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# Milwaukee Youngstar: Exploring the Racialized Experiences of African American Early Care and Education Providers

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MILWAUKEE YOUNGSTAR: EXPLORING THE RACIALIZED EXPERIENCES OF  
AFRICAN AMERICAN EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION PROVIDERS

by

Michele Turner

A Dissertation Submitted in

Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

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at

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December 2018

## ABSTRACT

### MILWAUKEE YOUNGSTAR: EXPLORING THE RACIALIZED EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION PROVIDERS

by

Michele Turner

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2018  
Under the Supervision of Professor Raquel Farmer-Hinton

In 2010, the State of Wisconsin passed legislation to implement a program called YoungStar. YoungStar is a quality rating improvement system that is used to prevent fraud in the Wisconsin childcare subsidy program called Wisconsin Shares and to rate the quality of early care and education centers (ECECs) on a scale from one to five stars. Programs rated as two stars receive assistance from technical consultants to help programs to make improvements. The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of African American early care and education providers (ECEPs) and their interactions with YoungStar technical consultants. This study also attempted to find out whether or not the ECEPs perceived that they had racialized experiences that affected their ability to make improvements in their programs. In relying upon questionnaires and one-on-one interviews with Milwaukee African American early care and education providers, the findings of this study suggests that the ECEPs previous racialized experiences with a governing agency affected their interactions with the technical consultants and that their interactions with the technical consultants may have affected the ECEPs abilities to improve their quality rating.

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To

my mom and husband,

my children and grandchildren,

and all those who love children.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

APHA/AAP	American Public Health Association/American Academy of Pediatrics
CRT	Critical Race Theory
ECEC	Early Care and Education Center
ECEP	Early Care and Education Provider
NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children
QRIS	Quality Rating and Improvement System
SFTA	Supporting Families Together Association
WCCF	Wisconsin Council on Children and Families
WCCIP	Wisconsin Child Care Improvement Project
WECE	Wisconsin Early Childhood Excellence Initiative

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In 2009, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel published an in depth exposé on Wisconsin Shares. Wisconsin Shares is a program funded by the state's taxpayers that provides a subsidy for childcare expenses of low-income workers. The newspaper investigation focused on five Wisconsin counties, Dane, Racine, Kenosha, Brown and Milwaukee, which includes the city of Milwaukee. Allegations of fraud and underhanded business owners littered the headlines and compelled the involvement of the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (Rutledge, 2009; McIlheran, 2009).

These investigations triggered the passage of legislation that put into place a quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) called YoungStar in 2010 (Bicha, 2010).<sup>1</sup> The Department of Children and Families was charged with submitting a plan for the creation and implementation of a childcare rating system (Section 9108(7) of 2009 Wisconsin Act 28). Then on June 23, 2010, YoungStar was passed into law (Motion 38 of the WI Joint Finance Committee). Its initial purpose was to prevent fraud and improve the quality of early care and education centers (ECECs)—specifically those that serve children of lower socio-economic status in the state of Wisconsin (Bicha, 2010). This motion allocated funds for the creation and implementation of a quality rating and improvement system through fraud prevention and the assignment of technical assistance for early care and education providers (ECEPs).

Wisconsin's new QRIS, YoungStar, began rating participating ECECs on a scale of one to five stars. Although participation in the YoungStar program is touted as a voluntary commitment, those who choose not to sign a contract with YoungStar are cut from their funding through the Wisconsin Shares program (YoungStar FAQs, n.d.). This is especially hard for

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ECECs that serve low-income families who rely on Wisconsin Shares in order to afford adequate childcare.

Once enrolled in the YoungStar initiative, whether voluntarily or out of necessity, the ECEC receives a formal rating of their program in four categories: the provider's education and training level, the learning environment and curriculum, the program's business and professional practices; and the children's overall health and well-being. At the inception of YoungStar, an ECEC that received five stars was considered the highest level of quality and received a 25 percent increase in their Wisconsin Shares funding as an incentive to continue providing this high standard of care. On the other hand, ECECs who received a rating of two stars were stripped of five percent of their Wisconsin Shares funds and one star programs were not allowed to participate in the program or receive Wisconsin Shares (YoungStar, n.d.). As of 2017, programs that are rated as two-stars will receive their Wisconsin Shares payments directly from families utilizing an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card. The authorized Wisconsin Shares subsidy amount will be reduced by one percent before being placed on the EBT card. The four and five star programs will continue to receive 10 and 25 percent increases respectively (Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, n.d.)

When YoungStar began rating early care and education centers, the majority of the centers in Milwaukee County were considered low quality as of December 2011 (dcf.wisconsin.gov). At that time, out of 534 rated ECECs, over 80 percent received no more than a two-star rating, while less than 10 percent of Milwaukee County centers received a five-star rating. At the same time, it is fair to point out that ECECs have the option of choosing not to be rated. If an ECEC chooses not to have someone come out to rate their program, they are still required to complete and return a YoungStar contract, but will automatically be assigned a 2-star

rating as long as they are in regulatory compliance ([dcf.wisconsin.gov](http://dcf.wisconsin.gov)). On the YoungStar website, it does not indicate historically which providers chose not to be rated and which ones completed the ratings process and received a two star.

In order to assist in remediating the high percentage of low rated centers, \$1,500,000 was allocated to provide training and technical assistance to help early care and education providers (ECEPs) understand the YoungStar criteria and guide them through the improvement process (Motion38.pdf). The technical assistance YoungStar provided was based on results from a 2005 pilot program of the Wisconsin Child Care Improvement Project (WCCIP). The areas of focus included: licensing regulations, providing materials and equipment, enhancing classroom learning centers, modeling the teaching cycle, assistance in creating a system for staff retention, and enhancing family involvement (YoungStar/Final Report, n.d.). Of these technical assistance modules, four levels of support were identified: sharing resources and written materials; providing an overview on a topic or referral for assistance; providing in-depth group training for more than one ECEP with a skilled trainer, and consulting at individual program sites, including the development of a quality improvement plan (YoungStar/Final Report, n.d.).

Also, in the WCCIP pilot study, it was determined that “the value of good technical assistance lies in its ability to be individualized, and in the relationships built between the technical advisor, the program director and staff, as well as the networks developed between programs.” With the help of technical assistance, many ECEPs improved the quality of their programs and were deemed a success (YoungStar/Final Report, n.d.). Similar to the technical consultants in the pilot study, the YoungStar technical consultants were to work with the ECEPs over the course of twenty weeks with a total of ten hours on site, providing the same types of support offered in the pilot study. They were to assist the ECEPs in creating a quality

improvement plan and help identify opportunities for growth. The technical consultants were to provide their skills, resources, and support based on research and best practice for enhancing the quality of the programs that they worked with as well as monitor progress towards the quality improvement goals (YoungStar, n.d.).

### **Statement of Problem**

As mentioned before, in December 2011, over 80 percent of ECECs in Milwaukee County were rated as two stars. Six years later in 2017, that number has improved substantially. As of August 2017, out of just under 1200 ECECs in Milwaukee County, 32.63 percent of all ECECs are rated as two stars with three ECECs rated as one star and 185 ECECs not rated or not participating (NR/NP) in YoungStar (YoungStar Childcare Finder, n.d.). As wonderful as this change sounds, this substantial change is not fully reflected in the African American ECECs in Milwaukee County in the majority African American zip codes (which are all located in the city of Milwaukee). The zip codes shown in the table below have more than fifty percent of African Americans in their populations. (See appendix for full table showing total race breakdown of Milwaukee County). The percentage of 2-star centers for these zip codes is 46.7 percent.



Table 1. Milwaukee County Zip Codes with Majority African American population (July 2017)

<b>Zip Code</b>	<b>5-star ECECs</b>	<b>4-star ECECs</b>	<b>3-star ECECs</b>	<b>2-star ECECs</b>	<b>1-star ECECs</b>	<b>NP/NR</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of ECECs with 2stars</b>
<b>53205</b>	1	1	14	14	0	4	34	41.18
<b>53206</b>	0	2	19	35	0	14	70	50.00
<b>53208</b>	3	2	17	28	0	13	63	44.44
<b>53209</b>	3	4	31	69	0	13	120	57.50
<b>53210</b>	3	6	39	50	0	10	108	46.29
<b>53212</b>	4	1	26	29	0	8	68	42.64
<b>53216</b>	3	1	46	54	3	18	125	43.20
<b>53218</b>	1	9	37	65	1	28	141	46.09
<b>53225</b>	2	0	15	23	1	6	47	48.93
<b>Totals</b>	20	26	244	367	5	114	776	46.7

Source: [www.city-data.com/zipmaps/milwaukee-wisconsin.html](http://www.city-data.com/zipmaps/milwaukee-wisconsin.html)

Milwaukee County zip codes that contain a majority, white population show a substantial difference in the number of 2-star ECECs than their African American counterparts. In majority white zip codes, only 18.56 percent of centers are rated as 2-star. (See appendix for actual numbers of each group in each zip code from the 2010 Census)

Table 2. Milwaukee County Zip Codes with predominantly white populations

Milwaukee Co. Zip Code	5-star ECECs	4-star ECECs	3-star ECECs	2-star ECECs	1-star ECECs	NP/NR	Total ECECs	% 2-stars
53207	4	0	9	6	0	6	25	24
53211	2	0	2	1	0	8	13	7
53213	4	1	5	3	0	15	28	11
53214	1	1	11	4	0	3	20	20
53215	12	5	43	18	1	12	91	19.7
53219	1	1	2	3	0	4	11	27
53220	3	1	6	3	0	1	14	21.4
53221	1	1	10	5	0	6	23	21.7
53222	1	2	14	8	0	5	30	26.6
53223	4	1	18	13	0	6	42	30.9
53226	3	2	1	1	0	4	11	9
53227	5	0	0	0	0	2	7	0
53228	1	0	1	0	0	4	6	0
53233	2	1	2	3	0	1	9	33
53235	1	0	1	1	0	0	3	33
53172	1	2	4	2	0	0	9	22.2
53202	0	0	2	0	0	2	4	0
53203	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
53204	9	5	16	13	0	0	43	30.2
<b>Totals</b>	56	23	147	84	1	79		18.56

Source: [www.city-data.com/zipmaps/milwaukee-wisconsin.html](http://www.city-data.com/zipmaps/milwaukee-wisconsin.html)

This difference in the number of 2-star ECECs in the primarily African American zip codes in comparison to the number in the predominantly white zip codes brings one to question why there is such a disparity. The Wisconsin Council on Children and Families (WCCF) found that it costs a 2-star ECEC on average \$9,000 annually to care for one child, compared to \$11,168 for a 5-star ECEC (Wisconsin Council on Children & Families, 2017). With this, it is clear that higher quality programs require greater operating funds; and similarly, lower rated programs need money to raise their level of quality.

The Wisconsin Early Childhood Excellence Initiative (WECE) (2000-2005) substantiated this assertion in their study. It was found that the combination of sufficient funds along with the guidance of a quality technical consultant had a significant impact on ECEPs that primarily served low-income children. When provided with the necessary funding and technical assistance, the ECEPs in this study significantly improved the quality of care and the levels of service for their families. Not only did they improve their quality, they maintained the higher quality of care even after their funding was substantially reduced (Grow in Quality-Final Report, 2007). One could argue that while the money aided in making the needed improvements was beneficial, it was the effective mentorship of the technical consultant that made the changes sustainable.

On the other hand, one must ask why the increase of care quality is not more evident in the ECECs targeted by this study located in the predominantly African American zip codes in Milwaukee County under the YoungStar initiative. These programs are eligible to receive micro grant funds; yet, the changes seen are short-lived and remain unsustainable, as the programs are not able to maintain the increased revenue it takes to run a high-quality center (Grow in Quality-Final Report, 2007).

The problem is exacerbated as YoungStar dictates that the programs that score lower than a three star will lose a percentage of their funding. These programs that have shown that they most need the funds are being further hindered from improving their level of quality. If low-scoring ECEPs had the means to improve their quality through mentorship of a technical consultant in addition to the funds needed to make said changes, they would be in a better position to make sustainable improvements. Instead, the meritocratic system of Young Star increases the gap between those programs that have the funds to provide high quality care and those that do not.

I assert that while proper funding is critical to improving quality of ECECs, it is not enough to affect sustainable change. Instead, it is imperative that technical consulting received through the governing and regulating agencies be culturally responsive to meet the unique needs of the ECEPs in order to implement sustainable change within the early childhood setting. The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of African American early care and education providers (ECEPs) and their interactions with YoungStar technical consultants. This study will also explore the extent to which ECEPs perceived that they had racialized experiences that affected their ability to make improvements in their programs.

### **Rationale for the Study**

As mentioned previously, it cost on average \$9,000 per annum for a 2-star program to cover the costs of one child compared to \$11,168 for a five-star program to care for a child, making it apparent that higher quality programs need more money to sustain a five star level of quality and lower rated programs need money to raise their level of quality. This is important because higher quality programs have been shown to affect the outcomes of the children that they care for with increased rates of high school graduation, reduced teen pregnancy, higher

earnings and reduced crime (YoungStar, n.d.)

Research also shows that increased quality of early care and education could close up to twenty percent of the black-white school readiness gap and up to thirty six percent of the Hispanic-white gap (Magnuson & Walfogel, 2005). This makes it more important than ever to address the question about the effectiveness of the technical assistance provided and the relationship between the Milwaukee African American ECEP's and their technical consultant's since studies have shown that technical assistance can help ECEPs to improve the level of the quality of their program.

While successful coaching or technical assistance depends on many factors, perhaps the most crucial is to have a solid relationship between the technical consultant and recipient. Kruse (2012) maintains that in order for the relationship between a coach and mentee to be effective, there must be a cultural sensitivity on the part of the coach and cultural relevance in the feedback given. This relationship is founded on the ability to overcome the apprehension of cultural and linguistic differences.

Research has shown that not acknowledging and respecting differences in cultural backgrounds can impede the formation of a strong technical consultant/recipient relationship (Buisse & Wesley, 2005). Kruse (2012) calls it culturally relevant coaching when three criteria are present: first, the coach expresses value for diversity across all caregivers' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, second, the sociocultural context of both the coach and the ECEP is recognized; and lastly, they are able to build on the individuals' cultural background and count it as an asset rather than an obstacle to be overcome.

It is important to analyze the interactions of the Milwaukee County African American ECEPs with their technical consultants to ascertain if their experiences, or their perception of

their experiences with their technical consultant, were culturally relevant according to the aforementioned criteria. The quality of the relationship between an African American ECEP and their technical consultant has multifaceted ramifications. Not only does it affect the esteem of the ECEP and the confidence they have as a professional (Bilanich, 2009), it can ultimately affect their quality rating with YoungStar. Their rating, in turn, affects the amount of income provided by Wisconsin Shares. Finally, the less money programs have to operate with, the fewer improvements they can make to their programs to provide higher quality services for the children and families, thus perpetuating the cycle of substandard education in low-income areas leading to poor child outcomes and disenfranchised communities.

### **Research Questions**

For this study, it is essential to take a phenomenological approach to explore the relationships between the African American ECEPs and the technical consultants. Since the task of a phenomenological study is to get to the essence of an experience (Merriam & Tisdale, 2005), the guiding questions will explore not just the experiences of the ECEP's, but the feelings, interactions and perceptions of the African American ECEPs in the ECEP/technical consultant relationship and whether or not the ECEPs believe this affected whether or not their star level ratings improved.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) will be used as a lens to understand the ECEP's feelings, interactions, perceptions and to validate the ECEPs voices. CRT will also be utilized to explore the ECEPs lived experiences in a racialized society with the knowledge that CRT contends that racism is endemic in American society.

The guiding questions for this study are as follows:

- How did the African American ECEPs feel about the extent to which the technical consultants

helped to improve their practices as providers/leaders?

- How did the African American ECEPs feel that their interactions with technical consultants helped to address their quality ratings?
- How did the providers perceive the support systems of their technical consultants?
- How did race or racial differences affect the ECEPs perception of their interactions with the technical consultants if at all?
- How did the African American ECEPs feel about their experiences of working with the YoungStar technical consultants?

These will be the guiding questions of this study. The hope is that this study can inform the YoungStar consortium about the importance of not just providing technical assistance to ECEPs, but to also consider the urgency of providing technical assistance that is culturally relevant and can meet the needs of all providers.

This study argues that while proper funding is critical to improving quality of ECECs, it is not enough to affect sustainable change. Instead, it is imperative that interactions with governing and regulating agencies in addition to interactions with technical consultants be culturally responsive to meet the unique needs of the ECEPs in order to implement sustainable change within the early care and education setting.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Attending daycare or some form of out-of-home care while their parents work is a fact of life for millions of American children. Attending a high-quality childcare program has been linked to positive child outcomes in cognitive, social and language development (Campbell, 2000). Yet, at the turn of the century, no more than half of all American childcare centers met minimum American Public Health Association/American Academy of Pediatrics standards. At the same time, most were rated poor to mediocre in quality (Patten & Ricks, 2000).

African American children are just as likely as white children to be involved in childcare programs; but, they are much more likely than whites to be enrolled in a low-quality day care (Morgan et al.,2015). Data from an Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey that consisted of a sample of 7,500 children showed that African Americans experienced the lowest quality care in both Head Start and non-Head Start settings and that children in disadvantaged and race/ethnic minority families disproportionately experience poor quality childcare (Morgan et al.,2015).

In the state of Wisconsin, YoungStar has been touted as a means to ensure all children, regardless of family income, have access to high quality childcare. YoungStar is meant to assess and rate the quality of childcare programs in five different competencies and to assist ECEPs in improving the quality of their programs as needed. However, as previously noted, in the primarily African American zip codes in Milwaukee County, African American ECEPs have not shown significant improvement in their programs quality ratings even after receiving coaching. Technical assistance is provided to all ECEPs participating in the YoungStar initiative. The findings of the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Developments Grow in Quality Project has shown that technical assistance can be effective in improving the quality of some ECEPs (Grow in Quality-Final Report, 2007) Yet, as previously indicated, all ECEPs have not shown



improvement. The concern is that technical assistance that does not take into account the cultural differences of the ECEPs and the technical consultants may be ineffective, if not harmful.

This literature review will look at technical assistance and other factors that may hamper its effectiveness (such as cultural relevance and trust), using the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT). As a theoretical lens, CRT frames the impact of the actions of the Department of Children and Families on the relationship of the ECEP and their technical consultants.

### **Critical Race Theory: Understanding YoungStar**

#### **Wisconsin Context**

**Welfare and Labor Reform.** In 1935, as the nation was still suffering the effects of the Great Depression, as part of the New Deal a program called Aid For Dependent Children (ADC) was created. This program was to assist families in which there was no father, whether it was due to death, absenteeism or a situation in which the father was unable to work (Blank & Blum 1997). ADC was very selective from its onset. States used different criteria to assure that mostly white widows were provided for. Women that were divorced, separated, or had children out of wedlock were discriminated against. While the poor and black women, instead of receiving assistance, were sent to employment offices where they were pushed into taking low-wage jobs while being denied outside assistance. Early on individual states began to start creating work requirements that were specific to Black women. (Reese, 2005)

Over the course of years, other reasons were used to deny assistance to black women, but after World War II, in the 50s, propaganda was created to stereotype black women as promiscuous, dishonest mothers that would sell their food stamps instead of purchasing food for their children. The Welfare Queen discourse was set in motion (Reese, 2005). Anthropologist Oscar Lewis added to this discourse in the 1960s when he advanced the term, *The Culture of*

*Poverty*. Lewis while studying Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico and New York made a distinction between poverty and The Culture of Poverty. Lewis said that, “People in a culture of poverty produce little wealth and receive little in return. Chronic unemployment and underemployment, low wages, lack of property, lack of savings, absence of food reserves in the home and chronic shortage of cash imprison the family and the individual in a vicious circle” (Lewis, 1966 p.21). Instead of blaming societal circumstances like systemic racism, discrimination, lack of employment opportunities and low wages, he blamed the victim. He also promoted the idea that the black family had a tendency towards female authoritarian households in which the women would refuse to marry, because the men are likely to be immature. He claimed that the individuals that grows up in the culture of poverty, “has a strong feeling of fatalism, helplessness, dependence and inferiority” (Lewis, 1966, p. 23). These are the same traits that politicians and the media presented to the public as traits that are part of the African American culture, while blaming African American culture and personal behavior for rising AFDC rolls (Nadasen, et al.).

Six years later, Daniel Moynihan’s 1965 report, “The Negro Family: A Case for National Action,” further blamed the victim. He wrote that the black family structure was the problem, mainly the disintegration of the black family, female-headed households and high rates of illegitimate children He maintained that, “the breakdown of the Negro Family has led to startling increases in welfare dependency” (Moynihan, 1965, p.12). The promotion of these ideas show one way that the intersection of race, sex and class have affected African American women. Because of ideas such as these and other racist policies, welfare reform became paramount in the view of many. According to Reese (2005), “many whites became increasingly resentful of expanding welfare rolls and federal social programs which they viewed as benefitting racial

minorities at their expense as taxpayers” (p. 78). The media covered many stories about poverty highlighting Blacks, leading people to believe that Blacks were the primary beneficiaries of welfare. “Popular magazines increasingly portrayed welfare mothers as black, unmarried women out to cheat the state in the 1960s and 1970s. Whereas only 37 percent of Americans polled in 1964 blamed poverty on lack of effort, forty-four percent did so in 1967” (Reese, 2005).

Into the 80s, politicians and the media continued to appeal to racial stereotypes in their attacks on welfare. The racist anti-welfare rhetoric was subtle and often coded. Popular magazines promoted racialized images of poor people and television news stories portrayed the poor as Black and criticized welfare as their cause for dependency. Stories like these continued to change the attitudes of the public and increased the calls for welfare reform. The percentage of the public that blamed the poor for their situation increased. They neglected to recognize that there was a scarcity of jobs in urban areas or focus on the fact that many times there were only low paying service jobs available for which people needed subsidies to help them survive (Reese, 2005).

In 1981, then president Ronald Reagan made changes in welfare. He cut payments, changed eligibility requirements and encouraged states to develop work programs. These new requirements removed almost five hundred thousand recipients from welfare (Reese, 2005). The Family Support Act of 1988 created the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) program. With this states expanded education and training for recipients rather than workfare (Reese, 2005). In 1992 Bill Clinton promised to “end welfare as we know it” in 1992 through tougher work requirements and two-year consecutive time limits. By 1994, politicians were committed to ending welfare (Reese, 1995).

Wisconsin politicians were no different. In response to the calls for welfare reform, Wisconsin legislators began requiring low-income parents to take job or skills training in order to continue receiving assistance and to get off welfare rolls (Pawasarat & Quinn, n.d.). The Wisconsin Works (W-2) program that was created by 1995 Wisconsin Act 289 was a part of welfare reform efforts. The states landmark welfare-to-work legislation, which ended up serving as a national model for welfare reform, required participants to work, and provided additional services and support to make the transition to work feasible and permanent. Because of the legislation that was passed, parents on welfare were to enter the labor force shortly after their children were born or to participate in time-limited employment-related activities. Therefore, the need for daycare expanded. The money that was saved by getting people off the welfare rolls was made available to provide childcare for the parents that now had to go to work (Pawasarat & Quinn n.d.). As was previously noted, the Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy program was created as a new welfare reform measure (Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, 2001). This provided childcare assistance to low-income families who needed to go to work. By June 2004, 79.8 percent of the program participants were in Milwaukee County (Wisconsin Works Evaluation, 2005).

