them. The researcher determined that their interrelationships would provide significant insights. Limitation by social class is implicit in selecting this population, as the Milwaukee childcare workforce is comprised primarily of women, many of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Moreover, as women, they are automatically at a socio-economic disadvantage. As the study has reference only to African American women working as teachers in center-based childcare programs, male childcare center directors and teachers are excluded from the one-on-one interview segment of the study. These limitations narrow the scope of the study to specific social justice issues within the context of race, gender, and class, and how they affect the construction of professional identity within a given population. Sample size also presents a drawback to the study.

Data Collection Environment

The focus group and interviews were conducted in a secure, quiet place where conversations could not be overheard. Interviews were recorded via an audio recording device and an IPAD audio recording program. Transcriptions were verbatim. Recordings began with a statement of the date, time, and place of the interview, and pseudonyms were assigned to the participants. The researcher's closing remarks were recorded at the end of the recording. No deception was used

and interview participants were not compensated. One participant per focus group was randomly selected and awarded a twenty-dollar gift certificate at the end of the focus group session.

Description, Analysis, and Interpretation of the Generated Data

Descriptions were constructed from data out of the personal experiences reported by the participants. According to Wolcott (2009), “One of the unheralded qualities of qualitative inquiry is purposiveness, and the more explicit we can be about our purposiveness as both fieldwork and desk-work progress, the better our position to judge what needs to be described, and at what level of detail” (p. 15). As researcher, my role is also that of storyteller, accurately recounting the stories and observations of the participants. Wolcott’s (2009) description, analysis, and interpretation framework allowed for the emergence of themes in the data. Description provides the foundation upon which this qualitative inquiry rests (Wolcott, 2009, p. 27). Organizing and presenting the descriptions was accomplished through various forms. *Progressive focusing* allowed the story to be built around a specific problem or phenomenon. According to Wolcott (2009): “...[T]he description account may be revealed through progressive focusing that goes in either direction, slowly zooming from broad context to the particulars of the case, or starting with close-in-view and gradually backing away to include more context” (p. 18). *Critical or key event* approach addresses the problem of not being able to tell the entire story. A third approach focuses on one or two aspects of a narrative, and creating a story within a story. All three approaches are suitable for reporting the data findings of this study.

According to Wolcott (2009): “...Controlled comparison between a known case and the unknown case being analyzed offers a way for the analyst to exercise control...” (p. 33). All participants in the study were asked the same questions. Comparisons were made in the data to

determine emerging themes, characteristics and tensions. Data was coded into major themes and refined several times throughout the process to ensure an accurate reporting of participants' responses. Schutt (2012) reports that data analysis programs can include text to illustrate the cases, codes, and relationships. These types of analyses are also possible with qualitative analysis software, although they do not lessen the need for a careful evaluation of data quality (p. 352). The researcher opted not to use an analysis software program, as my understanding and experience as a long-time childcare center director and owner could more accurately interpret their words and stories.

A fourth approach was to refocus on interpretation itself. In contrast to theorizing, refocusing on interpretation can actually help to develop the framework. Interpretation of data must be linked to the actual data reported, and *not* to generalizations or the researcher's opinions. Thus, in examining the data presented by the participants' stories, the researcher had to maintain consistent boundaries to the discussion. This required the researcher to single out some things as worthy of note and relevant to the investigation of childcare teachers' path to professionalization, while relegating other things to the background.

Presentation of the Findings

Representing data findings through non-text formats was accomplished through the use of graphs, charts, and tables.

Establishing Trustworthiness and Credibility in the Research Process

In any field research study involving interpersonal communications, confidence in the conclusions is strengthened by an honest and informative account about how the researcher interacted with subjects in the field, what problems she encountered, and how these problems

were or were not resolved. Trustworthiness of the study was established through member checks. Members were allowed to review the transcriptions of their responses. This provided an opportunity for participants to correct any misrepresentations, thus confirming the accuracy and credibility of the findings.

Protection of Human Subjects

Permission to collect data was obtained from the Institutional Review Board. Data was collected and transcribed verbatim by a transcriptionist. While the possibility exists that another participant in the study might reveal the respondents' identities, the likelihood of potential harm to the subjects was non-existent. Privacy and confidentiality of the participants was achieved through the use of pseudonyms, which should prevent any linkage to the participants. Data was stored in the researcher's home office where it was locked in a file cabinet. After the study has been completed, the research data will remain locked in the file cabinet permanently.

Informed Consent

Survey participants, focus group members, and one-on-one interview respondents were given a full-disclosure statement describing the purpose, times, and way the study would be conducted (Addendum E). A copy was available to focus group and on-on-one interview participants, and the original was kept in a secure file in the researcher's home office.

The Role and Background of the Researcher

This research evolved from ten years of firsthand observation in the field of early childhood education. My own experience as administrator of a center-based program allowed me to track the varying degrees of training, education, experience, and work ethic of staff members, and to see what the implications were for both teachers and students alike. Thanks to my years in the

field, I had some insight into the challenges that face teachers attempting to comply with changing regulatory standards for early childhood education. I myself faced a challenge – I simply could not take time away from work to study or attend classes during the day. The timely development of online and hybrid courses ultimately allowed me to take advantage of educational opportunities while managing my own childcare program. An issue of illness within the family created another barrier to furthering my education, as it required adjustment of my class schedule. There were, however, opportunities as well as barriers. I received financial assistance for tuition through the T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship program as well as scholarship opportunities available through UW-Milwaukee. Another opportunity arose when I was included in a cohort of minority students who provided each other support and a sense of community. Having worked extensively in early childhood education in the past made me an insider as I conducted this research. Now that I am no longer in the field, I could approach the participants in the research as an objective outsider too. This double role was a position of strength for me. My insider/outsider role helped participants speak more openly. They knew that I had been in their position because I had previously worked many years in the field. In talking to me as an outsider, they sensed my objectivity and were willing to provide information that made me aware of changes in the field since I had left it.

I collected data through participant observation and interviews. Recording participants' stories in their own words was critical to the study.

Reflexivity

Being conscious of my own biases, values and experiences positioned my voice within this study. My own experiences as an “insider” – an “insider” who had struggled to construct my

own professional identity in the early childhood education field – supplied a vital component of the research. As Creswell (2013, p. 216) writes: “...[I]t is important that the researcher not only detail his or her life experiences with the phenomenon, but also be self-conscious about how these experiences may have potentially shaped our findings, the conclusions, and the interpretations drawn in the study.” In discussing theoretical and methodological frameworks, Denzin and Lincoln (2013) indicate that the methods for collecting, analyzing, understanding, and distributing data we researchers employ cannot be separated from the epistemologies, social theories, and ethical stances that shape our own understanding of the issues we seek to address (p. 351). Thus, my personal biases were inevitably an inherent element in this research project. By careful self-reflexive awareness and by structuring the research questions in a way that allowed the participants’ voices to shape the results, I could override my biases and maintain the trustworthiness and validity of the study. Glesne’s statement (2011, p. 159) affirms the legitimacy of this approach: “Reflexive thought assists in understanding ways in which your personal characteristics, values, and positions interact with others in the research situation to influence the methodological approach you take, the methods you use, and the interpretations you make.” Like Glesne, Denzin and Lincoln (2013), Creswell (2013) indicates that qualitative research is a form of inquiry in which researchers make an interpretation of what they see, hear and understand. Their interpretations cannot be separated from their own backgrounds, history, contexts, and prior understandings (p. 176). Following Berger’s (2013) recommendations for qualitative research projects of this kind and Creswell’s (2011, p. 65), recommendation that equal priority be given to qualitative data, surveys, interviews with participants, keeping a

diary/research journal for self-supervision wherein I created a trail of my own reasoning, judgment, and emotional reactions, all helped me to maintain reflexivity throughout the study.

Not steering the responses into a particular direction, along with member checking of the recorded statements, helped to ensure the validity of the data. It also determined how well I balanced a “confessional tale” with an “ethno-narcissistic” account of my role in the research process. Following Berger’s recommendations once more, I undertook content analysis and reporting that helped me remain alert to myself and aware of any unconscious editing due to my own sensitivities (Berger, 2013, p. 3). Through these strategies, I enabled a fuller engagement with the data, which hopefully resulted in a more comprehensive interpretation of it.

Chapter IV

Findings

To restate this study's essential question, its primary purpose is to understand how African American women working in center-based childcare programs in Milwaukee County understand and construct their professional identity. Narrative inquiry was used to identify how current efforts to move the childcare field toward professionalization have impacted these particular childcare teachers. As stated in previous chapters, despite financial supports for education, too many African American women working in center-based programs in Milwaukee have not only *not* earned their Bachelor's or Associate's degree, but have made few advances into any aspects of credentialing in the childcare field. This population makes up a large proportion of the early childhood education workforce in Milwaukee County, and understanding how they perceive the model of early care and education professionalism is vital. How do these women perceive its meaning? As the women who participated in the study's paper surveys, focus group, and one-on-one interviews offered their experiences and expectations, the following underlying questions guided interpretation of the collected data:

1. How do teachers describe themselves as professionals – i.e., their professional identity?
2. What perceived barriers might exist which prevent or impede African American females working in center-based programs as teachers from participating in continuing education?

Recruitment for data collection was conducted using paper surveys – (repeated electronically, and accompanied by telephone calls, in the second round) – sent out to childcare centers. Survey

research provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population (Creswell, 2009, p.12). In this study, paper and electronic surveys, which are easily overlooked or disregarded, might not have offered fully reliable quantitative results. Qualitative analysis was better suited to the study's purpose. Therefore, the questions asked of the participants were qualitative in nature, as they focused on individual experience of perceived barriers and opportunities in professionalization among this sample population. The initial sample size included Milwaukee childcare teachers across genders and ethnicities for the purpose of comparing responses, but after evaluating the survey responses for relevant connections, ended by narrowing the focus group to women.

Survey Responses

In round one, three hundred sixty seven surveys (Appendix D) were sent to center-based programs in Milwaukee County. No center-based programs were excluded. To facilitate an analysis of center-based programs by star rating, zip codes were assigned to zones numbered one through eight (Appendices F, G). Zone assignment was based on the physical proximity of programs to each other. This information is helpful in providing the location of center-based programs in Milwaukee County based on star rating. As example, seventy-seven programs ranked as two-star programs were included in the list of contacted programs. The highest number of two-star programs in one zone was twenty-four, and these programs were assigned to zone 2. These programs are in the northwest section of Milwaukee County, portions of which are outside of the more urban areas.

Similarly, there are sixty-five programs rated five stars (Addendum G), with the highest concentration being located in zone seven. These programs are located in more metropolitan

areas of Milwaukee County's south side. In contrast, zone two reflects only twelve programs rated as five stars.

There are more than twice as many three-star center-based programs as there are two or five-star programs (Appendices F, G) in Milwaukee County. This indicates a shift among programs from two-star to three-star. To reiterate, two-star programs receive a five percent decrease in their Shares reimbursement due to not having at least fifty percent of their teaching staff meeting only basic education requirements. Five-star programs are most likely to be accredited and receive an increase of up to twenty-five percent of their Shares tuition reimbursement. Three-star programs do not receive a financial penalty, but are not eligible for additional financial incentives. One hundred seventy-two programs are rated as three stars in Milwaukee County. Many of them are in more urban areas (Appendix G). The largest concentrations of these programs are in zone two (this number is twice as many as in other zones).

The first round of data collection yielded forty-three surveys representing a response rate of twelve percent. A second round of data collection was conducted using phone calls to the remaining three hundred twenty-seven center-based programs in Milwaukee County. During the second round of data collection, conducted eighteen days after the deadline for the first round of surveys, programs were asked whether or not they had received the survey, and whether they intended to respond. Programs that indicated they were willing to participate were encouraged to share the survey with their staff and return it through fax machine. The second round of survey collection yielded an additional four surveys, increasing the total response rate to thirteen percent. Directors and teachers unwilling to participate in focus groups or one-on-one interviews made up forty percent of first and second round returned surveys. Although voluntary, within

this forty percent were surveys that did not include identifying information, including program name or respondent information. The researcher contacted programs a third time by phone. To ensure that responses were representative of the total population of childcare teachers in Milwaukee, programs were contacted based on YoungStar rating and zip code (Appendix C).

Programs were asked to share the surveys with their staff and to encourage their teaching staff to volunteer for the focus groups or one-on-one interviews. The third round of survey collection yielded an additional forty-seven surveys, which increased the response rate to twenty-two percent.

Survey Analysis

Table 1: Survey Respondents by Experience

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1.3	1.3	1.3
10+	48	60.0	60.0	61.3
2 years or less	1	1.3	1.3	62.5
2-5 years	10	12.5	12.5	75.0
5-10 years	15	18.8	18.8	93.8
Less than 2 years	4	5.0	5.0	98.8
NA	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Initial analysis of all survey responses determined that of the 61.3% of respondents reported as working in childcare for more than ten years (Table 1), at least 41.3% were teachers and 13.8% were assistant teachers working in center-based programs in Milwaukee County (Table 4). The average annual salary reported by seventy percent of responding teachers was less than \$30,000. Sixty percent of assistant teachers reported an annual wage of less than \$30,000 (Appendix O).

Survey collection was conducted across genders (Table 2) and ethnicities (Table 3).

Table 2: Survey Respondents by Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	77	96.3	96.3	96.3
	Male	3	3.8	3.8	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Table 3: Survey Respondents by Ethnicity

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Asian	1	1.3	1.3	1.3
	Bi-racial	3	3.8	3.8	5.0
	Black	48	60.0	60.0	65.0
	Hispanic	3	3.8	3.8	68.8
	White	25	31.3	31.3	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

At least eighteen percent of respondents held Associate's degree status; thirty percent held Bachelor's degree status and fifteen percent held Master's degree status (Appendix I). At least fifty-six percent of respondents with Associate's, Bachelor's or Master's degrees reported that their degree was in Early Childhood Education (Table 4, Appendices J, K). Only ten percent of respondents held the basic requirement of a high school diploma or GED. Findings also indicated that at least twenty-eight percent of respondents held some college credits or credential status (Tables 5, 6, Appendix K).

Table 4: Survey Respondents by Position

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Administrator	16	20.0	20.0	20.0
	Assistant Teacher	11	13.8	13.8	33.8
	Co-Owner	1	1.3	1.3	35.0
	Director	16	20.0	20.0	55.0
	Owner	1	1.3	1.3	56.3
	Prog. Coordinator	1	1.3	1.3	57.5
	Supervisor	1	1.3	1.3	58.8
	Teacher	33	41.3	41.3	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Table 5: Survey Respondents with ECE Degree

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	NA	1	1.3	1.3	1.3
	No	34	42.5	42.5	43.8
	Yes	45	56.3	56.3	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

The data also shows that the number of African American and white respondents with Associate's degrees in early childhood education was the same – eight percent (Table 8). There was only minimal difference between African American and white respondents with Bachelor's degrees in early childhood education. African American respondents were represented at eleven percent, and white respondents were represented at thirteen percent. Interestingly, eleven percent of African American respondents showed a Master's degree in early childhood education versus only three percent of white respondents. Furthermore, overall degree or college credit earnings among African Americans respondents were approximately fifty-two percent compared to thirty-one percent of white respondents in Milwaukee. The data suggested increased numbers of

African Americans who are attaining early childcare education degrees and credentialing well beyond the minimal requirements.

Table 6: Survey Respondents' Overall Education

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid AA	14	17.5	17.5	17.5
Bachelor	24	30.0	30.0	47.5
Credits (ND)	22	27.5	27.5	75.0
High School	8	10.0	10.0	85.0
Master	12	15.0	15.0	100.0
Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Survey Respondents with ECE Registry Credentials

Table 7

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid No	42	52.5	52.5	52.5
Yes	38	47.5	47.5	100.0
Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Since the survey respondents included administrators, directors, program coordinators, and supervisors (Table 4), the researcher felt that their inclusion skewed the results. These were the individuals whose positions essentially required, or, at least, expected, higher educational qualifications. Consequently, she restricted the analysis to respondents working as teachers or assistant teachers.

The survey data suggests that while more African American respondents working as teachers in center-based programs have earned college credits, fewer than five percent have reported earning an Associate's or Bachelor's degree (Table 8, Appendices K, L, M). Among these respondents, college attainment has been focused in the area of professional credentials rather

than upon degrees. White respondents did not report earning any credentials, but did report earning Associate's (less than five percent) or Bachelor's degrees (ten percent). From this data, we can generalize that African American teachers working in center-based programs in Milwaukee have made some progress in earning professional credentials, but are still under-represented in degree attainment (Table 8).

Table 8: Survey Respondents by Education by Ethnicity

		Education					Total
		AA	Bachelor	Credits (ND)	High School	Master	
Ethnicity	Asian	0	0	1	0	0	1
	Bi-racial	1	0	0	1	1	3
	Black	6	10	17	6	9	48
	Hispanic	1	1	0	1	0	3
	White	6	13	4	0	2	25
Total		14	24	22	8	12	80

Survey respondents were asked to describe their professional identity based on categories that were included in the survey. More than fifty percent of survey respondents identified as Teacher/Leader (Appendix N).

To understand what perceived barriers might exist which prevent or impede respondents from participating in continuing education, respondents were asked to identify considerations they would need to make before enrolling in professional development opportunities. Survey respondents could select time, money, personal childcare issues, work schedule, or other. An analysis of the frequency of responses from all survey respondents showed time, money, and work schedule as the primary factors to be considered before enrolling in professional development (Appendix P).

Focus Group Findings

The second phase of data collection was through focus groups. As stated in previous chapters, focus groups have a unique ability to explore complex ideas, motivation, and behavior by accessing individual perspectives. They can leverage conflict and consensuses that emerge naturally during participant interaction. An integral component of this study was to allow African American female participants who had not pursued education beyond the basic requirements to come forward and interact both with one another and with the researcher. To accomplish this, the researcher conducted two ninety-minute focus groups. Focus group participants were teachers employed in center-based programs rated two, three, four and five stars in Milwaukee County. Programs were located across six zip codes and included African American and white female respondents. Fifty percent of the respondents met only the basic requirements for childcare teacher (Appendices K, S). The remaining respondents held either an Associate's degree or a small number of credits earned toward partial fulfillment of one of the Registry Credentials in early childhood education (Appendices M, S).

Male teachers queried in the initial paper survey either opted out of focus group participation or were employed as directors or administrators in center-based programs in Milwaukee County. Directors and administrators were excluded from focus group participation. Consequently, fourteen female teachers – ten black and four white – working in center-based programs in Milwaukee County were invited to participate in one of two focus group discussions. The respondents were asked the following questions:

1. Using one-word expressions, describe how you see yourself as a professional working in childcare.

2. Using one-word expressions, describe how you think your stakeholders (family, public school teachers, policy-makers, etc.) describe your professional identity in the context of the classroom.
3. How do you think YoungStar has impacted your perceptions of yourself as a childcare professional? (Tell me about a continuing education experience that affected your sense of being a professional).
4. What factors do you consider when making decisions about participating in continuing education programs like non-credit workshops and credentials?

In answering these questions, four themes emerged from the focus groups (Table 9):

Table 9	Emerging Themes
Theme 1	Self Knowledge
Theme 2	Societal Perception
Theme 3	Impact of Professionalization Efforts in Wisconsin
Theme 4	Opportunities & Barriers

Emerging Theme 1: Self-knowledge

Self-knowledge is an essential attribute of educators who strive to do their best for young children (Feeney, S., 2012, p. 83). The practice of self-knowledge requires teachers to become observers of themselves in the same way that they observe the children in their classrooms. Teachers demonstrate self-knowledge through examination of their teachings and through the responses of parents and children. The way childcare teachers describe themselves in the context of their role in childcare settings impacts the engagement and interaction between teachers and their students, parents, other childcare teachers, and stakeholders, and requires that teachers

review their practices to determine what works and what does not. Feedback from parents and students acts as a catalyst for teachers to examine themselves in the context of their classroom (Feeney, 2012).

To understand how teachers describe themselves professionally, respondents in both focus groups were asked: *Using one-word expressions, describe how you see yourself as a professional working in childcare?*

Peaches: “I see myself as a leader; I lead in my classroom every day.”

Cherry: “I see myself as passionate; children pay attention to what you do.”

Clementine: “I see myself as a leader; children pay attention to the leader and feed off of what you do.”

It was clear from the responses of the participants that they consider themselves as educators and leaders. This was indicative of self-knowledge of their role as educators and leaders of young children. The response of each focus group participant evidenced knowledge of the impact of their behaviors on children, parents, and other workers. Their self-description in the context of their classroom provides several benefits to children:

- It can help them know their strengths and the areas in which they need to grow.
- It can help them to develop awareness of the impact of their personal attributes and behaviors on young children.
- It can help when something or someone in the workplace provokes a strong reaction.

Instead of blaming another person, the teacher can seek to understand what is causing the strong reaction (Feeney, 2012, p. 83).

Literature (Martin et al., 2010; Buysse et al., 2009) suggests that more attention needs to be directed to reinforcing childcare professionals' realization that they are indeed part of a vital profession. The focus group respondents expressed an awareness of the importance of their role as educators and leaders of young children and agreed that childcare is a vital profession. Respondents acknowledged their need to continue moving toward professionalization evidenced through participation in credit-based education. As stated in the 2015 report by the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, adults who provide for the care and education of young children have a great responsibility. Children thrive when they have secure, positive relationships with adults who are knowledgeable about how to support their development and learning (p. 1).

Theme 2: Societal perception

A second theme emerging across both focus groups was societal perception. Self-knowledge can be influenced by societal perception. Social identity theory is a social-psychological theory that sets out to explain group processes and intergroup relations. The basic idea of social identity theory is that social categories, such as nationality, political affiliation or professions, into which one falls, and to which one feels one belongs, provide a definition of who one is in terms of the defining characteristics of the category (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). Respondents in both focus groups related positive self-descriptions such as learner, motivator, and feeling passionate about their role as childcare teacher. Respondents were not as positive in their descriptions of how their stakeholders and other professionals perceive their role.

Olive: *"Even though childcare teachers are children's first teachers, we are looked upon as professional babysitters."*

Peaches: *"People don't think we are educating children."*

Cherry: *“There is a lack of value for what we do.”*

Chloe: *“... They think we are babysitters, wiping kid’s noses, changing diapers, etc. Centers in zip code areas outside of the central city get more respect. We are looked at as not being as good. Ethnicity plays a part in this perception too.”*

The frustration over being perceived as babysitters was expressed across focus groups as well as in the one-on-one interviews. A babysitter, as defined by childcare teachers, is someone who changes diapers, feeds children, and keeps them safe. In other words, the work that childcare teachers do each day is seen as something less than teaching. Childcare teachers perceive this categorization as a lack of value for the valuable and totally necessary work they do each day. Not only that, there is an added perception that childcare teachers working in more urban areas of Milwaukee are valued less than childcare teachers in more metropolitan areas of Milwaukee. This perception can be problematic in a field that is already fragmented and still finds itself outside of the professional community. Boyd (2013) argues that education is the social and ideological linchpin of society, and because of that, one would think that educators would be held in high esteem (p. 1). As with the field of education as a whole, Milwaukee’s childcare teachers are often subjected to a perception that the important work they do each day is unimportant.

A critical factor in providing consistent support for children from birth through age 8 is the ability of care and education professionals to work in synergy with other professionals both across settings within the care and education sector and in other closely related sectors (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, 2015). How can childcare teachers be expected to work in synergy with other professionals when there is a perception that they are seen as being less

than teachers? These respondents clearly sensed that the public did not share their own sense of purpose and significance. In other words, public perception was eroding their professional identity. Despite the importance of the work they did each day, the respondents did not feel valued or regarded as professionals in the same way the public regards K-12 teachers or other professionals. Even the parents who relied upon them and entrusted their children to them often viewed them as less, as if childcare was a menial occupation. The African American respondents met with a deeper problem – their ethnicity marked them as unqualified to do the important work they did each day. It goes without saying that such external attitudes can tear down a sense of professional identity. It is hard to move forward carrying such a load of negativity. This brings us back to impediments the respondents saw as blocking their way to educational advancement, specifically in regard to fulfilling YoungStar’s expectations.

Theme 3: Impact of professionalization efforts in Milwaukee on professional identity

There is a wide consensus across states and types of schools that early elementary educators should obtain at least a Bachelor’s degree. The same consensus does not yet exist for teachers working with younger children (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, 2015). Educational requirements for childcare teachers are determined by the individual states, and qualifications vary across states. Several states have adopted a quality rating system designed to move the childcare workforce toward professionalization through established competencies. In Wisconsin, YoungStar Quality Rating Improvement System is the agency responsible for developing career pathways, establishing competencies, and monitoring the improvement processes of childcare programs.

Data indicates that African American women working as teachers in center-based programs in Milwaukee are not earning four-year degrees at the same rate as white teachers. To understand the impact of professionalization efforts on African American teachers' perception of themselves as professionals and to understand whether or not they were resisting education, the following question was asked: *How do you think YoungStar has helped to impact your perceptions of yourself as a childcare professional? (Tell me about a continuing education experience that affected your sense of being a professional.)*

Olive: *"YoungStar encouraged me to participate in continuing education. The classes helped me to see that what I do in the classroom is different than raising my own children. I learned that I needed a different skill set."*

Clementine: *"Through YoungStar and the classes I have taken, I have learned new ways to be more strategic in how I run my classroom. I understand more about brain development. What I learned about brain development has helped me with my own infant."*

Boyd (2013) agrees with Darlington-Hammond's (2009) previous findings that preschool teaching as a profession must settle what teachers need to learn and how they should learn it if they are to achieve professional status (p. 2). This argument aligns with the inclusion of a specialized body of knowledge in the criterion for professionalization. The development of the Registry Credentials (Appendix R) in early childhood education is seen as a positive factor that will lead to professionalization for Milwaukee's childcare teachers.

The study's respondents expressed understanding of the need to continue to grow through professional development if they, as childcare teachers, were to be successful in doing the best for kids. They all saw that their roles as early childhood teachers were not static. The problem

was how to make use of the opportunities that existed. The 2015 report by the Institute of the National Academies defines professional learning as all opportunities to gain and reinforce necessary knowledge and competencies for quality professional practice (p. 357). In spite of existing opportunities, Milwaukee's childcare teachers find themselves somewhat limited in accessing professional development opportunities.

Although most of the respondents viewed professionalization efforts in Milwaukee as being positive for the childcare workforce, wages were a focal point of the discussion. Boyd (2013) and others argue that wages continue to be left out of discussions regarding the need for improved child outcomes and quality programs. These discussions frame the discussion around professional status for preschool teachers. Respondents in the focus groups discussed the issue of financial inequity within the field, and their perception that Milwaukee's urban center-based childcare programs were being pushed out of the field into smaller, less profitable family childcare programs. Chloe's response is representative of the general feeling:

If you are going to come in and critique us, give us the tools and instructors we need to make sure we meet the goals. Don't come in and 'slice' us down and tell us we're not fit or we're not educated enough or intelligent enough to teach. We have raised babies from one generation to the next. I take that personal."

Chloe's responses were indicative of feelings of perceived inequities within the system. It appears that African American women working in center-based programs are not resisting education but rather perceived inequities within the system. The perception that inequality not only exists within childcare but also that unfair treatment of African Americans is being fostered by those responsible for oversight, funding, and developing competencies of the workforce has

resulted in resistance from African American teachers in Milwaukee. The perception of inequities serves to further fragment a workforce that is already fragmented.

Theme 4: Opportunities and barriers

This study sought to understand the barriers and opportunities for professionalization that were available to childcare teachers. The survey data showed that among the respondents, more African American childcare workers held Bachelor's and Master's degrees than white teachers (Appendix M). It also revealed that many of those holding degrees were directors and administrators.