**Growth of Childcare Providers.** To meet the increased need for childcare, many new centers were opened. The qualifications for the new ECEPs were minimal as were the requirements to open an Early Care and Education Center (Tommy Thompson 2001-2005). There were several types of ECECs that the parents could send their children to with government assistance. Certified family ECECs in which a single provider was able to care for up to four children. Next, there were licensed family ECECs that could care for up to eight children at a time in their homes. An ECEC that cared for more than eight children at any time was

considered a group center. In order to work for or own an ECEC, one only had to take one to three non-credit Early Childhood courses (Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, n.d.).

As mentioned previously, in response to the need for childcare because of this new legislation, the number of childcare centers exploded overnight. The number of state licensed group centers in Milwaukee County increased from two hundred and twenty nine in March of 1996 to three hundred sites in August of 2001. The number of state licensed family providers in Milwaukee County increased, from one hundred ninety six in March 1996 to seven hundred thirteen by August 2001 (Pawasarat & Quinn, n.d.). As of July 2018, there are three hundred thirty eight family childcare providers in Milwaukee County (Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, n.d.).

**Attack from the Media and New Legislation.** In addition to racialized notions of moving welfare recipients into the labor market as well as the use of state funds to support welfare recipients' children, sensationalized news stories added a racialized narrative of fraud. Patrick McIlheran of the *Journal Sentinel*, quoted Reginald Bicha, then Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families as saying that, “95% of the fraud cases in Wisconsin Shares are in Milwaukee County” (2009). In addition to this news story, Wisconsinites were being inundated with *Journal/Sentinel* articles about fraud in the Wisconsin Shares systems. Although these articles mentioned ECEPs in other counties, the most egregious focused on African American ECEPs; therefore, when Bicha said that 95 percent of the fraud cases were in Milwaukee County, people equated fraud with African American ECEPs. In October 2009, ninety-nine programs (primarily in the zip codes that were targeted by this study) were cut off from Wisconsin Shares (Rutledge, 2009). The crackdowns were the first part of

closing down programs. Before the end of 2009, over two hundred providers were suspended because of what was termed, “red flags signifying Shares violations” (Kaiser, 2011). It did not matter that some of those suspensions were later overturned in Milwaukee County Circuit Court (Kaiser, 2011).

After the *Journal Sentinel* investigation, Act 76 was put into effect on February 1, 2010. The African American ECEPs were made to feel like criminals by the media. This new Act requiring background checks for ECEPs added to the stigma that the ECEPs felt. It required criminal background checks for childcare owners and workers. People living in family childcare homes over the age of twelve were also required to have background checks. This requirement added to the stigma. The Act barred individuals convicted of certain non-violent crimes, even if the crime was committed 20-30 years ago, from obtaining a childcare license or from remaining in the field. Background checks would now be conducted four times a year and DCF was granted the discretion to suspend the license of an ECEP provider who had been charged with a serious crime and then revoke their license if convicted of the crime. This bill applied to all ECEPs, regardless of how long they had been in business. Many ECEPs were eventually barred from providing childcare for nonviolent crimes (Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, n.d.). DCF’s response to the *Journal/Sentinel* investigation can be seen as actions of deterrence, surveillance, stigma and graduated sanctions to modify ECEPs conduct (Wacquant, 2009). YoungStar was passed into law within months to help prevent fraud in the Wisconsin Shares system.

**Fear and Intimidation.** A fraud unit was created by DCF that would send investigators to an ECEC and demand records without warning and the ECEC was required to provide the records immediately or in no less than 24 hours. Also, if DCF reasonably suspected program

violations, as allowed by the new Wisconsin law 49.155(7)(b)4 or 49.155(7m), the ECEP would be suspended and would not be able to receive payments through Wisconsin Shares until after the investigation. This does not mean that their childcare licenses were revoked (Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, n.d.), but they would not receive payments until proven innocent and the penalty was lifted. Few, if any ECEPs that depend primarily on Wisconsin Shares income can stay open without that source of income until the sanction is lifted. This type of scrutiny or fear of constant surveillance made many ECEPs feel uncomfortable and as if DCF saw them as criminals.

**Control.** Wacquant (2009) wrote about how graduated sanctions were historically used to punish and control people. This is reflected in the way that, according to Dickman, Peterangelo, Schwabe & Henken (2011), Wisconsin is the only state that has a quality rating and improvement system in place that takes away money from an ECEC if it has not attained a certain level of quality. Other states will have the ECEC either remain at their level of reimbursement or, with improvements, receive additional money. Wisconsin, with its five star levels will not finance a one star program at all and a two-star program initially received a 5 percent deduction in Wisconsin Shares funds.

This need for control is reminiscent of the 1970s when the American public was introduced to the myth of the infamous “Welfare Queen”. This myth painted the picture of greedy and conniving African American women who collected excessive amounts of welfare payments through fraud and manipulation (Nieman Reports, 1999). Now, the African American ECEPs were being stigmatized in a familiar pattern. In response to the media’s stories about “Welfare Queens”, there were efforts made to crackdown on welfare fraud. There were more home visits and tip lines established for people to report those who they suspected of committing

fraud to take advantage of the hard-earned tax dollars earmarked for public welfare initiatives (Kohler-Hausmann, 2007). A strikingly similar response came as a result of media allegations of fraud in early childcare. It galvanized concerned citizens and brought increased regulation and policing by the Department of Children and Families. Just as before, there were more unannounced visits to early childcare programs by the DCF Fraud Unit and a tip line set up for people to report others.

### **Critical Race Theory: Policies, Rhetoric and Slights**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is an offshoot of Critical Legal Studies. For the purpose of this study, we will be discussing several of CRT's basic tenets. The first is that racism is normalized and systemic, something that people of color experience on a daily basis (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Moran (2008) adds that CRT sees racism as enduring and tightly woven into the fabric of society. Accordingly, Huggins, (2001), says that CRT is based on the premise that institutions maintain the status quo through policies and practices that oppress blacks. The participants in this study are indicative of another tenet of CRT, which is the one of intersectionality. According to Delgado and Stefancic (2012) no person has a single, easily stated, unitary identity. Everyone has potentially conflicting, overlapping identities, loyalties, and allegiances. The participants of this study are African American, women businesswomen that are affected by the passing of a law that was passed with no regard as to how it would affect them. This is another tenet that CRT espouses-colorblindness. In the following paragraphs, these along with other tenets of CRT will be discussed as well as how they connect to the events that prefaced this study, thereby showing why this is the best lens in which to frame this study.

**Interest Convergence.** Another feature of CRT is called material determinism or interest



convergence. Interest convergence stresses that racial equality and equity for people of color will be pursued and advanced when they converge with the interests, needs, expectations, and ideologies of Whites (Bell, 1980). Earlier, it was mentioned how Governor Jim Doyle wanted to create a childcare quality rating system for the state of Wisconsin in 2004. His plan, “Quality Counts for Kids” called for the development of a tiered reimbursement system for childcare in Wisconsin. His plan had two primary goals: 1.) To improve the quality of childcare in Wisconsin, particularly for children from low-income families; and 2.) To give parents the information they needed to make more informed childcare choices. The joint finance committee voted against it saying that it was too expensive. In alignment with interest convergence, five years later when the newspapers had stories about fraud, within a short time period a quality rating system was put into place. This time the main focus was to prevent fraud and secondly to improve the quality of childcare in Wisconsin.

Another of the views of critical race theory is the importance of understanding the ebb and flow of racial progress. According to Delgado and Stefancic (2012) circumstances change so that one group finds it possible to seize advantage or to exploit another. They do so and then form appropriate collective attitudes to rationalize what was done. Wisconsin Shares was not the first attempt at welfare reform neither was it the first attempt to form a collective attitude towards a group of marginalized people.

**Colorblindness.** Another tenet of Critical Race Theory is that of colorblindness. In law, a “color-blind” reading of the Constitution is made without seeing or being blind to the race of the person or persons affected (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Color-blindness is also said to be a precursor for “White, European hegemonic control of the social and structural arrangements in

U.S. society” (Parker, 2002 p. 9) With the racial disparity that is evident in American social welfare policies, colorblindness would suggest that African American ECEPs situation was not taken into account when YoungStar was passed into law without regard as to how the African American ECEPs would be affected. For example, the state of Wisconsin has a childcare Registry. Every early care and education provider has to be on that registry within three months of being in the field. If an ECEP is not on the registry they cannot receive Wisconsin Shares funding. It has already been said that more than half of the Wisconsin families and children served by Wisconsin Shares, reside in Milwaukee County (Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, n.d.). Therefore, African American ECEPs were inordinately affected by the passing of this colorblind law.

**Meritocracy.** According to Delgado and Stefancic (2012), critical race scholars question the view that people may be ranked by merit and that the distribution of benefits is rational and just. The creation of the YoungStar quality rating system indicates that some ECEPs are more deserving of benefits than others because of their ranking. Schneider and Ingram (1993) say that unequal power in society allows socially constructed groups to be categorized as deserving and undeserving. In other states there are quality rating systems that are completely voluntary. If one chooses to participate, there is the opportunity to receive more money because of the changes that you have voluntarily made. But, in Wisconsin, even though YoungStar is said to be voluntary, it is not. If an ECEP wants to receive funds from Wisconsin Shares, they must sign a contract with YoungStar. This guarantees that African American ECEPs in Milwaukee County will more than likely be affected due to disproportionate ratings.

**Microaggressions.** Delgado & Stefancic (2012), define microaggressions as “small acts of intentional or unintentional sudden, stunning, or dispiriting events that mar the days of women

and folks of color (p. 27)”. Sue et al.(2007), add that microaggressions are hostile, derogatory or negative racial slights towards people of color. When Reginald Bicha, the first Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, made the remark that 95 percent of the fraud that was committed was in Milwaukee County that was an example of one of the microaggressions that the ECEPs had to endure. The comments from public officials, the newspaper articles were all likely dispiriting events. If the technical consultants, in their interactions with the ECEPs unintentionally made disparaging comments to the ECEPs during their interactions, how might this have affected their compliance or acceptance of the YoungStar guidelines?

### **Intersectionality and the Disenfranchisement of Women of Color**

As was mentioned previously, the participants in this study have more than one identity. They are African American businesswomen providing services in Milwaukee, under the pressure of legislative reforms. Accordingly, Crenshaw (1991), addresses how intersectionality adds the importance of overlapping identities to critical analyses. Intersectionality is the concept that everyone has multiple overlapping identities that affect your life differently through the related systems of oppression, domination or discrimination (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Stefancic and Delgado (2012) add that intersectionality reflects the interplay of race, sex, class, national origin, and sexual orientation, and how their combination plays out in various settings. Each of these categories can have separate disadvantaging factors. At the same time when individuals occupy more than one of these categories they operate at an intersection of recognized sites of oppression (108).

In utilizing intersectionality, Crenshaw (1991) argues that women of color are situated differently in the economic, social and political world. In Wisconsin, the majority of ECEPs are

women and in this study all of the participants are African American women. I apply this framework to argue that African American ECEPs are situated differently in the early care and education world than their white counterparts. The intersectionality of race, sex and class has affected black women, not just the African American program participants, but also the African American ECEPs. Many of the African American ECEPs in Milwaukee County rely primarily on Wisconsin Shares income as their means of income. In a State of Wisconsin report that cites the usage of Wisconsin Shares, more than half of the Wisconsin families and children served by Wisconsin Shares, reside in Milwaukee County (Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, n.d.).

Unlike some African American providers, many white ECEPs may have the option of choosing not to participate in YoungStar. While the ECEPs in this study may have a difficult time making this choice. Seven of the nine zip codes that are targeted for this study, are indicated as highest in poverty in the state of Wisconsin (Community Indicators, 2014). Therefore, while I am not implying that the African American ECEPs are all of lower socio-economic status, I recognize the heavy implications of the intersectionality of their race and gender. I also recognize the intersectionality of the race and gender of their clientele. Under the guise of welfare reform and improving the quality of child care for low-income children, the state of Wisconsin created a punitive system in which low-income children were unfairly targeted. The ECECs located in the high poverty areas are the ones that had their money decreased. In Chapter One, it was shown that higher quality programs improve outcomes for children and that higher quality programs need more money to sustain their level of quality. Research also shows that children that attend high quality ECECs are also more likely to have better overall outcomes. Crenshaw (1991) continues by saying that when reform efforts are undertaken, how women of

color are situated is ignored and that they are less likely to have their needs met than women who are racially privileged. She maintains that because women of color occupy positions both physically and culturally marginalized within dominant society that information must be targeted directly to them in order to reach them and maintains that it is necessary to designate more resources for basic information dissemination in communities of color than in white ones (Crenshaw, 1991). Accordingly, in order to meet the needs of the children and the ECEPs that are affected by these punitive reforms, the interactions between the technical consultants and the ECEPs must be culturally responsive.

**Black Feminist Epistemology.** Patricia Hill Collins' framework of Black Feminist Epistemology aligns with Kimberle Crenshaw's intersectionality. They both address how the different identities that one has can put one at a disadvantage. Collins (1990) says that, "Black feminist thought's core themes of work, family, sexual, politics, motherhood, and political activism rely on paradigms that emphasize the importance of intersecting oppressions in shaping the U.S. matrix of domination" (p. 327) And, according to Samuels & Ross-Sheriff (2008) when addressing Black feminist epistemology, "intersectionality proposes that gender cannot be used as a single analytic frame without also exploring how issues of race, migration status, history, and social class, in particular come to bear on ones experience as a woman (p.5). In this study, African American women are affected because of their intersectionality on so many different levels. Collins (1990) adds that there are "four different dimensions of Black feminist epistemology. The first is the importance of lived experience as a criterion of meaning; the second is the use of dialogue rather than adversarial debate. The next is the ethics of personal accountability or personal responsibility and the last is the ethic of caring" (p. 332).

**Counter Narratives/Stories.** Many victims of discrimination suffer in silence or blame themselves for their predicament. Stories can give them voice and reveal that others have similar experiences (Stefancic & Delgado, 2012). The narratives of what the media says about ECEPs have been told as well as what DCF YoungStar has to say about them providing quality care. Being rated as two stars in a five star system is an indication that one is not providing quality care. This study is allowing the ECEPs to give their counter narrative. Counter narratives stand in opposition to the narratives of the stories told by those in authority. The stories that have been told about the ECEPs by the media are based on assumptions, privilege and racism, while according to Stefancic and Delgado (2012) they also distort and silence the experience of the dominated. The ECEPs stories are important to hear in that it allows them to give their side of the story and counter the perceptions that others have of them. Their stories of their experiences should be the authoritative voices.

As it has been shown, CRT is an appropriate lens through which to conduct this study. The ECEPs with overlapping socially stratified identities are hurt when, as a two-star program, they have to function on five percent less income than they had before because of DCF's attempt - in accordance with CRTs interest convergence tenet - to prevent fraud and recoup the lost taxpayer funds. Racism is also not invisible when business owners are subjected to surveillance because of other's actions. CRT discusses microaggressions, but what many of these providers experience through dealing with DCF is overt and harmful. As African American businesswomen, they are affected more than others. The intersection of these identities affects them not only financially, but also in how they are seen in the community and in how it affects the children that they care for in the long run. As businesswomen trying to balance their lives, homes and businesses how YoungStar was going to affect them was ignored.

## Technical Assistance

### Consulting and Relationship Building

In the literature, there is variation in the terminology used to describe the aid and assistance provided by a technical consultant. Depending on the author, the terms ‘mentoring’ (Nolan, 2007), ‘coaching’ (Buysse and Wesley, 2005; Crane, 2001; Kruse, 2012), and ‘consultant’ (NAEYC Glossary Training, 2011) have been used. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), all of these terms describe the role of a technical assistant.

NAEYC (2011) has defined what that relationship between an ECEP and a technical consultant should look like. They identified three necessary components to providing high-quality services to children and families: 1) education, 2) training and 3) technical assistance. NAEYC proposes that each of these components be designed using evidence-based best practice that adapt to each learners’ cultural experiences and linguistic abilities as well as the current context of their role and professional goals (NAEYC Glossary Training, 2011). They require that technical assistance should provide targeted and customized support by a professional that has knowledge in both the subject matter and the various aspects of adult learning and say that the role of the technical assistant should be based on positive, trusting, and respectful relationships.

**Coach and mentor.** Since NAEYC, in their definition of what types of assistance a technical consultant provides, uses the terms coach and mentor, a deeper search of what these terms mean needs to be discussed. According to Supporting Families Together Association (SFTA), the current administrator of YoungStar, the YoungStar technical consultant is the one to help providers move forward. They are to provide ECEPs assistance in determining how to use

micro-grants and in professional development (Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, n.d.). The technical consultants are to provide mentorship to help ECEPs reach the professional goals that are discussed and defined and then celebrate with the provider as the goals are achieved. They are considered a major resource to ECEPs and the first level of support and the ECEPs are encouraged to call or email their technical consultants at any time (Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, n.d.).

One way coaching is defined is a “collaborating helping relationship where coach and client (coachee) engage in a systematic process of setting goals and developing solutions with the aim of facilitating goal attainment, self-directed learning, and personal growth of the coachee” (Grant & Stober, 2006; Grant, 2013). In alignment with this definition, after the ECEPs complete a self-assessment, the YoungStar technical consultants and the ECEPs are to work together to set goals by creating a quality improvement plan. The quality improvement plan is then used to guide their work together (Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, n.d.).

The first concept of a mentor has been said to come from ancient Greece. When Odysseus was planning for a long journey away from his family. He asked his friend Mentor to guide his son Telemachus and teach him about the world and how to be courageous, strong, and compassionate towards others. In this sense, being a mentor implies being in a relationship with another. Both terms—coach and mentor—imply a relationship.

Lindsay-Dennis, Cummings and McClendon (2011) conducted a qualitative study that included a sample of five African American women. They conducted two semi-structured focus groups asking short, open-ended questions to find out about their mentoring experiences with African American girls. As part of this study, the role of mentor was studied from a Black feminist thought perspective. Accordingly, quoting Patricia Collins (2000) they say, “for African



American girls, mentors who keep it real or have lived through the experiences about which they claim to be experts are more believable and credible than those who have merely read, thought, or heard about such experiences” (p. 69). The authors continue by saying that “by talking with rather than talking to African American girls, mentors have the opportunity to deconstruct the specificity of their experiences” (p. 69). Another aspect of mentoring from the Black feminist viewpoint emphasizes personal accountability. “In the mentoring domain, claims made by mentors that are respected for their moral and ethical beliefs will carry more weight than those offered by less respected mentors” (p.70). Since the participants of this study were those that mentored African American girls, one would surmise that the same ideas would apply to African American women. The ECEPs would expect the technical consultants to talk with them rather than talk to them and share their own experiences in the field.

### **Consulting and Cultural Relevance**

**Cultural differences.** One of the questions of this study is, how did race or racial differences affect the ECEPs perception of their interactions with the technical consultants, if at all? According to research, differences in racial backgrounds can have an important effect on the interactions between a coach/mentor and coachee/mentee. Not only can race have an impact on their interactions, but also the past-racialized experiences of the mentees can have an impact on the experience of the interaction. In this section, the research on cultural differences and mentoring relationships will be explored.

Nilsson & Duan (2007), for example, found that the supervisees’ previous experiences with discrimination influenced their perceptions of their supervisor. The authors surveyed 69 racial and ethnic minority supervisees that were enrolled in psychology programs in doctoral training. They utilized the Majority-Minority Relations Survey. The MMRS is a 38-item

instrument, using a Likert-type scale (1 indicates strong affiliation with majority group, suggesting assimilation; 6 = indicated strong affiliation with one's minority group, suggesting rejection of American culture, that produces a total score and scores on three subscales: Perceived prejudice, Acculturation and Language Usage. Through this survey, the authors found that the supervisees' previous experiences with prejudice, oppression and white privilege influenced their perceptions of their supervisor. Their findings also supported the ideas that supervisory relationships are not isolated from the social contexts in which we live and that racial and ethnic minority students' experiences in perceived prejudice, among other factors, are associated with their experiences in supervision. According to this study, there is the potential that the ECEPs experiences with the perceived prejudice, oppression and white privilege by Wisconsin's Department of Children and Families (DCF) will affect their perceptions of their interactions with their technical consultants. It may be, as in this study, that ECEPs may expect less of their technical consultant if they are white and assume that they do not understand them, their intersectionality, or their situations and think that they will not be empathetic.

Similarly, in an article by Schroeder, Andrews and Hinds (2009), they found that supervisees' experiences with discrimination impacted their relationships with supervisors. The authors, in a meta-analysis of 13 research studies regarding cross-racial supervision, surmised that not only do supervisees bring their anxieties about being evaluated into the supervisory relationship, but they also bring their racial and ethnic backgrounds and experience into the relationship (Schroeder, et al, 2009). Therefore, as Nilsson and Duan (2007) also suggested, supervisors need to validate and respect experiences of prejudice of racial and ethnic minorities and the influence such experiences may have on supervisees' behavior in supervision.

While previous studies addressed the role of supervisees' prior experiences, Constantine and Sue (2007) found that minority supervisees have reported experiencing prejudice in their roles. Constantine and Sue sought to explore the perceptions of racial microaggressions and experiences of prejudice by Black supervisees. Through a qualitative analysis of ten self-identified African American doctoral supervisees in counseling and clinical psychology, results indicated seven microaggression themes were found to be directed towards the group: “(a) invalidating racial-cultural issues, (b) making stereotypic assumptions about Black clients, (c) making stereotypic assumptions about Black supervisees, (d) reluctance to give performance feedback for fear of being viewed as racist, (e) focusing primarily on clinical weaknesses, (f) blaming clients of color for problems stemming from oppression, and (g) offering culturally insensitive treatment recommendations” (Constantine & Sue, 2007, p.146). The impact of these racial microaggressions was found to be detrimental to Black trainees, the supervisory relationship and, indirectly, to clients of color. It was also found that when African Americans perceived any microaggressions or prejudice, it eroded the trust and negatively affected the relationship. From these studies, it is evident that the issue of race will be salient in the relationships between the technical consultants and the African American ECEPs. Therefore, it is imperative that the consulting interactions be culturally responsive.

**Culturally responsive consulting.** To understand what is culturally responsive consulting, we will look at the origination of the term. Culturally relevant pedagogy, a term coined by Gloria Ladson Billings, is a pedagogical model that helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools and other institutions perpetuate (Ladson-Billing, 1995). Ladson-Billings wrote that culturally relevant pedagogy empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally and politically by

using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes. To this Gay (2010), in her book *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*, added that culturally responsive teaching is empowering and it enables students to be better human beings and more successful learners. This empowerment translates into academic competence, personal confidence, courage and the will to act.