Restricting the analysis to those respondents who were teachers revealed the fact that African American childcare teachers in Milwaukee were not earning Bachelor's or Master's degrees at the same rate as white teachers (Appendix K). The availability of professional learning supports and the degree to which they are accessed vary greatly across professional roles (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, 2015, p. 363). Whereas administrators and directors often held degrees, African American teachers were far more likely to have only some college credits or early childhood education professional credentials at best.

The issue of childcare teachers and professionalization was familiar to me, the researcher. As an administrator and director of a center-based program, I recognized the need to pursue a college degree. As a non-traditional student, I experienced some of the barriers reported by the respondents in this study. As an administrator/director of a program, I was afforded the ability to participate in classes that were offered during the day. My salary as a business owner allowed me to pay tuition beyond that paid by the T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship Program. I was motivated to continue my journey toward professionalization. One year into my graduate program, my

husband became seriously ill. While I was able to continue my studies, the impact of the circumstances was considerable.

The barrier I encountered is not dissimilar to the barriers childcare teachers, who have to juggle family responsibilities and financial demands with work and education, are likely to meet. For all of us in childcare, resources and support systems are crucial determinants of our ability to professionalize. The respondents expressed frustration with perceived inequalities in professional development programs. They discussed the differences in professional development offerings for programs in urban Milwaukee versus programs in more metropolitan areas of the city. They questioned why it was necessary for them to drive to the suburbs and pay a higher registration fee, if they wanted a higher quality professional development opportunity.

There were seven major barriers to further training or higher education that the respondents discussed in the focus group meeting (Table 10).

Each respondent perceived a different barrier to further education. However, all of the respondents agreed that their negative circumstances had to be resolved if they were to continue on their path to professionalization. For some, the necessary solutions and support systems were already available. For others, the barriers were insurmountable, and they could not see their way to further training or education. Some issues were not reported with the same frequency and concern as others. However, wages, tuition cost, and work schedule emerged as the three most challenging barriers.

Wages paid to childcare teachers are directly connected to federal and state funding. How can childcare teachers continue to participate in professional development resulting in degree attainment when they are considered among the working poor? Policy consideration at the state

and federal levels must be given to the issue of wages paid to childcare teachers. Regardless of educational level, childhood certification, or professional development training, early childhood educators continue to be among the poorest paid professionals (Boyd, 2013, p. 3). Respondents expressed their frustration with the way they were devalued by low wages and lack of benefits.

Table 10

Most Reported Barriers by Focus Groups
1. Wages
2. Cost of Tuition
3. Work Schedule
4. Perceived Personal Value
5. Family or Personal Health Issues
6. Personal Childcare
7. Motivation

As stated in earlier chapters, funding for childcare comes primarily from federal sources. Based on federal funding, at least seventy-five percent of program tuition nationally is supposed to be reimbursed. In Wisconsin, however, only twenty-three percent of tuition cost has actually been reimbursed to programs. What has caused this shocking re-distribution? Citing issues of provider fraud within the program, provider reimbursement increases were suspended while program costs continued to rise. Federal funds allocated for childcare subsidies were then re-allocated within the state to other programs (High Quality Child Care Prepares Children for School Success: Invest \$40 million-WCCF, 2015). This pattern in the childcare budget has

resulted in a drop of over \$100 million – from \$385 million in the fiscal year 2009-2010, down to \$274.7 million in the fiscal year 2014-2015. This major loss undermines efforts to help childcare programs meet quality standards under YoungStar. The impact of funding decreases has been damaging to Milwaukee’s urban childcare programs. Unlike government funded programs and programs that are part of a national chain, urban programs rely on funding through the Shares program. Most of these programs do not receive additional funding through grants or program fund raising.

There is little doubt that quality childcare is a positive link to improved student outcomes. Not only that, as stated earlier, education is a key to individual success and social mobility (Boyd, 2013). These goals cannot be fully realized without quality early childhood education. The discussions that frame professionalization of early childhood education must include wages. Many of the barriers described by the focus group respondents had financial implications. Low wages coupled with the cost of tuition present powerful barriers that Milwaukee’s childcare teachers find themselves unable to overcome. When considering a professional development opportunity, many of the respondents expressed a reluctance to divert needed financial resources from their families. Adding to that, respondents were unwilling to spend badly needed financial resources on professional development opportunities that might not yield their own expected desired results.

Programs in Milwaukee are tasked with the responsibility of participating in professionalization efforts set forth by YoungStar. At the same time, they must deal with the challenges of staff wages and benefits. Teachers in these programs acknowledge the need to increase their competency, but are confronted by the lack of finances and resources. While the

T.E.A.C.H. program is an opportunity for teachers, programs are required to pay twenty-five percent, which many urban programs feel they are unable to sustain, given the fact that childcare programs have not received a Share's tuition increase in more than five years. Currently, Milwaukee's childcare teachers are reporting a waiting list for scholarship support through T.E.A.C.H., which is also related to funding issues.

When confronted by the choice of feeding their children or enrolling in a professional development opportunity, many childcare teachers opt for the more logical choice of feeding their children. As stated by one respondent in this study, *"I think it is great that there is a push for making things more professionalized in this field and I think it should be that way. There is not the money to support that. The wages that childcare teachers are paid do not really allow them to pay for themselves to go back to school, and it is hard to attract highly qualified lead teachers for childcare centers because the pay is so low"* (Rose).

Wages and funding issues in the childcare workforce must be addressed if Milwaukee's urban center-based programs are to continue to survive in a competitive market. There is a fear among childcare teachers in urban center-based programs that they will not be able to continue to do the work they love. Their centers do not have the financial solvency of state-funded programs, or of programs operated by national childcare chains. Respondents in the focus group noted their concern with what they perceived as pressure to eliminate them from the field.

Work schedules were a third frequently discussed barrier. Unlike many childcare administrators or directors, teachers do not have flexibility in their schedule that allows them to attend professional development opportunities held during the time they are scheduled to work. This means teachers must find professional development opportunities that are held during their

non-working hours. This leads to issues of childcare needs for their own children who are likely to have attended childcare while the parent was working. Other factors like family or personal illness or being tired after work were also perceived barriers to some focus group respondents. The respondents compared these issues to their assessment of perceived value of the professional development opportunities.

One-on-One Interviews

The third phase of data collection for this study entailed the one-on-one interviews. While the primary emphasis of this study was upon African American female childcare teachers' concept of professional identity, white women were also included in the one-on-one interview phase. As it did in the focus group discussions, this allowed for comparative data between black and white women. Twelve teachers in three, four, or five-star center-based programs, who had not participated in the focus groups, volunteered for the interviews. Respondents represented programs across zip codes throughout both the urban and greater Milwaukee metropolitan area.

To understand low engagement in professional pathways (toward credentialing and/or Bachelor's degrees) by African American Women childcare teachers in urban center-based programs, and to understand what constraints made it difficult for them to participate in continuing education, the twelve interview respondents were asked the seven questions listed in Table 11. During each interview, the researcher allowed sub-questions and subsequent discussion to emerge.

One-on-One Interview Questions Table 11
1. Why did you choose to work in childcare?
2. The field of childcare is working on professionalization of the field; tell me your thoughts about these efforts. How has it affected you?
3. How do you see yourself as a professional working in childcare?
4. Name one thing you want policymakers to know about professionalization of teachers in childcare settings.
5. What benefits do you see with childcare moving toward professionalization as a field?
6. What problems do you see with childcare moving toward professionalization as a field?
7. What would cause you to leave the field?

Interview Analysis

Educational levels varied among the respondents (Appendices K, M). At least eighty-five percent either had college credits, a Bachelor's, or a Master's degree. Fifteen percent of the respondents met only the minimal level of education. Despite the differences in education, the responses of each woman in the one-on-one interviews had many similarities. The interviews revealed that many of the opinions had much in common with the opinions expressed by focus group respondents. The researcher noted that although themes overlapped between groups, three themes emerged as larger and more frequently discussed issues (Table 12).

Table 12 Interview Theme	Frequency Rate
Perceptions of Value & Respect	18
Wages, Benefits & Funding	14
Teacher Education	14

Interview Theme 1: Perceptions of value & respect

In early childhood education, respect means valuing the worth of the child by seeing the child as a human being who has feelings, ideas, and wishes that should be honored to the greatest extent possible. It also means respecting family members, their goals for their children, and their parenting practices (Feeney, 2012, p. 59). How can teachers who are experiencing their own feelings of not being valued or respected effectively model this behavior for young children and their families? Both teacher preparedness and attitudes inform classroom practice. The low morale of teachers who do not feel valued may result in inevitable negative effects in their classroom practice. Being viewed as “babysitters,” who are less than teachers, is liable to have a negative impact on both teachers and the children and families they serve. All the respondents mentioned how often they encountered the idea that they were “just babysitters.” They all took their work with children very seriously, and this attitude that they were only babysitters made them feel denigrated. They saw a real need for a different public perception of their role.

I think once we define our role just in general, then we can kind of move from there, because we're not just babysitters, there is so much more that goes into our profession that most people don't really get. I teach preschool, so 3s & 4s, that's a very powerful age. There is so much brain development that goes on during that time. Most people wouldn't know that. (Willow)

“It's just more of being taken seriously and know that there is work that we're doing but there's so much more work to be done and there are roadblocks, such as funding and certain policies that block us from doing the best of our job. Doctors are seen as important, they're respected, lawyers are seen as important and a main staple, but a lot of people don't really see the

importance of early education. Some people are starting to, but the main law makers, that's kind of where the cuts come first.” (Willow)

State and national policy-makers are increasingly aware that there is a wide discrepancy between what the research says about the important role of early educators and the set of existing policies and practices that do not support an adequately compensated professional workforce (Early & Winton, 2001, p. 286). Increased funding that leads to better childcare teacher compensation and benefits would signal a change in public attitudes – an admission that quality early childhood education is vital to the health of society, and worthy of financial investment. It could be a first step toward helping childcare teachers feel valued for the important work they do each day.

Interview Theme 2: Wages & benefits

Respondents in this study also cited low wages as a primary reason they would consider leaving the field. Even though they know that competent and well-trained educators are a key to ensuring positive outcomes for children, policy-makers and the public are often shocked when confronted with statistics on the low education levels and compensation of the early childhood workforce (Early & Winton, 2001, p. 286). Low wages continue to plague childcare teachers. Wisconsin’s teachers, with an average median starting wage of \$10.00 per hour, have not fared any better than others in this country (Dresser, Rodriguez, Meder & Cows, 2016). Respondents Rose and Daisy acknowledged their wages as being slightly higher than most childcare teachers. This was attributed to their program being state funded and their access to financial grants. In spite of this, Daisy and Rose (Appendix B) agreed with the other interview respondents’ strong opinions on this subject of inadequate wages for their difficult work. They pointed to the

negative impact low compensation had upon both their teaching and their lives in general. Their remarks suggested a troubling reality: Although their compensation lifted them above poverty level, it was often not far above it. They were ineligible for state services – like healthcare – because they were making too much money, but they weren’t earning enough money to cover many basic expenses, like transportation to work, or their children’s medical care.

“The impact as far as wages go for me, like I said, I don't think that teachers in general get paid enough. If I make a certain amount of money, I don't qualify for healthcare through the State or anything like that. So if I am making middle class wages or working class wages, I'm really not because I have to pay all of this money for healthcare, I have to pay for my child's healthcare, I still have to buy food...” (Jasmine)

“With the cost of living constantly rising our checks are not rising, our kids are getting older, we don't meet the low income standard, so we're stuck in the middle because we don't meet a lot of benefits because we make too much money but we don't make enough money to do the things that we really need to do or we want to do. We work hard every day, and not to be able to enjoy life because you're worried about finances...” (Jasmine)

Low compensation had a less tangible impact as well. Most of the respondents were deeply committed to their work and believed in its importance. However, they tended to feel that inadequate wages devalued their work as early childhood teachers. Along with the difficulty of making ends meet on a practical level, they felt that they were being regarded as less than professionals in terms of compensation. These two factors united in creating considerable stress for them. Research shows high turnover of staff disrupts stability, which is essential to quality early childhood development. In Wisconsin, the turnover rate for all teaching staff is high – just

over thirty-five percent. Inadequate wages are pushing more teachers to leave the field, as recent research shows (Dresser, Rodriguez, & Meder, 2016). Without additional state and federal funding, this trend is likely to continue. A 2014 report examined the issue of wages among childcare workers over the past decade. It found that not only were childcare workers not paid a sufficient wage for the work they did, but that their compensation was only just above that paid to fast food workers.

Childcare workers have also experienced no increase in real earnings since 1997, and, as was true in 1989, still earn less than adults who take care of animals, and barely more than fast food cooks. Those who work as preschool teachers have fared somewhat better; their wages have increased by 15 percent in constant dollars since 1997, although their wages remain low. In contrast, parent fees have effectively doubled from \$94 to \$179 per week in constant 2011 dollars. (Whitebook, Phillips, Howes, 2014, p. 23)

The report acknowledges that while some strides have been made, childcare workers' wages have not kept pace with the cost of living. The impact of low wages is translated by the childcare workforce as a lack of respect for the work they do each day. Most of the interview respondents in the current study were deeply committed to their work and believed in its importance. However, they tended to feel that inadequate wages devalued their work as early childhood teachers. Along with the difficulty of making ends meet on a practical level, they felt that they were being regarded as less than professional in terms of compensation. These two factors made them question whether they could sustain their positions as childcare teachers.

The health and well being of care and education professionals play a critical role in their effectiveness as educators and thus in the development of children (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, 2015, p. 476). How can childcare teachers be expected to provide quality care to young children, helping them to develop appropriate social-emotional competencies when their own social emotional competencies have been adversely affected by the stress from low wages and the perception that the work they do each day is not valued? Citing Klausen et al. (2012), the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies (2015) concurs with findings that teachers experience various types and levels of stress each day which influence student behavior in the classroom (p. 476). The social and emotional well being of teachers is an important factor informing the quality of classroom practice (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, 2015). Professionals who are socially and emotionally competent are self-aware and can identify how to engage and motivate their students. From high engagement come better student outcomes.

The early care and education workforce is at risk financially, emotionally, and physically, subject to a vicious cycle of inadequate resources, low qualifications and expectations, low education levels, and low wages that is difficult to break (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, 2015, p. 478). These factors present powerful barriers to the childcare workforce. Without adequate support, including wage and benefits increases, childcare teachers will not overcome these challenges. Unlike teachers in K-12 settings, childcare teachers have not realized wage and benefits increases that can provide them with a stronger financial positioning to continue to move forward toward professionalization. Stakeholders and policy-makers must expand the current conversations related to improving early childhood education to include meaningful solutions to increased wages and benefits for childcare teachers. This can serve to

encourage and provide much needed emotional support to them. Without such support, Milwaukee's childcare teachers cannot hope to improve their competencies.

Interview Theme 3: Teacher education

Prolonged training is generally not required for educators who work in private programs serving children from birth to age 5. While training requirements vary substantially from place to place, they are determined by a combination of factors, such as state policy regarding program licensure, and standards of accreditation for programs that exceed state licensing regulations (Feeney, 2012). This variation in childcare teacher requirements has resulted in far too many childcare teachers who meet only the minimal education requirement. In Wisconsin, YoungStar is attempting to address this issue. The respondents in this study recognize the need for continued professionalization but are concerned that professionalization is not resulting in increased wages and benefits to them. To understand some of the underlying causes contributing to low engagement in professional childcare degree pathways, the following questions were asked:

The field of childcare is working on professionalization of the field; tell me your thoughts about these efforts? How have they affected you?

The answers several respondents gave were telling:

"...For example, when I worked at XXX, a privately owned program, teachers made a lot less money than the teachers here at YYY, a state-funded program. They were extremely passionate. They were eager for professional development, but they didn't have the means to continue their education without help and they didn't have the means to seek out professional development without help. I think that the lower wages they had were not a motivator. They were motivated to come to work every day because they loved their jobs, but they weren't motivated to necessarily

get a lot better at it by doing things like education. When you have highly qualified teachers who have an understanding of child development and what is actually necessary for kids to learn and grow, then they are going to get a richer experience, which there is tons of research out there that shows what a high quality early childhood program can do for kids in the long run, but that starts with having highly qualified teachers.” (Rose)

The answers showed the respondents’ deep commitment to the task of early learning and care, and their agreement that professionalization would raise the level of teacher education and quality of teaching. The respondents acknowledged that the funds are often there for continuing education, but they also felt frustration with inadequate funding overall, especially for teacher salaries, due to limited perceptions of the value of early childhood learning.

The respondents’ attitudes toward enhanced teacher education certainly confirm the research by the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies (2015) that all educators need to develop core competencies to move children along a continuous trajectory of learning and developmental goals. If Milwaukee’s childcare teachers do not have access to professional development opportunities due to insufficient state and federal funding, children will continue to be underserved by a childcare workforce with too many teachers who meet only minimal education requirements. This does not bode well for the children’s futures.

As stated in earlier chapters, Forbes (Biery, 2014) reported that studies indicate enormous growth in the number of childcare facilities over the last several decades. The number increased from 262,511 in 1987 to 766,401 in 2007. With surging numbers of working mothers, there are many more young children in childcare. These children need more than babysitting. They need quality care. Without qualified teachers, they are not going to get it. Appropriate income,

resources, support, and opportunities for career development are essential for bringing excellent candidates into the workforce, and, even more importantly, retaining them as they further develop their knowledge and skills through professional learning experiences (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, 2015, p. 478). Teachers who feel valued and receive adequate compensation for the work they do each day are likely to be more motivated to continue moving toward professionalization.

Conclusion

Data for this study was collected from three sources – paper surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews. Findings from each data collection source were similar. Generally, respondents across each of the data collection methods described their professional identity using positive descriptions such as teacher/leader, educator and role model. When describing her professional identity during a one-on-one interview, Linaria illustrated this issue: “... *I'm in the Head Start program, sometimes parents think it's just a daycare center, and I'm like, no, I'm not a daycare.*” Similarly to other respondents, Linaria described her professional identity in positive terms. What is significant are the additional descriptors included in her self-description. Linaria painstakingly described her professional identity and sought to exclude herself from the daycare workforce. This is indicative of the fragmentation that exists within the early childhood workforce. How can childcare workers become a unified workforce without an understanding of the shared nature of their professional identities? A coherent identity could be a significant step toward healing the fractures among them.

Wages and benefits were a concern of survey, focus group, and interview respondents. Teachers across focus groups and interviews expressed their dissatisfaction with childcare

teachers' wages. Most of the participants in this study did not receive benefits other than paid vacation and paid personal days. Respondents employed in center-based programs rated five stars were most likely to have additional benefits such as health and dental insurance; however, this was not always true. Interestingly, some respondents acknowledged the fact of their wages being higher than those paid to teachers employed in center-based programs located in more urban areas of Milwaukee.

As adults with responsibility for young children, all professionals in the early care and education workforce have a similarly complex and challenging scope of work and make a highly valuable contribution to healthy child development and early learning (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, 2015, p. 483). To reiterate, there is a positive link between childcare teacher education and student outcomes. The work that childcare teachers perform each day is vital to ensuring children are prepared to enter kindergarten. Given these factors, the logical response must be to not only ensure childcare teachers meet established competencies but also that they are adequately compensated for doing so. As stated in the 2015 report by the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, "...the sophistication and complexity of these professional roles are not consistently recognized and reflected in practices and policies regarding education requirements, professional learning expectations and supports, and compensation and other working conditions (p. 483). Milwaukee's childcare teachers and the children they care for each day cannot afford to continue waiting. Additional supports, both tangible, including increased wages and benefits, and intangible, including enhanced public perceptions, need to be realized now.

Chapter V

Discussion

The Difficult Question of Professional Identity

In this study's examination of how African American women working in center-based childcare programs in Milwaukee County describe their professional identity, my findings from the answers to the study's research questions helped it to achieve its goals. The implications of my findings are that the entire childcare workforce in the nation is facing issues similar to those confronting African American women in Milwaukee's center-based programs.

These women define their identity in positive ways, which are not unlike the ways white women working in center-based programs as teachers describe their professional identity. Varying descriptions of professional identity were consistent across survey, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews. However, these variations can also be seen as an indication of fracture within the workforce, as age of the children, program sector, and auspices, rather than the field as a whole, tend to frame individuals' occupational identity and allegiances (Goffin, 2007, p. 43).

As Goffin (2007) explains, identity with an individual component of the field such as, "I work in Head Start," rather than identifying with the field as a whole – i.e., "I am a childcare teacher" – can create competition among the field's "parts" and undermines creation of a shared frame of reference. This creates barriers to comprehensive planning efforts and to a coherent identity as a field of endeavor (Goffin & Washington, 2007, p. 43). Several respondents in the survey collection, focus group and one-on-interviews described their identity with an additional description. As indicated by Goffin (2007), identity with an additional component of the field has resulted in rivalries between groups creating a hierarchical pecking order (p. 43).

Interviewees had classrooms assignments with children age 2 and under. Some respondents revealed questions from others concerning why they were teaching in classrooms with children under age 2. The respondents perceived the questions about the age group they were teaching as a lack of respect for their work. This sort of question definitely creates fractures within the workforce. While Milwaukee's childcare workforce has made progress in moving toward professionalization of the field, the fragmentation of identity within the field suggests progress will be limited until this issue is resolved.

The Need for a Coherent Identity

The questions asked in this study sought to illuminate the perceptions of childcare teachers concerning problems they face in developing and sustaining high quality childcare services. Certainly the issue of a coherent identity is problematic. Developing and sustaining high quality childcare services must begin with a coherent identity, one wherein childcare teachers identify with the entire childcare field. This cannot be accomplished absent a clear understanding of the factors that define their collective identity as a specialized endeavor and what it is about their work that brings distinctive value to children, families, and the overall society. If, as Feeney (2012) writes, professions serve an important social function, and professionals should be knowledgeable, competent, morally responsible, and use their expertise for the good of all, their collective identity would serve several purposes. It could address issues of fragmentation related to professional identity within the field, create a collective voice that amplifies the important contributions of the childcare workforce in preparing children to enter kindergarten, and move the childcare profession toward securing a place among the professions.

Professional Identity across Star Ratings

Participants in this study were employed as teachers in center-based programs rated two, three, four and five stars by YoungStar. It was anticipated by the researcher that teachers in 4 and 5-star programs would most likely have established their professional identity. Findings indicated this to be true. Both white and African American respondents employed in programs rated five stars appeared more secure in their personal and professional identity. Interestingly, respondents employed in programs rated two or three stars were equally as confident in their professional and personal identity in spite of the fact that their programs are largely under-funded and offer lower wages.

The respondents in this study were passionate about the work they do with young children. They consistently described their work as “necessary” and “important.” Despite being under-resourced, and living with the stark reality of the poverty they face daily, Milwaukee’s childcare teachers are committed to the work they do each day. Most respondents could not foresee an immediate departure from childcare. Nevertheless, the issue of under-funding directly impacts a population already struggling to emerge from poverty. Lack of funding among this population not only impedes the social mobility that comes with a livable wage, but it also means a lack of resources for children enrolled in these programs. Frequently, their teachers do not have the educational materials they need to manage effective teaching. It is a situation that can only lead to further deterioration of the educational process in a population that needs the greatest input. Childcare teachers in Milwaukee, the children they care for each day, and the children’s parents cannot continue to wait. There must be an immediate response from Wisconsin’s policy-makers.

To reiterate, the federal government subsidizes tuition for early childhood education at seventy-five percent through the Shares program. The Wisconsin budget, however, reduces this subsidy to approximately twenty-three percent, while diverting the remainder to line items quite unrelated to early childhood education. This reduction has impacted all Wisconsin's childcare programs – particularly programs in urban areas of Milwaukee already experiencing the impact of systemic poverty. These programs, most of which are rated two and three stars by YoungStar, are severely affected by this funding reduction. Pay increases and benefits continue to be minimal, and program sponsored tuition assistance is virtually non-existent. It is time for Wisconsin's policy-makers to act to increase state childcare subsidies from twenty-three percent to the seventy-five percent allocated by the federal government. Milwaukee's childcare teachers, parents who depend on childcare services, and children enrolled in these programs cannot continue to wait. If policy makers in Wisconsin continue to ignore these pressing needs, the long-term consequences for the state cannot be over-emphasized.

Implications of Funding

The issue of low wages is not being experienced only by African American teachers; white, Hispanic, Asian, etc., experience the same problem of low wages. The issue of low wages is problematic of systemic poverty, which affects more than African American childcare teachers. Low wages places too many childcare teachers within the category of the working poor. They are equally an issue for those who are not in poverty or who might be white because they reflect a negative social attitude to early childhood education and care that implicates everyone involved. This study reveals that the problems confronting the childcare workforce in general are considerable, but they are more impactful on African American teachers where poverty and race

converge in a significant way. Without the necessary supports, Wisconsin's childcare workforce will continue to remain fragmented, and Milwaukee's children will continue to be educationally at risk. The question must be asked: What does this mean for the future of our children and our communities?

Respondents in this study question the discrepancy between the qualifications of childcare teachers, and the qualifications of teachers in other elements of education. The respondents all shared concerns in the areas of continuing teacher education, compensation, and respect. However, from the greater perspective of professionalization in the field of early childhood education, these are actually ancillary issues. They contribute to professionalism in vital ways, but they do not define it at its foundational level. What does define it is the way the teachers perceive the purpose of their work, and their role in achieving it. The teachers in this study primarily described their professional identity as that of teacher/leader. In their eyes, being a teacher/leader requires a love for children and an understanding of the importance of the work they do each day. The majority considered their role as childcare teachers as vital to the development and future well being of young children. Several of them also saw it as a vital service to society as a whole. Respondents either working in urban areas of Milwaukee or who had grown up in these areas, where crime rates were high, were committed to providing a safe place for children.

To these teachers, a safe haven is more than a physically secure place. Milwaukee's childcare teachers understand the reality of their children's home lives. Many live in communities marked by poverty, crime and violence. Many do not go home to safe havens in the evenings. In response to this reality, Milwaukee's childcare teachers endeavor to provide a nurturing

environment for children each day. To them, nurturing involves love and safety, but it also involves teaching and learning. What these teachers do, and the way they see and value it, creates their professional identity. For many of them, their work with young children is a calling.

If Milwaukee's childcare teachers are to be fully equipped, there must be increased access to professional development opportunities. There must also be support for them when they seek to take advantage of these opportunities. Respondents reported being "wait-listed" for tuition assistance due to insufficient program funding. Once again, the implications of under-funding are evidenced in this. This issue is problematic for teachers employed in programs that cannot provide tuition assistance to their employees as a benefit. Several respondents in this study are employed at state-funded programs. These teachers have access to vitally needed support that allows them to attain college degrees. All of these programs are rated five stars. Programs rated two and three stars, however, are under-funded and lack the financial ability to provide this much needed benefit to their employees. This leaves programs like the T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship program, which is currently wait-listing future students. The implications of under-funding permeate the entire childcare workforce.

Supports for Childcare Teachers

Opportunities for professional learning lack consistency and coordination. This inconsistency shows across types of professional learning supports, and it extends to educators who work in different roles and age ranges within the birth through age 8 continuum – this, despite the strong rationale for providing children with consistency and continuity in learning experiences (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, 2015, p. 358).

To address this issue of inconsistency in professional development for those who work with young children, the 2015 report by the Institute of the National Academies recommends eradicating the previous silo approach to professional development, and adopting a broader, more cohesive approach (p. 358). Wisconsin has already begun moving in the direction of this broader approach. The state has developed credit-based Registry Credentials in several areas (Appendix R). Childcare teachers can now earn credentials for Infant and Toddler, Pre-School, Inclusion, and After School care. Professional credentialing has been widely accepted in Milwaukee by early childhood teachers. The data, however, suggests that Milwaukee's childcare teachers, particularly among African American women, are not going on beyond credentialing for college degrees.

Without public policy support for teachers to pursue higher education, a base of early childhood knowledge and competency is very hard to establish. Better support of care and education professionals will require mobilizing local, state, and national leadership into building a culture, both in higher education and ongoing professional learning that fosters a cohesive workforce for young children. It must insure practice environments that enable and reinforce professionals' work and create consistency across work environments (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, 2015). Without these measures, the childcare knowledge base will remain fragmented and inaccessible to many teachers.

Knowledge of child development encompasses all of the developmental domains – physical, cognitive, social, and emotional – and includes principles of child growth and development as well as the sequence of development from birth through age 8 in each domain (Feeney, S., 2012, p. 45). Professional development of childcare teachers can help to increase competency in this

area. The possession of specialized knowledge and skills is the central defining feature of a profession. Because young children learn differently from older ones, their teachers require competencies that are distinctively different from those needed by other educators (Feeney, S. 2012, p. 35). These differences need to be taken seriously before early childhood teachers can reliably gain appropriate training for the age group they serve. In Milwaukee, the positive outcomes of our children depend upon it. Milwaukee's childcare teachers must continue to professionalize.

Educators working with children from birth through age 8 occupy an array of professional roles. There are multiple entry points to the field, and individuals may follow different pathways toward ultimate professionalization in caring for and educating young children (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, 2015, p. 358). Several of the respondents in this study demonstrate this fact. These respondents came to the early childhood field indirectly. Nevertheless, most of them used their previous educational experiences to jumpstart their early childhood education careers. They brought their education, even if it was not in the childcare field, with them. It helped them learn to think and evaluate. It proved the value of variations in the quality and type of professional learning experiences across professional roles of those working with young children (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, 2015, p. 358).

It is well known that competent and well-trained childcare teachers are a key to ensuring positive outcomes for children. An essential component of professionalization comprises knowledge competencies and standards. Inherent in establishing any knowledge base or set of competencies in a discipline is the active participation of those engaged in the discipline. Teachers have to be both educators and learners at every moment. If they are to be truly good

teachers, they need to be able to measure their practical learning process against educational theories and research. The base of knowledge and competency grows from the combination of the two.

Gable and Haliburton (2003) questioned whether individual beliefs about training, education, and compensation might act as barriers (or incentives) to professional development. They concluded, however, that participants in their study, regardless of role, agreed that education and training were necessary before a person started to care for children (p.188).

Nationally, most states still only have minimal education requirements for childcare teachers (Appendices I, S). Given the current factors of under-achievement in Milwaukee's schools, children cannot continue to receive sub-standard childcare. If Milwaukee's children are to receive high quality childcare resulting in their overall academic improvement, there must be radical change in the city's approach to the early childhood education workforce. Highly problematic is the ongoing issue of low wages, which impacts teachers' ability to take advantage of professional development opportunities.

To repeat, a 2016 report by the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association showed an increase of teacher educational attainment across Wisconsin, with approximately eighty-five percent earning an Associate's degree or higher in early childhood education. In Milwaukee, however, the data this current study has revealed is not so promising. While it does show that Milwaukee's African American childcare teachers working in center-based programs are earning college credits, less than five percent of the respondents reported earning an Associate's or Bachelor's degree. Obviously, African American teachers working in center-based programs in Milwaukee

have made some progress in earning professional credentials but are still under-represented in degree attainment.

High-quality early education and care programs can help prepare children for success not only in school, but also in their future work and lives. Research proves it: Every \$1 invested in high-quality early education and care programs for disadvantaged children saves as much as \$17 down the road, with tangible results measured by lower crime, fewer teen parents, and higher individual earning and education levels (Mitchell, 2005). Increased funding and improving the childcare workforce are seen by many researchers as ways to not only support families and promote school readiness; they are also seen as a possible pre-emptive measure for lowering the crime rate.

The increased demand for childcare emphasizes the need for continued improvement of teacher competencies. Outcomes for children cannot be improved without improvement of teacher competencies. This process begins with teachers becoming skilled at self-observation. One of the chief goals of this study is to discover how African American females working in center-based programs see themselves. In other words, how do they perceive who they are and what they do? Do they see themselves as teachers, or as something else? In the responses to this study, the answer to this question was emphatic. The respondents clearly described their identity as being teachers. The discussions among them delineated their perception that the work they do each day is as important as the work done by K-12 teachers.

Teacher identity cannot be considered without inclusion of teachers' own perceptions of how their identity is described by the broader community. The descriptions of what it means to be a professional in the field given by childcare teachers, and the abstract description set out in the

field are not essentially different. The respondents in this study self-identified as professionals, as teacher/leaders, and role models who recognized the need for continued professional development. Respondents acknowledged the link between quality childcare and school outcomes. So far, their view was similar to what was expected of them in the childcare industry. However, they were not at all convinced that parents, policy makers, K-12 teachers, and other stakeholders would describe them the same way.

The consistency in education expectations that would result from requiring early childhood educators to have a minimum of a Bachelor's or equivalent degree, with qualifications based on core competencies, could contribute to the quality of professional practice. It could also stabilize the workforce, achieve greater consistency in learning experiences, and optimize outcomes for children. However, a policy requirement for a degree implemented in isolation, without addressing other workforce development considerations, would be insufficient to yield these improvements (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, 2015, p. 439). Respondents in this study were cognizant of the need for continued professional development but were held back by other considerations. Preeminent among these considerations was the lack of funding.

Conclusion

This study revealed the fact that both white and African American women describe their professional identity as “teacher/leaders,” and “educators.” Despite their low wages, childcare teachers are expected to continue moving toward professionalization evidenced by Registry Credentials and/or college degrees. Unwavering in their commitment to the work they do each day with young children, Milwaukee’s childcare teachers question how they can continue to professionalize in the absence of adequate wages and benefits. There is an immediate need for

policy changes. Policy makers must increase funding for early childhood education to establish better wages for childcare teachers. Wisconsin's policy makers could begin by refining the state budget, and returning to early childhood education the full 75% provided by the federal government to subsidize childcare tuition costs. The implications of continuing to ignore the urgency to provide financial relief to Milwaukee's childcare teachers are too crucial. These financial problems cannot be dismissed as belonging only to childcare programs in the central city; they are affecting the metropolitan area's entire childcare workforce. Wisconsin must act now; Milwaukee's children cannot continue to receive care that is something less than teaching.

Feeney (2012) describes self-knowledge as an essential attribute of educators who strive to do their best for young children (p. 83). Milwaukee's childcare teachers do demonstrate an awareness of themselves in their descriptions of their professional identities. The practice of self-knowledge requires teachers to become self-observers in the same intentional way that they observe the children in their classrooms. Teachers attain self-knowledge through examination of their teaching methods, attitudes, and successes and failures, as well as through the responses of parents and children. The way childcare teachers describe themselves in the context of their role impacts the engagement and interaction between teachers and their students, parents, other childcare teachers, and stakeholders. It requires teachers to review their practices to determine what works and what does not. The interaction between Milwaukee's childcare teachers, the children they serve, their parents and stakeholders is not only vital, but is necessary to ensure that everyone is doing the best for children. Childcare teachers need to be fully equipped for the leading role they play in these interactions. Milwaukee's childcare teachers cannot continue to

move toward professionalization without additional supports evidenced by wage increases and benefits.

Further Study

A possible avenue for further study that might help resolve some of these problems lies in the data concerning Milwaukee's female African American administrators and directors of center-based programs. These women have a much higher percentage of degree attainment than the center teachers. The process by which they achieved it, and what obstacles they overcame to do so, could be illuminating. Their trajectories to higher education might serve as models to center teachers who have only earned a professional credential, or perhaps not even that, in early childcare education. Understanding the issues of professionalization from the perspective of these administrators and directors could open new areas of action in the early childcare professionalization discourse. It could even succeed in moving center teachers toward higher degree attainment.

There is a positive link between teacher education and student outcomes. Teacher competencies include an understanding of how young children develop across socio-emotional, cognitive and physical development domains. Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards provide a framework for teachers of young children aged birth through first grade. What are the long-term effects on student outcomes beyond the early years? What effect does teacher credentialing have on student outcomes beyond the early years? These issues require further research.

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Appendix A

Focus Group Respondents' Profile and Comment *Focus Group 1 Participants*

Name	Years of Experience	Education	Program Rating	Program Zipcode
Olive	Less than 2-years	High School	5	53210
Peaches	2-5 years	High School	3	53209
Cherry	5-10 years	AA	5	53208
Clementine	5-10 years	4 Credentials	4	53233

Focus Group 2 Participants

Name	Years of Experience	Education	Program Rating	Program Zipcode
Pepper	10+ years	High School	2	53209
Chloe	10+ years	AA ECE	3	53218
Ginger	10+ years	High School	4	53233
Anise	5-10 years	High School	3	53218

Focus Group1 Participants:

Participant Olive, an African American female, has worked in childcare for the past five years but as a lead teacher for less than two years in a center-based program rated five stars. Olive meets only the minimal education requirements. Olive describes her identity as a teacher/leader, and she considers the current movement toward professionalization of the childcare workforce as positive for the workforce. Olive expressed concern that parents and stakeholders do not understand the importance of childcare teachers. *“Even though childcare teachers are children’s first teachers, we are looked upon as babysitters.”* A sub-question emerged asking for a definition of the term “babysitter.” She described a babysitter as someone assigned to keep children safe, feed them, and change diapers. Olive’s perception is that parents, K-12 teachers, and other stakeholders see the childcare teachers’ role as something less than teaching.

Olive understands the need for professionalization and acknowledges that childcare classes have helped her to understand the competencies she needs as a teacher. She is encouraged to continue professional development classes. *“It takes time and investment.”* Olive described feelings of being undervalued and underpaid as a childcare teacher. *“The wages we are paid are not a sufficient indication of our value.”* Olive described lack of time as a barrier to professional development.

Participant Peaches is an African American female who has worked in childcare between two and five years. She is currently employed as a lead teacher at a center-based program rated three stars, and she only meets the basic educational requirements. Describing her professional identity as a leader, Peaches believes that her role is *“to encourage children to be their best and reach their highest potential.”* Her feelings concerning professionalization are positive, and she

believes professionalization *“helped me to want to be better and grow as a teacher.”* Peaches acknowledges the need for professionalization of the field but is concerned about the perception of parents, K-12 teachers, and other stakeholders. *“People don’t think we are educating children.”* Personal value is a factor she considers when making decisions about continuing education. *“Value; it has to be worth my time.”* Peaches agreed with other respondents concerning teachers’ compensation. *“Our wages are not a sufficient expression of our value. We need the time and investment of policymakers to continue to professionalize.”*

Participant Cherry, a white female, has been employed as a lead teacher in a center-based program rated five stars for the past seven years. She holds an Associate’s degree in Early Childhood Education. Unlike Olive and Peaches, Cherry has full employee benefits (health, dental, and vision insurance, paid vacation, personal and sick days). Cherry describes her professional identity as a *“teacher/leader”* who is *“dedicated.”* *“We are always available for children and parents. I am dedicated and committed to children.”* She feels that YoungStar has had no impact on how she sees herself as a professional but acknowledges the need for more education in the field. (The researcher noted that respondents employed at accredited center-based programs most often reported no impact from YoungStar. This perception is due to accredited programs not having interaction with YoungStar but with their accrediting agency).

Cherry cites *“Time, energy, motivation, and finances”* as considerations she includes when making decisions about continuing education. Like the other respondents, Cherry perceives teacher compensation as an expression of value of the work childcare teachers perform. *“Parent and co-workers’ feedback and people wanting to observe my classroom are expressions of value. Wages are not sufficient for many in this field.”* She sees an increase in funding for childcare

teachers to continue to professionalize as a deterrent to crime. *“Put more money into childhood education and you won’t need to put as much money into jails.”*

Cherry expressed her opinion that stakeholders must consider the importance of quality childcare for children. *“We understand the importance of what we do. It is important for stakeholders to understand that.”*

Participant Clementine, an African American female, has been employed for the past five years at a center-based program rated four stars. Her employer is a privately funded program and she reports having full benefits (health, dental and vision insurance, 401K, paid vacation, personal days and paid sick days. In spite of the benefits Clementine receives, she reports her annual wages as \$20-25,000.00.

She reported having earned four early childhood professional credentials but has not earned a degree. Clementine describes her professional identity as a *“leader.”* *“Children pay attention to the leader and feed off of what you do.”* She also describes herself as *“knowledgeable.”* *“We share knowledge of children with parents that they might not have.”* When asked about the impact of YoungStar on her professional identity, Clementine responded, *“YoungStar is great. However, it is so intense that it kind of takes away from children’s ability to just explore. Everything has to be intentional. Professionalization has helped me to understand brain development in children, which has helped me with my own infant. I know how to do fine motor skills activities with my child.”* Clementine agreed that policymakers need to understand the importance of childcare work and provide additional funding. *“Policymakers need to understand that birth to three is the most important stage of a child’s life. Invest more money in childcare teachers.”* When making decisions about continuing education opportunities, Clementine cites factors of personal childcare, time and money.

Focus Group 2 Participants

Participant Pepper is an African American female, employed in childcare for more than ten years. She reports her position as having been assistant teacher, lead teacher, director and administrator. She currently operates a center-based program rated two stars and reports her annual wages in the survey as \$10-15,000.00. She reports having earned at least one of the early childhood education professional credentials. She describes her professional identity as a leader.

Pepper's response to the current move toward professionalization of the workforce appeared somewhat duplicative. She first expressed her appreciation of the value of YoungStar but then took a defensive posture of resistance to the model of professionalization of the childcare workforce in Milwaukee. At one point she stated, *"I think YoungStar is mostly good."* As the discussion concerning professionalization of the field continued, Pepper stated, *"They're trying to make us like teachers, but they don't want to give us teacher's pay. They should give us teacher's pay. They are trying to get people to change their group centers to family centers so we don't have the penalty due to education. We are slowly being pushed out of childcare."*

Unlike the other participants, Pepper's survey response indicated that she didn't know if there was a link between teacher education and students' educational outcomes, and she didn't think teacher education made a difference. She does not feel valued in the field and believes that policymakers don't understand the work childcare workers do each day. *"It feels like we are being pushed out of childcare. Some programs are state-run and they have more access to resources. The competition is strong and we are not able to compete with such low funds. Even with T.E.A.C.H. programs, now that we want to go to school, there is a waiting list. All of a sudden there isn't any funding."*

Pepper raised the issue of the need for more quality professional development programs. *“We don’t have access to adequate professional development programs.”* Describing factors that concerned her when she has considered professional development opportunities, Pepper responded, *“What am I going to gain if I take time away from my family? I have to pay a babysitter and consider the value to me.”*

Participant Chloe is an African American female who has worked in childcare for more than ten years. She reports having previously operated her own family program, which is now closed. She is currently working as a lead teacher in a center-based program rated three stars. Chloe has earned an Associate’s degree in early childhood education. She is also registered as a trainer with The Registry of Wisconsin and provides continuing education opportunities for childcare employees in Milwaukee. She feels, however, that she is unable to compete with agencies in more metropolitan areas of Milwaukee, which have access to resources she does not have.

Chloe describes her professional identity as an educator: *“We need to educate ourselves so that we can help others.”* When asked about the impact of YoungStar on her professional identity, Chloe raised several issues of concern to her. *“I think it’s more about pushing your staff to go back to school so that you can get a star. We have to do all of this paperwork and they don’t want to pay us. Youngstar has helped to identify programs where children are not getting the services they need. Some children are not being prepared for school. Centers can’t meet the criteria of YoungStar so they go back to being a family center and hire someone with a high school diploma. If the director has a degree, there’s no penalty. The money you are given for improving the program is not enough.”* Chloe’s statements reveal an underlying resistance not to professionalization but to a model of professionalization that seems to result in inequities against teachers and programs in more urban areas of Milwaukee.

Chloe believes that African American childcare teachers in Milwaukee are valued less than white teachers, and she expresses a perception of feelings of victimization. *“We are underpaid and made to feel like we don’t know what we are doing. We have been doing this work for a long time, and now we are being made to feel inferior. Other programs have access to grant writers and more resources, and we don’t. I feel like the policy makers sat down and strategized on ways to impact us financially. Now we get paid on an hourly basis opposed to weekly. That cuts into our funds and our ability to compete. If we had a collective voice, that could help us.”*

Chloe emphasized her perception that policy makers don’t understand the difficulties within the childcare workforce, and that a culture of inequality exists against African American childcare teachers. *“They don’t understand the work we do each day. They think we are babysitters, wiping kids’ noses, changing diapers, etc. Centers in zip code areas outside of the central city get more respect. We are looked at as being not as good. Ethnicity plays a part too. If you are going to come in and critique us, give us the tools and instructors we need to make sure we meet the goals. Don’t come in and ‘slice’ us down and tell us we’re not fit or we’re not educated enough or intelligent enough to teach. We have raised babies from one generation to the next. I take that personal.”* Chloe’s responses were indicative of feelings of perceived inequities within the system. It appears that African American women working in center-based programs are not resisting education but rather perceived inequities within the system. The perception that inequality not only exists within childcare but also that unfair treatment of African Americans is being fostered by those responsible for oversight, funding, and developing competencies of the workforce has resulted in resistance from African American teachers in Milwaukee.

When considering professional development opportunities, Chloe considers the factor of value. *“What am I going to gain in the end? I want to make sure that I’m getting more education. I also have to consider health. I have a personal health issue.”*

Participant Ginger is an African American female employed as a lead teacher at a center-based program operated by an academic institution rated four stars. She has worked in childcare eleven years and has access to health, dental and vision insurance, 401K, paid vacation and sick-days. She currently only meets the minimal education requirement for childcare teachers.

Ginger describes her professional identity as teacher/leader and states that she likes to “motivate” her children to do more. Ginger is *“hopeful”* that things will get better in the childcare field but concedes that parents and policy makers don’t understand the importance of the work childcare teachers do each day. *“It has a lot to do with the environment and zip code of the program. Some parents might value programs in other areas and not value programs in poorer areas. Some centers have a TV in every room, but that’s not every center.”* The implication of Ginger’s response indicates her perception that inequities exist within the workforce. The perception of inequities serves to further fragment a workforce that is already fragmented.

Ginger’s survey response describes YoungStar as a *great benefit*. In response to the focus group question relating to the impact of YoungStar on her professional identity, Ginger expressed her perception that education has not resulted in higher teacher compensation: *“Directors push us because State is pushing them. Some people don’t want to go back to school. We go back to school to get more education, but our wages have not changed. I like that YoungStar pushes us to get more education. We need to get paid what the real teachers get paid.”* Ginger recognizes the need for more teachers with college education. *“It is difficult to*

meet the standards because we don't have quality staff. Centers can't afford to pay teachers sufficient wages." When considering professional development opportunities, Ginger cited her son's health issue as a consideration. *"My son has a health issue and I must consider who he will be with when I'm away."*

Participant Anise is an African American female currently employed as a lead teacher for the past two years in a center-based program rated three stars. She only meets the minimal requirement for lead teachers and reports her wages in the survey as being \$10,000.00 or less.

Describing her professional identity as teacher/leader, Anise considers herself a motivator. *"I see myself as a motivator, as a care-er. I care about the well-being of children."* She agrees that childcare teachers' education is important and that YoungStar is a *"great benefit."* *"YoungStar helped with some of the fraud that was taking place. We are getting better at making sure children are school ready. We need to survive in this business."* Anise was clearly more non-respondent than the other participants and seemed most comfortable listening to the conversation, nodding occasionally.

In response to discussion of how parents and stakeholders consider the work childcare teachers do, Anise expressed her perception that childcare teachers are seen as performing a function that is less than teaching. *"They see us as babysitters. There is no respect for what we do."* Anise considers her age and money when considering professional development opportunities.

To understand how teachers describe themselves professionally, respondents in both focus groups were asked: ***Using one-word expressions, describe how you see yourself as a professional working in childcare?***

Olive: *"I see myself as a role model; I am an example to my class."*

Peaches: “I see myself as a leader; I lead in my classroom every day.”

Cherry: “I see myself as passionate; children pay attention to what you do.”

Clementine: “I see myself as a leader; children pay attention to the leader and feed off of what you do.”

Pepper: “I see myself as a leader; I lead my classroom every day.”

Chloe: “I see myself as an educator; we need to educate ourselves so we can help others.”

Ginger: “I see myself as a motivator. I like to motivate kids that are not motivated.”

Anise: “I see myself as a ‘care-er’; I care about the well-being of children.”

Using one-word expressions, describe how you think your stakeholders (family, public school teachers, policy-makers, etc.) describe your professional identity in the context of the classroom.

Olive: “They see me as a learner. Parents see you learning the personality and behaviors of children.”

Peaches: “They see me as an encourager. I encourage children to be their best and to reach their highest potential.”

Cherry: “Dedicated. I am available for children and parents. I am dedicated and committed to children.”

Clementine: “Knowledgeable. I share my knowledge of children with parents. This is knowledge that parents might not have access to.”

Chloe: “They would describe me as a motivator. I try to motivate my students every day.”

Ginger: “They would describe me as hopeful. I am a positive person and believe that things will get better.”

Anise: “They would describe me as ambitious. I want to improve.”

During the discussion of how stakeholders and other professions describe their professional identity as childcare teachers led to the sub-question: ***Do you think families, policymakers, public school teachers, etc., have an understanding of what you do every day?***

Olive: “No. Even though childcare teachers are children’s first teachers, we are looked upon as professional babysitters.”

Peaches: “People don’t think we are educating children.”

Cherry: “There is a lack of value for what we do.”

Clementine: “No. It feels like people degrade childcare teachers because it is not a school setting. We are looked upon as babysitters and not educators.”

Chloe: “No. They think we are babysitters, wiping kid’s noses, changing diapers, etc. Centers in zip code areas outside of the central city get more respect. We are looked at as not being as good. Ethnicity plays a part in this perception too.”

Anise: “No. They see us as babysitters. There is no respect for what we do.”

Appendix B
Interview Narrative
Respondent's Profile

Respondent	Ethnicity	Age	Years of Experience	Education	Zipcode & Star Rating
Rose	White	26-33	10+	Masters (ECE)	53211/ 5-Star
Daisy	African Amer.	26-33	10+	Bachelor (ECE)	53211/ 5-Star
Fern	African Amer.	26-33	10+	AA (ECE)	53212/ 5-Star
Willow	African Amer.	34-41	10+	Bachelor (ECE)	53212/5-Star
Iris	African Amer.	26-33	2-5 years	Bachelor (ECE)	53226/ 5-Star
Lily	White	50-57	30+	Bachelor (ECE)	53221/ 5-Star
Peony	African Amer.	18-25	2-5 years	College Credits (Not ECE)	53221/ 5-Star
Linaria	African Amer.	34-41	5-10 years	ECE Credits	53212/ 4-Star
Jasmine	African Amer.	58-65	10+	High School	53212/ 4-Star
Heather	African Amer.	50-57	Less than 2-years	Masters	53218/ 3-Star
Silene	African Amer.	50-57	Less than 2-years	College Credits (Not ECE)	53210/ 3-Star
Aster	African Amer.	34-41	2-5 years	High School	53210/3-Star

Interview Respondents

Respondent Rose is a white female employed as a substitute teacher in an accredited five-star center-based program in an academic institution. She has a Master's degree in Early Childhood Education. Rose's position requires her to substitute when teacher absence occurs. Her other responsibilities are in administration. This makes her somewhat dissimilar to the other respondents. Rose has health and dental insurance, 401K, paid vacation, personal and sick days, and reports her annual salary at \$45-50,000.00.

Rose began working in childcare after graduating from college. She was not originally sure of her career goals but found that working with small children was her passion. She describes her professional identity as a professional: *“I see myself as a professional and to be completely honest, a lot of that comes from my experience and training at the centers that I have worked at and not so much the formal education... I think the formal education like my master’s degree helped me to be a more open-minded and well-rounded person, but I think as far as the knowledge of best practices and early childhood, that has come more from the support of specific organizations that I work within.”*

Rose is concerned over the financial implications of professionalization for programs and teachers. *“Overall, I guess my personal thoughts are that there are a lot of people who want to professionalize the field, but in reality, that means more education for the people that are working with young children and continuing professional development, all of which costs money which childcare centers typically do not have. So while I think it is great that there is a push for making things more professionalized in this field and I think it should be that way, there is not the money to support that, and the wages that childcare teachers are paid do not really allow them to pay for themselves to go back to school, and it is hard to attract highly qualified lead teachers for childcare centers because the pay is so low.”*

Prior to working for her current employer, Rose was employed with a national childcare chain and received tuition assistance. *I was fortunate enough to work for a company with a tuition reimbursement program that I utilized, about 6 years ago. I went back to school for my master's degree in education. I thought I wanted to be an elementary school teacher. Like I said, I was fortunate to use that tuition reimbursement program which covered about a third of my master's degree and got a degree in education and then decided I didn't really like that either and went*

back to working in childcare... so I feel that I personally was fortunate to work for that company that allowed me to do that. Rose acknowledged that many childcare programs do not provide this benefit to their employees. She discussed a second national chain childcare program where she was employed as a director that also provided tuition assistance for childcare teachers. *When I was a director... I encouraged my teachers to take advantage of because they made under the threshold hourly wage and I wanted them to increase their education. So some of them took it and some of them didn't.*

Rose agrees with other respondent's commentary concerning teacher compensation. In her response to **one thing she wants policy makers to know about professionalization of teachers in childcare settings**, she remarked, *"The wages for teachers in childcare centers will have to increase in order for, I think, education or professional development to be possible."*

Several sub-questions emerged pertaining to teacher compensation.

Researcher: Do you think that lower wages diminish motivation to educate? Do you think that's a critical issue?

Rose: *I think it depends on the setting. For example, when I worked as a director, my teachers made a lot less money than the teachers here... and they were extremely passionate, they were eager for professional development, but they didn't have the means to continue their education without help. They didn't have the means to seek out professional development without help and I think that the lower wages they had were not a motivator. They were motivated to come to work every day because they loved their jobs, but they weren't motivated to necessarily get a lot better at it by doing things like education.*

Researcher: Do you see wages and benefits as an assignment of value to that person?

Rose: *I think so and I think to the profession as a whole. I think there is a larger issue at play. Because most early childhood programs are not funded by the government, they are funded by private tuition. So the general public says, 'I'm paying a lot of money for my children to come to your center.' When they hear that our teachers are making barely above minimum wage, they're a little bit appalled and they're confused at where the discrepancy comes in. Why is that the case? But at the same time, they're not able to pay more money either.*

Rose is not alone in her opinion that low wages devalue childcare teachers and discourage them from elevating their educational qualifications. A recent CBS report highlighted the issue of childcare teachers' compensation: *A group of parents is fighting for higher wages for workers at one of the nation's largest early childhood education companies. According to government data from 2015, childcare workers make an average of \$9.77 an hour. That's only 68 cents more than the earnings of fast food employees and some others in the food and beverage industry. It is 83 cents less than what retail workers earn* (News, 2017). The issue of teacher compensation is a national issue, one deserving immediate consideration and resolution.

Rose considers professionalization of childcare a positive factor for the workforce and acknowledges that more qualified teachers are needed.