Regarding culturally responsive technical consulting, Kruse (2012) interviewed six participants, each for one hour, in her qualitative research on culturally relevant training and coaching for early child care providers. The participants were trainers and coaches that worked with caregivers from socially marginalized populations. The main objective was to identify practices of those engaged in culturally specific coaching relationships. The author found that the connection between culturally relevant pedagogy and coaching is apparent. According to Kruse, culturally relevant coaching would, like, “culturally relevant teaching, express value for diversity across all caregivers’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds, recognize the sociocultural context of the coach-caregiver, and build on the individual’s cultural background as an asset” (Kruse, 2012, p.2). According to both Kruse (2012) and Moran & Banks (2016), in order for the technical consultant and ECEP relationship to be successful, a relationship must be cultivated and that relationship must be culturally responsive. Schroeder, et al (2009) adds that in order for there to be a strong working alliance between a supervisor and a student, the supervisor must be culturally responsive and competent. The same would be said that technical consultants must be culturally responsive and competent.

In addition to being culturally responsive, Crutcher (2006), in a qualitative study that utilized grounded theory methodology and individual narrative-base interviews, explored the perspectives of mentors. She interviewed 24 participants from different professions. Each had

been involved in cross-cultural mentoring. After interviewing these successful mentors from different backgrounds, it was found that additional components are necessary for success. The study concluded from their feedback that mentors must be able to navigate cultural boundaries, not just racial, but others such as personal, gender and geographic boundaries - the intersectionality of people's lives. Because of this, mentors must work to eliminate any fears, biases and stereotypes they may have about other races and cultures.

**Navigating cultural values.** In the discussion above, empirical research showed that mentors must be aware of their own values, prejudices and biases as well as differences (Crutcher, 2006; Schroeder et al., 2009). Arguably, the technical consultants working with the African American ECEPs need to work to not only eliminate their own fears and biases, but work to eliminate any fears and biases that the ECEPs may have. The ECEPs, because of the racialized actions of DCF may be dealing with a sense of apprehension because of those experiences.

**Feedback.** Another factor that is vital to the technical consultant/ECEP relationship is feedback. Burkard, Knox, Clarke, Phelps, and Inman (2012), in a qualitative study, examined the delivery of feedback in cross-ethnic/racial supervision. The participants in the study were 17 supervisors that were geographically dispersed across the United States. Twelve were women and five were men and ranged from 28-53 years of age. Participants completed a demographic form. The form was comprised of open-ended questions in which they rated their comfort level in providing difficult feedback to supervisees overall and to supervisees who are culturally different from themselves on a scale from 1-very uncomfortable, 7- very comfortable. It was found that cultural differences influenced the feedback process. The study showed that when supervisors had to give difficult feedback in a cross-cultural situation they found it to be very

uncomfortable. This study did not address whether or not the supervisor was white or a person of color, but they did address the fact that there may be different cultural expectations in cross-cultural situations. They recognized that difficult feedback is often emotionally laden for both supervisee and supervisor in that it may address personality or personal concerns, which may cause the supervisees to wonder if the feedback is even relevant to supervision.

**Building a relationship.** Essential to educational change is relational trust. Bryk and Schneider (2003) addressed what they call relational trust. In their longitudinal study of 400 Chicago elementary schools, they found that relational trust was central in building effective education communities. According to Bryk and Schneider (2003), “relational trust reduces the vulnerability that teachers feel when asked to take on tasks connected to reform and facilitates the safety needed to experiment with new practices”(pp.40-45). Accordingly, it would seem that the concept of relational trust applies to the technical consultant/ECEP relationship. The ECEPs are tasked with making improvements in their practice if they want to meet YoungStar standards. The relational trust between the technical consultant and the ECEP should be such that the ECEP feels safe enough to make the changes in her practice because of the interactions with the technical consultants because as Bryk and Schneider found, trust plays a powerful role in reform (Bryk and Schneider, 2003).

Brewster & Railback (2003) in their report called, *Building Trusting Relationships for School Improvement: Implications for Principals and Teachers*, agreed with Bryk and Schneider about the importance of relational trust and added to that by saying that “the more interactions that parties have over time increased their willingness to trust based on their perceptions of the others’ intentions, competence and integrity” (p. 5). They also agree with Bryk and Schneider that, “people are continually trying to discern the intentions of others and look at the past actions

of either a person or an institution to determine whether or not they can be trusted. If they have had no prior interactions with that person or that institution, the participants rely on commonalities such as race, gender, age, religion or upbringing to try and build those relationships” (Bryk & Schneider, 2003, pp. 41-42). This is something that is important for the technical consultants to be aware of. The ECEPs previous experiences with DCF may affect their expectations and interactions with the technical consultants. It is incumbent upon the technical consultants to make the connections to build the relationships and inspire trust.

Duan and Roehlke (2001) also addressed the issue of building relationships. They surveyed supervisors that were in cross-cultural supervisory relationships. Their sample consisted of 43 dyads in which the supervisor was white and the supervisees were ethnic minority members. It also included 17 dyads in which the supervisor was an ethnic minority member and the supervisees were white. They found that to build an effective relationship with supervisees of a different race or culture, they had to directly and openly show genuine interest in and respect for the supervisee and his or her unique culture. This study also indicated that although positive attitudes and behaviors from supervisors are important in any supervisory relationship, it seemed to be more important for minority supervisees. They found that being supervised by someone that not only has more power in the relationship, but also a different racial background was more likely to add to the supervisees sense of uncertainty and apprehension. The fact that the technical consultants have power over the ECEPs in that they can affect the rating that the ECEP receives is something that the technical consultant must be aware of. This too, has the ability to cause the ECEP additional apprehension.

**Readiness for coaching.** The importance of being culturally responsive and creating a relationship has already been shown. Kretzschmar (2010) by using a grounded theory

methodology in his study focused on readiness for coaching. The research data were generated from 18 semi-structured face-to face interviews and nine email interviews involving coaches, coaching clients and enquirers about coaching. The study discovered enabling and hindering factors affecting clients' readiness for coaching. The factors affecting the clients' readiness for coaching was incorporated into six themes: Culture and Class, Knowledge about coaching, Access to coaching, Psychological Interpretations, Feeling safe and Commitment to change (Kretzschmar (2010)). The focus for this study is the importance of coachees being committed to change and feeling safe in the relationship. This study would agree that ECEPs need to be committed to making changes, but at the same time, the technical consultant needs to be effective about making them feel safe in the relationship.

Jacobson, Butterill and Goering (2005), in a qualitative study explored how knowledge is generated in consulting and transferred, added to what Kretzschmar (2010) said by saying that "from a consultants view, clients need to be open minded, communicative and committed to the consulting process" (p. 315). For this study, they utilized case studies of three separate consulting projects completed by the Health Systems Research and Consulting Unit. The first case study was about a consulting project that was completed by an individual that was working with a team to determine what changes should be made within a provincial hospital. The second case study was about a consultation completed by a team of consultants that were to determine what changes needed to be made in a court-based mental health service program. The third case study looked at a project that was created to ascertain the fit between the client's needs and the types of services available (Jacobson, Butterill, & Goering 2005). From their study, they also found that, "When the need is perceived to be less urgent or when the problem is not recognized by the clients themselves, the chances of the knowledge being used are reduced" (p. 314). They



also found that, “from the clients’ point of view, knowledge is more likely to be used when the consultants are perceived to be accessible, organized, expert, and credible” (p. 314). From the study by Jacobson, et al, (2005) the importance of the relationship between the technical consultant and the ECEP is evident. According to this, the technical consultant must be accessible, organized, expert and credible. Accordingly, Black feminist epistemology indicates that for Black women to relate to mentors, Lindsay-Dennis et al, (2011) say that mentors who have lived through the experience about which they claim to be experts are more believable and credible than those that in this case have been trained (2011, p. 69). From these two studies, it is evident that the ECEPs need technical consultants that are credible and accessible, organize, expert and real.

**Reasons for Failure.** It was previously stated that Kretzschmar (2010), found that there were additional factors that could hinder the coaching process. Two of these were a lack of commitment to change and not feeling safe in the relationship. Dressel, Consoli, Kim, and Atkinson (2007) agreed that feeling safe was important in the coaching relationship. Using a Delphi Poll, to assist in identifying successful and unsuccessful multicultural supervisory behaviors, the researchers gathered a panel of knowledgeable participants. Through a nomination process that, for this study, identified individuals considered experienced in coaching and supervision. All of the panelists had earned a doctoral degree, 71 percent were counseling psychologists and 29 percent were clinical psychologists. The panel was surveyed repeatedly to arrive at a consensus opinion on a topic of interest. In this present study, Round 1 involved knowledgeable supervisors identifying successful and unsuccessful multicultural supervisory behaviors. Round 2 involved supervisors expressing their opinions, using the ratings on a likert scale, about each of the statements developed in Round 1. Finally, Round 3 obtained their

consensus on successful and unsuccessful supervisory behaviors. This was achieved by informing panelists of the average scores for statements from Round 2 and by asking them to rate the same statements one last time in Round 3. Through this approach, it was found that the most important element of successful cross-cultural supervision was to create a safe environment for discussion of cross-cultural issues (Dressel et al, 2007). Schroeder, et al (2007) agreed that it was important to create a safe environment and also proposed that it is the supervisor's responsibility to facilitate a climate of safety, honesty, trust and comfort.

Gardner (2002), agreed with Dressel et al. and Schroeder, et al. about the importance of creating a safe environment for the ECEPS while working with the technical consultants. From her study she added that the perception of safety could affect the success of a coachee and limit their growth. She utilized a qualitative study that was designed to explore the dynamics associated with cross-cultural supervision. The participants were eight supervisees (7 African Americans, 1 White American; 7 female and 1 male, ages 24-50 that received supervision by a supervisor from a different ethnicity from graduate counselor education programs in the Midwest and the southern regions of the US. The information was elicited from the participants utilizing the Cultural Perspective interview. In addition to the perception of safety being important, Gardner (2002), also found that supervisees felt that supervisors were, "competent if they were knowledgeable, demonstrated good facilitative skills, and possessed attributes of compassion, concern, fairness and honesty" (p. 102). They also found that "when supervisees and supervisors form strong interpersonal bonds and agree on the goals and tasks of supervision, it is less likely that the supervisees feel confused about their roles in the supervision process" (p. 102).

**Technical consultant challenges.** The purpose of a qualitative study by Ackerman (2008) was to learn more about the coaching process and the issues that affect efforts to raise

QRS scores. A survey was conducted of the coaches that were participating in a QRS pilot study. All of the participants were female, three African American, one Latina and the remainder were white ranging in age from 25-64 with an average of 13 years experience in the field. The data collection occurred through a self-administered survey that was sent electronically. In Ackerman's study, out of 84 ECEPs that were involved, 41 ECEPs stayed at the same star level and 12 decreased their star level. Through the information gleaned from the survey and one small group meeting, it was found that a supervisor's competence and the interpersonal bond between the supervisor and supervisee could enhance or hamper the growth of the supervisee. Additionally, it was found that cultural insensitivity, communication styles and critical feedback are factors that can affect that relationship (Ackerman, 2008). With this in mind, the technical consultants for Milwaukee ECEPs ought to create and maintain a safe environment through avoiding judgmental or biased speech and building a positive relationship as perceived by the ECEPs. Consequently, this will encourage buy-in from the ECEPs and empower them to bring about change in their programs.

Ackerman also determined from this study that some of the consultants lacked the skills set necessary to be effective and that the possession of a college degree and/or some early-childhood-related experience may not be enough. To be effective they needed additional specialized knowledge. Some of the challenges that were faced by the coaches included the director's lack of experience, lack of buy-in by the program and the director having minimal leadership skills or personal problems. She found that some beginning coaches believed that change would be easy and therefore were unprepared when confronted with mistrust, a lack of leadership or engagement in the change process. These are some of the issues that the QRIS technical consultants had to address while working with the ECEPs.

## **Conclusion**

In the United States, many states have a quality rating and improvement system. The only state that bases the amount that providers are reimbursed is Wisconsin. Granted, some states offer additional funds or benefit to programs that meet certain quality standards, but Wisconsin is the only state that takes away money from programs when they do not meet certain standards. This is challenging because it has been shown that money and technical assistance can help programs meet quality standards. In the absence of money, technical assistance has been shown to help programs make improvements.

This rating system, disguised as a meritocratic system per the earlier discussion on CRT is problematic for Milwaukee African American ECEPs. Many of them have already had racialized experiences while working under the auspices of DCF and have endured the attacks from the media outlets. In response to the allegations of fraud, the colorblind legislation was passed without regards as to how it would affect the African American ECEPs.

In order to help providers improve their quality, ECEPs are assigned a technical consultant. According to Supporting Families Together Association (SFTA), the YoungStar technical consultants should be a major resource to ECEPs. The technical consultants are to guide the ECEPs through the necessary steps to improving the quality of their programs (Supporting Families Together Association, 2017) Accordingly, the technical consultants' input plays a vital part in the ECEPs success.

The quality of the interactions between the technical consultants and the ECEPs needs to be understood. Much has been said about cross cultural interactions and what is needed to assure that the coach/coachee relationship is successful and that goals can be met. But, what is missing is the literature about how the interactions between the technical consultant and the African

American early care and education provider is affected when there is an intersectional threat of losing ones business and/or income based on their position as African American female business owners operating under punitive legislation. This study is important because the voices of the African American early care and education provider can help to understand what is needed in order for them to be successful and to improve in quality. Their success may also affect the outcomes of the children that are in their care, making this information vital to be added to the scholarship about effective technical consulting.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

In 2010, legislation was passed to create a quality rating and improvement system called YoungStar. As a part of YoungStar, Wisconsin early care and education centers received a star rating between one and five. An ECEC that is rated as a two star or below is considered to be low quality, while a five-star center is considered to be of the highest quality. Each ECEC that participated in YoungStar was provided with a technical consultant to assist them in improving their quality and their rating. As shown in the previous chapters, research has determined that the relationship between the technical consultant and the ECEP was of utmost importance for the assistance to have a positive effect and for the ECEC to improve in quality. With an inordinately high percentage of African American ECECs in Milwaukee County rated as low quality, it is vital to study the relationship between the African American ECEPs and their technical consultants.

For this study, I have attempted to find out about the lived and perceived experiences of the African American ECEP's while working with their technical consultant's, by using the following question as a guide for the research.

- How did the African American ECEPs feel about the extent to which the technical consultant helped to improve their practices as providers/leaders?
- How did the African American ECEPs feel that their interactions with technical consultants helped to address their quality ratings?
- How did the providers perceive the support provided by their technical consultants?
- How did racial differences affect the ECEP's perception of their interactions with the technical consultants, if at all?
- How did the African American ECEPs feel about their experiences of working with the

YoungStar technical consultants?

## **Phenomenology**

I utilized qualitative research to conduct this study because it was crucial to understand the meanings that the ECEPs have constructed; how they are making sense of their world and the experiences they had while working with their technical consultants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2005). Of the different varieties of qualitative methods, phenomenology is the one that is best suited for this study. A phenomenological approach is ideal for studying affective, emotional and intense human experiences because it can describe the common meaning for individuals that have the same lived experience (Creswell, 2007). At the same time Patton (2014) contends that phenomenology is based on the assumption that we can only know what we experience by attending to perceptions and meanings that awaken our conscious awareness. Moreover, the CRT frame and the study participants' intersectionality lead to the importance of allowing them to give their counter narratives. Counter narratives stand in opposition to the narratives that are told by those in authority. As was previously stated, the stories that have been told by the media are based on assumptions, privilege and racism, while according to Stefancic and Delgado (1993) they also distort and silence the experiences of the dominated. This study will allow the dominated (the ECEPs) the opportunity to speak for themselves and be heard.

The German Philosopher Edmund H. Husserl, to study how people describe things and experience them through their senses, first applied phenomenology to social science. Phenomenology allows for an in-depth inquiry into a topic with a small number of homogenous participants (Glesne, 2016), and explores how human beings make sense of an experience or phenomenon by thoroughly capturing and describing how people perceive, describe, feel about,

remember and judge an experience and is concerned with the lived experiences of the people involved with the issue that is being researched (Maypole & Davies, 2001; Manen, 2016).

Through phenomenological, research, I systematically attempted to uncover and describe the structures, and the internal meaning structures, of the lived experiences of the ECEPs (Manen, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2005). In that all human experiences have an underlying structure (Creswell, 2007), there is also something that was common or universal about the technical consultants experience (Moustakas, 2010). Using phenomenology, I attempted to utilize language to describe the essence or nature of their experience.

### **Critical Race Theory**

For this study, I utilized phenomenology along with Critical Race Theory (CRT) to focus on the lived experiences of the target group. Through the use of phenomenology, I attempted to find the essence of the ECEPs' experiences with their technical consultants and endeavor to understand their perceptions, attitudes and how these affected the outcome. I used CRT to acknowledge their experiences and provide space for them to share their own narratives about their experiences. These narratives provide the necessary context for understanding their feelings and interpretation of their experiences (Altman, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998).

One of the principle tenets of CRT is that racism is endemic. CRT says that in America, racism is common in interactions of every social arena. It is the way that people of color experience daily life (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). As was mentioned in a previous chapter, women of color are situated differently in the economic, social and political world (Crenshaw, 1991) and because of this they are less likely to have their needs met than women who are racially privileged. Collins (2000) adds, "U.S. Black feminist thought as specialized thought



reflects the distinctive themes of African-American women's experiences. Black feminist thought's core theme of work, family, sexual politics, motherhood, and political activism rely on paradigms that emphasize the importance of intersecting oppressions in shaping the U.S. matrix of domination (p. 251). Accordingly, it is maintained that since women of color are marginalized both physically and culturally within the dominant society (Crenshaw, 1991) that this colorblind concept is unacceptable.

The combination of phenomenology and CRT was advantageous. Using phenomenology allowed me to get to the essence of their experiences and the voice component of CRT provided a way for ECEPs to communicate their experiences and perceived realities. Without their voices, a complete analysis of their experience could not have been made. It was important to recognize their experiential knowledge (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The usage of in depth interviews along with the questionnaires reinforced the belief that each of the participants are supreme authorities of their own experiences. (See appendix for questionnaires and interview questions)

### **Data Collection Overview**

A phenomenological design method was utilized to explore the ECEPs' perceptions of their experiences with their technical consultants. I utilized interviews since it is the dominant method for data collection in phenomenological research (Bevan, 2014). First, I gave the potential participant an inclusion questionnaire to determine whether or not they qualified to participate. (More information about the recruitment process and how potential participants were identified is included in the section called "Participant Recruitment") If, after completing the inclusion questionnaire, the criterion was met to continue, the ECEP was asked to complete a second questionnaire. Each participant was asked to complete an informed consent form

(described below), next an initial interview was scheduled. Because of the number of questions each participant was going to be asked, the questions were broken into two separate interviews and a questionnaire. This was done out of respect for the participants time. The space between the first and second interview varied for each participant. The space was anywhere between five days and one month, depending on participant availability. Between the first and the second interview, the first interview was transcribed and reviewed and participants were contacted by phone if any clarification was needed.

**Informed Consent.** Each potential participant was asked to complete the inclusion questionnaire. If they were identified as being eligible to participate, they were then given a copy of the informed consent form. I then asked them to follow along as I read the form to them. The consent form relayed the purpose of the study. It also told the number of questionnaires they would be asked to fill out, the number of interviews they would be asked to complete and the time that would be involved. Each participant was informed of her right to withdraw from the study at any time. They were also informed that everything that they said was voluntary and would be kept confidential. It also gave them information on who to contact in case there were questions or problems and warned as to whether or not there were any foreseeable risks or discomforts.

**Research Sample.** According to Groenwald (2004), the phenomenon dictates the method (not vice-versa) including the type of participants. Because of this, a criterion-based homogeneous purposive sampling method was used to locate and secure research participants. In Wisconsin, there are several types of out-of-home care: Licensed family childcare providers are able to care for up to eight children under the age of seven at one time. Certified Family Care

providers are able to care for three or fewer children under age seven at one time. Licensed Group Child Care providers are able to care for nine or more children at one time, while Day Camps are seasonal programs that provide care for four or more children ages three and up. Certified family, licensed family and group African American ECEPs all have a disproportionate number of 2 star ECECs, but I will focus solely on family ECEPs whether certified or licensed. Their percentage of 2-star providers far exceeds the other types of ECECs. (See appendix) I identified participants that met the following criteria:

- (a) Certified or licensed family ECEP;
- (b) Female;
- (c) African American owner or director of a daycare center located in one of nine primarily African American zip codes (53205, 53206, 53208, 53209, 53210, 53212, 53216, 53218, and 53225) areas in Milwaukee County: Choosing African American ECEPs in the nine zip-code areas was important because that is the target area of concern. They are the ones that have not seen a substantial rise in quality according to YoungStar. As of March 2015, these zip codes housed 61percent of the daycares in the city of Milwaukee, yet contained 72 percent of the two-star centers in the city, 17 percent of the three star centers and less than 2 percent of the four and five star rated ECECs (YoungStar, n.d.) Today these zip codes still have a majority of two star programs.
- (d) Preferably, an African American ECEP who has been in business continuously since the passing of the YoungStar Legislation. These ECEPs already have some longevity in the field and are less likely to close. According to Wagner,

(2015) entrepreneurs who start a business will fail within the first 18 months. They are past the 18-month time frame and have had the opportunity to work with a minimum of at least one technical consultant in the past seven years. I also consider providers that started in the business since the implementation of YoungStar if they have had at least two years of experience in the field.

- (e) Currently a two-star program: No higher than a two-star provider: Even though a three-star program is not considered the highest quality, YoungStar does not affect their income. When YoungStar was first implemented, two-star ECECs received a five percent reduction in the amount of money that they received from Wisconsin Shares; therefore, the African American ECEPs that were in business pre-YoungStar were greatly affected by the reduction in income. Those that started in business after YoungStar now have one percent deducted from the money that is put on an EBT cards that the families use to pay them.
- (f) An ECEC in which a minimum of 50 percent of their children are subsidized by Wisconsin Shares: Some ECEP's have made the decision, after the implementation of YoungStar, to stop providing care for children that are subsidized so that they will not have to deal with the increased oversight of YoungStar.
- (g) Has never been a student of mine in any of the early childhood classes that I teach currently or have taught in the past; I see this as a potential conflict of interest. I did not want my former students to answer in the way that they thought that I would want them to respond.

**Sample size.** Creswell (2000) recommends that a phenomenological study have five to twenty-five participants, while Morse (1994) recommends at least six participants. For this study of African American early care and education providers, I chose the sample size of 15 participants. In the search for participants it was found that over half of the 2-star ECEPs had taken an automated rating. When I started out with a provider zip code search to identify potential participants, I started with the 53218 zip code to get mailing addresses of the family ECEPs that had received a two-star rating. What was found was unexpected. Well over half of the two-star family providers in that zip code had taken an automated rating. If a provider requests an Automated Rating, upon receipt of the completed YoungStar Contract the local YoungStar office will enter the required information into YoungStar case management and a 2 Star Automated Rating is generated. Providers electing to receive an Automated Rating are not required to be on The Registry (Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, n.d.) I found the same thing in each of the additional zip codes in the study. Over half of the providers in those zip codes took an automated rating. What was left was 135 providers spaced out over nine zip codes that chose not to take an automated rating and to work with YoungStar. There is no indication of why so many ECEPs chose to take an automated rating. One thing is known. They were required to sign a YoungStar contract and would lose five percent of their income, but did not have to work with a technical consultant or have anyone come in and rate their program.