Researcher: **What benefits do you see with childcare moving toward professionalization as a field? What would be the benefit?**

Rose: *I think that you would see more high quality early childhood programs in terms of children actually having experiences and getting an education that is beneficial to them developmentally. In my experience, it seems that there are a lot of childcare centers that are really just kind of doing some crowd control. Keeping kids safe and fed is the end goal, and while, yes, those children are being kept safe, it's not clear how much they're really learning or*

gaining from the experience, whereas when you have highly qualified teachers who have an understanding of child development and what is actually necessary for kids to learn and grow, then they are going to get a richer experience, which there is tons of research out there that shows what a high quality early childhood program can do for kids in the long run, but that starts with having highly qualified teachers.

Researcher: Without the funding, how do we get there?

Rose: *That is a good question. I don't know. Internal motivation I think is a factor for a small number of people who are so passionate they will figure out a way to make it happen. But I don't see the cycle changing of expensive childcare and poorly paid teachers. This is going back to the national chain I previously worked for, we were not able to hire a lot of teachers with Bachelor's degrees because we would have to pay them more and we didn't have the budget to do so. In essence we were hiring less qualified people because we can afford to pay them, and that's not okay. That center was accredited by NAEYC and they, as far as I know and this might have changed, were moving towards wanting a higher number of teachers to be degreed with a Bachelor's degree or higher, which is very noble. I would want that too, but until the field catches up and is able to pay people who pay to go to school and get a Bachelor's degree, I don't see that happening. To me the root issue is funding, but I don't know, there could be more.*

Rose agrees that professionalization of the childcare workforce is positive for the field but sees wages as problematic for professionalization efforts: *I don't know that there are a lot of problems with the idea of the field moving towards professionalization. Again, I think it comes down to wages. The teachers that I would hire at my KinderCare that had a Bachelor's degree and a teaching license, I might be able to pay them \$12-\$13 an hour, but they're also qualified to go teach in an elementary school and make more money and have their summers off and things*

like that. So, while it's great, we want to bring these people in, it's going to be a long time before we're able to keep them in that field. So while it's a benefit if they really want to work with young children, I think a challenge is that we get them all this education and then they might leave us anyway to go where they can make more money.

As Rose points out, the issue of teacher turnover is very problematic for the childcare workforce. Low wages present only two possible solutions for childcare teachers with a Bachelor's or Master's degree: (1) Teachers can opt to work a second job to subsidize their income (2) They can leave the childcare workforce for a teacher's position in a K-12 setting.

Researcher: Can you summarize your feelings about professionalization of the field and the impact, whether it is positive or negative, on teachers across the spectrum in the City of Milwaukee?

Rose: *I think the professionalization of the field and teachers in the City of Milwaukee is something that we should definitely be working towards. I think there are multiple ways to go about doing that, whether it be funding or more administrative staffing willing to support those kinds of things. I think the overall benefit would be a lot higher than any negative impacts. As you mentioned, there are a number of 2-star rated centers in this area, and I think that by increasing the teacher qualifications, that changes where you're able to be at quality-wise, which is what impacts that Young Star rating. So while I think there are barriers to it, I don't know that there would be a negative impact in terms of having more highly qualified teachers.*

Researcher: What do you consider a barrier?

Rose: *The funding, the ability of people to take time out of their personal lives to do either professional development or go back to school, I think that can be challenging, and then funding. If you don't have the support of something like a T.E.A.C.H. grant or a company like I had that is*

able to reimburse you for some tuition, when you're making \$8 an hour, \$5000 a semester for tuition is a little out of sight. So that's a barrier.

Rose was keenly aware of time and money as issues she factored in as deep concerns for many childcare teachers considering professional development opportunities.

Respondent Daisy is an African American childcare teacher who has been employed at the center-based childcare program of an academic institution. She reports her annual wages as \$30-35,000.00. She has health, dental, and vision insurance, paid vacation, and personal and sick days. Daisy has worked in childcare for more than ten years and holds a Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education.

Daisy chose to work in childcare after discovering her personal enjoyment working with children: *I've always been really good with kids, and at first I was just kind of looking for a job while I was on campus. I originally started as a business major, but then working here, I kind of just found that I loved this the most and so I changed my major to education my senior year. My grade point went up and I just felt like I was happier. Working with preschool is the best thing for me, and I've been doing it for 12 years. It was that feeling that I got. I remember sitting in my finance class and not really paying attention and was kind of thinking what I planned on doing with the kids, and that's when the light bulb kind of hit me, like maybe you should change your major and really focus on what makes you happy.*

Daisy describes her professional identity as a teacher/leader and sees herself as a role model: *I see myself as a role model. I see myself as a leader. I also see myself as more of a teacher of culture, especially for coworkers who may not have had the same experiences in life that I've had. I was born and raised in the worst area code in Wisconsin, 53206. I was born and raised right off of 20th and Chambers. So there are lots of things that I've seen that I've experienced*

that a lot of my coworkers have not had. When we get children who may have come from that same background, they might be a little confused or not sure what to do, or I might be able to handle them a little bit better than they could. So it's more of a cultural thing, and I do kind of push that awareness of even though we do try to teach everyone the same, but there are some differences that we have to acknowledge. The program where Daisy is employed has 3-5% low-income Share's funded enrollment. The remaining enrollment is parent funded in the form of private pay tuition.

Researcher: The field of childcare is working on professionalization of the field. What are your thoughts about those efforts?

Daisy: *I think that there is a lot of work to do, because the younger the age, the more people see you as a babysitter, so we really have to define what we do and people don't really understand that. I've heard that a lot. Why don't you go work with older kids? Why do you have to work with the younger ones? I tell them I feel I need to work with the younger ones so that when these teachers get these kids, they already have that foundation set. They understand their emotions and they know what to do when they're feeling a certain way so that they can pay attention to everything academically. So I think once we define our role just in general, then we can kind of move from there, because we're not just babysitters, there is so much more that goes into our profession that most people don't really get.*

Researcher: Tell me what age you teach and then would you define what a babysitter is?

Daisy: *I teach Preschool so 3s & 4s, so that's a very powerful age. There is so much brain development that goes on during that time. Most people wouldn't know that. I see a babysitter as just someone that watches the kids and just makes sure that they're safe until their family comes home. Preschool teaching is so much more than that because we hit on all developmental*

domains, we work on self-regulation and just really understanding what you need, how does your body feel. If you feel upset, what can you do to calm yourself? So instead of someone telling you what to do, it's listen to your own body and figure out a way to adjust it to get yourself back home. For example, right now we're doing yoga for our preschoolers, and when they feel a certain way they understand the deep breathing and the different kinds that they need. I think that's important at a young age, to understand what you need to do. At this age there are so many questions that they have and someone should be there to not answer all of them but give them tools of how to solve their own problems. I have noticed that there are adults at this age, like younger adults that cannot problem solve, because someone has always given them the answer or the tools or just given them the solution instead of giving them the tools of how to solve that problem yourself. That starts at a younger age.

Since Daisy works at a center-based program that is part of an academic institution, the researcher raised a sub-question.

Researcher: How do your experiences here compare to experiences as a teacher someplace else?

Daisy: *I would say here, because we're part of an academic institution, it's pretty much a whole other ballgame. We have lots of resources that I know a lot of places do not have, so we can help our kids in a different way, because... there is a lot of funding. Of course, not enough because that's always how it is, but we're able to do a lot more. Just having yoga and taking walks and exposing kids more to nature, I would say that's one of the bigger differences. It's just funding has a lot to do with what you can do, and there are still times I am paying for stuff out of my own pocket because I'm that dedicated to the activity or helping my kids really understand a concept.*

Researcher: What benefits do you see with childcare moving toward professionalization?

Daisy: *I know that there are so many. Whether we have our own professional identity, I think that that is a big part of it, so that's where benefits would really come from. Again, it's just more of being taken seriously and know that there is work that we're doing but there's so much more work to be done and there are roadblocks, such as funding and certain policies that block us from doing the best of our job. I mainly think of everything that can be done, because doctors are seen as important, so they're respected, lawyers are seen as important and a main staple, but a lot of people don't really see the importance of early education. Some people are starting to, but the main lawmakers, that's kind of where the cuts come first... especially in the early ages, those are the first to get cut, fine arts, everything. So that's kind of what I'm thinking as far as policy makers, to see the importance of outlets for our children, especially children that are in low-income areas. They need an outlet to get away from the issues and stuff that are surrounding them, so if those are the first things that you cut, then they might find other outlets that are less positive. So to me it's kind of a ripple effect that I think that's what needs to be seen. So there are many benefits really paying attention to what we do to kind of stop that ripple effect.*

Researcher: **What problems do you see, and I hear you talking about funding and it sounds like you're talking about societal perceptions that undervalue what happens in these environments every single day. Would that be correct?**

Daisy: *It would be. You see children that have so many emotional outbursts. There's lots of anger and not really understanding the world around them, but I think if you start at a younger age, learning to identify how you feel and working towards adjusting that and learning how to help, then that helps you as an adult.*

I think that sometimes gets lost, because they only see that as a skill that you learn when you're older but if you start younger and really kind of hone into that, then I think that would

help them as adults. Then who knows, that could help with the crime rate, because a lot of it does happen out of instant anger, because there is no self-regulation there. I'm angry, I want this; I'm going to go steal this car. So a lot of that I think could have changed if they understand how they felt as they were younger, and then they also had the appropriate outlets, like Boy's and Girl's Clubs, if they're into music or art, there is always some sort of outlet. But if those are the first things that you're cutting, you're kind of putting them in this bottle and you keep shaking it up and then you're surprised at the reaction.

Researcher: You're in a unique situation working here. Looking at professionalization efforts in the City of Milwaukee, what benefits and problems do you see?

Daisy: *I see just a safe place as a benefit. So for the kids, they have a place that could be very nurturing to them so whatever is going on in their home life, this is a safe base. For families, if our roles are more defined and we're taken more seriously and it's a place where they feel comfortable taking their children because they know that we know what we're doing. If early education is seen as important, then parents get why it's important for their child to be there. Not only just so that they can go to work or wherever they have to go, it's your child is learning here, this is the best option for your child.*

Most people, I'm not sure if they know, but there is such an important role between the teacher and the parent, and so the parents do see us as experts in our field, and so we do give the parents tools on what might work at home or different things to try. I think that's important, especially outside of here. Your child is very upset, are there any changes going on at home, and then they might say, 'Yeah, we're getting a divorce,' or just those different milestones that are important to address. So getting those issues out there, I think that that's a benefit, to just really call everything out for what it is and then address those problems one by one.

Daisy was referring to having teachers who understand how to facilitate this level of child learning and development as a benefit to children and families.

Researcher: What problems are there?

Daisy: *Honestly, I think it depends on the teacher, if they're there for the right reason... Who knows, that could mean less crime, because there's a lot of crime in Milwaukee as we all know. Having access to art and music can help to deal with children's emotions.*

Researcher: What it sounds like, the issue you're raising is the benefit would be increased teacher competencies that translate then into the life of that child, and then, from a societal or community perspective, we could possibly begin to see a decrease in crime over time.

Researcher: You work in an institution that is accredited, funded fairly well, and you may not have had some of the same challenges that a person in another center in 53206 may have had. I don't know if you ever have opportunity to be around teachers that are in different places, and hear some of the conversations. What problems do you hear? Do you see YoungStar as something that is helpful?

Daisy: *I see it both ways. I see it as helpful so that more childcare centers are being held accountable, and that of course helps our kids, because our kids should always be put first. But I do see it has a hindrance because if you can't do certain things within this range, then you're shut down and you're not able to work up to a 5-star level. But again, it goes right back to funding. If you don't have it, then how can you move up to a 5 star? It's a big circle and the only people I think that could help the circle stop are the policy makers, or else we're just chasing our tails pretty much.*

Researcher: What would cause you to get out of childcare, leave the field entirely?

Daisy: *Because my heart really is in it, but to make me completely get out of it, it would be not being able to take care of myself. Wages, if they get really, really low. If there are so any cutbacks to where I don't feel like I'm doing my job effectively; also, if there's no help. If I'm looking for resources and no one is paying attention to the needs that I have, that would make me question it very much.*

Respondent Fern is an African American female employed as a lead teacher for the past ten years in an accredited five-star program. She holds an Associate's degree in Early Childhood Education, has paid vacation, personal and sick days. She reports her annual wages as \$25-30,000. She describes her professional identity as a teacher/leader who is a passionate guide for children and parents to trust.

Fern chose to work in childcare during high school: *I always wanted to work with children since I was young. I am a middle child, we come from a big family and I used to always help babysit, so I knew I wanted to work with children. I went to high school and we stayed in this I classroom for 4 years and when I graduated I had my child assistant's license at the end of the graduation. I volunteered at a school that's in our community, and they hired me. I worked there for 3 years and then I came to this program and I've been here for 10 years.*

Researcher: **Childcare is working on professionalization of the field. Tell me your thoughts about these efforts.**

Fern: *My thoughts are it has come a long way. I believe YoungStar is great because they give teachers the advantage of going back to school and funding most of it. Also, they fund some of the trainings that we have. As a teacher, you must have continuing education, 25 hours per year. I think it is moving in the right direction since YoungStar has come along. It is also about the*

group of people that you work with to support you. That's a big part of it. Pushing you and keeping you up to date on all of the new things that come with this profession.

Some things happened where they closed a lot of schools and a lot of daycares, but I believe that's why YoungStar came in, so that the programs that were on the level that they needed to be, they would help them. They would give them the grants to get where they needed to be. It hasn't affected me that much. I am still able to go to school and just move forward.

The effect [of professionalization] could be either negative or positive. Having your program closed is a negative effect, even if it is positive for the kids, but it's negative, but in terms of you continuing. I would say it is a positive effect, but as I look at it nationally, some of it is negative though. But for me, for the effect on me, it has been a positive effect since YoungStar has come into effect because they have helped our program.

Researcher: Tell me 2 or 3 positive effects that this whole move has had on you.

Fern: *When Young Star came about, and before Young Star came about, I was able to go to school through T.E.A.C.H. That allowed me outside hours to get my work done and still be able to get paid the rate that I do. I am a single mother with a child, so that helps a lot.*

- *Also, it helps with the cost of education, because the grant only goes so far, and when I want to attend a more competitive school, I went to UWM just for a couple of semesters, I don't owe so much in loans because T.E.A.C.H. was there to help fund it.*
- *Also, once I received my Associate degree, I was promoted to lead teacher, and I was able to get a raise to help with the cost of living.*
- *Another positive thing is my skills have been refined since I started the profession in 2002 until now. I have a lot of experience with all different backgrounds. Working with families. I know how to communicate. I know how to just listen.*

Researcher: What would you like Wisconsin's policymakers to know?

Fern: *I would like to tell them that we have a lot of quality programs out here, but we need their help. We need their help with some of the laws. We need their help financially, to come out and to just see what we're doing. Not to think that because a couple of things have happened at some other centers and schools, but to come see for themselves what's going on. Come meet our parents. Come into our community to see what's going on so that they could help us be better, be the best.*

Researcher: What laws would you want to see changed?

Fern: *As far as for YoungStar, I don't even know if it is a law, but increase as far as the grants, increase for the teachers as far as like when we do meet certain credentials, because I believe on there, it is 3% increase, and that is kind of like the cost of living to me, so for that to go up a little bit more because a lot of things cost.*

Researcher: What benefits of professionalization do you see?

Fern: *I see benefits for better for our children that we serve, better outcomes. I see better scores on the math testing. Better training for the teachers.*

Researcher: What problems or negatives do you see?

Fern: *The people in power, if they don't agree, they kind of get the best of it. So it's their way or no way. If they don't agree totally with what most of us are saying, if they have the power to still keep it the same.*

Researcher: What would cause you to leave the field?

Fern: *If they started closing a lot of centers and schools and everybody has to be forced into the more qualified centers but then we didn't have enough bodies to go with the children.*

Fern's survey reported perceived barriers of work schedule and money: *"Learning how to balance a full-time job and duties, staying on top of school work and time for my family and my child's activities."*

Respondent Willow is an African American female employed as a lead teacher in an accredited center-based program. She has a non-ECE Bachelor's degree and is working on her Master's Degree. She reports her annual wages as \$25-30,000. She also reports health and dental insurance, paid vacation, personal and sick days. She describes her professional identity as a teacher/leader: *"I am a team player and hard worker. I am a good teacher."*

Researcher: Why did you choose to work in childcare?

Willow: *It has just something I've been doing for a long time. Honestly, I didn't choose to work in childcare. It wasn't something that I had a passion for in the beginning. It's been 13 years I've been in childcare. In the beginning I was like, okay, you're hired. I needed a job. When I got in childcare, I began to like it and I began to realize that it's not always the children's fault and the kids needed things. The kids needed good teachers and a good mentor, so I stayed in it. I went to school for my bachelor's in human service and that was because I still wanted to work with children in a different way. I've been in low-income childcare and I see our children suffering from a lot of things. They need a lot of things and attention and there's a lot of stuff going on in the house. That's what I went to school for to work with children with those issues.*

Researcher: Were you looking more at working in the foster care segment in the beginning?

Willow: *I was looking more into everything. Children that are coming out of the system, parents in the system and don't have anybody. It's just something where a lot of people say they're bad, and I'm like they're not bad, it's something else, there has to be something else. Always think of*

something else first. Some may just need that little attention, but there's always something else. So that is what I was looking into. I like to teach. But that's my passion.

Researcher: Looking at the efforts toward professionalization, what do you think about it?

Does it matter? Does it not matter?

Willow: *It does matter. It matters to me. I feel like what I do is a profession. I feel it should be in that group because we teach the children. We're with the children between 8-10 hours every day, Monday through Friday, the majority of the children, and we're a big part of their lives and we have a big impact on the children. They look up to us. A lot of people say we're babysitters.*

Researcher: What does that mean? I hear that a lot.

Willow: *I think it means that I'm just going to drop them off, I'll be right back, they're not really doing anything, they're just playing in the classroom. Things like that, like we play all day.*

Researcher: How do you feel when they say that?

Willow: *That's fine, because some in our classroom do play all day, but they have to understand that they learn through play. Therefore, I would give my parents things like what we learn through play, so they get a list of what we learn through play. They learn colors, numbers, shapes, opposites, rhyming, all of that stuff. That's what children do. They play until they get to a certain time and it's time to sit down and focus a little bit. I think that's what they mean. I don't think they really think they get taught in childcare, which they do.*

Researcher: If childcare becomes a profession, do you think people will see what you do differently? Do you think that that will change that babysitting perspective?

Willow: *For some people; for others, they will still feel that way until we bring them in and show them. We have to show them what we do and how we do it.*

Researcher: Looking at the statewide effort to move the field toward professionalization, what impact has it had on you as a person? How has it affected you?

Willow: *I really honestly haven't been into that. I pay attention to it and try to get all of the updates and all of that stuff, but I just really don't kind of get into that. I just do my job the best way I can and I know that I'm a professional. But as far as us being accredited and stuff, that changes things.*

Researcher: It may not have been YoungStar coming in to watch what you did, it may have been someone that was part of that whole accreditation piece and it may have been your directors coming in saying you have to change this and you have to change that. How did that affect you?

Willow: *It was for the better. It was something that had to be done in order to get to where we are, but I just feel like it's a lot of different rules we have to follow. There is YoungStar and then the State.*

Researcher: How do you feel about that?

Willow: *That's kind of irritating, because when you think you're doing something right, this side says you can't do that. So who do I follow? I'm supposed to follow both.*

Throughout the interview Willow presented as being very guarded and the researcher found it necessary to pose numerous sub-questions to gain a perspective of her thoughts on professionalization.

Researcher: When your program became accredited, what did that mean for you and how did you process that?

Willow: *It was a great feeling to know that they feel that we are good. They feel that we are good people and we did the best that we can.*

Researcher: You took it personally?

Willow: *Yes, I did.*

Researcher: It was an evaluation of your personhood?

Willow: *Correct.*

Researcher: Do you feel part of the field?

Willow: *No.*

In the beginning you felt valued?

Willow: *Yes. We always get praised and you're all doing a good job today, stuff like that. That's from our administrative staff. As far as from the accreditation people and all that type of stuff, it was just like another day to me, I guess. I don't know how to explain it. It's like we did it, we got the stars, we're done and what's next. I don't feel any different anymore. At first I was real happy that we did it. Somebody is always looking for a 5-star center or school or whatever, and it's good to see all different types of people trying to get in here.*

Researcher: What do you want policymakers to know?

Willow: *I would let them know, we are worth more than what they think.*

Researcher: Are you speaking about value?

Willow: *Yes.*

Researcher: When you talk about value, are you talking about your personhood? Are you talking about financial value?

Willow: *I am talking financial value.*

Researcher: So you think there isn't enough money?

Willow: *There's a lot of things that we have to do, especially when you are accredited and you are partnered with other schools. It's a lot. We do a lot.*

Researcher: Financial value is a big deal?

Willow: *It's a big deal, and I will also mention everybody needs to be on one accord, on one page as far as the rules that we have to follow. I think they need to meet with each other and be on one accord.*

Researcher: What benefits of professionalization do you see?

Willow: *I see the centers being full. I can speak for here. We have a lot of programs for the children.*

Because we are 5 stars, we are able to participate in more programs. I'm not sure if it is because of the funds, we are able to connect with other centers. Things happen here in the center in the summertime when children go out, it's a lot more to do.

Researcher: What are some of the negatives? What do you see that makes you feel like that's not quite fair?

Willow: *The pay is different. Some centers still stay full without being 5 stars, but I don't see the professionalism of the teachers are as far as them being more educated themselves. I believe by us being accredited, everybody has to have some type of degree.*

Researcher: So their center is full and they don't have education.

Willow: *Correct.*

Researcher: Programs that are 2 and 3 stars, what should they do with them? As we look at professionalization, what should they do with those programs?

Willow: *Just try to see where they want to go with this and help them try at least. Don't try to just give up on them, try to give them a chance, see where they're trying to head to, how far they're try to go and just try to give them a little hand.*

Researcher: YoungStar would say we are giving them a hand. WECA comes out, there is a technical consultant that comes out. There are in-services available.

Willow: *I've just known a lot of centers that the director isn't at the center a lot. The teachers are kind of on their own and they don't give them the resources, like you go take this class, it's free. Things like that, just to get them up on the registry. They can make a decision like 'you're all going to this class this week and you're all going next week.' They can get their teachers in there and it's not like a choice I feel. You want your center to be 5 stars, that's what you have to do. You have to make them basically. It's not your choice. Some centers are okay with a 2 or 3. I feel like they should try to get up there, and they'd probably see a difference.*

Researcher: What would cause you to leave childcare?

Willow: *Maybe just I know in my mind it's time for me to do something else. Another calling.*

Researcher: Will you stay beyond your master's degree?

Willow: *I'm not sure because we did expand to 3rd grade and nobody's the 3rd grade teacher yet. It will be once the 2nd grade moves to 3rd grade. We added 3 classrooms and we had 1st[grade] last year, so they just move up. So I'm not sure. I hear a lot of stuff about MPS, and I'm like 'do I really want to do this'? But I like it here. When we go further, we get more [incentives]. She does not hold back. We've got a lot to do. All the children have to get individual goals and we create a curriculum. We do a lot of stuff.*

Respondent Iris is an African American female who has been employed as a lead teacher for three years. She is with an accredited program rated 5 stars and has health, dental and vision insurance, paid vacation, personal and sick days. She reports her annual wages as \$20-25,000.

Researcher: Tell me why you chose to work in childcare.

Iris: *I had an Associate's degree in physical therapy. I wanted to work with children and a lot of places turned me down because I don't have any professional experience working with children. So I kind of took some of the basic classes and I entered into school for it. I felt that I needed to complete the degree for it. I'm going for my Bachelor's, so I'll be in school for 2 years because I already have my Associate's degree.*

Researcher: **The field of childcare is working on professionalization. I noticed that you are at a 5-star which tells me that you are accredited. There is a component of accreditation that addresses professionalization in the form of education, wages and benefits. What are your thoughts about professionalization of childcare?**

Iris: *I feel that we don't really have too many professional childcares out here. I feel like teachers in general don't get paid enough to work with children. I feel that to work with a child is hard work on its own, regardless if you're a mother or aunt or you're babysitting or you're actually teaching inside of a school. It's hard work and I feel that it should be on a government standpoint. These should be governmental jobs. The wages that a garbage man receives is way more than what a teacher receives. I don't think that society sees childcare teachers like school teachers, it's more like a babysitting thing. They look at it as babysitting versus actually teaching children something.*

Researcher: **How do you distinguish the two?**

Iris: *Babysitting, you just watch children. You watch them, of course you keep them safe, you nurture them, but I feel that a childcare teacher or a teacher in general, it's deeper than that. You're teaching kids, you're teaching them how to socialize and do everyday tasks so that they can be successful when they grow up versus just watching someone's kids and them dropping them off and you watch them. It's not that at all. I have aunts that are teachers so they know the*

difference and they know how hard it is to actually teach 8 toddlers, they know that. But other people don't really see it as that. They're just like, oh, you're a childcare teacher? They kind of blow it off like their job is more meaningful than mine when we actually do the same thing. I may not be teaching an 8th grader. I feel like teaching an 8th grader is way easier than teaching a 1-year-old in a sense. I just feel that we don't get the credit that we deserve as childcare teachers.

Researcher: How have efforts toward professionalization impacted you personally?

Iris: *The impact is wages for me. Like I said, I don't think teachers in general get paid enough, I always explain it as this. If I make a certain amount of money, I don't qualify for healthcare through the State or anything like that. So if I am making middle class wages or working class wages, I'm not because I have to pay all of this money for healthcare, I have to pay for my daughter's healthcare, I still have to buy food with cash. It's like everybody else on the outside looking in, like 'oh, well, you're in this bracket of income, you should be fine.' No, because I still have to pay for everything that you can get from the State. I still have to pay that, and that's a lot of money.*

Researcher: How many hours do you work a week?

Iris: *Now I work maybe 40. I was salaried, but it went down. Last month it changed, so everybody is hourly now.*

Researcher: Was that a good shift for you?

Iris: *I like the fact that we get paid every other Friday, but my wages went down, so I don't make as much as I did.*

I was already going to go back to school. Working here kind of pushed me to go back to school, but I already had planned to, so it was all in the process of just doing it.

Researcher: How do you see yourself as a person working in childcare? Do you consider yourself a professional? What do you consider yourself as?

Iris: I do consider myself a professional. I may not follow by the book per se, I know a lot of teachers that go strictly by what they learned in school and they just do that. It's hard for me to do that, I'm all over the place. I feel like I'm more on the child's level, because I can sit, even though they don't really talk to me verbally, I can sit and talk to them or ask them what it is that they may need, and I do get off track but I also feel that that is part of being professional, because when you're working with children, you have to be on their level. You have to figure out what they need, not how you want something to go. I'm that fun-loving teacher. If anything I'm always there for the child. Some parents, I don't think in this environment they really get it. I used to wear an afro so I think that kind of scared a lot of parents, but the kids love it. They liked to touch my hair. I feel like that's a lesson in its own, we all have different hair. We don't have to be scared of my afro. I think in this environment, some parents don't really understand me and sometimes I do think it's an ethnicity issue and how I express who I am.

Researcher: What do you want policymakers to know?

Iris: Being a childcare teacher is hard work; it's not easy at all. For one, we do need to be compensated for that hard work, and we need to be recognized, and I feel like the resources need to be available to us. Some of the classes we take are \$100 and something. This is something that is never going to end. You're going to always need teachers; you're going to always need childcare providers. Why not make that available for us?

Researcher: With the whole idea of professionalization and childcare gaining recognition as a profession, what benefits do you see?

Iris: *Us being recognized as teachers versus a babysitter. We need that. That really needs to be separate.*

Researcher: **What problems might develop?**

Iris: *I do feel that opening a childcare is easy. Anyone can open a childcare and at the rate it's going, there are going to be childcares everywhere, and no one in the childcare center that is professional enough to teach a child anything. I have run into those types of centers too.*

Researcher: **So you think it's going to be a problem with them meeting standards of professionalization?**

Iris: *Yes. It's more of a money thing. I know that you can take a couple of classes that qualify you to be able to open a home center or a group center, you don't need many. I think that professionalization would change that. I feel that if you went to school for it and you paid your money for it and you feel that you can do it, then who am I to stop you from that? But if you really don't like to work with children and you have no desire to teach them anything and you just want to open up a childcare center for the money, then I don't see why you should qualify for that. In the whole field of education, they don't get paid enough. Funding is a really big problem. I see that in public schools now. They always need money for something when I feel like the government in itself should be able to fund these schools. I noticed a lot of education programs are cut out due to funding, and I don't feel like that's fair because we need those classes, our children need those type of activities.*

Researcher: **What would cause you to leave the field?**

Iris: *I'm not sure. I love this field. It would only be the struggle of surviving outside of work as far as financial. That's the only issue that I have, but I know I can make a difference in these*

kids' lives, in any kids' lives. I feel that being a minority teacher parents are kind of iffy. I have to deal with stereotypes.

Babysitting and childcare teacher are two different things. Childcare teachers, I feel like they are underfunded, and some people do look at them as not really being teachers. We're important. This stage of life is very important, and you want your kids to be handled by people who are going to make a difference; something that they can take along with them. Like I said, they're sponges at this age, this is the perfect age to teach them everything, so you want your child learning something from someone, the right thing.

Respondent Lily is a white female employed as a lead teacher at a five-star accredited center-based program.

She has health, dental, paid vacation, personal and sick days. Lily has a Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education, a CDA certification and at least one Early Childhood Education professional credential. She has worked in childcare more than thirty years. She reports her annual salary at \$10-15,000.

Researcher: Why did you choose to work in childcare?

Lily: My love for children; I helped with my siblings at home and have always enjoyed working with children.

Researcher: The field of childcare is working on professionalization of the field; tell me your thoughts about these efforts? How has it affected you?

Lily: *Professionalization has changed my way of thinking. I no longer use swings. At first I was upset by this but as I took courses I developed a different viewpoint of this. It helped me to learn better ways of teaching. We are a learning center. Our focus is on school readiness. We discuss issues of bullying and our parents and students see us as teachers.*

Researcher: How do you see yourself as a professional working in childcare?

Lily: *I am a teacher, leader, grandma.*

Researcher: Name one thing you want policymakers to know about professionalization of teachers in childcare settings?

Lily: *We need more support, more financial support. Children's learning can help to address some of the societal issues we are facing. We need access to better teachers. We need the same respect as "regular" teachers.*

Researcher: What benefits do you see with childcare moving toward professionalization as a field?

Lily: *Children can get quality care, meals, fresh air programming, curriculum, etc., better background checks. Teacher professionalism helps improve overall teacher behavior and increase teacher competency. Childcare needs support. I'm not sure that education makes a difference. Compassion and caring are key characteristics that teachers need. Education is not a top priority. Professionalization should require a degree. Children under age 5 need a safe, educational facility.*

Researcher: What problem do you see with childcare moving toward professionalization as a field?

Lily: *I don't really see any downfalls. Centers might be closed that shouldn't be.*

Researcher: What would cause you to leave the field?

Lily: *I don't see myself leaving childcare unless I had a significant health issue.*

Respondent Peony is an African American female employed as an assistant teacher at a center-based program for the past two years. She is currently working toward her Bachelor's

degree in another field and does not plan to remain in childcare. She has health and dental insurance, paid vacation, personal and sick days.

Researcher: Why you choose to work in childcare?

Peony: *As far as being in childcare, I have younger siblings that I used to take care of as well as family members who I used to babysit while they went to work and stuff. I really enjoyed working with my brothers and my sisters, teaching them as they grew up, I am the oldest of 3. I really didn't know what I was getting into at first, because I was kind of hired in a weird way previous to this. So I came in, I was kind of just thrown into the process. I wasn't given the adequate training that I thought I would be given.*

Researcher: The field of childcare is working on professionalization of the field; tell me your thoughts about these efforts. How has it affected you?

Peony: *Because based on the curriculum that we are giving, it is like a professional setting, you do have to take it serious. I guess I would say yes because how serious the curriculum is taken and how serious they hold us accountable for our classrooms being classroom ready at all times.*

Researcher: What does classroom ready mean?

Peony: *It means you're doing your curriculum; it's being displayed. The parents should be able to walk into your classroom and tell what's being learned, what the theme is for this week. They should be able to look around and see pictures of their children engaged in these activities or work that their children have done based on the curriculum that we are doing. If they don't see that, I guess your classroom would not be considered classroom ready. When tours come in, they should be tour ready. They should be able to come into your classroom and say if we ask them, what do you think we're learning about for the next 2 weeks, if they can't look around your*

classroom and say, oh you're learning about the solar system, then your room is not screaming the theme as it should be. That's taken very serious here.

Researcher: What effect has this movement toward professionalization had on you?

Peony: *It has opened my eyes to things what my sister has been experiencing in her childcare that she is no longer in. I feel like if people are paying their money for their kids to go here, they should be learning. It should always be about learning. Learning doesn't have to be strictly boring or journals and writing and bookwork. You can make it fun. There are certain activities that you have to use to draw the kids in to make learning fun, which actually makes it easier for them to learn. So I guess the impact that it has had on me was to look for things like that. To understand where a center should be and where they should be going if they're in that professionalism of childcare. I think a lot of people just consider childcare as, oh, we're just babysitting until you get off work or we're just babysitting until you pick up, when it should be more than that.*

Researcher: What is babysitting?

Peony: *Babysitting just watching the child, making sure they're fed, making sure they're safe and don't get hurt until the parents get off. It's basically being lazy. Like when I get my sister and babysit on the weekends, we're just chilling. We ain't doing colors and stuff on the weekends. Sometimes we'll do it, but you know, sometimes I'll work on it with her from time to time, but if it's on the weekend and it's my off day and she comes over and we're playing, we're going somewhere, I'm just watching her until Dad picks up or something. That's what I consider babysitting, but when it's here, it's a totally different story.*

Researcher: How do you see yourself as a professional working in childcare?

Peony: *I see myself as a leader. I see myself as someone who is motivating them to do better. I see myself as a teacher who is teaching them things that they need to know or teaching them new concepts that they can use in life. It's kind of like how I feel when my professors are teaching me at UWM. They're teaching me stuff that I need in order to go further in life. The things that they're getting taught in there, for the most part, is stuff that they can use in school. It's stuff that they can use as they go further in life.*

Researcher: **Name one thing you want policymakers to know regarding professionalization of teachers in childcare settings.**

Peony: *I would definitely want them to know and understand the importance of childcare first and foremost. I would want them to know, if they're funding childcare, they should have a guideline or something, like this is what you should be doing, this is what you need to have. I don't think centers that just sit around and watch movies all day, that funding, who is it helping? I don't think that everyone gets paid enough. An increase in funding could help our playgrounds, can help our buildings, it could help our curriculum, so I guess that all ties into it.*

Researcher: **What benefits do you see in childcare moving in that direction? What's good about it? Then I'm going to ask you what are you concerned about, what could go wrong?**

Peony: *Moving it to a profession could be good. It's just the quality of the center, the quality of what's being done in the centers. So moving it to a professional, I think everything will be taken more serious. I think curriculum should be in every childcare center or they should be doing some type of learning activities with the kids throughout the day. Just saying that itself makes it sound like this is something serious, it's not a joke, it's not a game, you're not just coming here to be lazy. But sometimes when people hear the word childcare, they think, oh, I'm just going to watch kids all day. Personally, that's what I thought. That's what I've seen, that's what I've been*

used to seeing. This was an eye opener to me, like okay, it's way more to what I've experienced. So having it go that route, I think it's good for the children as well, because they're our future, they're the ones who need to be learning stuff out of the curriculum, instead of just watching movies or just going outside to play. That's all fun, but that can be incorporated throughout the day.

Researcher: What are you concerned about?

Peony: *I guess how they're going to do it. How are you going to make sure each center is doing what they're supposed to do? How are you going to evaluate the curriculum and make sure it's the right curriculum for the right age group? How are you going to go about choosing your teachers and make sure they're qualified to work here?*

Researcher: So you favor education for teachers?

Peony: *Yes. From my experience, you should definitely be educated and you should definitely know what you're doing.*

Researcher: How much education should they have?

Peony: *They should definitely have a high school diploma, because we did have someone here without that. They should have some type of childcare courses or, like here, the courses should be offered for them to take and have a deadline of when they can complete it.*

Researcher: Do they need college?

Peony: *Not if they're taking the courses in the center I would say. Because the childcare courses in the center are childcare courses you can take in college, but you just don't have to pay for them.*

Researcher: How much education should a lead teacher have?

Peony: *I think they should have the minimum and then maybe some college experience is always a plus. They should definitely have experience of working in the classroom, whether they started as an assistant teacher and moved up, because that's what a lot of teachers do, they start as an assistant teacher, take the courses that are necessary and eventually they move up.*

It was clear to the researcher that Peony was unaware of the regulatory standards for childcare teachers. The researcher attributed these factors to the inexperience of the respondent in the field and to the fact that she does not plan to remain in childcare.

Respondent Linaria is an African American female employed as a lead teacher in a center-based program rated four stars for the past three years. She reports her annual wages as \$30-35,000, has health insurance, and a 401K. She has some college credits toward her Associate's degree in Early Childhood Education but has not been able to complete her program due to not having funding or scholarship.

Researcher: How long have you been in childcare?

Linaria: *Overall, I've been doing childcare for about 17 years. I started doing childcare when I had my first child, who is 18 now, but this setting right here, I've been in that position for 3 years, but overall with this employer, I've been here for 6 years.*

Researcher: Why did you choose childcare?

Linaria: *It was my first child and I just didn't feel comfortable sending my child to a childcare setting. So after I had my first child, then I started doing childcare.*

Researcher: You started working in childcare because your child was at the center that you worked for?

Linaria: *I was actually working in a restaurant, and after I had my baby and everything, I needed to find a childcare center for her. It was my only child and I was living on my own, it was*

hard for me to let her go, I guess. It was hard for me to leave her there, because I didn't know the workers, I didn't know the people at the daycare center, so I applied and I was hired and I ended up doing childcare.

Researcher: At the same center where your child was?

Linaria: *Yes.*

Researcher: The field of childcare is working on professionalization of the field? Tell me your thoughts about these efforts. How has it affected you?

Linaria: *I think it's something really nice. I would love to see that. Right now, for instance, since I'm in the Head Start program, sometimes parents think it's just a daycare center, and I'm like, no, I'm not a daycare. So it's a difference between daycare and Head Start. I'm pretty much for it.*

I can see the progression of the kids when I teach them something, or it's time for me to transition to different places. It's something new to some of them, but I see what I work so hard to put into them. I want to see the outcome of my class. It's so different from the daycares I used to work at. The paperwork and the curriculum that we used, it's totally different from Head Start. So the curriculum that we use in Head Start is more in depth or is something really new and fresh to me.

Researcher: Looking at professionalization, how has it affected you?

Linaria: *I have kids that attend, not this campus, but the other campus, and I guess I can say that since I'm a teacher that works in the school setting and I have children here, I want to say they assume that your kids are supposed to be all professional too. I guess I'm saying this the right way. Me being a teacher here, I guess they expect so much out of my kids because I'm a teacher here, and I was a parent before I was a teacher here. So sometimes that doesn't always*

work, because if it has something to do with my kid's academics, and if I feel like something is unfair, then I can try to be professional.

Researcher: You've raised some very good points, and we'll come back to that. It all will make sense after I ask a couple of more questions. Give me some descriptions of how you see yourself as a professional working in childcare, or do you not?

Linaria: *I do see myself as a professional. You have to continue to get knowledge in certain things that you want to do and go forward. The reason I consider myself as a professional is because I've been working in a childcare setting for over a decade and me constantly going to school and getting more knowledge. I'm going to school for my associate's degree. So me going to school and getting outside help in college or courses being offered here or at the main campus, I try to get that knowledge, because things change over years. I'm trying to stay where everything else is at. I don't want to be lost and be like, oh, this is new, so that's why I consider I'm a professional because I'm constantly gaining knowledge in what I like to do. I am a teacher. I am a professional. I work so hard. I want to see it with the kids that I work with. I want to see everything that I worked so hard and gained so much knowledge [about]. I want to put it up in my classroom and I want to see the outcome of everything that I've worked so hard to do. We're not babysitters.*

Researcher: What does that mean?

Linaria: *From my experience, some parents just come in and drop the babies off and sometimes the parents are it's just like a daycare or it's just like a babysitting job. No, it's none of that.*

Researcher: So what is babysitting?

Linaria: *You can do that at the house. I can go to your house and babysit, but when you bring your child to a center, there's much more that comes with that. Like the feeding that the parent is not able to because the parent has a job.*

Researcher: **Name one thing you want policymakers to know about professionalization of teachers in childcare settings?**

Linaria: *I have 15 credits left for my associate's degree. I'm a full-time mom, I have 5 kids, and I have a full-time job, so I'm not able to go to school full time. Being that I have a full-time job and am a full-time mother and then to go to school full time, it's very overwhelming. It's overwhelming for me when I go to school half time or only take 6 credits. But now with the financial aid, I'm out of financial aid because an Associate's degree is supposed to be 2 years. Mine has been lingering on for about 3 years because I'm taking 6 credits here or maybe 9 credits, only because I can't take 12 and 15. Chances are I'll have to go down to the campus and I still have 3 younger kids that are under 7 that I have to make sure are well fed and taken care of. By the time I get out of school, it's probably time for them to lie down. I just feel like they need to understand, if a student is a full-time single parent and has a full-time job because she's a single parent that needs to do what she has to do to take care of her family. I just feel like the financial aid money is not there. Sometimes we can't finish our Associate's degree in 2 years, only because of what we have to take care of outside of school. So if they can understand that it's not enough financial aid and sometimes it makes you want to stop. I've made it so far here I'm not about to quit, but where am I getting my financial aid money to pay for the classes I have left? Then that's loans, and I can't afford loans.*

Researcher: **What benefits do you see?**

Linaria: *Babies are being born all the time. It might be single parents that have to get up and go running back to work after the child makes a certain age. We have to get up and we have to go back out there and do what we have to do, so yes, childcare centers are very important because babies are being born every day and we have a lot of single parents out here, we have a lot of 2-parent households, but childcare centers need to be here.*

Researcher: What problems do you see?

Linaria: *Sometimes they'll go to the teacher, the main person or the head person that they feel like is running the class; they'll go to them versus coming to me.*

Researcher: You want to be respected?

Linaria: *Yes.*

Researcher: What would cause you to leave the field?

Linaria: *Probably sick. I've been doing it for so long, this is where God wants me to be. I tried to get out of it plenty of times, filled out other applications, but childcare called me back.*

Respondent Jasmine, an African American female, has worked in childcare for seventeen years. She is currently employed as an assistant teacher in a center-based program rated four stars and meets only the minimal education requirements.

Researcher: Why did you choose to work in childcare?

Jasmine: *I didn't choose childcare; childcare chose me. I was fresh out of high school and I was home with my mom and she had 7 of my sister's kids, so she and I took care of them. She enrolled them at Next Door Foundation. At that time they did in-home visits one week and then they went to the center the next week. With me being at home, I volunteered to go to the center with them and found that it was something that I liked, and the director there pulled me in and asked me to*

volunteer, and then from there I was hired on as a nutritionist which didn't last long because then she put me in the class and put me forth into the childcare classes.

Researcher: The field of childcare is working on professionalization of the field; tell me your thoughts about these efforts? How has it affected you?

Jasmine: *I personally feel that it's a good thing. One of the reasons that I am in the field is definitely not for the money. We do not get paid a lot of money. I'm in this ministry because I was at a place where I felt I had run my course with childcare, and then I came to here and I saw something different. I felt something different when I entered the building. One reason is I love the ministry here. I love the fact that if I'm having a bad day, we can have a prayer session right in the middle of the hallway or right in the classroom and that feeds my soul. Another reason is our babies are hurting, and for them to have a place where they can come and be comfortable and the families know that their child is in a safe, protected place with the bonus of being educated about our Lord and Savior. Not only just that but the academic parts of that follows along in the classroom, it's just not a babysitting job.*

Researcher: What do you mean by that? Everybody uses that term.

Jasmine: *Teaching our families responsibility. Teaching our families that it's just not a place where you can just drop your kid off and they just sit around and they just learn, and I'm sitting in the chair and the kids are doing whatever they want to do.*

Researcher: That's babysitting?

Jasmine: *That's babysitting when you're sitting and you're doing nothing, and the children are just doing whatever they choose to do. We're teaching routines, we're teaching them consistency, we're teaching our parents and our babies how to be independent and how to be responsible. I*

love that we get them early, because they're sponges and they soak up so much and they help me stay on my toes.

Researcher: So you think age 3 is an important age?

Jasmine: *I think age 3 is a very important age. They learn a lot. There are people out there that say they can't do that; yes, they can do that. I had a 3-year-old who was reading by the time he left K3. He's excelled so far... Another thing that I love about the field that I'm in is I build relationships with my families. Once they leave K3, that's not the end of it. This is my 5th year here. I'm still in contact with the families that I met when their babies were in K3... I love that personal relationship, that positive relationship that we build with our families and they know that they can come to me and I'm going to help them as much as I can and if I can't help them, I will find somebody who could help them, so we can provide the resources that they need. That's why I'm in the field. My kids went to K3. I was part of a quality program and I know what a program without quality is like, because I worked for a program without quality, so I know the difference between quality and non-quality.*

Researcher: So you think this whole movement toward professionalization is a positive thing?

Jasmine: *Yes, I do.*

Researcher: You think YoungStar is a positive thing?

Jasmine: *It has its pros and cons.*

Researcher: What are the pros, what are the cons?

Jasmine: *One thing about YoungStar that I do like is with the programs. YoungStar is making the programs be at their best. They're held accountable for the things that they're doing in their center. They have to be a center of quality. It's not just you dropping your child off and that's just it. Bad things are happening in daycares. Kids are being abused. So with YoungStar, they know*

and they see, like we have to meet this quality in order for us to be open, because if not, we're going to get shut down. So I like the rules that are in place. Some of the downfall is, when you come in for 1 day, you really don't get the feel for our program. When you come in to give us our star, how can you say our program is this when you've only been here a few hours? It could just be a bad day. So saying that every program is going to have a good day every day, that's just not true. We're human. We're all going to have a bad day.

Researcher: How has the movement of childcare toward professionalization affected you?

Jasmine: It's a plus and there's a negative. Because of my experience, I feel that I can be doing more, but with my education I'm stuck.

Researcher: How much education do you have?

Jasmine: *I have some college, but I haven't finished college.*

Researcher: Do you have an Associate's degree?

Jasmine: *No. I have a year left in my Associate's, which was not part of my plan, but when you're living life and things happen in your family, you have to step up and take on other responsibility which stop you from completing your goals in life. Not to say that I'm not going to finish, because my goal is to get my Bachelor's.*

Researcher: That's what I'm trying to understand. What are some of the barriers that you encounter? What are some of the things you have to factor into your decision-making process when you are considering professional development? What do you have to consider?

Jasmine: *You have to consider time; you have to consider your family, just living your life period when you have little kids at home, even though you have teenagers. I took a religion class. Right now, I have my niece who is 2 and then my nephew who is 6, they live in my household. I*

don't have custody of them, but they live in my household. I put that responsibility on my 15-year-old daughter to bathe them, to feed them, to help the first grader with his homework. Those 10 weeks I was in class, her grades dropped, and as a parent I felt horrible. I'm coming home from class at 9:00 in the evening, she's still up doing her homework at midnight. I felt horrible as a parent. I had to stop because my baby's education is just as important as mine, but hers is more important at this time. So I feel bad that I did not finish class, but as a parent, that was something I had to think about, and there's money. Trying to pay for classes. I know there is financial aid, I know there are loans, but I don't want to take out a loan and get myself further in debt than what I already am. Even though education is important. For me, those were the barriers.

Researcher: How do you see yourself as a person working in childcare? Describe your professional identity.

Jasmine: *I'm a called worker; it's just not a job, God called me here. I educate 3 year olds. In our classrooms we do academics, we work on socialization skills, we work on independence skills, we work on being responsible, taking responsibility for our own actions, we work on communication skills and we wrap it up with ministry. We minister to our 3 year olds.*

Researcher: Do you find that you are limited in terms of opportunities?

Jasmine: *Yes, because of education.*

Researcher: Is that a frustration sometimes?

Jasmine: *Yes, because I know I can do more and even though I'm not in the position, they come to me and they talk to me and they get ideas from me. They communicate with me like, 'what do you think about this or how do you do this and what do you know about that?' So I'm not in the position, but I'm still being used.*

Researcher: So do you think education matters more than experience or are they both equal?

Jasmine: *It actually depends on the person. The reason I say that is because my first and my second years here I worked with 2 wonderful people who were educationally qualified but were not experience qualified. One realized it, stepped back and let me do my thing, let me just take control of the classroom, even though she was the lead. You would have thought I was the lead in the classroom. The other one didn't do that; she didn't quite understand how our program worked. Didn't connect with our African-American kids, which was frustrating for me. So I went to my director and told her maybe K3 was not for me, and so she came in and she observed our classroom and she was like no, K3 is for you, K3 is not for the other person and they made some adjustments. I don't have the education but I have the experience to manage a classroom, and not tooting my own horn, but just listening, people give you feedback about what you do. I have a good reputation.*

Researcher: Name one thing you want policy makers to know.

Jasmine: *I would like for them to know that our job, the things that we do in our program, are just as important as if I were a brain surgeon.*

Researcher: So you want to be valued?

Jasmine: *Yes, ma'am. We're important. We touch lives. We save lives. We are preparing our babies for the future so that they can get out here in society and not just be a statistic.*

Researcher: Can you give me 2 or 3 benefits of this field becoming professional?

Jasmine:

- *I think the people in the field would think differently and give their all and perform better.*
- *The pay would be better and people would feel more appreciated. I feel that the outlook would be different.*

- *With the pay, you would be able to pay to finish your education. You'd be able to pay for training, which will help you perform better in your classroom.*

Researcher: What are 3 things on the downside?

Jasmine:

- *Not feeling appreciated.*
- *Mistreating kids.*
- *Actually just showing up to get a paycheck because you don't have the education to move forward or it's just something for you to do, it's just a paycheck.*

The stars kind of bother me. Because I know that we have a quality program and it's kind of disappointing that last year we were a 3 star. Now we are a 4 star and we can only be a 4 star because half of our staff doesn't have an Associate's degree. Some people look at stars, but I know a program that's a 5-star, I wouldn't send my own kids there.

Researcher: What would cause you to leave the field?

Jasmine: *Money.*

Researcher: You feel like you're underpaid?

Jasmine: *Yes, definitely. With the cost of living constantly rising, our checks are not rising, our kids are getting older, we don't meet the low income standard, so we're stuck in the middle because we don't meet a lot of benefits because we make too much money, but we don't make enough money to do the things that we really need to do or we want to do. We work hard every day, and not to be able to enjoy life because you're worried about finances.*

Respondent Heather is an African American female who has worked part-time as a lead teacher for less than two years in a center-based program rated three stars. She reports her wages as

\$10,000 or less and holds a non-ECE Master's degree. Heather reports more than ten years in social services and plans to open a facility to support families and children.

Researcher: Why did you choose to work in childcare?

Heather: *Working with children has always been a passion of mine. Actually, back in 2006 is when I initially began that journey with intent to open up a childcare facility, mainly because I want to make a difference in children's lives because a lot of them are lost. They don't have the family structure that they need, and I feel that every childcare center should not just be just that, a childcare center. It should also be an educational facility for the children as well. I think that in itself, the reason why I feel that way is because me being a single mother. I had a large family, I did have support systems, but I also had friends that did not have the support system that I had trying to raise my child being a single mother. I just want to say this, my degrees are not in education; my degrees are in human services.*

Researcher: The field of childcare is working on professionalization of the field; tell me your thoughts about these efforts? How has it affected you?

Heather: *I think it needs to be enforced. With that being said, how can I expect for my child to be educated in a childcare center when they, first of all, don't acknowledge it as a school, they acknowledge it as a center, a safe haven for children to attend while their parents work or do other activities?*

Researcher: Where does that term come from? Safe haven. Whose description is that?

Heather: *When I was in the social services network... they facilitated a training seminar for some of the W2 case managers at one point. In terms of giving us definitions of their services, that's how they defined the childcare center, a safe haven for children in order for the parents to work or attend other activities.*

Researcher: So the issue that you're raising is a very good one, because what you're saying is that outside of this field, then agencies like social services don't see these types of institutions as a school, they see them as a place, a safe haven, a safe environment, and in that terminology, are you saying that because of the use of this term, then the implications are there is no expectation of education?

Heather: *There are misconceptions about what a childcare center, the type of services a childcare center should be providing children. Like I mentioned earlier, I always felt it was about education. Even though it is a safe haven in their definition of what a childcare should be, by use of their definition of what a childcare center offers, even though it does offer a safe place for the children, the children should still be continue to be taught. Whether it's hygiene, discipline, in whatever area, they should still be taught. I guess I was under the interpretation when they come to the center, you're supposed to help them with their homework. Well, if you're not educated enough in order to add and subtract, how can you teach a child how to add and subtract?*

Researcher: Talk to me a little about the ways in which this national move, and now this State-wide/City-wide move has impacted you.

Heather: *When they're talking about all of these different issues with education and all the stipulations that they're putting on these children's educational journey, especially in the urban areas, they're cheating us, they're cheating the children. There's always libraries. There's always a teacher that cares.*

Researcher: Tell me how they're cheating us. Is it because professionalization requires that we have more education? Are you saying there isn't enough trickledown effect into the

classroom and we're just going through the dynamics of getting pieces of paper without the knowledge?

Heather: *How can you expect for a teacher to teach a classroom full of children at the number of 35 or 36? She's not going to be able to pay attention to all of those children, because she doesn't have a teacher's aide. She has 35 students that she has to teach. That's 35 different personalities. How can she effectively teach all of those children that base curriculum on a day-to-day operation? How can she do that?*

Researcher: Speak to that in a childcare setting.

Heather: *Same difference. How can they effectively pay attention to 35 students in one class? I'm just throwing a number out there. How can you keep your eye on 20 students in one class and there's only 1 teacher? How can you keep control of that child if you don't have the support from the parent or you don't have the support from your superior or you don't have the support of the owner?*

Researcher: How do you see yourself? Describe who you are in the context of childcare.

Heather: *Motivated. Compassionate. Educator.*

Researcher: What do you want policymakers to know?

Heather: *Our children are our future. Educators, lawyers, doctors, politicians. We as adults have to pave the way for them. Make sure that we are their foundation, the seed that's planted in the earth waiting for them to nourish it. What we need is more life into our educational systems for these kids.*

Researcher: What does that look like?

Heather: *More avenues, more funding, more support systems, more teachers, more educated teachers, staff members, more passionate caregivers period, in general. I would also try to*

encourage them to have a little bit more focus on the urban areas more so than the suburban areas. Find other resources.

Researcher: Do you feel like these types of programs have the care from the policy makers as other institutions like the public school system? Do you think that they regard the importance of funding for childcare programs as much as they advocate funding for K-8?