There is a website, provided by DCF that provides names, contact information, star rating and the start date of each early childhood program in the state of Wisconsin. Utilizing this website, potential participants that are in the targeted zip codes that are identified as two star centers on the YoungStar website were contacted. I mailed out surveys and made phone calls in

an attempt to contact each of the 135 potential participants (more details on potential participant list follows).

**Participant Recruitment.** As mentioned in Chapter One, in the ECE field, especially in Milwaukee, there is a sense of distrust. As in other research, it was important to think about how to gain access. Before attempting to collect any data, I obtained the required approval from the Institutional Review Board. Upon obtaining approval, I began the recruitment of participants. Gaining access is not a simple task and it requires a combination of strategic planning, hard work and in some cases luck (Van Maanen and Kolb, 1985). I began by contacting people that some would consider to be gatekeepers. A gatekeeper is defined as someone who controls access (Singh, Shenuka & Wassenaar, Douglas, 2016). Family and group ECEPs because of all of the scrutiny that they are exposed to are not a very trusting lot. I contacted the former director of the Wisconsin Child Care Registry. I went to Madison, Wisconsin to meet with her and we discussed her research and how ours could potentially make a difference in the field. She gave me several names of people that I could contact in the Milwaukee area that perhaps could encourage ECEPs to talk to me and participate in my research.

I contacted the former head of the Family Child Care union. She is an accredited family childcare provider in the Milwaukee area. Her center is located within the targeted zip code areas. I set up a meeting with her and she provided several suggestions as to how to make inroads with the family ECEPs. She had just resigned from her position as the vice president of the childcare union, so she still had some connections, but not as many as she would have if she would have still been in office. She put out a notice on the group Facebook page that yielded no results.

I contacted two other people that I believed could potentially be of assistance. One felt that it would be a conflict of interest to even talk to me and the second pushed me aside telling me that she could not give me any personal information of any childcare providers, which I had not asked for and do not need for this research.

I then turned to the Wisconsin YoungStar website that has all of the names, addresses and star ratings of every provider in the state and identified all of the ECEPs that would be potential participants. In the first mailing, which covered the majority of the zip codes targeted in this study, I mailed out 83 letters. Each envelope included an introductory letter, an inclusion survey and a self-addressed stamped envelope. Each piece of correspondence had a number on it that corresponded to the number of the potential participant. In my home office, I keep a printed copy of every two-star provider in those zip codes. The copy has the name, address and phone number of the ECEPs along with the number that I use to identify them.

The following week, I sent out an additional 52 letters. In all 135 letters were sent to the family ECEPs in the zip codes that were identified as primarily African American. These were the ones that had not decided to take an automated rating and had worked with a technical consultant in some capacity. It should be noted, that just because an ECEP had an automated rating, did not mean that they had never worked with a technical consultant at some point in time.

In order to reach all 135 of the two-star providers the first time, two separate mailings were sent out. In the next attempt to reach the providers there was one mailing sent to 120 providers that had not responded the first time. Only 120 were contacted the second time because several had indicated that they were not interested; two others identified as white and a couple

letters were returned due to the wrong address. After 135 letters were sent to the family ECEPs in the nine zip codes, and a second mailing, I gained the first eleven participants.

With each interview, I asked participants if they were aware of any family ECEPs who may want to participate in the study. This snowballing provided a few additional participants. One participant had a friend come to the interview that was set for her. While there, the friend completed the inclusion questionnaire and met the criteria. I interviewed both participants at separate times so they would not be influenced by the other's responses. I wanted each of them to be able to relate their own experience of working with their technical consultant. Some of the participants asked about an incentive for participating, but because that had not been previously approved, there was none offered.

**Demographics of Sample.** In order to be included in this study, the participants had to identify as African American and run a two-star program located in a nine zip code area in which the majority of the population was African American. The fifteen participants all identified as African American and had been in the field anywhere between two and thirty years. All of them had been in the field before the implementation of YoungStar, but only thirteen of the fifteen owned their businesses before YoungStar. The thirteen that were in business pre-YoungStar received a five percent decrease in their reimbursement rate. The other two were not affected in the same manner. Seven out of the nine primarily African American zip codes that were targeted are represented in this study. Two of the participants had master's degrees. Three of the participants were working on completing a childcare credential offered by a Wisconsin college.

Even though there is a credential that is specific to family childcare, none desired to complete that credential. Two were working on the Infant Toddler credential through the Milwaukee Area Technical College and one was working on completing the Preschool credential



by taking online courses through the Wisconsin University System. Upon completion of these credentials, all three of these providers would qualify in the education category to receive a three star. If they qualified in other areas, they would be eligible to receive a three star, thereby assuring that they would no longer have 5% of their income taken away. Two of the participants did not have high school diplomas. One was working on completing her high school diploma but was struggling and had to complete five tests before she could graduate. The other, at this time, planned to eventually complete her high school diploma, but did not feel that she currently had the time to work on it with the long hours she worked.

The fact that two providers did not have a high school diploma was not surprising. In Wisconsin 8.6 percent of adults do not have a high school diploma, while in Milwaukee; the percentage is significantly higher at 13.1 percent (Kids Count ,n.d.). According to Wisconsin's Childcare Workforce Study (2016), 34.8 percent of family ECEPs have a high school diploma or less, 40 percent have some college, 18.3 percent have an associate degree, 5.2 percent have a bachelor's degree and 1.7 have a Master's degree or more. My assumption would have been that the ECEPs with a Master's degree or more would have been a four star or higher, but as evidenced by the participants, that was not true. The number of family ECEPs with a high school diploma or less is significantly higher than the state average. The other eleven participants had high school diplomas and or some college credits in an unrelated field. College credits in an unrelated field do not count towards the Wisconsin Child Care Registry and do not count towards the educational expectations of YoungStar.

**Protocol/Data Collection.** Before any of the audiotaped interviews were conducted, the interview protocol was created using Critical Race Theory first, because the study is dealing with whether or not the ECEPs had a racialized experience and critical race theory says that racism is

endemic. Secondly, empirical articles were used as guidelines for what to ask and expect from the knowledge of previous studies. Next, phenomenology was used to understand their beliefs and perceptions about their interactions with the technical consultants and to get to the essence of their experiences. Finally, the research questions were utilized as a foundation to create the protocol because the researcher wanted to make sure that the questions were addressed and answered. In the protocol I included instructions to myself. I included information that I did not want to forget so that I would not waste the participant's time. The questions were designed to elicit each ECEP's experiences and perceptions of their interactions with their YoungStar technical consultants. Along with the key research questions, I included probes that I may have wanted to ask (see appendix). I left space between the questions on my interview form so that I could write extra notes as needed as I listened to the participants, so I could add these notes to the transcriptions. Sometimes the participants would unknowingly answer one of the other questions. Later, when we got to that question, I would let them know about that question, then ask if there was anything else that they would like to add to their response.

The data collection was conducted over a four-month period. The interviews were semi-structured to allow the participants to focus on what they thought was most relevant and to allow them to provide the broadest set of perspectives. Each interview ranged from 45-60 minutes for a total interview time with each participant ranging between 90-120 minutes, depending on the disposition of the participant. During the interviews, I asked questions about the ECEP's perception of their relationship with their technical consultant. I also asked about the cultural backgrounds of the provider and the technical consultant to ascertain whether or not the experience was perceived as culturally relevant.

**Questionnaires and Interviews.** Participants completed an inclusion questionnaire and a demographic questionnaire before being interviewed. Each semi-structured interview lasted between 45-60 minutes depending on the volubility of the participants. The questions focused on their interactions and the perceptions of their experiences with the technical consultants. I also asked questions to gather background information about the ECEPs and the history of their businesses.

Because of the volume of questions, all but one of the participants was interviewed twice. That individual completed both in one sitting because she was leaving the country. I was able to member check (member checking will be addressed in the member checking section) over the WhatsApp telephone application. Three of the interviews were held at a coffee shop or restaurant. The others were conducted at the ECEPs home. One provider indicated that she would be available early during the day. The interview lasted longer than she expected and was frequently interrupted as parents arrived with their children. She, however, did not want to end the interview; so, we paused it until she got the kids settled in and were able to finish.

I asked nine questions in the first interview and ten in the follow-up interview. The questions were designed to illicit information from the participants regarding their experiences and perceptions of their time with their YoungStar technical consultant. (See appendix of interview questions). The decision was made to interview the participants twice because of the number of questions that were on the original protocol. Some of those questions were deleted- specifically the ones that had yes or no answers. Some of the questions were put into the questionnaires that were part of the study and the rest were broken into two interviews. This was to insure that the participants had enough time to answer and the amount of questions would fit into the time allowed.

**Pilot Study.** In 2015, I did a pilot study regarding this topic. The topic was framed somewhat differently and a lot more questions were asked. At that time, I included both family and group early care and education providers. In that protocol there were a lot of questions that I found did not relate at all to the topic at hand. Some of the questions included: Have you taken the Wisconsin Model Early Standards? Have you heard of the REWARDS program? Those were questions regarding education and training that did not matter in this study. At least thirty of the questions that were included in that pilot study were eliminated while others were added that would be appropriate for this study.

During that study, I also realized that I had a lot of closed questions. I also felt that I did not want to interview people that had been my students. They seemed to feel like they had to answer a certain way even though I assured them that I wanted the truth.

### **Data Analysis**

I started with collecting the data. The data were taken from the questionnaires and from individual interviews. Two digital recorders were used to record data for each interview, with permission of the participants. The interviews with the ECEPs were transcribed verbatim within twenty-four hours. Non-verbal expressions were noted during the interviews and were later added to the transcriptions. All of the first interviews were completed and transcribed before the second round of interviews was started. The information from the first interview was used to guide the second interview as needed. If the participant, during the first interview answered a question that was included in the second interview, I asked them to expand on it and was able to add additional probing questions. Since there were two protocols, I started out the second interview with the clarifying questions about the first interview before going to the second interview protocol.

To begin analyzing the data, I started out with an initial reading of each transcript to get an overall feeling for what the ECEPs were saying about their interactions with the technical consultants. Along with the initial reading, I listened to the recording simultaneously to hear the ECEPs voice again while I was reading. Not just to get what they were saying about their interactions with the technical consultants, but also to see what other things stood out during that initial reading. The tone of their voices makes the reading not so flat and emotionless. During the interviews, a lot of emotions became evident. For this study it was important to hear the way that the participant spoke to be able to understand the depth of their feelings about the interactions and to help to get to the essence of the phenomena. I noted these emotions and later added them to the transcribed notes.

During and after the readings, I added to the notes that I wrote out during the face-to-face interviews. After the second reading along with the recording, I began to organize the data by hand. I made several copies of each transcript. I purchased large pieces of tag board. Since I am a visual person, I knew what worked best for me. I researched how to use electronic coding methods, but kept to what I was comfortable with.

At the top of each piece of tag board, I wrote one question from the protocol. I then taped each participant's answer to that board so that I could see it all together. When all of the responses were taped onto the tag board, I read them all together. I began to code. Patterns began to emerge, as I was able to see the codes and the responses together on the tag board. It helped me to see patterns in their responses. Because I have my own office, I was able to lay the pieces of tag board out to view all the questions and answers at the same time. This allowed me to view the codes that occurred not just within the same question, but also across questions. I used

highlighters and colored pencils to make notations and to identify the codes that were created. I created a list of codes (see appendix for codes).

One of the things that became apparent as I listened to the recordings and read the transcripts that there was a lot of emotion involved. As I listened to the recordings and read the transcriptions, I recognized the importance of allowing these participants to be able to share their counter narrative. As mentioned before, the African American ECEPs had been stigmatized by the media stories about fraud in Wisconsin Shares. Here was their chance to tell their stories. I also realized that their voices needed to be heard and shared with a broader audience. Critical Race Theory says that this provides a way for the oppressed to communicate their experiences and their realities.

**Validation Methods.** Along with recording everything in the time that I was with the participants, I kept notes on the surroundings. Especially when interviewing in the providers home/business. I made notes of the interactions with the children and with extraneous adults. I attempted to be objective and ask questions when someone seemed like they were hesitant to respond.

**Trustworthiness and Dependability.** The methodology for this project involved several procedures, which helped to ensure a trustworthy and ethical research process. To establish credibility, I took additional measures to ensure that responses were reported accurately. Because I was the only person conducting this research project, I felt that it was of particular importance to carry out a properly conducted study. Employing the use of triangulation was assistive, as it provides additional credibility measures. A demographic survey, questionnaires and a semi-structured interviews were part of the process. I developed an audit trail inclusive of: (a) interview protocols, (b) demographic information, (c) recorded, and (d) transcribed interviews.

**Member Checking.** According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), member checking is “the most crucial techniques for establishing credibility” in a study. It is also called respondent validation. The idea of member checking is to solicit feedback on the findings from some of the participants. According to Maxwell (2013), this is the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on, as well as being an important way of identifying your own biases and misunderstanding of what you observed (pp.126-127).

The actions that were taken were that depending on the willingness and availability of the participants, I followed up with participants after each interview to see if there was anything else that they wanted to add to their responses or to receive clarification to a response that they gave in an interview. I waited until the interview was transcribed and I had time to go over them thoroughly. I set up a time for the extra call at the end of each interview. I wanted each participant to know that I would be calling and what I would be calling for. If the participant did not want me to call, I worked on getting clarification during the second interview. The participants were contacted to clarify their responses and given the opportunity to add to what they had said during the interview, but at no time after the information was analyzed and/or coded was the information taken back to the participants to get their opinions on it. I did however clarify with them and get feedback on the meaning/interpretation of their first interview during the second interview. Another point to take note of is that many of the questions in the second interview were similar to the questions that were asked in the questionnaire. This, along with following up with the participants helped to systematically check the data as well as their account (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

## **Considerations**

Research has shown that African Americans have a deep-seated mistrust of research and participating in research projects. African Americans continue to participate substantially less than whites (Scharff, Mathews, Jackson, et al. 2010). Some may refer to the Tuskegee syphilis experiment when discussing race-targeted experimental testing; but as recently as the 1990s, unethical research involving African Americans has been conducted (Scharff et. al., 2010).

Whether or not participants are aware of the aforementioned research studies, as noted in the last chapter, there is a notable sense of mistrust that African American ECEPs have regarding dealing with the Department of Children and Families and YoungStar. The aforementioned actions of DCF have created a sense of mistrust and suspicion that many providers have. Even though, I came as a researcher, I also came as an empathetic insider because of my own experience with technical consultants. I needed to be able to assure them that everything would be in an ethical manner and that the expectation was that the research would be of benefit to them. Lastly, that they will be able to have their voice heard and that because of their participation, the hope is that changes will be made in policies involving the technical consultant/ECEP process.

The utmost respect and protection of the participants was a top priority for the duration of this study. The researcher's responsibility to maintain each respondent's dignity and safety was paramount. Given the sensitivity of this research's topic, it was essential that I went the extra mile in providing a quality reflective experience for all. To further support this, each participant was given a thorough explanation of the study's purpose, as well as how the information would be treated thereafter. A variety of safeguards were put into place as an added measure of security. As discussed, I went over the consent form to make sure that everything was clear and assured



the participants that they may withdraw from the study at any time.

**Researcher's Positionality.** An important aspect of qualitative research is the concept of reflexivity. According to Creswell (2012), reflexivity has two parts. The first is when the researcher talks about his or her experience with the phenomenon, the second part is to discuss how this past experience shapes the researcher's interpretation of the phenomenon. This is when the writer shows consciousness of the biases, values, and experiences that he or she may bring to the study (Hammersly & Atkinson, 1995). As a part of being transparent, I shared some of my experiences with the providers as a way to build rapport. At the same time, I found that it was important to gauge how much to share and with whom. I did not want to sway the information that they shared in any way. As they shared their experiences, I was aware of my own personal feelings that surfaced. I did take notes, so that I could review my own feelings. At the same time, I recognized that I had to subjugate my own personal biases in order to not lead the interview with my own biases or assumptions. Even though I had some of the same experiences that the providers shared. I felt that it was important to get to the essence of their experiences while recognizing that if my feelings were so strong, theirs may be too. Below, I will share some of my experiences while in the field working with YoungStar and their technical consultants

A basic assumption of CRT is that structured power relations inform the world. Disenfranchised groups have historically been taken advantage of in research and now many marginalized groups are suspicious of how they will be portrayed and what is the researchers "actual" agenda (Randall, 1996). As a critical researcher and an ECEP, I recognize that this research should be done with people and not on people. (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016)

As an African American ECEP myself, I have had extensive experience with YoungStar technical consultants. When the YoungStar program began in 2010, I had the first of many

experiences with technical consultants. As a requirement of YoungStar, the ECEC that I have been working in as a director was assigned a technical consultant. A meeting was arranged, and upon her arrival for our initial meeting, she was met at the door and led to a room to meet with my sister and myself. My sister, Karen, is the administrator of the program and I am the director of our program, which is licensed for 146 children and one of the largest privately owned minority programs in the city of Milwaukee. After our introductions, the technical consultant proceeded to pull out paperwork, look over it, and then she announced, “I guess you will be a two-star program.”

Karen and I looked at each other, then back at her and asked. “Why?”

She replied, “Because of your educational levels.”

At that time, Karen had a master’s degree in educational psychology and I had an associate’s degree in early childhood education and our staff had the educational qualifications to earn over a two-star rating. I responded, “Obviously, you don’t know us. Did you ever look at our qualifications?” That was our inauspicious introduction to YoungStar technical consultants.

In the early care and education field, I hold several positions outside of my program. I am a trainer, consultant and currently an instructor at a state university. A month after I met the YoungStar consultant, Karen and I attended a meeting in Madison, WI, with consultants from throughout the state. This meeting included consultants who worked independently and those who worked with YoungStar. My sister sat next to the YoungStar consultant who had come to our program. During the meeting, another YoungStar consultant said, “They need to realize that they will never be more than a two star” when referring to minority programs located in

Milwaukee. My sister and I looked at each other with our mouths agape. It was then that I realized there was a problem. After telling the consultant what I thought about her comments, I decided to talk to other providers about their experiences. Those experiences and the conversations with other African American ECEP's were the impetus for this research.

The challenge for me as a researcher and insider was to allow the voice of subjectivity to emerge authentically in coming to an understanding of what essentially the research participants meant in their personal accounts expressed through the data collection. At the same time because of my insider/outsider position, I recognized the importance of collecting rich data from the participants. I needed to delve into their experiences and explore the nuances of their individual experiences.

**Conclusion.** Using Critical Race Theory and phenomenology to delve into the experiences that the ECEPs had while interacting with the technical consultants helped frame my research activities around what was going on in the minds of the participants. It also led to a more sympathetic view of their situation. It was important to hear the voices of the participants, and illuminate their voices for this conversation. This was evident, when one of the participants, after the study, called me and said, "Thank you for allowing me to tell my story. People don't understand". After reading the next chapter, my hope is that we will all understand.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The objective of this chapter is to explore the relationship between Milwaukee African American Early Care and Education Providers (ECEPs) and their assigned Technical Consultants from YoungStar, which is the early childhood rating system implemented in 2010. This study targets the African American ECEPs who own Early Care and Education Centers (ECECs) in Milwaukee zip codes that are documented as majority African American (see the appendix for details on the demographics of these zip codes).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, semi-structured interviews were used to explore the relationships between the African American ECEPs and their technical consultants. After transcribing, coding and analyzing the interview data, three major themes emerged. The first of which was *competence*, which alludes to how the ECEPs indicated that they were offering quality services to the families they serve. The second theme that emerged was *regulations and relationships*. This refers to the relationships that the ECEPs had with those that had regulatory oversight over them prior to their first encounter with YoungStar. In the discussion of this theme, we will hear about the experiences that the ECEPs had with the different representatives of the Department of Children and Families (DCF) such as licensors, the Fraud Unit and YoungStar. The last theme that will be covered is *feelings of sabotage*. This will address how the ECEPs interacted with the YoungStar technical consultants and how they frequently felt that their efforts were being undermined or sabotaged.

As a phenomenological study, the voices of the African American participants are paramount. By employing direct quotes from their interviews, I highlight their experiences, assumptions and perceptions. The first part of this chapter explores how the ECEPs' experiences

prior to the implementation of YoungStar affected their expectations of Young Star and interactions with the technical consultants. The second part of this chapter gives an account of the participants' experiences while working with their YoungStar technical consultants including how the technical consultants were introduced into the lives, businesses and homes of the participants and how that affected the participants as they navigated the new rating system, rules and obligations they were to abide by.

### **Competence and Power**

One of the questions of this study is, how did the African American early care and education providers feel about the extent to which the technical consultants helped them to improve their practice as providers and/or leaders. One finding, although the question was not specifically asked, was that the study participants each indicated in their own way that they felt that they were already competent. They each felt that they were providing quality services before they began working with the technical consultants. With the implementation of YoungStar, it is astonishing that they still felt that they were competent after being rated as two stars. According to Black Feminist Theory, "when a group has been relegated to a subordinate position in the social order of things and believes that that position is underserved it affects their sense of self worth, value and accomplishment (Amoah, 1997, p. 88). In the case of this study, the African American women who had already suffered through the stigmatization and the accusations of fraud were now being told that their businesses were subpar before having to make the required changes. Even so they maintained that they were doing quality work pushing past the narratives.

Though it wasn't overtly stated or asked about in the questionnaires or interviews, it seems that they felt a sense of power and ownership in that they were business owners. One provider, Erica, mentioned the fact that she always wanted to be an entrepreneur. Another

provider, Tammy, said that because others weren't doing a good job that she had to do something. By do "something", she meant start a business that would provide the quality that was needed. Another study participant, Becky, pointed out that she felt that she was doing a good job before YoungStar because she was covering the benchmarks for preparing the children in her care for school. She said:

I thought I was doing a good job because the kids were doing art projects. I would do story time with them. They were learning their ABCs, shapes, colors and numbers. And, that's what I thought I was doing-preparing the children for school.

This quote also illustrates that she felt secure in her understanding of developmentally appropriate practices that she was providing to the children in her care, but being rated a two star program by YoungStar made her question whether or not she was doing a good job. What made her feel prepared to educate the children was that, over the years, she had attended many workshops and taken a large number of continuing education classes in order to learn as much as she could about caring for children. When asked about the classes that she had taken, she said, "You know how we're required to take so many hours of workshops every year? I always went over. Why do the least that you can? This is my business. These are my children". Once again implying a sense of ownership.

Another study participant, Sharonda, shared that she felt that she was providing quality care. Having worked in a group early care and education center (ECEC) for ten years prior to opening her own ECEC, gave her confidence in her ability to administer quality programming:

I'm kind of old school. I'm like one of those daycare providers. I consider myself to be a good quality daycare, old school provider, doing the basics. Not into all that new stuff.

When asked what she meant by "old school" she expanded and said:

Old school. Where I think a lot of times—because I can do it in my way. Where I try to teach my kids more manners. I don't think a lot—the way the parents is bringing up these kids now days. They don't really teach their kids manners and I think that's a good part of learning, is manners. So I let them know when they come in here, the highest scale of learning, manners. Something as simple as that.

Sharonda felt that her experience gave her the wisdom and the knowledge that she needed to provide quality service to the children in her care. She did not only rely on her own opinion about whether or not she was doing a good job. When asked what she thought her technical consultants thought about her when she first met them, she replied, “Well, I think they left out with a smile on they face. That's what I think.” When probed for more information she said, “The conversation, you know? I think they thought I was doing good. Yeah.” According to YoungStar this provider was rated as a two star provider. But, according to Black Feminist Epistemology she had a wisdom that perhaps others that were outside of the intersection in which she found herself would not understand (Amoah, 1997).