Heather: *No. That should get them in the proper perspective of, even though you are putting these requirements on this individual to have this level of education attainment, yet their value is not compensated. I would take that to them. But where would the money come from? You're expecting me to pay this person \$14 an hour, but you're only paying me \$106 per child and you require me to have this person here in my facility?*

Researcher: Finally, what would cause you to leave the field? Why would you leave?

Heather: *If I lose the passion. If I don't have the passion to continue on this journey, educating, supporting, providing for our youth, there is no amount of money that would make me want to stay. I wouldn't be able to do it. My moral compass wouldn't allow me to.*

Respondent Silene is an African American female employed as lead teacher in a center-based program rated three stars. She previously owned a family program but has been away from the field for some time. Silene holds college credits and certification in building maintenance and service. She reports her annual salary as \$15-20,000. She has paid vacation.

Researcher: Why did you choose to work in childcare?

Silene: I chose childcare, because I love children. I was taking care of children, I had my own in-house daycare 17 years ago, so I decided to pick back up and go back into the field.

Researcher: The field of childcare is working on professionalization of the field; tell me your thoughts about these efforts? How has it affected you?

Silene: *I think it should be considered as a profession because it's a lot of work and a lot of responsibility that comes along with being a childcare provider. You take on a lot of roles that a parent would do at home, but you're taking it on here because the parent works so you have to pick up where they are, just keep their kids so they can learn, keep their education going, because they don't have time. So I think it is a profession because you're doing a lot.*

Researcher: **How has it affected you?**

Silene: *It really hasn't affected me, but it teaches me to keep getting knowledge and learn what they require you to do as a childcare provider/teacher. You've got to continue to get education as well so you can learn to teach the children and what they require of us as lead teachers.*

Researcher: **How do you see yourself as a professional working in childcare? Do you consider yourself as a professional or do you consider yourself something else?**

Silene: *I look at myself as being a professional by what I'm doing and how I conduct myself with the children as well as communicating with the parents.*

Researcher: **Name one thing you would like policymakers to know?**

Silene: *As far as the pay rate, they can increase that because being in this field, it really does not pay enough to meet where you're trying to go. I think they can give a little raise in the area for childcare because I think that if they really sit in the classroom in a childcare, they would see what you really have to go through dealing with children, not only with their attitude, but the behavior too. There is a lot that comes along with it.*

Researcher: **What benefits of professionalization do you see?**

Silene: *It's a great advantage now dealing with kids because kids are a blessing, they're so intrigued to learn, and then it's us putting out more time, giving out more time with the children to help them. So to me that makes me look good, that makes me feel confidence in what I do.*

Researcher: The outcomes for children, is what you're talking about?

Silene: *Yes. The outcome of children, seeing them growing and succeeding in life.*

Researcher: So you feel like all of the competencies, all of the things they want you to do, in the end, it's for the benefit of the children?

Silene: *Yes.*

Researcher: So what negatives do you see? What do you see that you're, like, you know what, they're making us do all of this, but I'm concerned about this.

Silene: *The only negative I see is what we might teach the children here and they go home, they don't come back with the same thing. You can tell when a child has been away for so long, their behavior or their learning ability changes. I think it's like more parents need to get involved.*

Researcher: So you're concerned that parents won't be involved with their kids if childcare becomes a profession?

Silene: *I kind of think so, because they expect so much from the profession of childcare to do more work.*

Researcher: So you think then they're going to do less because you have to do more?

Silene: *I feel so, because now we hear, 'why my kids not learning this?' But parents have to teach their children as well as we teach them.*

Researcher: Have you started thinking yet about continuing education in childcare?

Silene: *Yes, I was thinking about taking early childhood education at MATC to get involved.*

Researcher: When you're thinking about that, what kind of things go into your decision-making process? What do you have to consider? Can you just make the decision and it's just done? If you decide you want to go, that's just it? Or are there some other factors?

Are there factors like time, transportation, small children, money? What are the factors that you have to consider?

Silene: *I don't have any young children; my children are grown. I think more so it's the time of being able to go to school and work at the same time. So it's like time management.*

Researcher: Funding is not an issue for you?

Silene: *No, because they help you with grants and stuff, so that wouldn't be too much of an issue.*

Researcher: What would cause you to leave childcare?

Silene: *The only thing that would probably cause me to leave childcare is being burnt out.*

Researcher: How does that happen?

Silene: *To me it would be that I'm doing so much and not being too much appreciated and after a while you just get tired.*

Researcher: So you're talking about appreciation. I call it value, which is the same thing.

What does value look like to you? What would need to happen for you to feel appreciated or to feel valued? What would that look like?

Silene: *To me, telling me that I'm doing a great job and not always looking at the negative things when you come in but look at the positive side of things. In every work field, everybody would like to be appreciated for what they do, especially if you're really trying your best and giving it your all.*

Researcher: So it's important to you that the people that you work for affirm you and acknowledge the good efforts and not always just look at what you didn't do.

Silene: *Exactly. I think being a childcare provider is for the community, to help parents out here. We go beyond our means to do what we need to do to help their children. And I think this is a field that needs a lot of work.*

Researcher: What kind of work?

Silene: *Parents being involved with the children. We don't babysit, we teach their kids. We do activities with their kids. We teach their kids the ABCs, how to count, all of these different types of things that they don't have time for and they need to know that we're not a babysitter but almost like a second parent to their children.*

Researcher: What is a babysitter? It's funny, because everybody that I have interviewed has said that.

Silene: *A babysitter is a person that sits down and tells your 'kid just go over there and sit down and watch TV.' Not doing nothing with your children. We do things. We do activities with them. We feed them. We give them love. Some kids might not get that love. We give them love, they like to be held, they like to be hugged, we do all those types of things. I feel that they need to see that it's more to what they think childcare is. They don't know because they come in and drop their kids off and they go. They don't sit in; they don't come and get involved with what their kid is doing or what their children are learning. Then they take the kids and go and then they come back. There's more to that.*

Researcher: In context of what you do, how would you describe yourself? Would you tell me you are a childcare provider? Would you tell me that you are a teacher? Would you tell me you're a leader? What would you tell me that you were?

Silene: *I would say I'm a childcare provider.*

Researcher: What's the difference between that and a teacher?

Silene: *Because we're providing all of the things that a child needs, and a teacher to me is you're teaching all children. I think being a childcare provider, to me, is like you're giving out more.*

You're spending more time; you're just being one-on-one with that child. A teacher to me, you got to deal with all of the kids.

Respondent Aster (final interview) is an African American female who is employed as a floater-teacher in a center-based program rated three stars. She does not meet the minimal educational requirements. Her GED was attained at a non-accredited school, and she is currently working on getting her GED. Aster has worked in childcare for eight years. Aster was not originally scheduled for an interview. She volunteered for the interview when the scheduled employee did not report for work.

Researcher: Why you choose to work in childcare?

Aster: *I chose to work in childcare because when I got pregnant with my oldest daughter, I used to watch my nieces and nephews, I was like, oh, I think I want to do childcare. So when I was pregnant, I asked my W2 worker, 'Can I take some classes?' and I got into classes. Since then I've been doing it, because I love children.*

Researcher: The field of childcare is working on professionalization of the field; tell me your thoughts about these efforts? How has it affected you?

Aster: *If you want to do the right thing, you want to say the right things; you have to go take the actions to do it. Like me, I wanted to be in childcare, I had to go through the process of going to school, have to go through the process of going through the training to better myself as being a good caretaker for the kids in my care. Therefore, that makes me better at what I'm doing. You have to have the tolerance, the patience to work with kids.*

Researcher: So professionalization actually helps because you're then pushed back into education and the education helps you to build the capacity to do the work?

Aster: *Yes.*

Researcher: Why does that matter?

Aster: That matters because if you're going to go get the education, then you'll know how to deal with kids.

Researcher: How have the efforts toward professionalization affected you?

Aster: The good part about YoungStar is I know it helped build the facility [program] that you're in and also build the staff up. We have to go to class to get more education. We have to do what we have to do to be around and provide good care for these kids.

Researcher: Do you describe yourself more as a teacher, as a caregiver, what do you describe yourself as?

Aster: I describe myself as a leader. I'm not going to say babysitter, because I don't babysit.

Researcher: What does that mean?

Aster: I don't just watch kids, I teach them. I motivate them. I'll be on the floor with them and do stuff with them. Even in the summertime, my kids used to say, 'Oh, is Miss Aster working tonight? We're going outside, we're going to the play yard, we're going to have some fun.' They can't say that about every teacher.

Researcher: If I'm looking at coming into childcare, and you want me to understand the 3 most important skills that I'm going to need, what am I going to need?

Aster: Education.

Researcher: How much do you need?

Aster: You really don't need that much to work in childcare.

Researcher: How much do you think people need?

Aster: *More than one class. You have to have the education, the patience and the desire to want to do this. That's my opinion. If you don't have the desire, the patience or the education, you're just coming here for the money, it's not going to work.*

Researcher: **What is one thing you want policymakers to know?**

Aster: *I would like to let them know how great and excellent daycare is. I would also like to let them know we need a lot more good daycares to be expanded. Pay could go up a little bit. If we need to go to school for GED programs, they can help out a little bit, financial help. Going to school, going back to college, I know they have some funding for that, [but some of us] need extra. The only thing our paychecks are going to is paying rent or paying for meals. We need help like any others. Some teachers, their problem is they can't come to work because of transportation. Help us with transportation. We really want to be there. We need more education, we need more experience, because me being in 8 years, I need more experience because by needing more experience, I know I can do better.*

We do have a voice in this, even though we don't get heard. We don't get heard; teachers don't have any say. If we have a lot of say so because we're the ones working with these kids and they all need to help us out by doing something better. Because us being teachers, I feel like if you have an opinion, you have to keep it to yourself. If you have something to say, you have to keep it to yourself, and I'm tired of holding my words. It's hurtful when we can't express ourselves, we can't say what we need to say. Not what we want to say, what we need to say. And if we are professionals, we know it ain't going to matter, but it should matter. It should be a fact that teachers have the right to say something, because we're the ones with the kids. You can see like with directors, they don't have to be with the kids.

Researcher: What benefits do you see coming out of all of this? With YoungStar coming in, what do you see as a benefit?

Aster: YoungStar coming in I feel is a good benefit, because their laws or things are being enforced when nobody really go and do what they're supposed to be doing. If they say we have to have a certain criteria to meet the standards for a 5-star or a 6-star, we got to meet the criteria. If you can't meet the criteria, just because you want to be in childcare that don't mean you're going to be in childcare or working in a facility. It's good they're enforcing and putting on teachers that we need certain limits at a certain time. That makes us motivated to do what we have to do. If we have the passion and the love for these kids, that will make us go do it.

Researcher: What's the negative?

Aster: People don't always have transportation, and sometimes it's hard for them to get rides to go to the classes. If you have a good boss at the daycare that you're working for, they're going to make sure you get there, because they want to make sure their stars go up.

Researcher: What would cause you to leave childcare?

Aster: If I get to the point that I can't handle it no more.

Researcher: Stress?

Aster: Yes, if I can't handle it that would make me stop to go to school to do something else.

Appendix C Refined Mailing List including Star Rating

NAME	ADDRESS	CITY	STAR	ZIP
Acelero Learning – Cudahy	5885 S Packard Ave	Milwaukee	5	53110
Acelero Learning - Cudahy Extension	5809 S Packard Ave	Milwaukee	5	53110
Gard N Angel Child Care Ltd	4925 S Packard Ave	Milwaukee	4	53110
St John Child Day Care And Dev Ctr	4850 S Lake Dr.	Milwaukee	4	53110
Kindercare Learning Ctr. - Loomis	5230 W Loomis Rd	Greendale	5	53129
Park's Edge Preschool Inc.	10627 W Forest Home Ave	Hales Corners	5	53130
Kindercare Learning Ctr.	6350 S 108Th St	Franklin	5	53132
Academy Of Integrity	3900 W Ryan Rd	Franklin	3	53132
Discovery Days Child Care Inc	9758 S Airways Ct	Franklin	3	53132
Faith Academy Child Dev Center	7700 W Faith Dr	Franklin	3	53132
Mrs. Rikki's Structured Daycare Inc.	11224 W Forest Home Ave	Franklin	3	53132
Ebenezer Cc Centers Inc. Forest Hill	220 W Forest Hill Ave	Oak Creek	5	53154
Kids N' Care Ltd	6901 S 20Th St	Oak Creek	5	53154
Kindercare Learning Ctr.-Howell	7677 S Howell Ave	Oak Creek	5	53154
Learning Edge Childcare And Preschool	100 W Marquette Ave	Oak Creek	5	53154
Matc Oak Creek Campus Children's Ctr.	6665 S Howell Ave	Oak Creek	5	53154
Children Of America Oak Creek	8870 S Mayhew Dr	Oak Creek	4	53154
Creative Explorers Learning Center	8630 S Shepard Ave	Oak Creek	4	53154
Early Childhood Educational Ctr. Llc	10479 S Chicago Rd	Oak Creek	3	53154
Grace Lutheran Ecc And Preschool	3381 E Puetz Rd	Oak Creek	3	53154
Salvation Army Children's University	8853 S Howell Ave	Oak Creek	3	53154
Kindercare Learning Ctr. - College	1801 College Ave	S. Milwaukee	5	53172
Divine Mercy Early Childhood Center	695 College Ave	S. Milwaukee	4	53172
Franciscan Villa Child Day Center	3601 S Chicago Ave	S. Milwaukee	4	53172
Mary Linsmeier School - Chicago Ave	2979 S Chicago Ave	S. Milwaukee	3	53172
Renaissance Child Dev Ctr-Marshall	1306 N Marshall St	Milwaukee	3	53202
Ebenezer Child Care Center St Paul	340 W Saint Paul Ave	Milwaukee	5	53203
Guadalupe Headstart Center South	239 W Washington St	Milwaukee	5	53204
La Causa Early Education And Care Ctr.	809 W Greenfield Ave	Milwaukee	5	53204
St. Anthony Preschool And Daycare	1644 S 9Th St	Milwaukee	5	53204
United Community Center Day Care	1028 S 9Th St	Milwaukee	5	53204
De Colores Day Care Center	1732 S Muskego Ave	Milwaukee	4	53204
Rayitos De Esperanza Cc Center Llc	1762 S Muskego Ave	Milwaukee	4	53204
A Promise Of Hope Academy Llc	2220 W National Ave	Milwaukee	3	53204
Guarding Your Angels Inc.	1436 W Mitchell St	Milwaukee	3	53204
Open Hands Child Development Center	1818 W National Ave	Milwaukee	3	53204
Reading Rainbow Academy	2439 W Mitchell St	Milwaukee	5	53204
Open Hands Cdc North Llc	2300 W North Ave	Milwaukee	3	53205
St Ann Ctr. Intergenerational Care	2450 W North Ave	Milwaukee	3	53205
Superstar Child Care Services Llc	1862 W Fond Du Lac Ave	Milwaukee	3	53205
Teach Early Childhood Center	1710 N 24Th St	Milwaukee	3	53205
The Treehouse Enrichment Center	1726 W Lloyd St	Milwaukee	3	53205

Young Minds Creative Academy	2200 N 12Th St	Milwaukee	3	53205
Steps To Success Child Dev Center	2212 N 12Th St	Milwaukee	3	53205
Young Achiever Learning Center	1218 W Walnut St	Milwaukee	2	53205
A Cupful Of Love Child Care Llc	1654 W Hopkins St	Milwaukee	3	53206
Brighter Horizons Learning Academy	3319 N 24Th St	Milwaukee	3	53206
Coa Burke Early Education Center	2320 W Burleigh St	Milwaukee	3	53206
Hadley Child Care & Learning Center	2434 W Hadley St	Milwaukee	3	53206
Kingdom Kidz Educare Academy Llc	1618 W Keefe Ave	Milwaukee	3	53206
Leadership Literacy And Technology Dev Ctr Llc	907 W Atkinson Ave	Milwaukee	3	53206
Mrm Child Enrichment Center	1530 W Center St	Milwaukee	3	53206
V I P Child Care Services Llc	2301 W Capitol Dr	Milwaukee	3	53206
Victorious Child Care	1373 W Center St	Milwaukee	3	53206
A2z Bizzy Feet Academy	2850 N Teutonia Ave	Milwaukee	2	53206
Heaven's Tot Lot Llc	2400 W Capitol Dr # 2404	Milwaukee	2	53206
Just A Touch Of Love Child Dc Llc	1026 W Atkinson Ave	Milwaukee	2	53206
Today's Future Tomorrow's Leaders Ccc	936 W Center St	Milwaukee	2	53206
Vision Kids Academy Inc.	2836 N Teutonia Ave	Milwaukee	3	53206
Young Achievers Academy Inc.	2809 N Teutonia Ave	Milwaukee	2	53206
St Ann Ctr - Intergenerational Care	2801 E Morgan Ave	Milwaukee	4	53207
Children's Edu Care-Bayview	3200 S Herman St	Milwaukee	3	53207
Prince Of Peace Day Care Center	4419 S Howell Ave	Milwaukee	2	53207
Jo's Early Learning Academy	4801 W North Ave	Milwaukee	5	53208
Neighborhood House Of Milwaukee	2819 W Richardson Pl	Milwaukee	5	53208
Armani Learning Center Llc	4517 W North Ave	Milwaukee	3	53208
Children's Knowledge Learning Ctr.	3424 W North Ave	Milwaukee	3	53208
Children's Pantry Fam Resource Ctr.	3130 W Lisbon Ave	Milwaukee	3	53208
Highland Educational Academy	4212 W Highland Blvd	Milwaukee	3	53208
Hilltop Academy	827 N 34Th St	Milwaukee	3	53208
Kid-Tastic Child Care Llc	3030 W Highland Blvd	Milwaukee	3	53208
Living Well Academy Llc	2901 W North Ave	Milwaukee	3	53208
The Growing Tree Children's Center	3940 W Lisbon Ave	Milwaukee	3	53208
Best Experience Child Care	4702 W Vliet St	Milwaukee	2	53208
Honey's Child Care	2939 W Kilbourn Ave	Milwaukee	2	53208
Kids Palace Academy Phase Ii Llc	4429 W North Ave	Milwaukee	2	53208
Kingsway Child Development Ctr. Llc	3624 W North Ave	Milwaukee	3	53208
Milwaukee Buckaroos	3529 W Vliet St	Milwaukee	2	53208
Safe Haven Child Dev Center Llc	4419 W North Ave	Milwaukee	2	53208
Superior Learning Academy	2814 W Lisbon Ave	Milwaukee	2	53208
Two Plus 2 Equals Fish Cc Dev Ctr.	2101 N 48Th St	Milwaukee	2	53208
Acelero Learning - Green Tree	3744 W Green Tree Rd	Milwaukee	5	53209
Acelero Learning - Teutonia	5719 N Teutonia Ave	Milwaukee	5	53209
Glendale Heights	2315 W Good Hope Rd	Glendale	5	53209
Loving Shepherd Early Childhood	3909 W Clinton Ave	Milwaukee	4	53209
North Shore Prsc And Child Care Llc	7703 N Green Bay Ave	Glendale	4	53209
About Our Kidz Dev And Lrng Ctr Llc	6125 N Teutonia Ave	Milwaukee	3	53209

Atonement Early Childhood Center	4536 N Sherman Blvd	Milwaukee	3	53209
Carter's Christian Edu Center Inc.	2717 W Atkinson Ave # 21	Milwaukee	3	53209
Deborah T Washington Lrng Ctr. Llc	3002 W Silver Spring Dr	Milwaukee	3	53209
Future Investment Childcare Llc	6207 N Teutonia Ave Ste M	Milwaukee	3	53209
God's Anointed Ones Cc Dev Ctr. Llc	3311 W Villard Ave	Milwaukee	3	53209
Growing Minds Child Development Ctr.	2812 W Fairmount Ave	Milwaukee	3	53209
JCC Childcare Ctr. Of The Arts Llc	5244 N 35Th St	Milwaukee	2	53209
Lc Academy Child Dev Center Llc	6900 N 43Rd St	Milwaukee	3	53209
Lit'l Scholars Day Care	3320 W Wren Ave	Milwaukee	3	53209
Lucille's Learning Center Llc	3820 W Florist Ave	Milwaukee	3	53209
Miracles Safe Haven Development Llc	5117 N 32Nd St	Milwaukee	3	53209
Tomorrow's Future Academy Llc	4730 N Teutonia Ave	Milwaukee	3	53209
Amazing Faces Childcare Center	3727 W Villard Ave	Milwaukee	2	53209
Brilliant Minds Child Dev Ctr. Inc.	4075 N Teutonia Ave	Milwaukee	2	53209
First Start Learning Academy Llc	3622 W Silver Spring Dr	Milwaukee	2	53209
Firstborn Learning Center	4960 N 18Th St	Milwaukee	2	53209
House Of Angels Cc Learn Ctr. Llc	5250 N 35Th St	Milwaukee	2	53209
Johnson Preschool And Lrng Ctr. Llc	6005 N Teutonia Ave	Milwaukee	2	53209
Kids Are Smart	4065 N 25Th St	Milwaukee	2	53209
Kids R Just Kids Phase	4678 N 40Th St	Milwaukee	2	53209
Kings & Queens World Child Dev. Center	5204 N 36Th St	Milwaukee	2	53209
Little Tikes Early Learning Center	4145 N Green Bay Ave	Milwaukee	3	53209
Reach One Teach One As They Grow	4502 N Teutonia Ave	Milwaukee	2	53209
The Jungle Gym Childcare Center	2809 W Atkinson Ave	Milwaukee	2	53209
Helwig Fam Ctr. Early Childhood Headstart	2545 N 29Th St	Milwaukee	5	53210
Teddy Bear Child Care Llc	5140 W Lisbon Ave	Milwaukee	5	53210
Cady's Kids Child Care Inc.	6825 W Burleigh St	Milwaukee	3	53210
Creative Children Of Milwaukee Llc	3632 W Burleigh St	Milwaukee	3	53210
Crystal's Creative Minds Lrng Ctr.	4900 W Burleigh St	Milwaukee	3	53210
Dreamland Child Care 2	4715 W Center St	Milwaukee	3	53210
Fantastic Beginnings Campus Cc	4322 W Center St	Milwaukee	3	53210
Grisby's Child Dev Ctr Site 3	5301 W Burleigh St	Milwaukee	3	53210
Grisby's Child Dev Ctr Site 4	5455 W Burleigh St	Milwaukee	3	53210
Hadley Child Care And Lrng Ctr.	5520 W Burleigh St	Milwaukee	3	53210
Harvest Learning Center Llc	5932 W Appleton Ave # 36	Milwaukee	3	53210
Heartland Child Development Ctr. Llc	5836 W Appleton Ave	Milwaukee	3	53210
Lisbon Learning Center	6610 W Lisbon Ave	Milwaukee	3	53210
Mother Of Good Counsel Congregation	3001 N 68Th St	Milwaukee	3	53210
Rocka-Bye-Baby Cc & Lrng Academy	5219 W Center St #25	Milwaukee	3	53210
St Catherine Day Care Center	2647 N 51 St St	Milwaukee	3	53210
Stepping Milestones Lrng Academy	5312 W Burleigh St	Milwaukee	3	53210
Tippi Toes Childcare Center	3812 W Burleigh St	Milwaukee	3	53210
United Child Care Llc	5806 W Burleigh St	Milwaukee	3	53210
A Purposeful Life Childcare Ctr. Llc	7205 W Burleigh St	Milwaukee	2	53210
Brenda's Learning Center 2	5512 W Center St	Milwaukee	2	53210

Hopson's Kiddie Kare Llc	4300 W Burleigh St	Milwaukee	2	53210
Learn Through Love	6333 W Burleigh St	Milwaukee	2	53210
Mini Miracles Learning Center Llc	2707 N 54Th St	Milwaukee	2	53210
Mommy Dearest Children Center Llc	4006 W Burleigh St	Milwaukee	2	53210
Small Steps Learning Academy	5814 W Burleigh St	Milwaukee	2	53210
The Nurturing Nook Generations	2330 N Prospect Ave	Milwaukee	5	53211
UWM Children's Learning Center	2025 E Newport Ave	Milwaukee	5	53211
Coa Child Care Center	909 E Garfield Ave	Milwaukee	5	53212
Malaika Early Learning Center	125 W Auer Ave	Milwaukee	5	53212
Next Door Headstart - Ow Holmes	2463 N Buffum St	Milwaukee	5	53212
The Nurturing Nook	575 W River Woods Pkwy	Milwaukee	5	53212
St Marcus Child Care	243 E Center St	Milwaukee	4	53212
All My Children Lrng Academy Llc	2979 N Palmer St	Milwaukee	3	53212
Auntie Fe Fe's Child Dev Center	3567 N Dr Martin Luther King Dr	Milwaukee	3	53212
Brighter Horizons Learning Academy	2044 N Dr Martin Luther King Dr	Milwaukee	3	53212
C And C Child Development Center	413 E North Ave	Milwaukee	3	53212
Four Seasons Early Lrng Center Inc	2803 N Dr Martin Luther King Dr	Milwaukee	3	53212
Kids R Kids Childcare Inc	2661 N Dr Martin Luther King Dr	Milwaukee	3	53212
Kidz It Iz Child Care Center	2378 N Dr Martin Luther King Dr	Milwaukee	3	53212
Lifeways Early Childhood Center	3224 N Gordon Pl	Milwaukee	3	53212
Lil Dinks And Bubbles Lrng Academy	531 E Burleigh St	Milwaukee	3	53212
Mt Zion Child Development Center	2207 N 2Nd St	Milwaukee	3	53212
New Horizon Daycare Center	4200 N Holton St	Milwaukee	3	53212
Pricillas Child Care Dev Ctr Inc.	1934 N Dr Martin Luther King Dr	Milwaukee	3	53212
Pristine Child Care Center	1850 N Dr Martin Luther King Dr	Milwaukee	3	53212
The Learning Spot Child Care Center	130 W Keefe Ave	Milwaukee	3	53212
Tomorrow's Future Early Chldhd Ctr Inc.	1451 N 6Th St.	Milwaukee	3	53212
Hopson's Kiddie Kare	323 E Garfield Ave	Milwaukee	2	53212
Johnson Preschool And Lrng Ctr Llc	3444 N Port Washington Rd	Milwaukee	2	53212
Little Leaders Learning Academy	832 E Meinecke Ave	Milwaukee	2	53212
Super Kidz Daycare	140 W Garfield Ave	Milwaukee	2	53212
We Are One Child Care	2925 N Holton St # 27	Milwaukee	2	53212
Grandma's House Day Care Ctr Vliet	6119 W Vliet St	Milwaukee	5	53213
Lutheran Home Children's Center	7500 W North Ave	Milwaukee	5	53213
Wauwatosa Day Care And Learning Ctr	822 Glenview Ave	Wauwatosa	5	53213
Kid Tech Inc	118 N 76Th St	Wauwatosa	3	53213
Kce Champions Llc At Wilson	1060 Glenview Ave	Wauwatosa	2	53213
Wauwatosa Day Care And Learning Ctr10	2166 N 68Th St	Wauwatosa	2	53213
Wauwatosa Dc And Learning Ctr.	1741 N Wauwatosa Ave	Wauwatosa	2	53213

Wauwatosa Dc And Lrng Ctr-Maple Ter	6927 Maple Ter	Wauwatosa	2	53213
Matc West Allis Campus Children's Ct	865 S 72Nd St	West Allis	5	53214
Come Learn With Me	9716 W Greenfield Ave	West Allis	3	53214
Divine Love Child Care Llc	1700 S 60Th St	Milwaukee	3	53214
Little Starr's Childcare	1575 S 81St St	West Allis	3	53214
Tangie's Just Like Mommy Ccc	1627 S 44Th St	Milwaukee	3	53214
Wa Community Child Care Llc	6682 W Greenfield Ave Ste 105	West Allis	3	53214
Wa Community Child Care Llc	1126 S 70Th St Ste 112-1	West Allis	3	53214
Alverno Early Learning Center	3401 S 39Th St	Milwaukee	5	53215
Ebenezer Cc Centers St Jude Annex	1501 S Layton Blvd - Rm 134	Milwaukee	5	53215
Guadalupe Headstart Center Jo's	3027 W Greenfield Ave - Rm 101	Milwaukee	5	53215
Guadalupe Headstart Murguia	1645 S 36Th St	Milwaukee	5	53215
St Joseph Academy Inc	1600 W Oklahoma Ave	Milwaukee	5	53215
Dcsc Baird Child Dev Ctr	2210 W Becher St	Milwaukee	3	53215
Dreamland Child Care	3115 W Burnham St	Milwaukee	3	53215
Guarding Your Angels Inc	3147 S 16Th St	Milwaukee	3	53215
Guarding Your Angels Inc	2340 S 6Th St	Milwaukee	3	53215
Happy Days Day Care Center Llc	3001 S 13Th St	Milwaukee	3	53215
Happy Days Day Care Ctr Llc 2	1202 W Oklahoma Ave	Milwaukee	3	53215
Lily Pad Childcare Llc	3327 W National Ave	Milwaukee	3	53215
Stepping Stones Academy Llc	1801 W Becher St	Milwaukee	3	53215
Three Sisters Child Care	2842 W Forest Home Ave	Milwaukee	3	53215
Aurora Tiny Town Day Care Center	2920 W Dakota St	Milwaukee	2	53215
Jo's Early Learning Academy	3027 W Greenfield Ave	Milwaukee	5	53215
Tendercare Christian Child Care Center	5229 W Capitol Dr	Milwaukee	5	53216
All Walks Of Life Cc Center Inc	4335 N 35Th St	Milwaukee	3	53216
Angelic Care Child Care Ctr Llc	4040 W Fond Du Lac Ave	Milwaukee	3	53216
Blessed Savior Early Chld Ctr South	4059 N 64Th St	Milwaukee	3	53216
Dcsc Parklawn Child Development Ctr	4310 N 46Th St	Milwaukee	3	53216
Grandma Ethel's Childcare Lrng Ctr	4127 W Nash St	Milwaukee	3	53216
Heaven's Playground Child Care	4221 N 35Th St	Milwaukee	3	53216
International Learning Center	4434 W Capitol Dr	Milwaukee	2	53216
Most Precious Journee Day Care	4248 W Fond Du Lac Ave	Milwaukee	3	53216
Nana's Cozy Corner Inc	4006 N 42Nd St # 4012	Milwaukee	3	53216
Next Door Head Start	5310 W Capitol Dr	Milwaukee	3	53216
Nurturing Nature Child Care Llc	4313 W Fond Du Lac Ave	Milwaukee	3	53216
Ruby's Precious Ltl Angel Lng Ac Llc	4335 W Fond Du Lac Ave	Milwaukee	3	53216
Sallie's Loveland Phase	4032 N 39Th St	Milwaukee	3	53216
San's Sandbox Child Dev Ctr Llc	7261 W Appleton Ave	Milwaukee	3	53216
Sheila's Shining Star Learning Ctr	3380 N 35Th St	Milwaukee	3	53216
Tiny Tots Learning Center Inc	3700 N 27Th St	Milwaukee	3	53216
Beautiful Beginnings Child Care Llc	4122 W Fond Du Lac Ave	Milwaukee	2	53216
Grow With Us Learning Station	3526 W Capitol Dr	Milwaukee	2	53216
My Little Dreamers Cc Center Llc	4036 N 51St Blvd	Milwaukee	2	53216

Royal Palace Child Dev Center	4840 W Fond Du Lac Ave	Milwaukee	2	53216
Sallie's Loveland	4031 N 38Th St	Milwaukee	2	53216
The Children's Palace Lrng Ctr Phase	7365 W Appleton Ave	Milwaukee	2	53216
The Nurturing Nook River Point	8647 N Port Washington Rd	Fox Point	5	53217
Gan Ami Beginnings Prschl Kndrgt	6255 N Santa Monica Blvd	Whitefish Bay	4	53217
Carpenters Shop Christian Day Care	819 E Silver Spring Dr	Whitefish Bay	3	53217
Sima's Loving Day Care Center	6846 N Santa Monica Blvd	Fox Point	2	53217
Jewish Beginnings-Lubavitch Preschool	6401 N Santa Monica Blvd	Milwaukee	5	53217
St Francis Children's Center	6700 N Port Washington Rd	Glendale	5	53217
Elaine Schreiber Child Dev Ctr	5460 N 64Th St	Milwaukee	4	53218
Roberson's Kiddie Lane Day Care	6260 N 76Th St	Milwaukee	4	53218
A Dream Come True Prschl And Ccc	5613 W Hampton Ave	Milwaukee	3	53218
A Passion For Kids Llc	7526 W Fond Du Lac Ave	Milwaukee	3	53218
A Promise Of Hope	5226 W Hampton Ave	Milwaukee	3	53218
Adams Learning And Development Ctr	7625 W Mill Rd	Milwaukee	3	53218
Baby Steps Day Care Inc	7605 W Florist Ave	Milwaukee	4	53218
Baby Steps Day Care	5959 N 76Th St	Milwaukee	3	53218
Blessed Savior Early Childhood Ctr	5140 N 55Th St	Milwaukee	3	53218
Children's Knowledge Lrng Ctr	6140 N 60Th St	Milwaukee	3	53218
Destiny's Child Christian Academy Llc	7412 W Villard Ave	Milwaukee	3	53218
Guided Steps Child Development Ctr	6342 W Fond Du Lac Ave	Milwaukee	3	53218
Kinder Korner Academy Ii Llc	6003 W Villard Ave	Milwaukee	3	53218
Learning Through Technology	7633 W Fond Du Lac Ave	Milwaukee	3	53218
Little Leaders Academy Llc	5833 W Silver Spring Dr	Milwaukee	3	53218
Odlci Inc Db a Open Doors Lrng Ctr	8301 W Silver Spring Dr	Milwaukee	3	53218
Only God Can Children's Academy Inc	7626 W Florist Ave	Milwaukee	3	53218
Precious Blessings Learning Center	6915 W Fond Du Lac Ave	Milwaukee	3	53218
Tina N Tots Children Academy Llc	7968 W Appleton Ave	Milwaukee	3	53218
Whitley's Family Child Dev Ctr	6245 W Fond Du Lac Ave	Milwaukee	3	53218
Blessed Savior Early Childhood North	5501 N 68Th St	Milwaukee	3	53218
Coral Bells Learning Center Llc	7418 W Hampton Ave	Milwaukee	2	53218
Four Hearts Child Care Ctr Llc	7110 W Fond Du Lac Ave	Milwaukee	2	53218
Freedom Learning Daycare	4701 N 76Th St Ste 100-200	Milwaukee	2	53218
Gods Glory Infinity Love Child Care	7021 W Medford Ave	Milwaukee	2	53218
Kids R Just Kids Child Care	5301 W Villard Ave	Milwaukee	2	53218
Kids R Kreative Lrng Center Llc	5219 W Villard Ave	Milwaukee	2	53218
Let The Children Come Lrng Acad Llc	4700 N 76Th St	Milwaukee	2	53218
Little Camp Congress	5225 W Lincoln Creek Dr	Milwaukee	3	53218
Our Little Love Bugs Daycare	5225 W Mill Rd	Milwaukee	2	53218
Simply Kids Cdc	4851 N 76Th St	Milwaukee	2	53218
Kindercare Learning Ctr	2374 S 61St St	West Allis	5	53219
First Class Child Care Llc	7625 W Becher St	West Allis	4	53219
Tangies Just Like Mommy Cc Ctr Llc	7330 W Lincoln Ave	West Allis	2	53219
Kids N' Care Ltd	7424 W Forest Home Ave	Greenfield	5	53220
Lil Einstein's Academy Of Excellence	6161 W Forest Home Ave	Milwaukee	3	53220
Trini-Dad's Child Development Ctr Llc	4161 S 76Th St	Greenfield	3	53220

Kindercare Learning Ctr	4854 S 27Th St	Milwaukee	5	53221
Bright Rainbow Child Care	3340 W Loomis Rd	Greenfield	3	53221
Children's World	1908 W Layton Ave	Milwaukee	3	53221
Crescent Learning Center	801 W Layton Ave	Milwaukee	3	53221
Layton Avenue Llc / Rainbow Academy	1209 W Layton Ave	Milwaukee	3	53221
Our Fathers Luth Early Ch Dev Ctr	6021 S Honey Creek Dr	Greenfield	3	53221
Our Fathers Luth Early Ch Dev Ctr	6025 S 27Th St	Greenfield	3	53221
Future Generation Childcare Llc	5949 S 27Th St	Greenfield	2	53221
Acelero Learning – Capitol	7833 W Capitol Dr	Milwaukee	5	53222
L And M Links Child Development Ctr	7935 W Burleigh St	Milwaukee	4	53222
Ashley's Multicultural Cc Center	9111 W Lisbon Ave	Milwaukee	3	53222
Bright Beginnings Children Center	4248 N 76Th St	Milwaukee	3	53222
Kids Are Smart - Intelligence Inc	8500 W Capitol Dr	Milwaukee	3	53222
Kids Land Learning Center	7918 W Capitol Dr	Milwaukee	3	53222
L And M Links	3942 N 76Th St	Milwaukee	3	53222
Love Laugh & Learn Dc Llc-Capitol	8028 W Capitol Dr	Milwaukee	3	53222
New Creations Preschool Plus	8731 W Burleigh St	Milwaukee	3	53222
The Children's Place Lrng Center Llc	3401 N 76Th St.	Milwaukee	3	53222
The Graham Cracker Child Care Ctr	4240 N 78Th St	Milwaukee	3	53222
Covenant Early Childhood Center	8121 W Hope Ave	Milwaukee	2	53222
Klc DbA Champions - Center	11600 W Center St	Milwaukee	2	53222
Learning Links	3778 N 82Nd St	Milwaukee	2	53222
Shanannygans Ccc Of Milw Llc	8320 W Lisbon Ave	Milwaukee	2	53222
Kindercare Learning Ctr	8750 N 51St St	Milwaukee	5	53223
Kindercare Learning Ctr	6835 N 76Th St	Milwaukee	5	53223
Acelero Learning - Eternal Learning	7901 N 66Th St	Milwaukee	5	53223
All Walks Of Life Cc Llc	7000 W Good Hope Rd	Milwaukee	3	53223
Angel Care	5736 W Brown Deer Rd	Milwaukee	3	53223
Dreamland Child Care 1	9171 N 76Th St	Milwaukee	3	53223
Falling Into Loving Arms Cc Preschool	7945 N 76Th St	Milwaukee	3	53223
Hearts And Minds Childcare Llc	5051 W Bradley Rd	Milwaukee	3	53223
Inspiring Minds Child Dev Ctr Inc	4815 W Bradley Rd	Milwaukee	3	53223
Precious Minds And Memories Cc Llc	6900 N 76Th St	Milwaukee	3	53223
Spirit Life Creative Christian Cc	9455 N 76Th St	Milwaukee	3	53223
Woods Family Child Care Llc	5600 W Brown Deer Rd - Ste G4	Milwaukee	2	53223
Kindercare Learning Ctr. - Park Pl	10715 W Park Pl	Milwaukee	5	53224
New Testament Church Childcare	10201 W Bradley Rd	Milwaukee	3	53224
Yours And Mine Learning Academy	8842 N Swan Rd	Milwaukee	3	53224
Amazing Grace Quality Childcare	8615 W Brown Deer Rd	Milwaukee	2	53224
A Joyful Noise Childcare Llc	9700 W Appleton Ave	Milwaukee	3	53225
Amazing Grace Cc Christian Academy	10050 W Appleton Ave	Milwaukee	3	53225
Jordan Early Childhood Academy Llc	5364C N Lovers Lane Rd	Milwaukee	3	53225
Lynne's Precious Moments	5629 N 91St St	Milwaukee	3	53225
Early Steps Child Development Center Llc	9135 W Silver Spring Dr	Milwaukee	2	53225
God's Kidz R Us	8711B W Fond Du Lac Ave	Milwaukee	2	53225

Little Hidden Treasures Learning Center	9818 W Sheridan Ave	Milwaukee	2	53225
Wauwatosa Day Care And Lrng Ctr	9925 W Glendale Ave	Wauwatosa	2	53225
Ebenezer Child Care Center Prime	10701 W Research Dr	Wauwatosa	5	53226
Grandma's House Day Care Ctr	11401 W Watertown Plank	Wauwatosa	5	53226
Watertown	Rd			
Wauwatosa Day Care And Learning Ctr.1	11132 W Potter Rd	Wauwatosa	5	53226
Wauwatosa Day Care And Learning Ctr	530 N 103rd St	Wauwatosa	5	53226
Wauwatosa Dc & Lrng Ctr - Christ King	2646 N Swan Blvd	Wauwatosa	5	53226
Bright Horizons At Watertown Plank	8624 W Watertown Plank	Wauwatosa	3	53226
	Rd			
Just Right Childcare And Learn Ctr	346 N 121St St	Wauwatosa	2	53226
Wauwatosa Day Care And Learning Center	12121 W North Ave	Wauwatosa	2	53226
Wauwatosa Day Care And Lrng Ctr	2435 N 89Th St	Wauwatosa	2	53226
All About Learning West Allis	2360 S 106Th St	West Allis	5	53227
Kindercare Learning Ctr - Forest Home	8650 W Forest Home Ave	Greenfield	5	53228
Matc-Milw Campus Child Care Center	1130 N 8Th St	Milwaukee	5	53233
Penfield Children's Center Inc	833 N 26Th St	Milwaukee	5	53233
Marquette University Child Care Ctr	500 N 19Th St	Milwaukee	4	53233
A Promising Future Early Education Center Llc	2430 W Wells St	Milwaukee	2	53233
Kindercare Learning Ctr	4692 S Whitnall Ave	St. Francis	5	53235

Appendix D
Cover Letter and Survey

Venner J. Alston, MS
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Educational Policy Studies
vjalston@uwm.edu
1-732-825-7866

Dear Directors and Teachers:

You are invited to participate in a research study that will attempt to understand the experiences of childcare teachers and directors in Milwaukee. The survey is being offered to all assistant teachers, lead teachers, and directors who work in a group childcare program rated two, three, four or five stars by YoungStar in the city of Milwaukee.

All comments will be kept confidential and will be used to study trends and perceptions of the entire group, not individually. Finally, your participation will help to inform future professional development opportunities for childcare teachers.

Your comments cannot be included in the study unless your consent is given. Please review, sign and date the enclosed consent form.

Please copy and share this survey with your teaching staff. Please note that participation in the survey is voluntary. Employees who do not wish to participate may opt out. Responses will not be used against either the employee or program.

A stamped and addressed envelope has been provided to you to return all surveys to the researcher. Two-weeks have been allotted for timely return of the survey. Surveys submitted after two-weeks will not be included in the study.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this important research study.

Sincerely,

Venner J. Alston, MS
UW-Milwaukee

Venner J. Alston, MS
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Educational Policy Studies
vjalston@uwm.edu
1-732-825-7866

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. Your comments will not be used against you or your program.

Section I:

1. Gender

☐ Male ☐ Female

2. Ethnicity

☐ White ☐ Black ☐ Hispanic/Latino ☐ Asian ☐ Multi-Ethnic

3. Age

☐ 18-25 ☐ 26-33 ☐ 34-41 ☐ 42-49 ☐ 50-57 ☐ 58-65 ☐ 66 or over

Section II

4. Education

☐ High School/GED ☐ College Credits ☐ Associate Degree ☐ Bachelor

Degree ☐ Master Degree ☐ ED.D/PhD

5. Are your degree or college credits in Early Childhood Education? ☐ Yes ☐ No

6. Are you currently enrolled in one of the credential programs? ☐ Yes ☐ No

7. Have you earned one or more of the Early Childhood Education Credentials? ☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ Administration ☐ Leadership ☐ Program Development ☐ Family Childcare

☐ Infant/Toddler ☐ Preschool ☐ After School Age ☐ Exceptional Needs

Section III

Employment

8. What is your current position? ☐ Assistant Teacher ☐ Lead Teacher ☐ Director

_____ Administrator _____ Other (Please specify) _____

9. How many years **total** experience do you have as assistant teacher, lead teacher, director or administrator? _____ Less than 2 years _____ 2-5 years _____ 5-10 years _____ 10 years or more

10. Are you registered with The Registry of Wisconsin? _____ Yes _____ No _____ Level

Section IV

11. Annual Wages

_____ \$10,000 or less _____ \$10,001-14,999 _____ \$15,000-20,000 _____ \$20,001-
25,000 _____ \$25,001-30,000 _____ \$30,001-35,000 _____ \$35,001-40,000 _____ \$40,001-
45,000 _____ \$45,000-50,000 _____ \$50,001 or higher

Section V

12. Benefits (check all that apply)

_____ Health Insurance _____ Dental Insurance _____ Vision Insurance
_____ 401K _____ Paid Vacation _____ Personal Days _____ Paid Sick Days

13. Do you receive employer support for the T.E.A. C. H. Scholarship Program or similar program?

_____ Yes _____ No

Section VI

Focus Group Participation

As part of this study, a 2-hour focus group will be conducted to discuss issues of childcare professionalization. We are interested in your opinions and comments. Please note that a maximum of 12 volunteers will be selected. Would you be willing to volunteer?

14. _____ Yes _____ No

We will require your name, current phone number and e-mail address. This information will **ONLY** be used to notify you of the day/time that the focus group will be conducted.

Name: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Section VII

One-on-one Interviews

As part of this study, one-on-one interviews will be conducted. Interviews will take approximately 90-minutes. Interview participants will be limited to African American females currently working in licensed group childcare programs and rated by YoungStar as two, three, four or five stars. To ensure privacy and confidentiality, interviews will be conducted in a private room. The identity of the respondents will be kept confidential; a pseudonym will be assigned to you to ensure that your identity is not known. Your contact information will be used **ONLY** for the purpose of contacting you to schedule the interview.

I am willing to participate in a confidential one-on-one interview. ____ Yes ____ No

Name: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Email: _____

How long have you been employed as a teacher?

Volunteers will be notified within 2-weeks of receipt of your survey.

Please read and complete the following questions.

VIII. Questions

The central research question that this study aims to answer is: “How do African American women employed in early childhood education settings perceive the meaning of professionalization?”

For the purpose of this current study, professionalization in the childcare workforce is defined as teacher education evidenced by obtaining a degree in early childhood education, continued professional development in the field, and a commitment to a certain code of ethics.

1. How do you describe yourself as a professional, i.e., your professional identity?

☐ Employee only ☐ Babysitter ☐ Teacher Leader ☐ Other (Please explain) I describe myself as _____

2. What perceived barriers might exist which prevent you from participating in continuing education?

☐ Time ☐ Money ☐ Personal Childcare Issues ☐ Work Schedule
☐ Other (Please explain) _____

3. What is your perception of the link between their educational level, quality programming and improvement of students’ educational outcomes?

☐ I don’t know ☐ Experience is more effective than education ☐ Education matters

4. What your perception of Wisconsin’s Youngstar Quality Rating Improvement System with its focus on professionalization?

☐ I don’t think it makes a difference ☐ YoungStar is a great benefit

☐ I don’t have an opinion ☐ Other (please explain)

5. How is the meaning of professionalization communicated to staff and families within your program?

_____ Parent Handbook _____ Interaction with children and parents _____ Other (please explain. _____

Thank you for participating in this important study.

Appendix E Disclosure Statement

University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee Consent to Participate in Focus Group Research

Study Title: African American Women Working As Childcare Directors and Teachers in Milwaukee: Construction of Professional Identity

Person Responsible for Research: Study Description: The purpose of this research study is to examine how African American directors and teachers in center-based childcare programs describe and understand themselves as professionals. Approximately three hundred subjects will participate in this study. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in a focus group. A focus group is a discussion with a group of people about a certain topic. In this focus group you will be asked to discuss/share your experiences about how you perceive the meaning of professionalization, what perceived barriers might exist which prevent or impede you from participating in continuing education, and how the meaning of professionalization is communicated within your program. This will take approximately 60-90 minutes of your time and the focus group discussion will be audio recorded.

Risks / Benefits: Risks that you may experience from participating are considered minimal. There may be some questions that make you uncomfortable and you can feel free not to answer those questions. With focus groups there is always the risk that someone in the group will share your responses with others who were not in the group. In order to minimize this risk please do not share anything you do not want others to know.

There are no costs for participating. Benefits of participating include providing valuable information that can help to inform professional development programs, expand teachers' knowledge base, give teachers access to increased wages and benefits, include teachers in efforts toward change in the field and help to more effectively prepare children for kindergarten.

Confidentiality: Due to the group nature of the focus group, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. During the focus group your name not be used. A pseudonym will be assigned to you that will prevent your identity from being disclosed. You are encouraged to not disclose your personal information including your name. Your responses will be treated as confidential and any use of your name and or identifying information about anyone else will be removed during the transcription process so that the transcript of our conversation is de-identified. All study results will be reported without identifying information so that no one viewing the results will ever be able to match you with your responses. Direct quotes may be used in publications or presentations. Data from this study will be saved in a password file in a non-network computer in a locked room in the researcher's personal for five years. Only the researcher will have access to your information. However, the Institutional Review Board at UW-Milwaukee or appropriate federal agencies like the Office for Human Research Protections may review this study's records. Audio recordings will be destroyed after five years.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part in this study, or if you decide to take part, you can change your mind later and withdraw from the study. You are free to not answer any questions or withdraw at any time. Your decision will not change any present or future relationships with the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. There are no known alternatives to participating in this study.

Who do I contact for questions about the study: For more information about the study or study procedures, contact Venner J. Alston at vjalston@uwm.edu

Who do I contact for questions about my rights or complaints towards my treatment as a research subject? Contact the UWM IRB at 414-229-3173 or irbinfo@uwm.edu.

Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must be 18 years of age or older. By signing the consent form, you are giving your consent to voluntarily participate in this research project.

Printed Name of Subject/Legally Authorized Representative

Signature of Subject/Legally Authorized Representative

Date

University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee
Consent to Participate in Interview Research

Study Title: African American Women Working As Childcare Directors and Teachers in Milwaukee: Construction of Professional Identity

Person Responsible for Research: Gary Williams, PhD, Venner J. Alston, MS

Study Description: The purpose of this research study is to examine how African American directors and teachers in center-based childcare programs describe and understand themselves as professionals. Approximately three hundred subjects will participate in this study. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in an interview. During this interview you will be asked questions about how you perceive the meaning of professionalization, what perceived barriers might exist which prevent or impede you from participating in continuing education, and how the meaning of professionalization is communicated within your program. This will take approximately 60-90 minutes of your time. The interview will take place in a private location and it will be audio recorded.

Risks / Benefits: Risks that you may experience from participating are considered minimal. Loss of confidentiality is a minimal risk. There are no costs for participating. Benefits of participating include providing valuable information that can help to inform professional development programs, expand teachers' knowledge base, give teachers access to increased wages and benefits, include teachers in efforts toward change in the field and help to more effectively prepare children for kindergarten.

Confidentiality: During the interview your name will not be used. Prior to the interview, a pseudonym will be assigned to you that will prevent your identity from being disclosed. Your responses will be treated as confidential and any use of your name and or identifying information about anyone else will be removed during the transcription process so that the transcript of our conversation is de-identified. All study results will be reported without identifying information so that no one viewing the results will ever be able to match you with your responses. Direct quotes may be used in publications or presentations. Data from this study will be saved in a password file in a non-network computer in a locked room in the researcher's personal for five years. Only the researcher will have access to your information. However, the Institutional Review Board at UW-Milwaukee or appropriate federal agencies like the Office for Human Research Protections may review this study's records. Audio recordings will be destroyed after five years.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part in this study, or if you decide to take part, you can change your mind later and withdraw from the study. You are free to not answer any questions or withdraw at any time. Your decision will not change any present or future relationships with the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. The no known alternatives to participating in this study include.

Who do I contact for questions about the study: For more information about the study or study procedures, contact Venner J. Alston at vjalston@uwm.edu

Who do I contact for questions about my rights or complaints towards my treatment as a research subject? Contact the UWM IRB at 414-229-3173 or irbinfo@uwm.edu.

Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must be 18 years of age or older. By signing the consent form, you are giving your consent to voluntarily participate in this research project.

Printed Name of Subject/Legally Authorized Representative

Signature of Subject/Legally Authorized Representative

Date

By completing this survey, you are indicating that you have read the consent form, you are age 18 or older and that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

Thank you!