Another participant, Lynise had worked in other ECECs for over twenty years; therefore, when it came to leading her own program, she, too, was confident in her ability. While working in one of the group ECECs, Lynise had cared for eight babies at a time by herself. That is what led her to open her own ECEC. She felt that if she could care for eight babies by herself while working for someone else, why couldn't she do it for herself? She stated this about working for herself:

This is my domain. I can do this with my eyes closed. I have two babies and I have four two year olds [currently in her ECEC]. And I work them. We work each other. And, I'm not tired. Only time is the busiest time, lunch of course because everybody wants to eat.

They want to eat and they want to eat. Lunch and departure are busiest because everybody leaves at the same time. .

In a group early care and education program, the ratio for teacher to student for this age of children is 1:4 for children aged two and under. The largest group size for ages two and under is eight, with two teachers. Lynise felt to care for this number of children in a family daycare and to be able to meet their needs proved to her that she was doing a good job. Lynise was not just indicating that she felt competent. When she expressed that it was her domain., this spoke to the sense of power that she felt with her accomplishments.

Another participant, Fannie, felt competent because in her analysis, other programs (including past working contexts) were not as strong as her program. At the urging of a family member, she opened her own. She believed that she was providing the quality programming that she felt was not present in other ECECs that she had visited. When YoungStar was introduced, her first thought was it would be good because other ECEPs needed something to motivate them to improve. She said about YoungStar:

Oh, that'd be good. That'd help other daycares come up to meet the standards. Initially, I thought it would be a good thing because it's now going to force the daycares that's not providing quality services to do it.

Fannie had owned a group home for teen girls with babies. A part of her responsibilities was to help them find jobs and childcare. She knew what she was expecting in a quality program. She thought the girls should have more quality programs to choose. She thought that forcing the others to do better was a great idea.

The comments of these ECEPs were indicative of what others thought. Three of the fifteen compared themselves to others to prove their competence. But, another participant,



DeAngela felt that partnering up with different stakeholders strengthened the quality of her program while at the same time proving that she had a quality program. She said:

I work out of my home and my program is very much geared towards the environment and growth and sustainability. I have a backyard that's large enough for the children, but it's not really the outdoor type classroom that I dream of having. So I partner with the Urban Ecology, which is about five blocks from my home. I utilize their evening program where the children do nature exploration, fishing and canoeing. The children also do some organic cooking and whatnot. Partnering with the Urban Ecology program helps me to meet the goals that I've set for my program.

Each of the participants that were in the field and had their businesses before YoungStar indicated during the interview that they felt that they were providing quality services. Tierney also felt that she was competent and providing quality service. She said:

In my opinion, my center is a quality childcare because it is a center that is child and parent friendly. We provide better educational experiences that meet the needs with children as a whole and then those individually. And, I'm able to adapt the activities to meet the needs of the children. That's what I feel my center is.

All of the participants felt that their experience in the field helped them to provide quality services. Four out of fifteen of the participants felt that the trainings and workshops in addition to their experience helped them. Three participants had volunteered in group programs, discovered how much they enjoyed the experience, and then decided to start their own business. DeAngela felt that partnering with others helped her to provide quality care.

Tammy indicated that she felt that she was competent and had a quality program when said:

Look around. My center looks like even though it's family, it looks like a group center. It looks like it's a quality program and it breaks off the rooms. They're not watching TV.

So it did better me taking the class.

Tammy compared her family ECEC to a group ECEC. It seemed that this comparison made her feel good and that being like a group ECEC indicated that she was running a quality program.

Also, saying that the room was broken off –indicating that she had created learning centers is another indicator of quality. That was something that she had learned about in one of the classes that she had taken.

Vicki was the most bold about her proclaiming her competence and the most bold about what she felt was others incompetence. She didn't mind saying:

I know what I'm doing, but I do have a problem. I think that because our (African American) programs are usually underfunded, we don't have financial access to someone that could write a grant and bring in additional monies to fund some of the additional things that need to happen. I think that we are not progressing as well as we should. And I do think that part of that is a socioeconomic factor, I do. I think that the funding that comes from the state is insufficient. So, I don't know that we still fully understand what quality is and how do we get there? And, I think people of color-African Americans- I think we understand less. I think we understand less because we don't always go the meeting and we're not always paying attention. We are simply running our businesses.

Vicki was very involved and attended meetings. She had an employee that she could leave in charge of her business when she was away. She thought it was important to know what was going on in the field, so she attended meetings to try to stay up to date with what was going on

and to provide the quality that she thought was necessary even though she was rated as a two star program.

As for the ECEPs that opened their business after YoungStar, they also felt they had a level of competence. Prior to opening her own business, Alexa had worked for an ECEC for over ten years until she felt it was time to make a change and run her own business. She recalled how it happened:

When you get to the point where you get tired of working for other people and you just go out there and just do it. Because I've been trying to do it for the longest and that's—so one day I was like, “Just do it. Just do it. Just do it. You can do it!” So one day I just—actually just quit my job. Yes, I just quit and went down there; signed up to take the class at 4C's [an organization that offers entry level courses for ECEP], got my package [information on how to open a center] filled it out. Did everything. Took everything down there. There's one daycare I used to work at. She got closed down. So a lot of the stuff, she gave me and I got opened up. I know what I am doing and am thinking about opening a group center now.

As evidenced by what she said, Alexa was confident in her ability to run a program. She was so assured of her ability to run a quality program that she reported that, “I've been talking to my consultant, telling her that I would like to do group. Get a small building”. Making the leap from caring for up to eight children to having employees and caring for additional children would indicate that one has a lot of confidence in their abilities. She said it was a “Big step”, but felt that she could do it. Alexa, like Lynise, also seemed to want to be in control of her own destiny.

Another provider, Lisa, opened after YoungStar when she grew tired of working for other people and wanted to be her own boss. She recalled how she would ask her “grandboys” about

their day and what they learned in daycare. She wasn't satisfied with their answers or with what she saw in the ECEC that she worked in, so she quit to start her own. She said that she:

...wanted to see if I could be an entrepreneur. Do what I can, knowing that I would be the best because I would like to treat others like I want to be treated and the children that I care for learn and have something to talk about when they go home.

Four out of the fifteen ECEPs felt that there was a need that was not being met. They felt that the children were not being taught what they needed in the programs that they were currently attending. They also felt that other programs were not up to par. Because of this, they decided to take action and do what they felt was necessary to meet the need.

The general consensus of the participants was that they were providing quality care. Three of the fifteen went so far to say that they were doing a better job than their peers. The conviction that they were providing quality services is one reason that they had the expectations that when it came time to be rated that they would do well. Because they felt they were providing quality services before they interacted with YoungStar, most of them indicated that working with the technical consultant helped them to improve their practices minimally. This spoke to one of the questions of this study. How did the African American early care and education providers feel about the extent to which the technical consultants helped them to improve their practice as providers and/or leaders? According to this minimally. This also addressed the argument for this study. This study argues that while proper funding is critical to improving quality of ECECs, it is not enough to affect sustainable change. Instead, it is imperative that interactions with governing and regulating agencies in addition to interactions with technical consultants be culturally responsive to meet the unique needs of the ECEPs in order to implement sustainable change within the early care and education setting. Even though the ECEPs felt that they were

providing quality services, there were still changes that needed to be made according to YoungStar. The technical consultants were the ones charged with helping the ECEPs make these changes.

### **Regulations and Relationships**

This section of the chapter will address the ECEP's interactions with the components of the Department of Children and Families (DCF) before YoungStar was introduced. This will include the DCF licensors and the DCF Fraud Unit, which was created in response to media coverage as it related to Wisconsin Shares and childcare providers. This section will also cover the media coverage of fraud in the Wisconsin Shares system and how this impacted the ECEPs. The relationship of the ECEPs with YoungStar and the technical consultants will be touched upon, but will be addressed more in depth in a latter part of the chapter. One of the guiding questions of this study is, how did race or racial differences affect the ECEPs perceptions of their interactions with the technical consultants. In this section, I will show how the ECEPs racialized interactions with DCF and their representatives affected their later expectations of YoungStar and the technical consultants. As was mentioned previously, when there were allegations of fraud, the Fraud Unit was created along with a fraud tip line and YoungStar. YoungStar was said to be put in place to prevent fraud. According to Stefancic and Delgado (2012), "when policies prioritize broad concerns over those of particular subgroups, many needs may end up being left unaddressed". This was the case with YoungStar. When DCF needed to eliminate fraud in the system, they did not take into account how it would affect the African American providers who were historically oppressed because of their race as well as the intersections of gender and class in providing child care services within the context of Milwaukee welfare reform.

**Interactions with DCF.** A part of being in the field of early care and education is working within the boundaries of different governing agencies. The primary agency that ECEPs work with is the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF). As mentioned in chapter one, DCF is the governing body that licenses ECEPs. DCF has many components. The licensing component of DCF is accountable for the statewide licensure of childcare facilities, including family childcare, group childcare and day camps. The purpose of this component of DCF is to promote the health, safety and welfare of children in licensed care and ensuring that licensing requirements are met through ongoing inspections of child care facilities (Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, n.d.).

YoungStar is also under the auspices of DCF. It is a childcare quality rating and improvement system. According to their website, YoungStar objectively measures child care quality and supports ECEPs by giving them tools and training to deliver high-quality care by setting a consistent standard for child care quality (Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, n.d.). Licensing regulations and staff as well as YoungStar policies and staff are under the auspices of DCF, but are two separate entities with different responsibilities.

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the licensing component of DCF licenses ECEPs. It also provides continual oversight with unannounced inspections by licensors. The licensors may come to check up on the ECEPs for a required inspection or if a complaint was made against the ECEP. Inspections by the licensors may lead to an ECEP being penalized in some manner if it is found that they are not in compliance with one of the rules. The penalty may be as minor as a “write-up” or as severe as an ECEP having their license revoked.

Each ECEP was asked about their experiences with their licensors. The ECEPs experience with the licensors during the unannounced visits has the potential to affect the ECEPs

perceptions of their interactions with the YoungStar technical consultants because they are both part of the Department of Children and Families. Although the two entities are separate with different goals and expectations, the ECEPs experiences with the licensor, whether positive or negative, could affect their expectations and perceptions of their interactions with the YoungStar technical consultants.

One ECEP, Delores, recounted an event that occurred when her white licensors came in for an unannounced inspection:

My licensor, when she came, her butt sat in that kitchen, her and her little friend [two female licensors]. And they just talking about that kitchen and what they want they kitchen to look like. And then they went into the bathroom, and they was like, “It’s so clean! Can you come and do mine?” This is not *The Help!*

Delores’ reference to *The Help* was about the 2011 movie about the racism that Black maids experienced while working for white families in the 1960’s. She then said, “They probably wouldn’t have said that to a White provider! I ain’t no maid!” These licensors failed to recognize that they were not just entering someone’s business, but they were entering someone’s home. Just as Lynise had said that her ECEC was her domain, this was Delores’ “domain” that the licensors were rummaging through and critiquing. There was a degree of respect that should have been shown by the licensors to the ECEPs. Darlene Clark Hines (1989) discusses how Black women are caught up in an ever evolving constantly shifting, but relentless war for personal autonomy and economic liberation. In this case, here was an African American businesswoman who had taken the risk to forge her own path and work for herself being asked to clean a white woman’s bathroom. This supposed compliment was the encapsulation of a microaggression. Delores also mentioned her overall impression of licensors:

I think most people think their licenser is mean or sneaky. I think my licenser is sneaky. I like her, but I think that's their job. To me, they can't be buddy-buddy to you because they have to have that line. And, of course, they're going to smile and hold conversation. You're going to get wrote up for something. They can't let you have no clean slate.

When asked why she thought the licensers could not allow an ECEP to have a "clean slate", she told me that one of her licensers had told her that, "You're always going to get written up for something. We can't let you have a five-year clean slate." Hearing this had to be demotivating, knowing that the licenser (at least this one) felt that it was her duty to find something wrong.

Delores went on to describe another licensing inspection in which her licenser sat down with her at her kitchen table and made small talk. The licenser mentioned a few things that she needed to fix, and Delores immediately made the changes. She felt that because she had made the changes right away that everything was okay. That is, until a week later, she received a write up in the mail from the licenser. Hence, the feelings that she was sneaky. The licenser made her feel comfortable then wrote her up anyway. Even though she said the licenser was sneaky, she "liked her" because she was doing what she was supposed to do: "Write her up".

One of the questions that each participant was asked on the questionnaire was, "Have you in the past or presently believed that African American providers are treated differently than white providers?" This question was asked in regards to licensers and in regards to YoungStar technical consultants. Only the responses regarding the licensers will be addressed in this section. During the interviews, when asked if African American ECEPs were treated differently three of the fifteen participants said that they felt that they had never experienced negative treatment by a licenser. Two of those three got into the business after YoungStar was implemented. Two of the study participants said no, they did not feel that African Americans



were treated differently at all. While three of the participants said that it depended on the licensor from their experience. They wouldn't say that all licensors treated African Americans differently. They each had worked with more than one licensor and their experiences varied according to which licensor they were working with. The rest of the participants commented that they did think that African Americans were treated differently than white providers.

Out of the seven that said that African Americans were treated differently, although not asked in the interview, four ECEPS asserted that they noticed a disparity in the way in which they were treated by African American licensors. One ECEP, Kenyatta, that had worked with several different licensors said:

I know license people. From what I hear—even us black people, is harder on us than they [white licensors] are. I don't know. I don't know if they expect more, but they petty.

Some of them are petty.

From her experience working with licensors overall, she had the expectation that each was going to be harder on African Americans. Unfortunately, from her experience and from what she had heard others say, her perception was that African American licensors were harder on Black ECEPs than white ones were.

Her perception was not unique concerning African American licensors. Vicki said concerning her experience with her African American licensor:

There's that racial piece that happens with us [African Americans], when we are sometimes people of color interacting with people of color. We somehow think we are going to get more support and we don't always. We don't!

Vicki had worked with black and white licensors and felt that there was a disparity in the way in which African Americans were treated. She was surprised when the African Americans treated

her differently. As she indicated, she thought she was going to receive more support from the African American licensors than she did. Another study participant, Tierney, indicated that race played a part in her interactions with her licensor. She gave the example of one specific incident:

Okay, I am not one to throw the race card. If I'm doing something that I'm not supposed to do or that needs improvement as far as a licensor is concerned, let me know and I'll make those corrections because I know that's your job [referring to the licensor]. But, I don't like intimidation and when you come in and intimidate me or try to intimidate me. That's when my guard goes up. That's when I'm like beep, beep, beep, beep, [making motions like she was in a vehicle and backing up]. We got a problem here. He was talking some stuff that wasn't right and at the time I said, "No, you're not right and you're not going to come in here and intimidate me"! And then he said, [the licensor] "You're smart." He said, "No one else would ever said anything to me about this." [Then the provider continued and said about the licensor] And that's not right. If you know you're wrong or close to doing something wrong, just tell me.

This participant felt that the African American licensor was doing more than testing her knowledge of the licensing rules and regulations, but attempting to ensnare her. She felt that if she had not known the licensing rules that she would have been unfairly written up.

Another participant, LaShunda, when giving an example of how she felt she was treated differently by a white licensor communicated her resentment when she recalled how her white licensor expressed surprise when she found out that the African American male that she had driving her van to pick up the children that attended her center did *not* have a criminal record:

Yes, I do think that black centers that are minority owned run centers are treated differently because I don't think she would have went to a white center and asked to see

their driver's police records and then make the comment that, "Oh! He doesn't have a criminal record?"

While LaShunda was speaking, one could tell that she was still very upset about the event and she went so far to call the remarks racist.

Though seven of the ECEPs recounted negative experiences with their licensors, as mentioned previously, four did report positive experiences. One ECEP, Cheryl, said when speaking of her relationship with her white licensors:

I felt almost fortunate at some levels to have a licensor—One of my first licensors was—she had been with the state for a while. And she was very informative. So, my relationship with her was good. And then, there was a rotation and I was assigned a new licensor and he was very helpful. They both would write you up if you were wrong but I didn't perceive this to be punitive. They wanted to find a way to try to help me and support me. And, at a lot of levels when we talk about my licensors, I did feel supported.

Cheryl reported that she had a great relationship with the two white licensors that she had worked with. She also spoke about how once when she was out of town on a business trip and her licensor made an unannounced visit. When the licensor saw that the person in charge was overwhelmed with the situation, the ECEP told how the licensor helped. She said:

She was assisting them in the classroom trying to give them directives. This is what you do. This is what you need to do. I got a lot of write-ups, but she helped me to resolve the problems.

This licensor showed that she cared about the welfare of the children and the ECEP appreciated and respected her for caring and assisting. What that licensor did was outside her realm of responsibility.

Another ECEP, Erica, told about her positive relationships with her licensor. She went so far to compare her current licensor favorably with the one that she had years ago:

I've had great interactions with the current licensor that I have within the current family child center that I own now. Her and I, we've had great, great interaction. She's also been a very good support in the-- I can actually have a comparison. Because years ago, back in '08, '09, or actually, yeah, '08, '09, when I had a licensor, that particular individual was very militant, very strict. And I did not get the gist or the feeling from that person that they were in support of my business, and in support of the work that I do within the field. I got a real-- I picked up a real deep vibe of them being--very wanting to police the business versus support the business in aspects of regulatory and safety. Instead of being proactive about the safety of the house, and the operation, and just the flow of the business. It just seemed as if they were coming off as, "Hey, I got you. Hey, I'm going to get you", versus, "Hey, let's take more active measures. Why don't we sweep this area so that it can be a little bit more safe for the children? Why don't we change this around so it will support you as a provider?" I didn't get that from my previous licensor. But, the licensor that I'm working with, she is very, very supportive in that manner.

This ECEP had varied experiences with licensors, but her experiences show that an ECEPs experience varied according to whom they are working with. In this account she said that she felt she was being policed and that the licensors attitude was that he was out to get her. That feeling was not unique among the providers. The same thing will be said about other DCF representatives. Although not said about all, it is not good that this was the perception that any of the providers had. As evidenced by the experiences that were shared, four of the ECEPs reported positive experiences with their licensors, seven did not and this, as was previously

mentioned, this had the potential to affect their expectations when they were required to work with the YoungStar technical consultants that were a part of DCF.

**Media Coverage.** In this section I will discuss how the media coverage relating to the fraud in Wisconsin Shares affected the ECEPs and also brought about the creation of a new arm of the DCF-the Fraud Unit. In 2009, in the media coverage by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel about fraud in the Wisconsin Shares system, DCF was blamed for the state being bilked out of millions of dollars by ECEPs because of their lack of oversight of Wisconsin Shares (Rutledge, 2009). Newspaper headlines that focused on Wisconsin Shares that highlighted Milwaukee African American providers, prompted DCF to create a Fraud investigation unit. As a result of the Fraud Units investigations, many ECEPs, primarily in Milwaukee had their licenses suspended or revoked ([dcf.wisconsin.gov](http://dcf.wisconsin.gov)).

With YoungStar being presented as a tool to prevent fraud, it is no wonder that many of the ECEPs had negative expectations of YoungStar and felt intimidated by its creation. Vicki stated:

At the time that YoungStar was implemented, there was a lot happening in the city in terms of fraud. And, it seemed at that time that the focus of all of those investigations were always African American centers. And, so you take that and the person that was writing all of these articles for the Journal Sentinel- keeping focus on African American, primarily females that were operating childcare centers. And then, even when I listened to talk radio in the black community, there was so much of the focus that was on providers committing fraud. So, we were being painted in this negative light. And so, you take that, and then now you marry that with, here is a new rating system that we're implementing. And so, you assume that it's just another way to prove that African

American women don't know what they're doing. I did not see them as my friend coming into my center. I did not see them as a support system. I did not see them that way. Given what the political climate was here at that time, I just felt like it was a second way that they were looking at African American women in particular because when I watched and paid attention to the centers that were being closed, they were primarily all African American centers. I didn't hear anything about any white center being closed or investigated for that matter.

The ECEPs were working in a volatile climate that was exacerbated by the media coverage of fraud. It is no surprise that some of them would be suspicious when YoungStar was introduced. They would now be required to allow three separate DCF representatives into their homes. Interaction with either of these could potentially affect their business. If they refused to work with YoungStar, they would automatically receive a five percent reduction in the amount they are reimbursed from Wisconsin Shares. If they chose to work with YoungStar, there was still the possibility that they would still receive a reduction in their payments.

One study participant, Tammy, when asked what were her thoughts when the YoungStar legislation had passed had views similar to Vicki. She felt that they were targeting minority owned centers:

It felt more punitive. There were other things that were going on at the same time [stories in the Journal Sentinel about daycare fraud-targeting Milwaukee] and as a woman of color, I really felt that they were targeting centers that were minority-owned or run. It felt like they were trying to find a way to eliminate people of color from childcare.

Nine of the thirteen study participants that were in business before YoungStar expressed the same views. They felt that the state of Wisconsin wanted Black ECEPs out of business and

YoungStar was their instrument to do it. The newspapers and websites listed child care programs that were closed down because of what were called “crackdowns”. As mentioned in chapter two, in October 2009, ninety-nine programs (primarily in the zip codes that are targeted by this study) were cut off from Wisconsin Shares (Rutledge, 2009). The crackdowns were the first part of closing down programs. DeAngela made it very clear that she felt that YoungStar was a tool to get African American ECEPs out of business when she said:

I felt that the perception was we didn't know what we were doing as people of color and somehow we didn't have the right to be in the field. Which again, given the political climate at the time and the fact that there were numerous centers and owners that were being accused and all the fraud was directed toward women of color, I really did feel like it was a racial thing. And then we were looking at the quality rating improvement system [YoungStar]. I felt it was another nail to be able to drive people of color out of the field. We developed this quality rating system and then we'll set the standards. Because I said, “Who is sitting on the committees? Who decided that this was the criteria? Did anyone ask us?” Why did the penalties start almost immediately?

DeAngela's perception of YoungStar's agenda led her to believe that her efforts to improve her programs' ratings would be undermined because she felt that YoungStar's purpose was to eliminate African American ECEPs from the field as a whole. The media coverage that seemed to primarily focus on African American ECEPs and the reception that ECEPs received in their own community made some of the ECEPs feel uncomfortable.

**Fraud Unit.** The Fraud Unit was created because of the media coverage of the fraud in the Wisconsin Shares system. Because of this, the ECEPs that were in business before the

implementation of YoungStar were the ones primarily affected. Their previous experiences with DCF licensors, and then the uncertainty that they experienced because of the media coverage, caused many of the ECEPs to feel uncomfortable. Some ECEPs felt that people thought that they too were committing fraud. As mentioned in Chapter Two, in 2009 alone, over two hundred providers were suspended because of what was termed, “red flags signifying Shares violations” (Kaiser, 2011). It didn’t matter that some of those suspensions were later overturned in Milwaukee County Circuit Court (Kaiser, 2011).