Appendix F
Zip code Zone Assignments

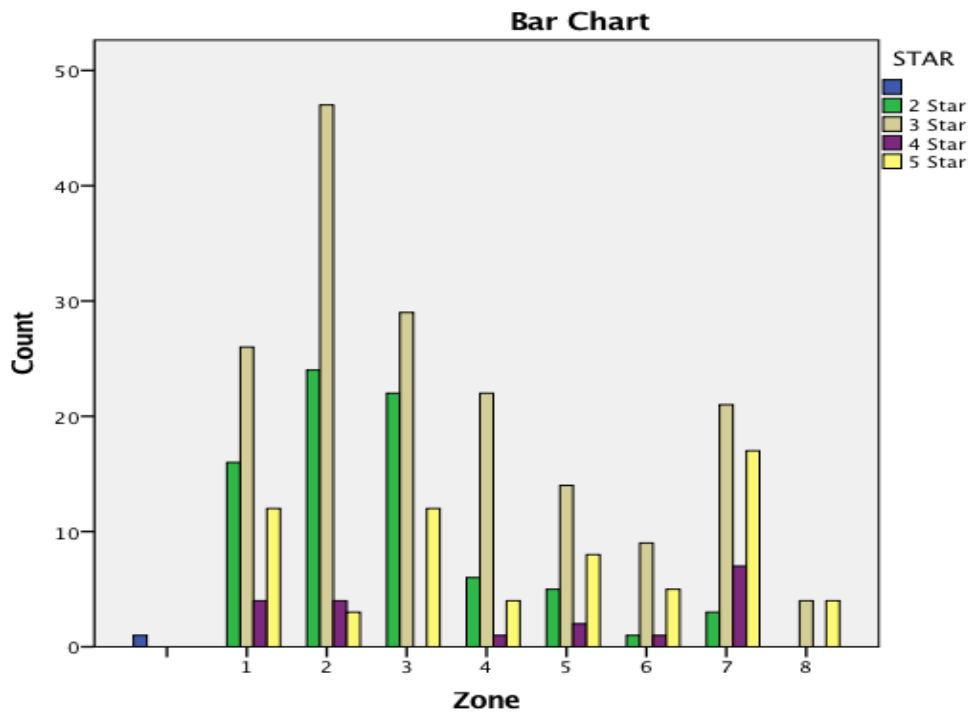
ZONE	ZIP CODES
1	53224, 53223, 53217, 53209
2	53225, 53218, 53222, 53216
3	53226, 53213, 53210, 53208
4	53206, 53212, 53205
5	53211, 53233, 53206, 53202, 53204
6	53214, 53228, 53227, 53219, 53220
7	53215, 53207, 53221, 53154, 53172, 53110
8	53129, 53130, 53132

Appendix G
Zone/Star Rating Table

Zone * STAR RATING

Zone	STAR					Total
		2 Star	3 Star	4 Star	5 Star	
1	0	16	26	4	12	58
2	0	24	47	4	3	78
3	0	22	29	0	12	63
4	0	6	22	1	4	33
5	0	5	14	2	8	29
6	0	1	9	1	5	16
7	0	3	21	7	17	48
8	0	0	4	0	4	8
Total	0	77	172	19	65	333

Appendix H ZIP CODE



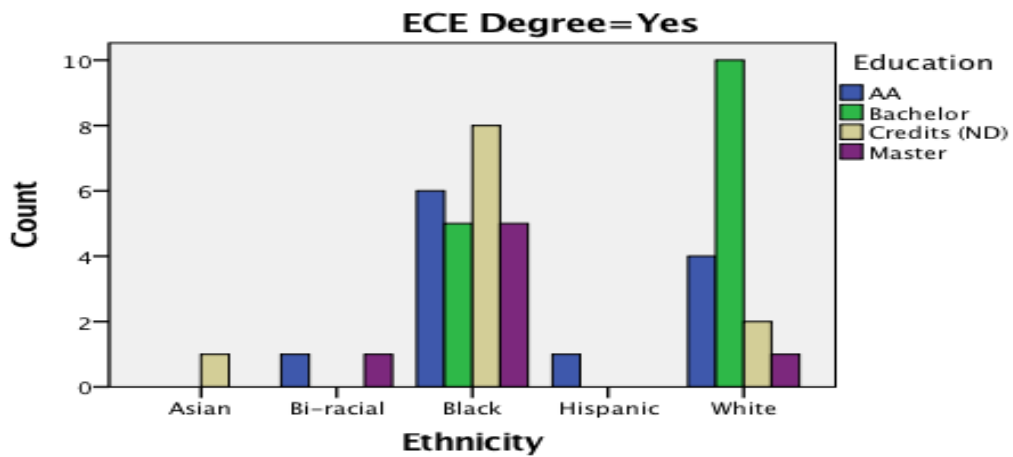
Appendix I Overall Education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	AA	14	17.5	17.5	17.5
	Bachelor	24	30.0	30.0	47.5
	Credits (ND)	22	27.5	27.5	75.0
	HS	8	10.0	10.0	85.0
	Master	12	15.0	15.0	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Appendix J ECE Degree

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	NA	1	1.3	1.3	1.3
	No	34	42.5	42.5	43.8
	Yes	45	56.3	56.3	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Appendix K



Appendix L

The Registry Professional Credentials					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	42	52.5	52.5	52.5
	Yes	38	47.5	47.5	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Appendix M

Ethnicity * Education * ECE Degree

ECE Degree: Total
Count

		AA	Bachelor	Education Credits (ND)	HS	Master	Total
Ethnicity	Asian	0	0	1	0	0	1
	Bi-racial	1	0	0	1	1	3
	Black	6	10	17	6	9	48
	Hispanic	1	1	0	1	0	3
	White	6	13	4	0	2	25
Total		14	24	22	8	12	80

Appendix N- Professional Description by Survey Responses

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1.3	1.3	1.3
Administrator	1	1.3	1.3	2.5
Assistant Teacher	1	1.3	1.3	3.8
Childcare Administrator	1	1.3	1.3	5.0
Childcare Provider	1	1.3	1.3	6.3
Coach, mentor, administrator, advocate	1	1.3	1.3	7.5
Director	3	3.8	3.8	11.3
Director, Educator	1	1.3	1.3	12.5
Early Childhood Educator	2	2.5	2.5	15.0
ECE Professional Leader	2	2.5	2.5	17.5
ECE Professional Teacher	1	1.3	1.3	18.8
Educated Teacher's Asst.	1	1.3	1.3	20.0
Educated Woman	1	1.3	1.3	21.3
Educator	3	3.8	3.8	25.0
Employee	2	2.5	2.5	27.5
Executive Director	1	1.3	1.3	28.7
Facilitator of ECE	1	1.3	1.3	30.0
Master Teacher and mentor	1	1.3	1.3	31.3
NA	10	12.5	12.5	43.8
Owner, Director	1	1.3	1.3	45.0
Passionate, Nurturing	1	1.3	1.3	46.3
Positive influence for Children	1	1.3	1.3	47.5
Professional Business Owner	1	1.3	1.3	48.8
Role Model, Mother	1	1.3	1.3	50.0
Teacher Leader	33	41.3	41.3	91.3
Teacher Leader, Advocate	1	1.3	1.3	92.5
Teacher Leader, Professional	1	1.3	1.3	93.8
Teacher, Educator	1	1.3	1.3	95.0
Teacher's Assistant	1	1.3	1.3	96.3
Team Leader	1	1.3	1.3	97.5
Teacher Leader, Advocate	1	1.3	1.3	92.5
Teacher Leader, Professional	1	1.3	1.3	93.8
Teacher, Educator	1	1.3	1.3	95.0
Teacher's Assistant	1	1.3	1.3	96.3
Team Leader	1	1.3	1.3	97.5
Team Leader, Childcare Professional	1	1.3	1.3	98.8
Trainer	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Appendix O

Annual Wages by Ethnicity & Position

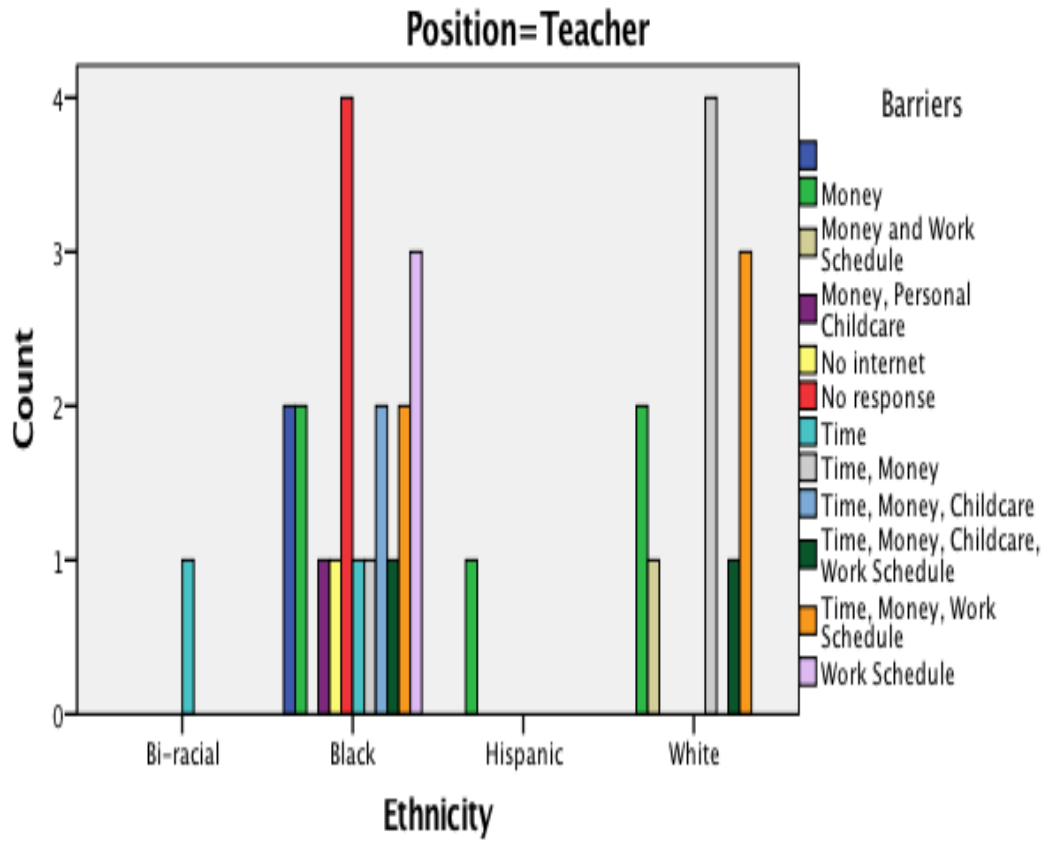
Position			Ethnicity					Total
			Asian	Bi-racial	Black	Hispanic	White	
Administrator	Annual Wages	10-14,999		0	1		0	1
		25-30,000		0	1		0	1
		30-35,000		0	2		0	2
		35-40,000		0	2		1	3
		40-45,000		1	0		0	1
		45-50,000		0	0		2	2
		50,000+		1	4		0	5
		Not indicated		0	1		0	1
		Total		2	11		3	16
Assistant Teacher	Annual Wages	10,000 or less	1		0	0	1	2
		15-20,000	0		2	0	0	2
		15-20000	0		0	1	0	1
		20-25,000	0		0	0	1	1
		25-30,000	0		2	0	0	2
		Not indicated	0		3	0	0	3
		Total	1		7	1	2	11
Director	Annual Wages	20-25,000			3	0	1	4
		30-35,000			1	0	1	2
		35-40,000			0	0	1	1
		40-45,000			0	1	1	2
		50,000+			3	0	3	6
		Not indicated			0	0	1	1
		Total			7	1	8	16
Other	Annual Wages	20-25,000			0		1	1
		25-30,000			1		0	1
		35-40,000			1		0	1
		50,000+			1		0	1
		Total			3		1	4
Teacher	Annual Wages	10-14,999		0	1	0	0	1
		10,000 or less		0	2	0	1	3
		15-20000		0	5	0	0	5
		20-25,000		0	1	0	0	1
		25-30,000		0	2	0	0	2
		30-35,000		0	3	0	2	5
		35-40,000		0	2	1	2	5
		40-45,000		0	1	0	3	4
		45-50,000		0	0	0	2	2
		Not indicated		1	3	0	1	5
		Total		1	20	1	11	33
Total	Annual Wages	10-14,999	0	0	1	0	0	1
		10,000 or less	0	0	3	0	1	4
		15-20,000	1	0	5	0	1	7
		15-20000	0	0	2	0	0	2
		20-25,000	0	0	1	1	0	2
		25-30,000	0	0	5	0	3	8
		30-35,000	0	0	7	0	2	9
		35-40,000	0	0	5	1	3	9
		40-45,000	0	0	4	0	5	9
		45-50,000	0	1	0	1	3	5
		50,000+	0	0	0	0	2	2
		Not indicated	0	1	8	0	3	12
		Total	0	1	7	0	2	10
		Total	1	3	48	3	25	80

Appendix P

Barriers Reported By Survey Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	2	2.5	2.5
Work Schedule, Language	1	1.3	1.3
Money	17	21.3	21.3
Money and Work Schedule	2	2.5	2.5
Money, Personal Childcare	1	1.3	1.3
Money, Personal Childcare Issues, Work Schedule	1	1.3	1.3
Money, Transportation	2	2.5	2.5
No internet	1	1.3	1.3
No response	8	10.0	10.0
Time	14	17.5	17.5
Time, Money	8	10.0	10.0
Time, Money, Childcare	2	2.5	2.5
Time, Money, Childcare, Work Schedule	2	2.5	2.5
Time, Money, Work Schedule	9	11.3	11.3
Time, Work Schedule	3	3.8	3.8
Work Schedule	7	8.8	8.8
Total	80	100.0	100.0

**Appendix Q:
Barriers by Ethnicity-Teachers**



Appendix R

The Registry Credentials

For more information about The Registry Credentials visit www.the-registry.org or call 608.222.1123

For T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship information and help finding the Wisconsin University or College that is right for you, visit www.wisconsinearlychildhood.org/hildhood.org

The Registry Credentials

Administrator Credential is a six course, 18 credit sequence that helps develop the skills and competencies needed by administrators and directors working in programs.

Afterschool & Youth Development Credential is a four course, 12 credit sequence designed for any individual working in an out-of-school-time program for children ages five through twelve.

Family Child Care Credential is a four course, 12 credit sequence focusing on the unique aspects of family child care.

Inclusion Credential is a four course, 12 credit sequence focusing on the additional training and education professionals need when caring for children with special needs.

Infant Toddler Credential is a four course, 12 credit sequence designed for providers who work with children under the age of three.

Leadership Credential is a four course, 12 credit sequence exploring the importance of excellence and diversity in early care and education programs, and the role of vision and reflective practice in reaching these goals.

Preschool Credential is a six course, 18 credit sequence building upon provider's skills in the preschool setting.

Program Development Credential is a four course, 12 credit sequence exploring the role of Program Developer including both management and leadership roles.

Registry Credentials focus on job specific skills so students can apply the practical knowledge they've learned to their current positions.

Registry Credentials are a stepping stone to advancement for any early care and education professional.

Credential Elements

■ Credit based courses are taught through an accredited technical college or university located throughout Wisconsin

■ Includes a Capstone Course—the final course culminating everything presented in previous courses

■ Students present a portfolio or final project to a commissioner to determine mastery of skills

■ Credentials are developed, verified and awarded by The Registry

Appendix S

DCF Staff Guidelines

DCF 251.05 Staffing.

(1) RESPONSIBILITIES AND QUALIFICATIONS OF STAFF.

(a) Competency. A childcare worker, including the center administrator, center director, child-care teachers, assistant teachers, and volunteers counted in the staff to child ratio shall be physically, mentally and emotionally able to provide responsible care for all children including children with disabilities.

(b) Shaken baby syndrome prevention training. Except for a volunteer who is not counted in staff-to-child ratios, each child care worker including the administrator, center director, teachers, assistant teachers, and substitutes who provide care and supervision to children under 5 years of age shall receive department-approved training in shaken baby syndrome and impacted babies and appropriate ways to manage crying, fussing or distraught children. The training shall be completed by one of the following methods:

1. Complete the department-approved, in-person training on shaken baby syndrome prevention and impacted babies before the date on which the child care worker begins to work with children under age 5 years.
2. View a department-approved video or complete a department-approved, web-based course on shaken baby syndrome prevention before the date on which the child care worker begins to work with children under age 5 years and complete a department-approved, in-person training within 6 months of beginning to work with children under age 5.

Note: Department-approved training in shaken baby syndrome prevention is included in the department approved non-credit courses called Introduction to the Child Care Profession and Fundamentals of Infant and Toddler, if the course was taken after 7/1/05. Information on department-approved training in shaken baby syndrome is available from the Child Care Information Center at 800-362-7353.

(c) Cardiopulmonary resuscitation training. All employees in regular contact with children shall obtain and maintain a current certificate of completion for infant and child cardiopulmonary resuscitation and automated external defibrillator use from an agency approved by the department within 6 months after beginning to work with children. Volunteers included in determining staff-to child ratios shall obtain a certificate of completion in infant and child cardiopulmonary resuscitation after volunteering for 240 hours. The time spent obtaining or renewing cardiopulmonary resuscitation training may be counted towards the required continuing education hours.

(d) Administrator.

1. The licensee may act as administrator of a group child care center. If the licensee does not act as administrator, the licensee shall designate a person or persons to be the administrator or administrators of the center. The administrator shall be responsible for the center's management,

including personnel, finance, physical plant and the day to day operation of the center.

2. An administrator shall:

- a. Be at least 21 years of age.
- b. Have completed high school or its equivalent as determined by the Wisconsin department of public instruction.

3. Before a person assumes the position of administrator, the person shall have both of the following:

- a. One year of experience as a manager or satisfactory completion of one credit or non-credit department-approved course in business or program administration.
- b. One year of experience as a center director or child care teacher in a licensed child care center or kindergarten or satisfactory completion of one non-credit department-approved course or one course for credit in early childhood education or its equivalent.

4. If the board of a parent cooperative is responsible for management of a center, the requirements under subds. 2., and 3., do not apply.

5. Within one year of assuming the position, each administrator shall complete at least 10 hours of training in supervision or personnel management, if the administrator has not previously received that training. The training may be counted as part of the annual continuing education requirement.

(e) Center director.

1. The licensee may act as the center director. If the licensee does not act as center director, the licensee shall designate a person or persons to be the center director for each center location.
WISCONSIN ADMINISTRATIVE CODE 13 251.05(1)(e)2.

2. The center director shall be responsible for the supervision of the planning and implementation of the center's program for children, the supervision of staff at the center, staff meetings and orientation and continuing education for the staff.

3. A center director shall be employed on one of the following schedules:

- a. At least 10 hours a week for the exclusive purpose of carrying out center director responsibilities in a single full-day center location licensed for 50 or fewer children.
- b. At least 20 hours a week for the exclusive purpose of carrying out center director responsibilities in a single full-day center location licensed for 51 or more children.

4. A center director for a program licensed to serve 50 or fewer children shall:

- a. Be at least 21 years of age.
- b. Have completed high school or its equivalent as determined by the Wisconsin department of public instruction.
- c. Have at least 80 full days or 120 half days of experience as a teacher or assistant teacher in a licensed child care center or other approved setting.
- d. Prior to beginning to work as a center director have completed at least one of the following training requirements:

- i. Two non-credit department-approved courses in early childhood education and within one year of assuming the position, one course in the Wisconsin Child Care Administrator Credential or its equivalent.
- ii. Two courses for credit in early childhood education and within one year of assuming the position, one course in the Wisconsin Child Care Administrator Credential or its equivalent.
- iii. Forty eight credits from an institution of higher education with at least 3 credits in early childhood education and within one year of assuming the position, one course in the Wisconsin Child Care Administrator Credential or its equivalent.
- iv. A certificate from The Registry indicating the person is on Registry Level 12 or above.
- v. A one-year child care diploma from an institution of higher education.
- vi. An associate degree in early childhood education or child care from an institution of higher education.
- vii. Child development associate (CDA) credential issued by the council for early childhood professional recognition and within one year of assuming the position, one course in the Wisconsin Child Care Administrator Credential or its equivalent.
- viii. A bachelor degree from an institution of higher education in early childhood education or child development or a license from the Wisconsin department of public instruction to act as a kindergarten, pre-kindergarten or early childhood (regular or special education) teacher.

Note: Information on how to obtain or renew a Wisconsin department of public instruction teacher license is available on the DPI website, <http://dpi.wi.gov/tepdll/index.html>.

e. Complete at least 10 hours of training in supervision or personnel management within one year of assuming the position of center director, if the director has not previously received that training. The training may be counted as part of the annual continuing education requirement.

5. A center director for a program licensed to serve 51 or more children shall:

- a. Be at least 21 years of age.
- b. Have completed high school or its equivalent as determined by the Wisconsin department of public instruction.
- c. Have at least 2 years of experience as a child care teacher or center director in a licensed child care center or other approved setting.
- d. Prior to beginning to work as a center director have completed one of the following training requirements:

- i. Four non-credit department-approved courses in early childhood education or its equivalent and within 3 years of assuming the position the Wisconsin Child Care Administrator Credential. Up to two courses in the Wisconsin Child Care Administrator may be used to meet the early childhood education requirement, if taken prior to beginning to work as a center director.

- ii. Four courses for credit in early childhood education from an institution of higher education and within 3 years of assuming the position, the Wisconsin Child Care Administrator Credential. Up to two courses in the Wisconsin Child Care Administrator Credential may be used to meet the early childhood education requirement, if taken prior to beginning to work as a center

director.

WISCONSIN ADMINISTRATIVE CODE 14

251.05(1)(e)5.d.iii.

iii. An associate degree in early childhood education or child care from an institution of higher education.

iv. A bachelor degree in early childhood education from an institution of higher education or a license from Wisconsin department of public instruction to act as a kindergarten, pre-kindergarten or early childhood (regular or special education) teacher.

v. A certificate from The Registry indicating the person is on Registry Level 14 or above.

Note: Information on how to obtain or renew a Wisconsin department of public instruction teacher license is available on the DPI website, <http://dpi.wi.gov/tepd/index.html>.

(f) Child care teacher.

1. A childcare teacher shall plan, implement and supervise the daily activities for a group of children.

2. A person who is a childcare teacher shall be at least 18 years of age and have completed high school or its equivalent as determined by the Wisconsin department of public instruction.

3. A person who is a child care teacher shall document at least 80 full days or 120 half days of experience as an assistant child care teacher in a licensed child care center or other approved early childhood setting.

4. Prior to assuming the position, a person hired to be a childcare teacher shall be qualified by having completed one of the following:

a. Two non-credit department-approved courses in early childhood education.

b. Two courses for credit in early childhood education or its equivalent from an institution of higher education.

Note: Introduction to the Child Care Profession and Skills and Strategies for the Child Care Teacher are the names of the non-credit courses approved by the Department to meet the entry level training requirements for a childcare teacher.

c. Certificate from The Registry indicating that the person is qualified as a child care teacher.

d. Forty-eight credits from an institution of higher education with at least 3 credits in early childhood education or its equivalent.

e. A one-year child care diploma from an institution of higher education.

f. An associate degree in early childhood education or child care from an institution of higher education.

g. Child development associate credential issued by the council for early childhood professional recognition.

h. Certificate from American Montessori Society, Association Montessori International, or Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education.

i. A bachelor degree in education from an institution of higher education or a license from the Wisconsin department of public instruction to act as a teacher.

Note: Information on how to obtain or renew a Wisconsin department of public instruction teacher license is available on the DPI website, <http://dpi.wi.gov/tepdll/index.html>.

j. Certificate from the bureau of apprenticeship standards as a child development specialist.

(g) Assistant childcare teacher.

1. An assistant child care teacher shall work under the supervision of a child care teacher with a group of children.

2. A person hired to be assistant child care teacher shall be qualified in one of the following ways:

a. The person shall be at least 18 years old and have satisfactorily completed one non-credit department-approved course in early childhood education or completes that training within 6 months after assuming the position.

Note: Introduction to the Child Care Profession is the name of the non-credit course approved by the Department to meet the entry level training requirements for a childcare assistant teacher. Information on agencies offering the department-approved course is available on the department's website at <http://dcf.wisconsin.gov>.

b. The person shall be at least 18 years old and have satisfactorily completed one course for credit in early childhood education or its equivalent at an institution of higher education, or is enrolled in that course within 6 months after assuming the position.

c. The person shall have satisfactorily completed an assistant child care teacher training program approved by the Wisconsin department of public instruction.

5. Student teachers who are not employed by the child care center may not be used to meet the staff to child ratios during the time the person is working as a student teacher.

Appendix T



5.20.11

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8	Level 9	Level 10
Entry Level training requirements for any Wisconsin regulated position	Level 1 requirements + Verified High School diploma or GED	Approved Training ⁵			Non-Credit Credentials ¹	Credit Based Credentials ¹			
		80 hours tiered training (any tier)	120 hours tiered training (any tier)	160 hours tiered training (40 of which are tier 2 or 3 training)	CDA OR School-Age Credential OR Non-credit Family Services Credential	Mentor and Mentor-Protege ³ (5 credits)	Family Services Credential (6-9 credits)	Registry Credentials Infant/Toddler (12 credits) OR Inclusion (12 credits) OR Leadership (12 credits)	Registry Credentials Administrator (18 credits) OR Apprenticeship (18 credits) OR Preschool ⁶ (18 credits)
		This includes entry level course hours	This includes entry level course hours	This includes entry level course hours		6 related credits	12 related credits	18 related credits	24 related credits

Level 11	Level 12	Level 13	Level 14	Level 15	Level 16	Level 17
Early Childhood and Youth Development Degrees						
1 Year Diploma OR Any 2 Registry Credentials	Associate Degree	Associate Degree + Registry Credential	Bachelor's Degree OR Bachelor's + DPI License ²	Bachelor's Degree + Registry Credential OR Bachelor's + Registry Credential + DPI License ²	Master's Degree OR Master's + DPI License ²	Doctorate OR Doctorate + DPI License ²
Credit Based Increments 30 related credits	Degree in Another Field ⁴					
	Bachelor's Degree OR Associate Degree + 30 related credits	Bachelor's Degree + Registry Credential OR Bachelor's Degree + 30 related credits	Master's Degree OR Bachelor's Degree + 36 related credits	Doctorate OR Master's Degree + Registry Credential	Master's Degree + 36 related credits	Doctorate + 36 related credits

¹Montessori and other Credentials submitted from other states will be evaluated on an individual basis and placed on a Wisconsin Career Level.

²DPI Licenses recognized are numbers 080, 083, 086, 088, 090, 100, 103, 106, 108, 109, 808, and 809.

³Must be taken as role of Mentor.

⁴Those with a degree in another field *must also meet* entry level requirements for the position held.

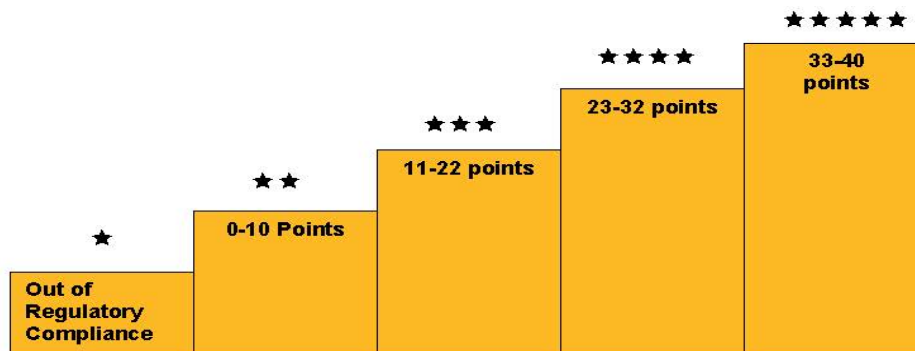
⁵Approved Training is training awarded a specific tier as approved by the Registry and taught by a Registry approved instructor. Must also meet entry level requirements.

⁶Preschool Credentials awarded with 15 credits are awarded a Level 9.

Appendix U


Quality Indicator Point Detail
January 1, 2017 – December 31, 2018
Track 2 – Group Child Care¹

Quality Rating and Improvement System Overall Model



Programs not in regulatory compliance would not be able to earn points in YoungStar until coming into compliance with licensing and certification.

It is imperative that Wisconsin improve the quality of child care. YoungStar assists Wisconsin child care providers to improve their quality leading to a critically important outcome of improving outcomes for children. YoungStar is based on research and other states' experiences to establish criteria that are: research-based, objective, and verifiable on a regular basis.

This document describes the categories for earning points in YoungStar. Each child care provider or program can earn up to forty points across four categories – education (Lead Teacher and Director), learning environment and curriculum; professional and business practices; and health and wellness. In general, when the word "staff" is used in the Group child care section, it means Lead Teachers and Directors unless otherwise noted. There are required points in each of the categories as well as additional optional points programs may accumulate.

The following chart shows the overall categories and the points possible in each.

Category for Earning Points	Possible Points
Group Teacher Qualifications	0-9
Group Director Qualifications	0-6
Learning Environment and Curriculum	0-13
Business and Professional Practices	0-7
Health and Wellness	0-5
Total	0-40 points

¹ This track includes licensed group child care serving children from birth through age 12.

Curriculum Vitae

Work History

CEO, City Kids

2004-2014

Position Description: Administrator of center-based group childcare program serving children age 6-weeks through 12-years old.

Duties:

- Management of ten employees
- Payroll
- Program Enrollment

CEO, Alston's Preparatory Academy

2005-2014

Position Description: Executive director of private Choice School serving grades K-8.

Duties: Management of approximately twenty-five employees (teachers, assistant teachers, foods service, janitorial and administrative personnel).

Education

Include dates, majors, and details of degrees, training and certification

UW-Milwaukee

Community Education

Bachelor of Science Degree

May, 2011

UW-Milwaukee

Cultural Foundations of Education

Master of Science

August, 2012

UW-Milwaukee

Urban Education

Doctoral Degree

August, 2017

Dissertation Topic: Female African American Childcare Teachers in Milwaukee: Construction of Professional Identity.

Professional Memberships

Golden Key Honor Society

2011-Current

Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society

2012-Current