As mentioned before, the ECEPs were now required to allow the Fraud Unit investigators into their programs. In the interviews, there were no questions about the DCF Fraud Unit, but three participants brought the subject up. One of the study participants, Chevy, told about her experience with the DCF Fraud Unit:

I had my first interrogation far as fraudulent behavior. I guess they were going around collecting—I’ve never experienced that, but I have seen other providers experience it or whatever going around collecting papers (attendance records). That’s when they were doing that in and out thing and somebody came over and said, “We need to see your paperwork,” and I’m like, “my paperwork?” And I was like—I didn’t have a problem with it, but the way they did it and they took all my paperwork. And I’m like, “Oh my goodness. What is going on here? This is the police!”

Chevy felt very uncomfortable about this experience. So uncomfortable that she compared the Fraud Unit interrogation to a police interrogation. It should be noted here that what Chevy said about the Fraud Unit was similar to what Erica had said about her licensor. They both made reference to “police”. She also commented that the attitude was “I’m going to get you”. Here we



have two separate entities of DCF being referred to as policing the ECEPs. One might question how this would affect the expectations of YoungStar?

As a business owner, Chevy was aware that other ECEPs had been investigated by the Fraud Unit, but was surprised when they came into her program. She felt that there was no reason they should have come because she was honest. Before making this statement, the ECEP had been very positive about her experiences while in the field.

She was not the only ECEP that felt uncomfortable about the Fraud Unit coming into her program. Sharonda, said when the Fraud Unit came in to her ECEC and they began to question her. She stated that she said to them, “I was like, ‘Hold on.’ And I had to kind of let them know everybody is not fraud. Don’t stereotype all the daycares. Sorry, everybody’s not for that!” She wanted them to recognize that every ECEP is not involved in attempting to fraud the system and should not be stereotyped.

The ECEPs initially only had to deal with DCF licensors coming into their ECECs for unannounced inspections with the possibility of being written up for rule violations or their license being revoked for serious violations. Now, they had to be apprehensive about the DCF Fraud Unit coming into their programs/homes with the ability to demand all of their records seemingly with the suspicion that ECEPs are committing fraud which had the possibility to leading to an ECEP having their license suspended and their financial well-being affected. Previously, the sense of power that the ECEPs felt was discussed. How might this invasion into their domains by DCF representative affect their sense of power and autonomy? How would the ECEPs feel about DCF forcing another authority figure on them with what the perception is of the two representatives they already are forced to work with?

### **Response to DCF YoungStar**

The adverse interactions with the licensors and the Fraud Unit had the potential to affect the ECEPs' confidence and willingness to trust other authorities in the field. These interactions left a lasting mark on their consciousness, as they had to make a choice whether or not to work with YoungStar and the technical consultants. In order to be reimbursed for caring for children whose payments were subsidized by Wisconsin Shares, ECEPs had to sign a contract with YoungStar. As discussed in Chapter One, YoungStar participants had to meet certain requirements in a limited amount of time to earn points. The number of points received would determine what rating they would receive on a scale from one to five. If one's program is rated as a three-star program, the ECEC is said to meet proficient standards of quality and the reimbursement rate would stay the same. However, if the program were rated as a four- or five-star program, the amount reimbursed would increase ten or 25 percent accordingly. Contrastingly, if the ECEC was rated a two star, the rate of reimbursement by Wisconsin Shares would be penalized by five percent, while one star programs were not allowed to participate in YoungStar. The providers are rated annually, so they have time constraints on making improvements. Once rated, that rating remains for a year; therefore, if your income from Wisconsin Shares was reduced by five percent, it would be for a minimum of a year. Patricia Hill Collins (2012) suggests that these sort of rating systems are institutional expressions of underlying social inequalities based on race, class and gender, age, ethnicity, religion, sexuality and ability. Just as YoungStar created a meritocratic system, she says that these "structures are typically hierarchical and offer unequal opportunities and rewards" (p.446). Once again this social structure affected the African American Milwaukee County providers in a way that others were not because of their intersection of race, class and gender.

It became evident through the interviews that working with DCF licensors and now the DCF Fraud Unit influenced the participants' expectations when YoungStar was introduced. The ECEPs that were in business at that time had negative expectations for the most part—but not all. Two of the providers initially had positive expectations of YoungStar. Fannie, who had previously said that she expected YoungStar to force other ECEPs to come up to meet the standards, assumed that YoungStar would help her program too:

Well, I thought, based on what I read, I thought it would be a good thing because of quality. I mean, that's something we should be producing anyway. And so, I thought that's how it would help us to do better or continue to give us some guidelines at that.

Fannie believed that YoungStar would pressure the ECEPs that, in her opinion, were not providing quality care to start and would provide guidelines for her to improve, her program.

Another participant, Becky, when asked about YoungStar, said that YoungStar would help her to:

...be a better provider, give more insight, develop my skills better. I like feedback. Even though I know what I am doing, but I don't know everything. I'm receptive. I'm one of those people. I need to learn more. You never get too old to learn more. So, I wanted some feedback.

Becky had been in the field since 2001. She attended many workshops and said she enjoyed them. She thought it was important to learn as much as she could in order to be a better provider.

With the educational requirements of YoungStar, she had enrolled in college, but was struggling because of time constraints. She worked twelve-hour days. This showed that even though she indicated that she believed she knew what she was doing already, she was willing to learn and

felt that YoungStar would help her to improve her skills. These two ECEPs with the positive expectations represented the opinions of the minority of the ECEPs.

Only Tammy assumed that YoungStar was not going to affect her at all. When asked, she bluntly said, “I didn’t think they will affect the business!” She was an anomaly. She was the only participant that did not think YoungStar would affect her business in any capacity.

The other ten ECEPs that were in business before YoungStar had the most negative outlook. Chevy felt that the implementation of YoungStar was going to slow down the growth of her business. She said about YoungStar:

When the information was presented on how this now new program is going to affect the financial aspect of the operation of my business, that was very, very difficult to understand, especially when this is your livelihood and this is what you depend on to support your household and feed your family. Wow! This program is now going to change the financials of my business that I run independently.

As an ECEP working with YoungStar, depending on how many children that were in your care that were subsidized by Wisconsin Shares, your income could vary greatly. If an ECEP chose to care for children whose care was subsidized by Wisconsin Shares, their livelihood was now controlled by YoungStar and depended on what their ECEC was rated. Not participating in YoungStar would limit the children that one could care for. She would only be able to care for children whose parents could pay out of pocket for their care unless she participated in YoungStar.

Chevy, who had a negative view of YoungStar stated:

I really did feel initially that the role of YoungStar was to show us all the things we were doing wrong and why we were not qualified to do the good work that we were doing

every single day. And I did not see YoungStar as a tool to help me to improve. That was not my perception.

Chevy had spoken earlier of how the media coverage of fraud in the Wisconsin Shares system had made her uncomfortable. She had kept up with the current events and knew that YoungStar was not just something to help them improve. She knew that only providers that accepted Wisconsin Shares were required to work with YoungStar.

LaShunda also felt that YoungStar was there to critique ECEPs and that YoungStar was not put in place to support providers. She said:

My initial thought was, Wow! Here comes another decision-making body that's going to judge us. It seemed like it was produced as more of a disciplinary matter versus something that was created to support. Or, I should say, it was introduced and it was presented as something that was disciplinary versus something that was supposed to be a support for the providers and the families.

LaShunda was correct in saying that YoungStar was introduced as a disciplinary measure. When it was first introduced, YoungStar was touted as being put into place to prevent fraud in the Wisconsin Shares system versus being a support to ECEPs or the families that they served. It was introduced after months of media attention regarding instances of fraud in the Wisconsin Shares system (Bicha, 2010). The negative expectations expressed by these ECEPs were indicative of how ten of the thirteen ECEPs felt that were in the field pre-YoungStar.

Contrastingly, the two ECEPS that started their businesses after YoungStar was implemented seemed to have no idea of what to expect. One of the participants, Alexa, that started after YoungStar said:

I really didn't know what YoungStar was. YoungStar was presented to me in orientation. It was real quick, like a drive by. I found out that YoungStar rates you on a lot of bull crap. I didn't know YoungStar would affect your business if you didn't have a college education.

Alexa had worked in other ECECs before the implementation of YoungStar and after the YoungStar legislation was passed. With her experience in the field, it was remarkable that she was unfamiliar with YoungStar requirements. Because of her lack of knowledge of YoungStar, she didn't know what to expect.

A second participant, Lisa that was licensed after YoungStar didn't know what to expect either when she was introduced to YoungStar so she had no expectations:

Basically, I got licensed and everything. I didn't hear about YoungStar right away, so my—I want to say my licensor. I think YoungStar just kind of contacted me. I really don't remember exactly how they contacted me, but I found out by me getting subsidized payment, that I was going to need to comply with YoungStar in order to continue with the payment.

When a new program is first licensed, they are automatically rated a two star program for the first year. That means their income from Wisconsin Shares is automatically reduced by five percent in the beginning. These programs start out at a great disadvantage. They are required to wait a year before they have the opportunity to raise their star level. The ECEPs interviewed in this study reported that they were unaware of this policy when they founded their businesses.

It is evident by the responses that these two study participants gave that they had no real knowledge of what YoungStar entailed; therefore, they had no expectations of it.

Even though the subject was never brought up during the interviews, the prospect of not signing a contract with YoungStar was broached. Three of the fifteen participants that felt they knew what to expect opted to only enroll private pay families for a time period. They each cited different reasons. Vicki did not want to work with YoungStar and the extra work that was required. Vicki said:

I went private for a minute. I just didn't want to add to the paperwork. I just didn't want to do the extra paperwork.

However, she eventually ended up working with Wisconsin Shares and YoungStar again because the income from only private pay families was not enough to provide the basic needs for her own family.

DeAngela who chose to enroll only private pay families instead of working with YoungStar recounted why she had to start working with YoungStar again:

The children that were in my program, all of their parents paid either cash or money order for them to be in my program. I was at the point where I said, I probably won't participate in YoungStar because I just didn't think that what they were doing was fair with the going back and forth and making me change my hours, basically forcing me to do something that wasn't necessary for me, my family, my business or the children that I served. Since I wasn't using subsidies, I was told that since I wasn't really serving any children that received it, that I would be taken out of the YoungStar system and she would say that I'm not participating which now that gives a different message to the family. It makes it look like I'm unwilling to participate or maybe my program is not up to par. It just sends a very different message. It makes it look as though you are not worthy of having children in your program.

Parents are often referred to the YoungStar website in their search for quality childcare. On the website, programs are listed hierarchically starting with the five star centers, then the four-star programs and at the very bottom are the ECEPs that are “not participating” in YoungStar. As the participant said, this label connotes that they are either not qualified or non compliant with YoungStar. While some decided to not work with YoungStar by taking only private pay families, two mentioned colleagues who had closed down their centers rather than operating under YoungStar.

One study participant reported that she was presently contemplating closing her program if she could find a job that would compensate her enough because of the stress she felt working within the YoungStar parameters. Two days after the first interview, Lynise called me to ask if I had any job openings. I had provided each of my participants with my phone number and she knew that I had, at that time, a four star center. I told her that we were not looking for any help and then asked her how much would she want to make hourly? I told her that I would keep her in mind.

The feelings of intimidation from the licensors and the Fraud Unit were only exasperated with the threat of penalties that came through YoungStar. As mentioned, if a program did not meet up to at least three star standards, the overall income received from subsidized families could be reduced by five percent. Kenyatta at first chose not to take on subsidized families because she felt that she would not have to worry about the Fraud Unit or harassment from the YoungStar representatives. She found out that she could not make it independently. As Kenyatta said, “You don’t think that forty or sixty dollars matters, but every two weeks? That adds up and I still have to pay my bills!” She felt forced to work with YoungStar. She said, “I was upset at first. I was like; I’m not doing it! I’m not doing it! I didn’t do it at first. I didn’t do it for a whole



year”. She eventually signed up with YoungStar because she was unable to enroll enough private pay families to meet her financial needs. Here we see how intersectionality is affecting one of the ECEPs. Even though she is a businesswoman, she is also black, a woman and located in a high poverty area. This affects her ability to make enough money to not be forced to sign a contract with YoungStar.

To ameliorate the threat of having one’s income reduced if the ECEC was not up to YoungStar standards, one could receive a micro-grant to help make suggested improvements to the business. But, according to one participant even this small token came with further threat. Tammy made her frustration known when she recounted how her technical consultant continually threatened to take away the micro-grant:

She kept stressing, we’re going to take your micro-grant. We’re going to take your micro-grant if you miss a meeting. We’re going to take your micro-grant. I was like keep it! It’s not going to make or break me because I’m blessed. But, don’t use that as something over my head like I’m a little kid. That, we’re going to take your allowance if you don’t do this. Or, you’re not going to be able to go to the movie on Saturday if you don’t do this. Just say, “If you’re going to cancel this meeting, you need to give us 48 hours unless it’s a medical emergency. Or this, this, this, this! If you don’t have your paperwork ready, okay. I understand that you have deadlines and things that you have to do, but don’t threaten me about, we’re going to take your micro-grant.

Tammy felt she was being treated like a child instead of a business owner. She wanted them to lay out the rules and expectations instead of threatening her. The providers did not need to be threatened with having the micro-grant taken away. The participants in this study were rated as two star providers. They already had to contend with the loss of five percent of their income

because of their star rating. It is not surprising that some ECEPs attempted to continue their business without contracting with YoungStar and that many felt like things were put in place to get African American ECEPs out of business.

**Feeling Sabotaged.** With unannounced inspections by the DCF licensors and the Fraud Unit invading their businesses at any time to demand records, as well as the threat of having their income reduced due to their star rating, the ECEPs had a lot to be concerned about. As was mentioned previously, they also had to contend with the fear tactics of being interrogated, stereotyped, policed and intimidated by the different DCF representatives. To add to the burden, the ECEPs experienced what will be called in this section, *feeling sabotaged*. Once introduced to YoungStar, the ECEPs were told that the technical consultants were to be a major resource to them and their first level of support. The ECEPs were encouraged to call or email their technical consultants at any time to receive answers to their questions or concerns. However, the providers did not all find this expected support from their TC. As Tammy was previously quoted as saying, *“It felt like they were trying to find a way to eliminate people of color from childcare”*.

The guiding questions of this study include: (1) How did the African American ECEPs feel about the extent to which the technical consultants helped to improve their practices as providers/leaders? (2) How did the African American ECEPs feel that their interactions with technical consultants helped to address their quality ratings? (3) How did the providers perceive the support systems of their technical consultants? (4) How did the African American ECEPs feel about their experiences of working with the YoungStar technical consultants? These sections will answer these questions.

Previously, the interactions between the ECEPs and the licensors were discussed. When Delores was asked about her experience with the licensors, she stated, “I think most people think

their licensor is mean or sneaky. I think my licensor is sneaky.” Here, she was referring to a representative of DCF. This feeling of distrust or ill intention is especially problematic in the licensee/ECEP relationship. In developing a working relationship between a governing agency and a subordinated organization, regulations and expectation should be clearly stated with proper notification of any violations. Yet, according to Delores, this was not the experience of the ECEPs. Instead they were sometimes unaware of the expectation and subsequent violations until they were blind-sided by disciplinary actions taken against their programs. The distrust of YoungStar became evident when Vicki stated:

I did not see them [YoungStar] as my friend coming into my center. I did not see them as a support system. I did not see them that way. Given what the political climate was here at that time, I just felt like it was a second way that they were looking at African American women in particular.

Similarly, DeAngela said, “I felt that the perception was we didn’t know what we were doing as people of color and somehow we didn’t have the right to be in the field”. With this, these participants showed how before the YoungStar program was in place, there was a sense of foreboding about their presence in the field and their intentions for the African-American programs. As business owners, it is particularly disconcerting to feel that a governing agency is “out to get you” in any capacity. These sentiments will be further discussed as the theme of feeling sabotaged.

There were five areas in which one or more of the ECEPs indicated that they felt their efforts were undermined. Each area will be addressed individually. These included: 1) the technical consultants lack of expertise in both the field of early childhood education and the YoungStar system; 2) the limited time their technical consultants dedicated to working with

them; 3) the delayed responses to the ECEPs' questions; 4) the resources that were or were not provided by their technical consultants; 5) the lack of organizational integrity.

**Establishing Relationships.** When the YoungStar technical consultants began working with the ECEPs, they needed to create a well working relationship founded on trust. This awareness may be why the study participants reported that their technical consultants were initially very complimentary of their programs. Sharonda reported what her technical consultant said:

She actually really liked my program and she told me. She always told me that I was doing a good job; just keep up the good work.

During the interview, one could tell by the way she smiled when saying it that she took pride in her work and was pleased with the technical consultant's comments. She even asked if I wanted a tour. Even though her home was small, the tour took almost thirty minutes as she explained in detail everything that she was doing for the children and families of her program. Sharonda also reported that she felt that her technical consultant left out with a smile on her face when she saw the work that she was doing.

Similarly, Kenyatta stated that her technical consultant was very complimentary of her program, she said:

She [the technical consultant] was very straightforward and candid. She was actually very transparent about what I was doing well, what I was doing phenomenal or what I needed improvement on.

In addition to Sharonda and Kenyatta, three other participants noted that their technical consultants were very complimentary of their programs. These initial compliments along with

the confidence they already had in their work led some of the ECEPs to believe they would achieve a high star rating with the support provided by their technical consultants.

**Lack of expertise.** During the interviews, the ECEPs were asked if their technical consultants presented themselves as an expert. Several of the ECEPs, recalled how they at first thought that the technical consultants they were working with would be experts in YoungStar requirements because the technical consultants were the ones that were hired and trained to work with them. The ECEPs had to trust and depend on the notion that the technical consultants were the experts in not only the field of early care and education but also the YoungStar system.

Two of the 15 interviewed ECEPs recounted positive experiences when asked if her technical consultant presented herself as an expert. Sharonda said:

I think it was professional, doing their job when they first came in and the way they approached me and the way they worked with me.

This ECEP had a professional introduction to her technical consultant and was made to feel that the technical consultant was an expert because of the way that she worked with her and approached her. Tammy said:

Well, because every time we would ask a question they had the answer for us. And, if they didn't, let me go find out and then I'll email you. And they were consistent with doing that. I feel like we should not be blind to nothing and really in any upcoming changes, she made us aware of it. Just so you know FYI, this is going to be new here. So, I felt like she was an expert because she just kind of every time we asked her for something she had the answer or she would get it and email it. And let us know the resource. I got just the form for you to make this simpler. And, she'll email it, very, very helpful.

It is evident that these two ECEPs had a good experience and relationship with their technical consultants; yet, this was not the norm among other study participants. More than half of the ECEPs reported that they did not think that their technical consultant knew what he/she was talking about or was unfamiliar with childcare all together. Vicki said:

I don't think they understood. It may be different now, but at that time, I don't think they understood family childcare centers. I don't think they understand how they function. I think that these people are not practitioners. Most of the technical consultants that I interacted with, the few that I have, they have not been practitioners. And I think when you've been a practitioner, especially in view of the fact that you are a consultant that suggests to me that you should have some suggestions for me. That's one way that you support me. And that just was not the case.

Vicki was convinced that her technical consultant had not worked in the field and therefore was not qualified to give her guidance or support. The perception of incompetence negatively affected Vicki's ability to trust them. According to Patricia Hill Collins' (2000) *Black Feminist Thought*, "for most African American women those individuals who have lived through the experiences about which they claim to be experts are more believable and credible than those who have merely read or thought about such experiences" (257). This would seem to apply to how Vicki felt and to how Alexa indicated how she felt about the white technical consultants that she was working with. Alexa said when she was asked about if her technical consultant was an expert:

They can talk like they are. Anybody can talk like they were an expert, but actually hands on, I don't know. They give me what they think in their own words what they think I should do, but I don't know.

When asked what she meant by “hands on”, she said, “If they’ve never walked in my shoes, how can they tell me how to do it?” It is obvious by these participants’ comments that they did not have confidence in the technical consultants’ ability to help them raise their quality level with YoungStar because of their perceived lack of experience in the field. The technical consultants were to guide the ECEPs in raising their star level, but some of the ECEPs did not feel they were getting what they needed.

Some of the ECEPs felt that they were being sabotaged because their technical consultants were not completely informed concerning YoungStar policies. Tammy, when asked whether or not she felt her technical consultant presented herself as an expert said:

My first technical consultant was, I felt was, just incompetent. She didn’t know. She didn’t have the answers to the questions. She was feeling her way, trying to communicate a system.

Tammy, as evidenced by her words, felt that the technical consultant was incompetent and didn’t know what she was doing because she could not answer the questions that the ECEP had posed. The technical consultants should have been the ones to be able to answer the ECEPs questions. It does not instill confidence when the one that is assigned to help you is still “feeling their way” through the process. Her assumptions were not unique among other interviewees.

Chevy questioned whether or not her technical consultant had enough knowledge base to them what to do. One Chevy said of her technical consultant:

My black technical consultant, she don’t know nothing. She still learning. She didn’t know. She still kind of—well, maybe now she a little bit better because she more in it. But she had just started.

Chevy was kind enough to give the technical consultant the benefit of the doubt that she was still learning. Hearing the experiences of the study participants, it is obvious that there is a connection between trust and technical expertise. When speaking of her technical consultants expertise, LaShunda said:

She didn't know anything. We [LaShunda and her assistant] knew more of what we were talking about than she did. She gave us some false information or I shouldn't say false, but incorrect information. We called her on it and I think she was kind of intimidated. We contacted her supervisor because we were like, how could you send us someone who doesn't know what she's talking about. She was a nice lady, but just new to the field and I think she felt a little intimidated because we knew what we were talking about.

One could question why so many of the ECEPs felt that their technical consultants were new to the field. It is evident that some of the ECEPs felt like they knew more than the technical consultants they were working with. Erica was so upset that her technical consultant gave her incorrect information that she registered a complaint against the technical consultant. Six of the providers reported receiving incorrect information from their technical consultant, adding to the perception that this technical consultant support system was not what they thought it should be. Fannie relayed an incident in which she ended up reporting her technical consultant:

Oh. My very first one it wasn't—I didn't like it. I didn't like the situation, not her. But she wasn't—its like she didn't have any knowledge and everything. I do budgets-period. Not because people ask for it [Meaning that she had a budget for her business, not just because YoungStar was asking for it, but because it was good business]. But, just so I can operate on one. And she never even asked for it. So it was like she wasn't-and I get this was a first year, but she wasn't knowledgeable at all.



Fannie, as previously reported, had owned a group home and had been responsible for the finances in that business as well as for the finances of her current business. YoungStar requires the ECEPs to have a budget to receive a rating higher than a two star. When the technical consultant failed to inform Fannie of the budget requirement and did not ask for it, it was guaranteed that Fannie would not be able to receive anything higher than a two star rating. Receiving this rating ensured that she would continue receiving a five percent decrease in her income for at least another year until she could be rated again.

The fact that so many of the ECEPs felt during their interactions with their technical consultants that they were incompetent or that the technical consultants were giving them wrong information was problematic. It affected the trust levels of not only the technical consultants, but of the information that they provided.

**Ten Hours.** Another area in which some of the ECEPs felt they were undermined or sabotaged was in the amount of time they were allotted to work with their technical consultants. As mentioned in the first chapter, ECEPs receive ten hours with their technical consultant annually. The 2017/2018 YoungStar Evaluation Criteria manual is 75 pages long. Each year there are changes made to this manual. To know it thoroughly and to make the necessary changes in your ECEC can be time consuming. Many of the ECEPs expressed that ten hours was not enough time to feel comfortable with all the requirements.

Becky indicated that she was offended when the technical consultant made it obvious that she was tracking the time spent with her. She stated:

First of all, when you walk in and you sit down, you look at your watch and you write 9:15 on your paper, that lets me know that you're giving me ninety minutes and you're out of the door. If my questions take longer than ninety minutes, you're going to say,

“Oh! Time to go.” We have to table this into our next meeting. See you again. Which may be another four weeks because they (the technical consultants) express the fact that they have a lot of centers on their workload.

In this statement, Becky covered a lot. Not only did she feel that ten hours was not adequate time to work with a technical consultant, she also addressed the fact that an ECEP may have a lot of questions that go unanswered due to the once a month visits and excessive technical consultant caseload. In sum, Becky felt that this limited amount of time with the technical consultant was undermining her efforts to improve her program and earn a higher rating.

Delores expressed the same frustration about the amount of time that she had to spend with the technical consultant:

If you want me to do it, you want me to do it correctly. During the ten hours that I get from my technical consultant, teach me! Teach me! Don't just say, “This is what we want you to do.” Teach me! That's my biggest thing. And, I think they need to give you more than ten hours if they're going to teach you to do something correctly, and that needs to be consistent across the board.

She was especially angry because she had lost points that could have potentially raised her star level and her rate of reimbursement. Even if it did not raise her star rating, she felt that the overall number of points that she earned was important. Everyone has different learning styles or needs. That should have been taken into consideration while working with the providers or at minimum, make sure that they are completing the assigned tasks properly. Ten hours of time did not meet her needs.

Lynise also took issue with the amount of time she had with the technical consultant. She said:

I think we could have had a little bit more time. I think with all of them [referring to each of the technical consultants she had worked with]. They should give you a little bit more time than what they give you because you only get so much time when they're here. And then, each time, if you need information they have to come back. You got to wait 'til the next visit--which is a gap anyway. So, I think they could add on maybe one or two visits just because sometimes you have a lot that you're asking them. And, you got to wait till the next visit for them to bring it back or they'll email you. You kind of work on it. I think we could add a little bit more time.

It is evident that these ECEPs felt that only ten hours with a technical consultant was not enough time for them to meet the requirements of YoungStar. Becky complained not only about the number of hours allotted to working the technical consultant but also that she was told what to do, but not shown how to do it. She made a valid point when she said:

If I'm a low functioning center and I need to up my game with age appropriate activities, developmentally appropriate activities, come and spend that time with me. Come and say, "Okay. You're doing good here, but now let's build upon here." What's the phrase that they say? "Meet them where they are--?" And then as you meet me here, then take the time to help me get to the next level. You might not be able to get me to be in a five star, but you can show or help me improve where I am so if I don't make it this year, I can still build on it so I can get there next year. Not shoot me in the knee and then I got to go through rehab because I'm angry and I'm mad because you said that I was okay in this area and I'm not. And 15 hours, 10 hours, however many hours is not enough. And sometimes people need some mentoring. They need some coaching from somebody that understands where they are and gives them that encouragement, "Hey, you're going to do

this. You can do it. You can do it. It's going to take us a little time, but don't get frustrated.

According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children, in their definition of the type of assistance that a technical consultant should provide includes being a coach and a mentor (NAEYC Glossary Training, 2011). Just as Becky said, many of the providers may need this extra assistance. They may need more time spent with a technical consultant as opposed to only ten hours. According to the YoungStar website, the technical consultants are to provide mentorship to help the ECEPs reach their professional goals. It is clear that the limited amount of time that the ECEPs were allowed to spend with the technical consultants made them feel that their efforts were not fully supported and even sabotaged.

Though not as eloquent as Becky, LaShunda also complained of not being shown how to complete a task. She said, "Some things I'm not going to know how to do unless someone shows me. It's good to write it down, but it's better when you can show me." When probed further about what she was not shown how to do, she replied, "Something about making sure my lesson plans went along with the Early Learning Model Standards!" One way to earn a point with YoungStar is to make sure that your curriculum aligns with the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS). As proof of that YoungStar wants to see an ECEPs most recent consecutive four weeks of lesson plans. These lesson plans must reflect the WMELS five domains with goals and learning objectives for learning. LaShunda was told about them, but not shown how to do them.

Tierney had a distinctly different experience when working with her technical consultant. She stated that the time that she worked with her ECEP was adequate. Even though the time that YoungStar allotted for the technical consultants to work with the providers was ten hours total,

this technical consultant took a lot more time with this study participant. While others reported that their technical consultant worked with them at most one to two hours at a time, Tierney reported much more. When asked, she said:

I do believe that the time that we had was enough to make changes. Yeah, I believe that the statement to be true and why, is because we were able to spend hours. It was sometimes when she would come out to the program and she would be here for about four or five hours or sometimes anywhere between four and five hours. It was always a long stretch while she was here and she was always able to help me break down information and we were able to go through a lot of different points. So, I think it was enough time and even in the interim of her coming back out, there was sufficient time for me to go over any necessary information or prepare to meet with her again for the next meeting. There was ample opportunity for me to kind of get some of the projects done that we discussed.

When further questioned for clarification about how much time her technical consultant spent with her, she said that, “She [the technical consultant] was very comfortable when she would come. And it was multiple days where she would be here for a very long time”. In contrast to other ECEPs, Tierney’s technical consultant spent a reported four to five hour span in her program while the other providers’ consultants spent less than two hours at a time. Tierney’s experience, in contrast to the other ECEPs that felt their efforts were undermined showed that the extra time did make a difference. It is unfortunate that she was the only one that reported that her technical consultant spent that large amount of time with her.

**Delayed Response Time.** One aspect of working with technical consultants is working together towards agreed-upon goals. In the previous section, the Tierney spoke of how she and

her technical consultant would work together for hours. Then she would work independently on the tasks that they decided should be completed before the technical consultant's next visit.

Other study participants reported not only not having enough time with their technical consultants to make improvements, but not receiving feedback soon enough. Twelve of fifteen reported that they often had to wait until the technical consultants next visit to get answers to their questions. That meant they had to wait up to a month to get answers from their technical consultants.

Timely answers to the ECEPs questions were crucial to making the necessary changes to their programs to have a chance at improving their star rating. ECEPs are rated annually. The technical consultants have a specific window of time in which to work with them; therefore, the ECEPs needed answers to their questions quickly. In this day of emails, texts and even the postal service, answers to the providers' questions should have been able to come quickly. Even so, many ECEPs reported having to wait until the technical consultants' next visit to receive a response. With the technical consultants usually visiting no more than once a month, this response time was hardly adequate since the ECEPs had limited time to make improvements before being rated. Once rated, their income from Wisconsin Shares would be adjusted according to what they were rated and it would remain the same for a year until they were rated again. As mentioned previously, these women were disproportionately affected by the initial passing of YoungStar. The penalties were meted out immediately without opportunity to make changes. Even though that immediate response cannot be changed, they could now at least be given timely responses to the questions that they had so that they can attempt to make changes and affect their star ratings.

When they attempted to contact the technical consultants between their meetings, many found it difficult to do so. Lisa stated:

I had problems trying to get questions [answers] from YoungStar. I had a hard time getting connected with them because I know they're connected with 4C's [a program that hired and trained YoungStar technical consultants] and sometimes YoungStar doesn't answer their phone. They just let it ring. I just learned about YoungStar in the field, because you don't have nobody to tell you to connect this dot. This goes with this. This goes with that. If you do this, this will get you this.

Lisa indicated that she had to learn about YoungStar from other ECEPs because she was not able to contact the YoungStar office much less her technical consultant. According to the YoungStar website, an ECEP should be able to call or contact their technical consultant anytime. Yet, this was not the reality for most of the ECEPs. Alexa went so far as to say:

I don't even bother them [her YoungStar technical consultant]. I call the providers that have been in the business for over fifteen years. You don't get a response right away, and when something is on your mind, you make that call because you got the time, but with YoungStar, you might get it [a response] and you might not.

Alexa called on her fellow providers when she needed answers to questions regarding YoungStar, which was unfortunate because there was no guarantee that the information they provided was correct. Yet, when one has questions, time cannot be lost waiting for answers. This was also the sentiment of other providers. Chevy felt she had to wait too long for answers decided to give up on the technical consultant process all together and find her own answers. She said:

Anything I needed to know, I would research on a website or go talk to another center because at that point in time, I had turned around. [Meaning that she had giving up on receiving help from her technical consultant] Okay! Give me my hours that you have to be here and then get up out of here because you have nothing to say because I didn't think she had my best interest in her.

Chevy's frustration was evident as she spoke. The lack of response made her want to work independently and not depend on the technical consultant's assistance.

Chevy questioned why it took so long to get answers to their questions when they were expected to make changes in a limited amount of time. Waiting was a loss of valuable time and seemingly could have been avoided through a better use of technology. It is no wonder so many of the ECEs reported having to rely on their own resources and/or other colleagues in learning to navigate the YoungStar system and that they felt their efforts were being undermined.

**Inadequate Resources.** Some of the ECEPs felt that they were not provided with the resources that they needed to improve their practice as ECEPs and leaders. When discussing the resources that her technical consultant provided for her, DeAngela said, "She didn't bring me anything, but she did share with me what I've always known about." There was a lot of information available on the YoungStar website and DeAngela recognized that the technical consultant was telling her information that was readily accessible to anyone.

Becky expressed her frustration that her technical consultant would tell her about trainings that were inaccessible. She felt that the location, dates and times of the trainings made it difficult for her and others in her area to attend. Attendance at some of the trainings provided automatic points with YoungStar, while other trainings had the potential to help the ECEPs receive additional points. Regarding accessibility to the trainings, this Becky said:



We have a hard time finding trainings here in the Milwaukee area. They're in Wausau. Way up north and I even commented to my technical consultant on that one. Why do I have to drive all the way up to Appleton to get a training and there's more centers here in Milwaukee area than there is in Appleton, Oshkosh, Fond du Lac combined? Why do we have to carpool to go there? And that's what one lady told me. She said, "Well, why don't you guys just carpool and go up there?" Why do I have to carpool to go up there and you got 3000 centers in the Milwaukee area that need [these trainings]?

Milwaukee does not have three thousand ECECs, but it does have more ECECs than anywhere else in the state. It would seem that having more trainings available in the area would be a higher priority, especially when they have the ability to help ECEPs receive more points. Many family providers work twelve or more hours a day. They did not have time to drive to trainings in other cities.

Previously, it was mentioned that ECEPs had access to a micro-grant and that receiving it was conditional. Tammy, when asked about what type of resources were provided by her technical consultant said of her technical consultant:

She talked to me about the micro-grant because I didn't know anything about the micro-grant until she talked to me and helped me and showed me what to do. She talked to me about the—What was the name of that scholarship? [She was referring to the TEACH Scholarship that is available to all ECEPs to continue their education, if they have been in employed for a certain amount of time in a ECEC.]

The micro-grant is money that can be used to purchase materials or supplies for one's program (micro-grant handbook, 2017). As long as an ECEP complies with the rules, they will receive the

grant, which can be used to purchase toys, materials, pay for classes or a number of different things as long as it goes along with the goals that the technical consultant and the ECEP have agreed upon. The technical consultant must approve of whatever the micro-grant is used for.

Vicki when asked, what types of resources were provided by her technical consultants if any? Responded, “None. Go to the Registry Website. Go to the WECA [Wisconsin Early Childhood Association] website.” She had been told to go to the different child care websites for information. When asked for additional information about any resources she may have been provided, she added that one of her technical consultants had emailed her some information. She could not recall what it was and said that the information that was emailed was not useful to her.

Another participant, when asked what types of resources her technical consultants provided, said that her technical consultant provided brochures to give to the families in her program.

She always gave me stuff from Supporting Families [SFTA]. She will always keep me with that information. She just always gave me different stuff to give to them. Even if they don't ask for it, just pass it out. And so, I still have some of that stuff for my new families that I put in my enrollment packet. I have all of that in there. Stuff about depression. Stuff about parent hotline.

This family resource was beneficial; but the brochures were only a part of the whole. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, in YoungStar there are different requirements to receive points. The number of points received determine what the ECEC is rated. Even with having the brochures available, the provider would not receive additional points to increase her star rating.

In sum, there was no continuity in the resources that were provided. Although it could be argued that the resources were specific to each program. The providers did not think that the

resources they were provided met the needs of their programs. It may have helped them improve in one or more areas, but did not do enough to help them receive additional points towards a higher rating.

**Organizational Integrity.** Organizational integrity refers to the ethical integrity of the individual actors, the ethical quality of their interaction as well as that of the dominating norms, activities, decision-making procedures and results within a given organization (Palazzo, 2007). In this section, I will explore another area in which the ECEPs felt undermined. To make it more specific to this study, organizational integrity will be defined as when an organization has a set group of well-defined rules that are not subject to frequent changes and all the rules and stipulations are readily available to all that are affected by them.

The lack of organizational integrity within YoungStar affected the ECEPs. DeAngela felt that she met the qualifications to be a five star center, but because the YoungStar policies were not made clear to her and all of the rules and regulations were not available to her, she remained a two star center:

Here I am thinking I'm making great progress towards this number five star, and now you're throwing something into the equation that doesn't make sense to me, and you're throwing me off. It's almost as if you're trying to stagnate my growth. And that's when I knew it. I'm like, there's no possible way. I have a top-notch family childcare home. I'm highly educated. I have two degrees. I feel like I'm an expert in the field. I've done every single thing that I was supposed to do, and then you found one little thing to basically bar me out of achieving my five.

In order to maintain her confidentiality, what occurred cannot be addressed. But, it can be shared that DeAngela felt that she was sabotaged when her technical consultant's supervisor

found a rule that had not previously been known by the technical consultant or the ECEP and it was subsequently used it to disqualify the ECEP from receiving the rating she felt she deserved.

Vicki felt that she was affected by YoungStar's policies not being clear relayed how she lost points that she felt affected her rating. She said:

By them not having clear and precise policies forced me into taking something [a two star rating] versus me being very proud of receiving a five star. When it came to assessments and portfolios. I could have earned almost four points. Each technical consultant that I've worked with has given me different answers and to this day, I still don't have the answer.

I worked hard!

Whether she would have received a five star or not, may be debatable, but four points is a lot when it only takes eleven points on the ratings scale to be a three star. Three stars make a big difference. If a provider is a three star, the amount that they are reimbursed remains the same as opposed to losing five percent of your income being a two star. This participant felt that she would have received a five star rating with more time and if the YoungStar policies were clear and well defined. The information regarding the portfolios and assessments should have been easily accessible and that technical consultants should have been knowledgeable of what was acceptable

Vicki felt that since the technical consultant did not know, she should not have been held accountable for this knowledge. Vicki and others felt that the YoungStar rules were arbitrary and subject to change and depended on who they were speaking to in the YoungStar hierarchy. This is to say that when they were working with the technical consultant, there was one rule, but then the rater would say something else or add to it. For example, LaShunda that she was told by her technical consultant which lesson plan format to use:

She would say, “These are the lesson plans I want you to use.” And so I would use them-- or the Creative Curriculum stuff. I would use it. Then 4C’s [an organization that works in conjunction with YoungStar] came in and it was kind of like, “No, this is not what we want to see.” I was like; this is what your technical consultant person told us. This is how she said to do it.

These examples show the lack of uniformity in the information given to the ECEPs and the lack of continuity between the different components of YoungStar. Since the inception of YoungStar, the rules and requirements have changed annually. It is no wonder that ECEPs may find it difficult to keep up with the changes while maintaining their daily business operations.

As an organization that affects the income of providers who care for children from lower socio-economic status, it is important that they have set rules. Since YoungStar was implemented so quickly, changes and updates to their policies are inevitable. However with this, it is crucial that everyone have access to the amendments in a timely manner as well as leniency to allow the time needed to make changes without penalty.

## **Conclusion**

As part of this research, I spoke with fifteen ECEPs who are proud of the work they do to serve their community. Contrastingly, they have been told that their businesses are not “quality” due to a rating system that threatens to put them out of business. Despite negative media coverage, allegations of fraud and the stigma attached to being an African American provider, these women continue to care for and love “their children”. They tolerate a reduction in their compensation to be entrepreneurs and business owners while working under the increasing pressure of Department of Children and Families: the licensors, the Fraud Unit and now YoungStar.

In this chapter, three prevailing themes were shared. The first one was that the ECEPs believed that they were and are competent. Before YoungStar was implemented, the existing ECEPs, felt they were providing quality care for the children enrolled in their programs. The second theme of regulations and relationships revealed that many of the ECEPs had negative experiences with the different agencies of DCF both before and after YoungStar was passed into law. Finally, the broadest theme was that many of the ECEPs felt their efforts towards achieving a higher star rating was undermined or sabotaged by the YoungStar technical consultants who were meant to support them in improving their businesses. Although at least one of the ECEPs expressed the desire to look into other opportunities, the rest of the ECEPs maintain that they plan to continue towards the goal of achieving a higher star level.

In the literature, it clearly shows the importance of the relationship with the technical consultant. This study supports this assertion but also uncovered the effects of the providers' past experiences. The racialized experiences the providers had with the DCF licensors and the Fraud unit negatively affected that relationship with the technical consultants. This study also aligns with Critical Race Theory, which asserts that racism is endemic and a central factor that effects every American institution and has become the usual way of doing business (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001). This study suggests that early care and education is one more institution that is affected by racism and the same sanctions that were placed on these African American business owners reflected the sanctions that were placed on African American women that were on welfare in the past. The policing and intimidation that badgered African-American mothers providing for their children decades ago has transformed and resurfaced to continue their disenfranchisement of those that are disparaged because of their intersection of their race, class and gender. Those who are now business owners providing for the children of others.

## CHAPTER FIVE

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of African American ECEPs while interacting with YoungStar technical consultants and whether or not they had a racialized experience that affected their ability to make improvements. Although YoungStar was originally implemented to deter fraud in the Wisconsin Shares system, another of its goals was to improve the quality of care for children from low-income families. According to Huggins (2001), Critical Race Theory is based on the premise that institutions maintain the status quo through policies and practices that oppress blacks. The passage of this YoungStar legislation helps to maintain the status quo because with money being taken away from programs that are shown to need it, it ensured that the children from low-income families would be affected. Whether it was the initial five percent that was deducted from those that were in business before YoungStar or the amount that was deducted from others that became a part of YoungStar later, they still need more, not less money to provide quality services to these children. Earlier, it was addressed that African American children experience the lowest quality care in non-Head Start settings and that children in disadvantaged and race minority families disproportionately experience poor quality childcare (Morgan et al., 2015). This in turn affects their school readiness. According to Magnuson & Walfogul (2005) improvements in the quality of early care and education could close up to twenty percent of the black-white school readiness gap.

Since technical assistance has been shown to help providers improve the quality of their programs, it is imperative to know if the African American ECEPs had racialized experiences that would hinder them from improving the quality of their programs. This improvement is important for the sake of the children in their care and receiving a higher rating.

Earlier it was explained that this study was to explore the experiences of African

American ECEPs. It should be noted that the study examines African American ECEPs in zip codes in Milwaukee that are primarily African American that were targeted by the media with accusations of fraud. This led to the creation of a Fraud Unit and YoungStar. With the implementation of YoungStar, they are now rated on a scale from one to five. Their rating, in turn, affects the amount of income provided by Wisconsin Shares. The less money programs have to operate with affects not only their income, but it affects the income of their business. With less money, the fewer improvements they can make to their programs to provide higher quality services for the children and families, thus perpetuating the cycle of substandard education in low-income areas leading to poor child outcomes and disenfranchised communities. The implications of my findings are that the racialized experiences of the African American Milwaukee ECEPs have further reaching effects than just the ECEPs income and their star rating.

### **Racialization**

One of the features of CRT is interest convergence. Interest convergence stresses that racial equality and equity for people of color will be pursued and advanced when they converge with the interests and needs, expectations, and ideologies of Whites (Bell, 1980). The idea that YoungStar was put into place to help children from low-income families is overshadowed by the fact that the original and primary intention was to prevent fraud (Bicha, 2010). This along with the media coverage of fraud and the ECEPs experiences with representatives of DCF, created a lack of willingness to trust YoungStar and the technical consultants. Collins (2012) adds, “Social structures such as neighborhoods, schools, jobs, religious institutions, recreational facilities, and physical and cyberspace marketplaces are the institutional expressions of social inequalities of race, class, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, and ability. Typically hierarchical, these



structures offer unequal opportunities and rewards” (p. 446). YoungStar, with its hierarchical system of rating programs perpetuates social inequality. The perception of the ECEPs was that “they are out to get us”. Accordingly, Farnham (2013), in his book, says that the willingness to trust is based on one’s perceptions of intention and integrity.

Stefancic & Delgado (2012) address how intersectionality reflects the interplay of race, sex, and class and how each of these categories can have separate disadvantaging factors (108). There was a distinct differentiation between the African American providers who were in business before the implementation of YoungStar and those after. The study found that those who were in business pre-YoungStar were still affected by those past experiences with the DCF representatives. The participants in the study who started out in business after 2010 (post-YoungStar implementation) were initially not aware of all that YoungStar entailed. Whether or not they liked it when they were introduced to it, they were more accepting.

According to Constantine and Sue (2007), microaggressions or prejudice can erode trust and negatively affect relationships. The relationship between the YoungStar technical consultant and the early care and education provider was affected before it started. The ECEPs’ past experiences while in the field were reflected in their responses to YoungStar. Those experiences included the negative media coverage of fraud in Wisconsin Shares that focused on Milwaukee African American providers. The racialized experiences they had while working under the auspice of the Department of Children and Families representatives-licensors and the Fraud Unit-also affected them. According to their own testimonies, the ECEPs felt that they were stereotyped and policed because of their race by these representatives. These actions may have affected how they responded to YoungStar and their technical consultants.

The implications of this are that those who are newer in the field may be more trusting than those who have been in the field longer. The technical consultants will need to work to gain the trust of all providers (Cummings, 2004; Spouse, 2003). Because of the experiences of the ECEPs when working with DCF licensors and the Fraud unit and now YoungStar, it may be very difficult for a technical consultant to create a safe and trusting environment, especially when research has shown that past experiences of prejudice, oppression and white privilege can affect ones perceptions (Nilsson & Duan, 2007).

### **The Need for Sufficient Support Systems**

In Chapter Two, the literature related to Wisconsin's legislation showed how the African American ECEPs were inordinately affected by the passage of YoungStar. This colorblind legislation was passed without thought of how African Americans would be affected and without regard to the disparities that already existed. Fifty percent of all Wisconsin Shares recipients are located in Milwaukee County and the ECEPs targeted by this study are located in areas of the states with the highest levels of poverty. The intersectionality of race, sex and class cannot be ignored. Crenshaw (1991), maintains that when reform efforts are undertaken that how women of color are situated is ignored and that they are less likely to have their needs met than women who are racially privileged (4). One of the concerns of this study was about the support that the providers received and whether or not they were having their needs met. The technical consultants were to provide their skills, resources and support based on research and best practices, while at the same time monitoring ECEPs' progress towards the quality improvement goals set by the ECEP and the technical consultant (YoungStar, n.d.).

It was found that some of the providers felt that they were well supported, but the majority reported that they did not feel supported at all. They went so far to feel that their efforts

were actually undermined by the technical consultants. These feelings were exacerbated when the ECEPs felt that it was difficult receiving answers to their questions, when the resources were inadequate and when the rules were not consistent. One of the implications for improving the support systems is to make sure that the ECEPs are able to receive answers to their questions more quickly. They have a limited amount of time to make changes, so it is imperative to receive those quick responses. Although the resources that are provided should be program specific, it should be that the resources are accessible (referring to when the provider said that the trainings were out of town and out of reach) and those that will help the ECEP reach their quality improvement goals. Crenshaw (1991) maintained that because women of color occupy positions both physically and culturally marginalized within dominant society that information must be targeted directly to the them in order to reach them (I would add in a timely manner) and maintains that it is necessary to designate more resources for basic information dissemination in communities of color than in white ones. This is because, “at the simplest level, race, gender, and class are implicated together because the fact of being a woman of color correlates strongly with poverty (Crenshaw, 1991, p.3). This is to say that the African American ECEPs situation cannot be ignored. The resources and the support that they need should be provided to make sure that their needs are met in a way that aligns with their needs and where they are in society.

### **Training Technical Consultants and Consistent Policies**

In this study, one of the concerns of the providers was that the technical consultants did not have experience in the field, were incompetent and were unfamiliar with the YoungStar policies. According to YoungStar, each of the technical consultants were required to have a minimum of four years experience in the child care field with at least two years working directly with children. They were to have at least two years of responsibility for the professional growth

of another adult and must have completed specific training related to adult learning education (Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, n.d.) According to these guidelines, the technical consultants did actually have training in the field and in YoungStar policies, but were still seen as incompetent by many of the ECEPs. In addition to this, during the interviews, several of the providers reported that they were given information that they were later informed was incorrect. This led some of the providers to feel that the rules and policies were not consistent and arbitrary.

I assert that YoungStar ought to establish consistent policies that everyone that is involved should have access to and be aware of. The DCF licensing rulebook has a commentary book that explains all of the rules that are in the original rulebook. That is something that would be beneficial for the YoungStar manual. This commentary on the YoungStar manual should be easily accessible to all in order to clear up problems before they arise. Another implication is that the technical consultants should receive more in-depth training concerning the policies. There should be no information given that is incorrect. And, as mentioned in chapter four of this dissertation, the YoungStar manual is updated annually. Providers should be given ample warning of all changes and sufficient time to comply with the new rules. As previously discussed, thirteen of the fifteen participants in this study were in business before YoungStar was implemented. Because of this, they received a five percent reduction in the amount they were reimbursed. This affected their economic sufficiency and will continue to do so until they are able to raise their star rating. It also affected their ability to make changes in their programs. In Chapter One, it was shown how much money it took for a five star program to maintain their quality programming. At the same time, it takes money to raise the level of quality for a two star rated program. They need money and time to make changes.

In a qualitative study by Oreg, Shaul, Sverdlik & Noga (2011), the authors found that an individual's personal level of trust affected how they responded to imposed changes. In this study, Vicki asked when referring to the implementation of YoungStar, "Who is sitting on the committees? Who decided that this was the criteria? Did anyone ask us"? Indicating that the changes were imposed on them and that the ECEPs had no say. Also since YoungStar is supposed to improve the quality of care for children from low-income families, there was the recognition that the people in power were making decisions for African American children and African American business owners in which they had no opportunity to give input. Not having the opportunity for input about the changes that were imposed on them was problematic. This is something that continued over the years when additional changes were imposed on them.

A study by Arnold, Arad, Rhoades & Drasgow (2000) indicates that the quality of leadership that is experienced has an impact. Relationships based on trust and power sharing play an important part in overcoming resistance to change. The ECEPs felt they had no opportunity to give their opinion about the changes. That may have affected their compliance with the changes that are being imposed upon them when they are required to make changes. I assert that not only should the ECEPs be given ample warning when changes are made and ample time to make the changes, but also that they are given the opportunity to give feedback about the changes before they are imposed.

### **Implications of the Study for Professional Practice**

In their book, Delgado and Stefancic (2001) assert that race and racism are endemic. It is a central factor that effects every American institution and has become the usual way that social does business. Racism is the common, everyday experience of people of color in this country.

It is crucial that governing agencies that work with populations of marginalized backgrounds take into account the systemic oppression and historical disenfranchisement that form the foundation of all cross-racial interactions. This demands that policy-makers and -enforcers be culturally competent and sensitive to the effects of historical race-based trauma sustained by people of color in America. Training to raise awareness of multicultural norms and competency in effective communication are necessary for the consultants and supervisors who have contact with the people of diverse backgrounds.

This study also suggests that African American ECEPs and TCs have different cultural norms that influence their means of communication within their community as well as how they receive/give information. Tierney reported that her technical consultant spent hours at a time in her program working with her and “breaking down the information” and going over a lot of points, making sure that she understood. Tierney felt that she made a lot of improvements because of the time that the technical consultant spent with her going over things until she understood and was able to make the changes. None of the other participants indicated that they made a lot of improvements specifically because of the time that was spent with their consultant. The technical consultants need to spend quality time with the ECEPs, build trusting relationships and an awareness of the different learning styles and needs of the ECEPs that they work with.

Another implication of this study is that although the past cannot be changed, DCF needs to train all of their representatives-licensors, Fraud Unit and YoungStar technical consultants in how to be culturally sensitive and responsive to the needs of all early care and education providers. Although training is good, there also needs to be a paradigm shift in the way that things are done. The National Association for the Education of Young Children already says what the relationship between a technical consultant and an early care and education provider

should look like. They say that the three necessary components to providing high quality services to children and families include: 1) education, 2) training and 3) technical assistance. They maintain that each of these be designed using evidence-based best practice that adapts to each learners cultural experiences and linguistic abilities as well as the current context of their role and professional goals (NAEYC Glossary Training, 2011). All components are important, but the main focus here should be on the cultural aspect and what does that concern. Nilsson & Duan (2007) maintained that supervisory relationships are not isolated from the social contexts in which we live and that the experiences in perceived prejudice among other factors affect ones perceptions of their supervisor. This would be relevant to this study. That is something to be addressed.

Earlier when Cheryl reflected on how her licensor stepped in to help. That was outside of her realm of responsibility, but it showed that she cared. Just as Tierney told how her technical consultant spent hours with her-way above the allotted ten hours- to make sure that she understood what she needed to do. There needs to be a true shift from policing to true support. According to a study by Boysen & Vogel (2008), even after extensive training of the study participants in multicultural sensitivity, the implicit bias levels were still the same. Boysen & Vogel (2008) suggest that the trainings target implicit bias by immersing students in other cultures. They believed that doing so would help to alleviate the implicit biases. If it is possible, exploring ways to have technical consultants learn about other cultures in this capacity may make a difference. This along with building trust would likely make a difference in how things are done. Take note that one of the areas that Black Feminist Epistemology discusses is the ethics of caring which involves developing the capacity for empathy. This is something that I would submit would be important for the technical consultants. If they were to have an

understanding of the positions of the African American women, it may affect the way in which they interacted with them.

Also, there needs to be a recognition that all family providers work long hours. At this time there are opportunities for scholarships for education, but because of the long hours, it is unattainable for many providers. Some of the accrediting agencies take into account the educational level, but still they give the opportunities to make improvements within a time frame. When YoungStar started, ECEPs were penalized right away when they did not have the education needed to be eligible for a higher rating. Even now, as one of the providers said, she did not know that her lack of education was going to affect her reimbursement rate. Providers have the right to know in advance the penalty of their education level. At the same time, they should be given time to earn the required credits. The providers should be respected and supported as business owners especially since it has been shown that what they do has long reaching affects.

### **Limitations**

In every study, there is the potential for unintended bias. Research quality is heavily dependent on the individual's skills of the researcher and easily influenced by the researcher's personal biases and idiosyncrasies (Anderson, 2016). The limitations that may be posed by this researcher's lack of experience can be remediated by consulting others in the field and at the university that are able to help the researcher maintain focus and minimize the risk of confirmation bias. Confirmation bias is said to be the most pervasive form of bias in research. It occurs when a researcher forms a hypothesis or belief and uses respondent's information to confirm that belief while dismissing evidence that doesn't support a hypothesis. To minimize



confirmation bias, I had to continually reevaluate impressions of participants and challenge my own preexisting assumptions and hypotheses (Sarniak, 2015).

Another possible limitation may be the fact that since I interviewed ECEPs that are in programs that are rated two stars, there may have been a hesitancy to work with me if they knew that I work in a four-star program and because of the general mistrust that African American ECEPs have of the “system”. My insider status may help; at the same time there is the possibility that it may hinder. I shared with each of the providers that I spoke with the fact that I was an early care and education provider in a group center. Unless the topic came up, I did not share that I worked in a four star program. I talked about how I used to have my own family program and that I remembered how it was. I did this to establish a connection. Sometimes providers that work in one setting feel that providers that work in another setting do not understand their situation. I also shared with them that they would be a part of helping me to get my doctorate. They seemed to appreciate that and were willing to “help a sister out”. The participant responses from these sessions helped illustrate the ECEPs sentiments surrounding their interactions with their technical consultants, the YoungStar initiative and how they were affected by the historical interactions with governing agencies as well as the implications of those experiences for their expectations of the YoungStar technical consultants.

One of the limitations of this study is that only two of the participants had the educational qualifications to be more than a two star program. In order to be a three star program an ECEP has to have a minimum number of college credits. The study cannot tell if the fact that the ECEPs would not be able to attain a higher level without the college credits was demotivating. At the same time, if a parent were to view the YoungStar website in search of child care, a two

star ECEC with more overall points will look better qualified than a two star ECEC with fewer points.

Another possible limitation of this study is the fact that participants were reporting events that have occurred over the last eight years. It is unlikely that anyone will have perfect recall of the events that are being discussed and with this study we had to take everything at face value.

In this study, I have also shared my positionality. Although I have attempted to abstain from bias, it is impossible, as an African American ECEP myself not to potentially show some form of bias.

**Future Study.** A potential idea for further study may be to determine if African American providers in the targeted zip codes that are rated as three, four or five stars had racialized experiences. If they did have racialized experiences, how were they able to achieve the higher star ratings in spite of these experiences? One might ascertain that the participants in this study could not have attained to a three or more star status because of their education level, but that is not true of all. Two of the providers have degrees in education, yet are still rated as two stars. According to YoungStar, they meet the education requirement to be a three to five star program. That is a clear indication that education is not a definitive predictor that one will be rated as more than a two star.

As shown in this study, more goes into becoming a higher rated program than just the educational component. At the same time, education must also be addressed. Another area that has further potential for study is whether or not educational attainment is motivational. Meaning that, if a provider already meets the educational requirements, would that motivate them and help them to push past previous racialized experiences and attain a higher rating. These issues require further research.

This study focused on the experiences of African American family ECEPs while interacting with YoungStar technical consultants and whether or not they had a racialized experience that affected their ability to make improvements. Another area for potential future study is how other African American two-star ECEPs were affected by the implementation of the quality rating system, YoungStar. Were only the African American family providers affected or were the group African American ECEPs also affected by racialized experiences that affected their ability to make improvements?

It should be noted that this study is specific to the quality rating system that was set up in the state of Wisconsin. As of January 2017, forty-nine states and the District of Columbia have either statewide or regional QRIS systems in place or are planning for QRIS (Workman, 2017). Wisconsin's is the only quality rating systems that was implemented with the primary goal of preventing fraud and the only QRIS in which money was taken away from lower quality programs. Since the majority of Wisconsin Shares participants are located in the Milwaukee County, YoungStar inordinately affected the African American providers. With this study including fifteen participants that owned family ECECs, another potential for further study would be to study how African American group ECEPs were affected.

There have been studies about the provider/technical consultant relationship in quality rating systems. There has also been research about the efficacy of technical consultants while working with providers that are part of a quality rating and improvement system. In Chapter One, it was reported in the Grow in Quality Report (2007) how the Wisconsin providers when provided with sufficient funding along with technical assistance that they were able to improve their programs. It was relayed that after the funding was removed how the providers were able to maintain their levels of attained quality. This gave a clear indication of how quality technical

assistance can help providers make improvements. Since children attend group and family programs, it would be beneficial to explore those interactions as well.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> In 2005, Wisconsin Governor, Jim Doyle attempted to create a similar program. In his State of the state address (January 12, 2005), he announced that his budget would include a program for rating the quality of childcare programs. He wanted to create a five-star rating system with higher levels of reimbursement for higher quality childcare. However, the Wisconsin's Joint Finance Committee eliminated his proposed system, Five Star Quality Care for Quality Kids. The money that was budgeted for technical assistance to childcare providers and scholarships that would help childcare teachers to attend school was also eliminated (Lynch, 2005).

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## Protocol Survey and Interview Questions

### **Inclusion Questionnaire**

- 1.) Is your program a group or family program?
- 2.) Currently, what star rating does your program hold?
- 3.) How long have you been a family childcare provider?
- 4.) Are you a certified or licensed childcare provider?
- 5.) What zip code is your program located in?
- 6.) How do you identify racially?
- 7.) What percentage of the children in your program are subsidized by Wisconsin Shares?
- 8.) Have you ever worked with a technical consultant or did you receive an automated rating?
- 9.) What is your gender?

## Family ECEP Questionnaire

1. Do you feel that participation in YoungStar should be mandatory in order to be reimbursed by Wisconsin Shares?
2. Do you have any employees? If yes, how many?
3. How many children are currently enrolled in your program?
4. Did you have more than one technical consultant? How many?
5. What was the race/ethnicity of your technical consultant(s)?
6. What level are you currently on the Wisconsin Registry?
7. If you had more than one technical consultant, do you feel that one gave you more support than the others? (Y) (N) If so, how? **(This will be followed up on in the interview if they answer (Yes).**
8. Have you in the past or presently believed the African American providers are treated differently than white providers? (Y) (N)  
By licensors? (Y) (N)  
YoungStar? (Y) (N) **(Yes answers will be followed up on in the interview)**
9. Do you feel that the time you had with your technical consultant was enough to make significant changes?
10. Did you get the full amount of time (ten hours) with your technical consultant? (Y) (N)
11. What were the areas that were addressed?
12. Were the areas chosen by you or by the technical consultant?

## 1<sup>st</sup> Family ECEP Interview Questions

- 1. How did you decide to go into childcare?**
- 2. How did you first hear about YoungStar? What did you think about it initially?**
- 3. How did you initially think YoungStar would affect your business, if at all?**
- 4. If you had more than one technical consultant, do you feel that one gave you more support than the others?**
- 5. Have you in the past or presently believed the African American providers are treated differently than white providers? By Licensors, By YoungStar? How or Why?**
- 6. Did any of your technical consultants ever say anything to make you feel that race mattered? What was said?**
- 7. Do you feel that each of your technical consultants presented themselves as an expert? In what way? How did it make you feel?**
- 8. Do you feel that the time you had with your technical consultant was enough to make significant changes? Why or why not?**
- 9. What were the areas addressed?**
- 10. Were the areas chosen by you or by the technical consultant?**

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Interview

- 1. How would describe a quality childcare center?** (Does being an African American family childcare provider, serving primarily AA children affect your ideas about this at all? If so, how?)
- 2. Pertaining to YoungStar- If you were a technical consultant, what type of assistance would you say would be important to offer family childcare providers?** Why do you think that would be the more important type of assistance?
- 3. Reflecting on your first meeting with a technical consultant, what was your first impression of her/him?** What do you think she/he thought about you? About your program? Why/What gave you that impression? Did you later find out that your impression was accurate?
- 4. Please share with me your experiences of working with the technical consultants that came to your program?** How did you feel during your first meeting with your technical consultant? Share something that a technical consultant did to make you feel comfortable (or uncomfortable)?
- 5. How were your practices improved because of working with your technical consultant(s)-If at all?** Did anything you did change for better or worse as a result of your time with the technical consultant?
- 6. What types of resources did your technical consultant, if any provide?** What type of support did they provide? How did your technical consultants provide feedback?

7. If you were a technical consultant, how do you think that the race of the provider might affect how you interacted with them (if at all)?
8. **How do you feel that race affected the interactions between you and your technical consultant, if at all?** (Did you and any of your technical consultants ever discuss cultural differences? Do you feel that the technical consultant respected or valued cultural differences?)

Table 3. 2010 City of Milwaukee Census

Milwaukee population 594,833

Black population 237,769

White population 266,339

<b>Milwaukee Co. Zip Code</b>	<b>White Population</b>	<b>Black Population</b>	<b>Indian Population</b>	<b>Asian Population</b>	<b>Hispanic Population</b>
<b>53172</b>	18,357	391	150	226	0
<b>53201</b>					
<b>53202</b>	19,020	1,705	0	1,153	0
<b>53203</b>	672	143	0	0	0
<b>53204</b>	6,361	4,319	0	0	29,783
<b>53205</b>	319	8,480	0	0	0
<b>53206</b>	348	26,595	0	0	0
<b>53207</b>	27,347	847	0	0	5,294
<b>53208</b>	9,168	15,758	0	2,895	2,140
<b>53209</b>	11,280	32,358	0	540	1,521
<b>53210</b>	4,898	20,839	0	457	1,138
<b>53211</b>	30,999	995	0	0	0
<b>53212</b>	9,822	16,419	0	275	2,823
<b>53213</b>	22,780	1,040	0	595	976
<b>53214</b>	26,909	1,654	0	615	4,333
<b>53215</b>	15,949	3,224	0	1,561	38,551
<b>53216</b>	3,881	26,037	0	445	1,005
<b>53218</b>	5,886	28391	0	3,734	1,452
<b>53219</b>	26,769	1,071	0	572	4,535
<b>53220</b>	21,124	699	0	793	2,962
<b>53221</b>	26,097	1,272	0	1,978	7,129
<b>53222</b>	17,072	5,487	0	741	999
<b>53223</b>	11,442	14,036	0	1,687	1,039
<b>53224</b>	6,193	11,865	0	983	1,489
<b>53225</b>	8,939	13,434	0	1,203	1,052
<b>53226</b>	16,106	593	0	586	666
<b>53227</b>	19,704	764	0	702	1,657
<b>53228</b>	12,644	227	0	349	883
<b>53233</b>	8,773	5,397	0	872	1,087
<b>53235</b>	7,767	234	0	193	853

Source: United States Census Bureau

Table 4. Nine predominantly African American Zip Codes  
 Milwaukee County types of ECECs as of 10/15/2017 w/# of two star ECECs in parentheses

<b>Zip Code</b>	<b>Licensed Family (2-star ECEC)</b>	<b>Group (2-star ECECs)</b>	<b>Public School (2-star ECECs)</b>	<b>Certified Family (2-star ECECs)</b>	<b>Day Camps (2-star ECECs)</b>	<b>NR/NP</b>
<b>53205</b>	11 (5)	9 (2)	6	4 (2)	1	5
<b>53206</b>	24 (19)	18 (7)	6	8 (7)	0	15
<b>53208</b>	17 (5)	22 (10)	0	4 (4)	1	12
<b>53209</b>	41 (27)	34 (12)	0	24 (22)	2	20
<b>53210</b>	47 (26)	30 (7)	0	17 (15)	0	10
<b>53212</b>	15 (11)	29 (9)	7	6 (4)	2	8
<b>53216</b>	52 (26)	25 (7)	5	19 (18)	1	19
<b>53218</b>	56 (33)	31 (11)	7	22 (22)	0	28
<b>53225</b>	16 (11)	9 (2)	5	10 (8)	0	7
<b>Totals</b>	279 (163)	207 (66)		114 (102)		

Source: [dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar](http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar)

## Codes

1. Reason in childcare-why is the provider in childcare
2. Experience of provider (outside of childcare) How many years in the field.
3. Childcare experience of provider (How many years in their own business
4. Technical knowledge of provider (Competence) Any other type of training or courses
5. Concerns about YoungStar (Any worries that they have about YS past or present)
6. Negative perception of YoungStar (After working with YS, any concerns)
7. Positive perception of YoungStar (After working with YS, positive experiences)
8. Support of Education
9. Educational level of participants (How much education do they currently have)
10. Educational requirements for YoungStar (How much education do they need)
11. Communication with TC.
12. Perception of anticipated bias
13. Perceptions of licensor
14. Perceptions of Fraud Unit
15. Perception of TC.
16. Aspirations of provider
17. Body language of TC.
18. Expectation of TC.
19. Failure of TC to provide information
20. Requirements of YoungStar
21. Negative or low expectation from TC.
22. Lack of expectation from TC.
23. Feeling received from TC.
24. Time received from TC.
25. Attitude of tech
26. Lack of services or support from TC.
27. Bad or limited information from TC.
28. TC affecting morale
29. Helpful info received from other resources (Collaboration)
30. Comparing TC with other resources
31. Changes made with TCs help
32. Negative experiences
33. Positive expectation from tech
34. Good feeling received from tech
35. Explanation of YoungStar
36. Perception of DCF
  - a. Fraud Unit
  - b. Licensors
37. Different TCs
38. Lack of follow through



# MICHELE TURNER PhD

Professor

## EDUCATION

- Ph.D. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee **December 2018**  
Urban Education Social Foundations of Education  
Dissertation Topic: Milwaukee YoungStar: Exploring the Racialized Experiences of African American Early Care and Education Providers
- M.S. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee  
Cultural Foundations of Education, **May 2013**  
Focus in Multicultural Education and Arts Education
- B.S. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee  
Community Engagement and Education, **December 2011**  
Focus: Child Care Administration  
*Magna Cum Laude*
- AA Ashworth College  
Early Childhood Education, **April 2010**

## ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

- 2012- University of Wisconsin-Platteville  
Present Professor, Department of Continuing Education

## INVITED TALKS

- University of Wisconsin-Whitewater **April 2018**  
Featured Speaker, Whitewater, WI  
*Culturally Responsive Teaching for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*
- University of Wisconsin-Platteville **March 2018**  
Featured Speaker, Platteville, WI  
*Culturally Responsive Teaching for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*
- Wisconsin Child Care Administrators Association **May 2017**  
Featured Speaker, Madison, WI  
*Culturally Responsive Teaching for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*
- National Afterschool Association **March 2017**  
Featured Speaker, Dallas, TX  
*Culturally Responsive Teaching for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*
- Wisconsin Early Childhood Association **November 2017**  
Culturally Responsive Teaching

Madison, WI

## **TEACHING**

University of Wisconsin-Platteville

### Graduate Courses:

Childcare Administration and Supervision  
Best Practices for Children and Families in Early Childhood Program  
Early Childhood Programs and the External Environment  
Operations Management in Early Childhood Programs  
Administrative Seminar

### Undergraduate Courses:

Intentionality in Programming  
Site Programming and Operations  
Foundations of After School and Youth Development  
Engaging Youth in Groups

## **PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

National Association for the Education of Young Children  
Wisconsin Early Childhood Association  
Wisconsin Child Care Administrator's Association  
Early Learning Leaders

## **BOARD MEMBERSHIPS**

Roberson Family Daycare, Inc. 1989-Present  
Wisconsin Registry 2018-Present  
Wisconsin Child Care Administrators Association 2018-Present